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Introduction

Realizing DReAMS (Development of Resources and Access to Municipal Services) for South and Southeast Asian Local Authorities is a three years project funded by the European Union. The project focused on enhancing the capacity of Local Authorities to manage natural and environmental resources, with an aim of reducing poverty and contributing towards the attainment of Millennium Development Goals 1 and 7 through the use of two planning and management tools, namely, *ecoBUDGET* and Poverty Database Monitoring System (PDMS).

In South Asia, the project is being implemented in Rajshahi (Bangladesh) and Thimphu (Bhutan) with the support of ICLEI South Asia while Guntur Municipal Corporation in India which has already adopted one of the tools i.e *ecoBUDGET* into its system, is acting as a lighthouse city for these two cities. The city of Bologna in Italy is supporting the 3 cities in implementing the *ecoBUDGET* tool since it has a long experience of using the tool for good environmental management. The project is being implemented in partnership with the Province of Bohol, who is the main applicant in the project. Bohol, along with ICLEI South East Asia, is implementing the 2 tools in 5 municipalities in the Province and is receiving technical guidance from Vaxjo city from Sweden, who also has a long experience of using *ecoBUDGET* for environmental management.

The South Asian Regional Partner Meeting was organized at the end of the project in Hyderabad, India on 7th October 2013. The aims of the Partner Meeting were:

1. To review the process of implementation of the project in the 3 South Asian cities and find out what worked and what went wrong in the project.
2. To present the *ecoBudget* webcentre to the partners that have been developed by ICLEI European Secretariat and which can be used by all the partners and to train the partner cities in using the website.
3. To discuss opportunities of taking forward the project outcomes and continue the use of the tools developed and modified under the project in the South Asian region.

The partner meeting was attended by representatives of Guntur Municipal Corporation, Rajshahi City Corporation from Bangladesh, Thimphu Thromde from Bhutan, and ICLEI South Asia from amongst the project partners. Due to repeated changes in dates of the programme because of political issues in

Partner Meeting – Realising DReAMS Project

Guntur, it was not possible for representatives of Bologna and ICLEI European Secretariat to attend the programme. There were about 16 participants in the partner meeting.

The agenda of the workshop is attached as Annexure 1. The list of participants is attached as Annexure 2.

Wrap-up of 3 Years of the Project

The partner meeting was presided over by Mr. Emani Kumar Executive Director of ICLEI South Asia. Mr. Kumar welcomed the participants and asked them to introduce themselves briefly. He then invited Mr.



Participants in Partner Meeting

Abdul Latief, Deputy Commissioner of Guntur Municipal Corporation to present the Welcome Address to the gathering.

Mr. Latief, referred to former Indian President Abdul Kalam's famous quote, "You have to dream before your dreams can come true". He stated that the Realising DReAMS Project, funded by the European Union has helped Guntur Municipal Corporation to follow the former President's ways, by helping them to monitor the work done in the corporation.

The project has helped them identify major environmental and urban issues regarding water supply in the city, solid waste management, green area development, energy conservation, as well as social and infrastructural issues of slum development. Under the project, the SCADA (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition) system was introduced in Guntur, which is helping to monitor the water supply and control leakages in the transmission sector. The rate of mortality of trees planted by the corporation has reduced. The project is helping them monitor the survival rate of the planted trees, which was not done till now. The project is also helping them monitor their solid waste management system, by introducing 100% door to door coverage for collection of waste and achieving no illegal dumping or open dumping of waste. Self Help Groups of women are engaged in collection and disposal of waste. The project has also helped to erect solar panels for parks, reservoirs, traffic signals, etc. LED



Participants in Partner Meeting

Partner Meeting – Realising DReAMS Project

lamps are being used instead of Solar Photo Voltaics.

These positive changes brought under the project has greatly helped to improve the city and its administration. Finally he welcomed all the participants coming from different places and hoped that they could come together in other initiatives and work together again.

Mr. Kumar praised the Guntur Municipal Corporation as having a very open and accepting attitude to new ideas which has resulted in a partnership of 7 years with ICLEI South Asia.



Mr. Ashraful Haque, Rajshahi

Mr. Ashraful Haque, Chief Engineer, Rajshahi City Corporation introduced his team from Rajshahi who had come to attend the Partner Meeting and Final Conference. He spoke about the different issues taken up under the project such as improvement of quality and quantity of surface water supply, waste management system improvement through night collection of waste, and increasing green cover in the city through plantations. Sanitation for urban poor and conservation of water bodies have also been taken up under the project, and is being worked upon by the corporation. He said

that Rajshahi was happy to be a part of the project and the exchanges of information which happened through the project was of great help to the city. The project helped to introduce concepts of environmental management and showed the officials how environmental issues are linked to all the work that is undertaken by the corporation. He also expressed his gratitude to ICLEI South Asia for helping them whenever they needed guidance or assistance during the course of the project.

Mr. Tshering Peljor, Chief Environmental Officer, Thimphu Thromde, said that it was his privilege to speak about the project in the final conference. Although he was not a part of the project from the beginning, he has seen the impacts of the project on the different environmental issues that were monitored through the project. He spoke about the 'My Tree Programme' which was introduced to increase survival rate among planted trees, whereby school students have been roped in to take care of the trees planted by the corporation. Waste segregation has been introduced in the city and has improved greatly and biodegradable waste is being composted in the



Mr. Tshering Peljor, Thimphu

Partner Meeting – Realising DReAMS Project

municipal composting site. Through the PDMS process, pro poor planning has been made easy and stakeholder consultations are being conducted to identify issues. He was thankful for the opportunity of being a part of the project and expressed his willingness to be a part of this kind of consortiums in future as well.

Ms. Bedoshruti Sadhukhan from ICLEI South Asia provided a recapitulation of the project activities in the South Asian cities. She said that in 2009 when the project began, the 3 South Asian cities had started working together for the first time. Environmental management and poverty alleviation were the main objectives of the project, which consisted of capacity building and awareness generation of the local governments. The two tools were introduced through a series of trainings in the cities, and handholding support was provided to the cities as and when needed.

The main outcomes of the project were threefold:

- The forging of interlinkages and partnerships with local communities, NGOs and Self Help Groups with the local governments.
- Linking of *eco*BUDGET and Poverty Database Monitoring System (PDMS) tools to act together in the cities
- Budgetary allocation from municipal funds for carrying out the activities identified and selected under the project to ensure that there is political and administrative support behind the project.

A follow up project was also begun with the 3 South Asian cities, with support from SIDA, in partnership with The Swedish International Centre of Education for Sustainable Development and the Centre for Environmental Education, India, in which one issue has been selected from the issues identified in the DReAMS Project, and this issue is being explored further. This project is known as the Supporting Urban Sustainability Project or SUS project.

She also stressed that there was very good work culture in the cities and appreciated the help from all the staff. The officials were also very accepting of newer ideas and always suggested methods of modifying the ideas to make them better suited to local conditions.

However, the project had also faced some delays in the execution. Reporting on the project was not completed timely and this resulted in inordinate delays in release of funds from the donor and subsequent delay in execution of the work. She expressed hope that in future, a better management of time would ensure that this kind of delays do not happen in other projects where the cities may work together.

Introduction of webcentre

The *eco*BUDGET webcentre was introduced to the South Asian cities and demonstrated to them. Ms. Bedoshruti Sadhukhan from ICLEI South Asia explained the webcentre and the process of using the webcentre to record and monitor online the *eco*BUDGET master budget.



Ms. Bedoshruti Sadhukhan, explaining the webcentre

She explained the instructions and shared with the partner cities a set of instructions that can be used to develop and upload an online version of the *ecoBUDGET* master budget and then use it for calculating the budget balance for pictorial and detailed presentation to the council, general public as well as internal executive decision making.

She also demonstrated the use of the webcentre online. The cities committed to using the webcentre and reverting to ICLEI regarding its utility and benefits.

Conclusion and Vote Of Thanks

The programme was concluded with a vote of thanks from Mr. Kumar who thanked all the participants for taking time out to come to the partner meeting and sharing their views. He hoped that there would be active participation in future projects as well by the partner cities and wished them all success in their endeavours.