

## Human Settlements and Adaptation

### 11<sup>th</sup> Focal Point Forum of the Nairobi work programme

8 November 2017

#### Focus Group Discussion 4: City-to-city partnerships on climate change adaptation



The discussion in group four focused on challenges, successes and opportunities that relate to city-to-city partnerships on climate change adaptation.

- l) Overview of the key challenges met by the participants in relation to the focus area:
  - There are several north-south networks, but not enough south-south networks. This is important because what works on one city is more likely to be transferrable to other cities with similar constraints and situations.
  - Sustainability of short-term programs and collaborations and prolongation of work after the life of the program.
    - Program such as the [100 Resilient Cities \(100 RC\)](#) have a short life span and depend on continuous funding to be valuable. Cities often cannot benefit from short-term schemes like that – especially considering that adaptation is a long-term process that requires continuous political commitment for their implementation.
  - Lack of capacity within the local governments.
    - Experts are hard to come by, and staff turnover can disrupt partnerships.
  - Maintaining networks is challenging because of limited financial resources. Often it is challenging even to access funding for travel between neighboring cities in order to act on these city-to-city partnerships.
    - Funding for adaptation, including for city-to-city partnerships that focus on this topic, comes from local funds. This finding comes from the first assessment of adaptation data from the carbonn climate registry (CCR).
  - Lack of time and human resources.
    - Often local staff that initiated city-to-city partnerships are already overburdened with other “regular” tasks. Adaptation then jumps lower on the to-do list.
  - Mobilizing people to share information and resources within a local government is a challenging process. Often local

government structures are too rigid or inter-departmental sharing is not institutionalized. In such structures, it is hard to get any information flow – especially on adaptation; as such information is spread through different departments. This compounds the challenges of collaborating and sharing with other cities.

- It is necessary to improve methods of facilitating knowledge sharing.

- Monitoring to track progress and impacts of partnerships and networks is needed.

II) Successful experiences and relevant research that could help address such challenges:

- Key message: There is no cookie-cutter approach to how to forge city-to-city partnerships. They must respond to the needs of the cities concerned. For example, cities, towns, and provinces in the SIDS have different preferences on whom to partner/collaborate with. Sometimes they find it beneficial to partner with similar urban environments and other times they wish to be part of a cluster of city networks or partner with a city from the global north.
- Partnerships should not duplicate efforts. There are partnerships among mega cities and at the same time there are small-medium cities partnerships/networks. We need to integrate efforts and give cities what they need.
  - Expectations must be managed (so that, for example, cities are not encouraged to participate, and then financial and facilitative support is discontinued).
- We ought to distinguish political and technical partnerships. Mayors work on this “friendly competition” notion, but the technical teams are interested to continue partnerships beyond political cycles and agendas.

- There are several tools on city-to-city partnerships already. Asia Pacific has several interesting partnerships (ICLEI Oceania could share specific examples).
  - Other tools and platforms also exist, for example:
    - C40 <http://www.c40.org/>
    - UN-Habitat – utilities network <https://unhabitat.org/books/global-water-operators-partnership-alliance/>
    - EPIC network <http://www.epicn.org/>
    - Asia Pacific Adaptation Network [www.asiapacificadapt.net/](http://www.asiapacificadapt.net/)
    - Asian cities climate resilience network [www.accrn.net/](http://www.accrn.net/)
    - Resilience tools at [resiliencetools.org/](http://resiliencetools.org/)
    - Global covenant of mayors at [www.globalcovenantofmayors.org/](http://www.globalcovenantofmayors.org/)
    - City food network [www.iclei.org/index.php?id=1348](http://www.iclei.org/index.php?id=1348)
- UN-Habitat creates good city-to-city partnerships and the reason for this is perhaps sustainable financial resources for their establishment.
- Comparatively it is important for cities to see how far their peers have gone. World Resources Institute has a way to showcase this progress. “Friendly competition” can support good practices. On the other side, cities are discouraged by being “ranked”.
  - Facilitating interaction, preferably face-to-face, on a regular basis is important.
  - Training sessions and knowledge transfer platform are also useful.
- The Bonn-La Paz twinning is a successful example of a North-South exchange. Initially a cultural exchange, for the past 7 years it has enabled useful collaboration on adaptation and

mitigation (with several disaster risk reduction, adaptation, renewable energy projects and ideas underway), despite differences (e.g. Bonn has issues with storm-water and flooding, while La Paz, which is a much larger city, has issues with drought).

- Monitoring and reporting on progress, achievements and challenges of partnerships and networks is important.

III) Ideas in terms of possible response measures that could be undertaken, including through [collaboration](#) and/or by the participants in the group, to address such challenges:

- Developing a toolbox to support south-south collaboration. The toolbox could have a number of options, depending on whether partnerships are between urban settlements, remote settlements, etc.  
**Caution though:** There are too many toolboxes already available. How can we connect to existing efforts?
- Example: Sharing knowledge between cities on rainwater collection and storage for use in dry seasons: Maybe we should reach out to historians for such information on historical methods for dealing with climate variability and thus find locally relevant solutions?
- Work with indigenous groups to develop appropriate adaptation strategies. Focus on inclusivity in city-to-city partnerships. Do not just involve the top (official) layers of governance, but ensure support and involvement from affected communities.
- Include research and academia in city to city partnerships. City-university partnerships, such as the Educational Partnerships for Innovation in Communities Network ([EPIC-N network](#)) are already doing just that. Matching cities and universities to capitalize on opportunities and use resources on adaptation effectively is important. At the Resilient Cities

2017 congress, 20 collaborating pairs of individuals representing municipal governments and local universities received training on the EPIC-N model.

- Continue and capitalize on what we already have. We do not need to invent the wheel, but continue having local governments meet and discuss in hopes of affecting positive change.