

UNCRD EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON INTEGRATED REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

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Executive Summary

I. Introduction

The vision of the United Nations Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD) is to achieve sustainable living environment for all – safe, secure, equitable and inclusive development in harmony with nature. The Centre's mission is to assist developing countries in their transition to sustainable development path. Regional development planning and management is an effective set of tools that UNCRD is prioritizing to realize its vision and mission through guiding sub-national, national and international actions to reduce the social, economic and environmental disparities within a region or among different regions.

UNCRD's interventions in developing countries are clustered under three main interrelated and complementary areas of work: (a) Integrated Regional Development Planning; (b) Sustainable Urban Management; and (c) Knowledge Management.

After 40 years of its establishment, the surrounding environment has greatly changed and developing countries are facing a new set of challenges, including faster pace of globalization and integration of the world economy, the revolution in the information and communication technology, climate change and more frequent and intense natural disasters. Domestically, many developing countries are undergoing decentralization and democratization, which necessitate capacity building at sub-national and local level. These are compounded by recurrent problems of poverty and inequality.

After 20 years from the Earth Summit, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20 Conference) took place in June 2012 and adopted the outcome document, *The Future We Want*, which was endorsed by the General Assembly on 27 July 2012 ([A/RES/66/288](#)). At Rio+20, the importance of making coherent and integrated planning and decision-making at the national, sub-national and local levels was recognized and the World Leaders called for strengthening national, sub-national and/or local institutions (para. 101). UNCRD believes that integrated regional development planning offers an effective tool for promoting sustainable development. In order to better serve towards the promotion of sustainable development, there is a need to revisit the concept of regional development and raise international understanding around the tools it can provide to help developing countries addressing the new challenges of the 21st century. The Expert Group Meeting on Integrated Regional Development Planning (IRDP) was held for this purpose.

II. Integrated Regional Development Planning and Sustainable Development

IRDP is a process of planning that can transcend sectors as well as administrative boundaries to pursue holistic and integrated approaches to sustainable development. The approach is multi-scalar so as to cover the issues that are being addressed.

IRDP is designed to specifically address the needs at the local level and many problems that affect people at the local level. In addition, IRDP seeks to address community empowerment and capacity development.

IRDP is a useful tool for sustainable development, in particular, since it attempts to integrate three pillars of economic growth, social development and environmental protection and employs participatory planning.

The Rio+20 provided the normative directions for IRDP that point toward environmental and social justice, basic human rights, and forms of social progress that go beyond material measures to enhance human capabilities (Nussbaum 2002) and human flourishing (Friedmann 2011). Working toward such an adaptive IRDP approach is multifaceted in its institutional requirements. Among the most important are decentralized forms of governance.

Decentralization can be defined as devolution of decision-making power and fiscal capacity to democratically elected local governments. Decentralization and democratization are among the most prevalent directions of government reforms throughout the world, including Asia (White and Smoke 2005, UCLG 2008). Matching IRDP with devolved forms of governance is one of its major tasks.

With its participatory and multi-sectoral approach, IRDP offers a useful tool for pursuing sustainable development at the local level, in particular those countries undergoing decentralization.

In discussing IRDP, some concepts need clarification. Below (1) the concept of region and scale; and (2) planning – implementation process are explained.

(1) The concept of region and scale

A region is defined according to the issues being addressed. And there are different scales in both governance and issues. In addition, there are interactions between and among these different scales, such as transborder issues. Therefore, it would be best to let the “problem” decide region and scale. In other words, the region and scale need to be flexible in order to properly address the issues of concern.

Whether sub-national or supranational, the regional scale can in many circumstances provide an important scale of planning that is not available through existing territorial systems of governance. In many instances administrative areas are either too small or only occupy a portion of a regional ecology and thus need to be combined at larger regional scales for collaboration. The regional scale can also provide a more efficient level of cooperation among development planning units in terms of shared costs of infrastructure and services.

(2) Planning – implementation process

The formulation and implementation process is a cyclical and interactive process of planning, participation and action, in which the emphasis is on managing the progress towards sustainability goals, rather than producing a plan as an end product.

As Professor Friedmann remarked, “Development, and more to the point, sustainability planning, requires above all learning on the part of both experts and

those whom they advise. The world we know is in perpetual movement, and the problems with which we are confronted are unprecedented in both scale and kind. The fact is, there are no genuine experts on the future of city-regions. In policy work, we only learn by doing.”

III. Contribution of IRDP to Sustainable Development

IRDP is a process of **participatory** planning and decision-making for a region. This offers a very powerful tool to promote sustainable development by addressing the following sustainable development issues:

- Inclusion of **the poor and marginalized segments of the population** as well as **all other relevant stakeholders** in the planning process;
- Addressing the issues of concern of the local people and communities;
- Identification of priorities of issues to be addressed, which implies that issues will be addressed in **an integrated manner**;
- Many areas of developing countries are affected by **threats of climate change, other extreme weather events, and environmental degradation**, which implies that the planning process will have to include **disaster governance and management**;
- Land degradation/desertification and persistent drought conditions can compound the issues of agricultural production and food security, which will ultimately affect livelihood security of rural farming community. Similarly, water pollution could lead to depletion of fish stocks that will have implication on the livelihood security of local fishing communities. Plastics in coastal and marine environment could affect the livelihood security of SIDS communities. These dynamics need to be considered in IRDP in the context of environment for development. **Water security is one of the keys to IRDP.**
- IRDP should also be linked to the environmental services, natural capital and ecosystem values in an environmentally sustainable way.

IV. Challenges of IRDP

While IRDP face the following challenges, overcoming them will bring higher quality of life (HQL). HQL is driven by both the economy (economic opportunity, living & cultural opportunity, amenity, safety and security) and ecological security (burden on environment – burden from industry, domestic, transport, heat island, and noise).

- With the emergence of globalization and new information technologies, high urbanization and the effects of climate change, IRDP should come up with innovative methodologies and approaches to come to grips with these new emerging issues. IRDP should address the lack of human and institutional capacity that affects the implementation of integrated regional development and the problem of harmonization/integration of regional plans with national plans/visions. It should also put pressure on the central government to devolve power to regional authorities and address its lack of political commitment.

- IRDP should take into account the smart growth (growth outside) and the smart shrink (shrink inside) by taking long-term view, factoring in demographic change and associated changes in life style over the years.
- Urban sprawl and rapid motorization could put urban space at risk and result in lower quality of life (LQL), which is characterized by increasing cost of unnecessary infrastructure and deteriorating landscape and losing identity.
- Strengthening rural-urban connectivity is key to overall economic development in the countries.
- Toward increased resilience of the urban poor, IRDP defines specific problems in a given region first and then be implemented with participatory risk assessments to develop community risk reduction strategies, involving concerned government agencies for DRR strategies to be integrated into their local or regional plan and territorial planning.

V. Sectoral aspects of IRDP

1. Transport and land use planning

IRDP can contribute to guide urban region develop in a manner consistent with regional ecologies and environmental sustainability. The many options that exist in this regard need to be worked out in each context. There are various aspects of integration, including: (a) land use and transport; (b) infrastructure and land use; (c) watershed management; and shrinking population and land use. Low birth rate is being observed in most of East and Southeast Asia. Shrinking population is a factor that needs to be considered for the societies in those countries. Avoid-shift-improve strategies represent an integration of strategies in the area of transport. An ideal land use planning is characterized by a compact-connected society that is also key to strengthen resiliencies.

2. Waste management

IRDP needs to capture new emerging waste streams, such as e-waste, and industrial wastes (including hazardous waste construction and demolition waste, end-of-life vehicles, medical waste, etc.), which further compound the pressure on the local environment and ecosystem.

3. 3R (Reduce, Reuse and Recycle) and resource efficiency

3R and resource efficiency measures could contribute to IRDP in many ways – (a) help tackle local environmental problems and address climate change; (b) energy security (Waste to Energy - WtE); (c) preserving natural capital and avoiding resource conflicts; (d) improving economic competitiveness of firms and nations; (e) minimizing disposal costs by minimizing wastes (land fills and incinerators are very expensive methods and end-of-pipe disposal is a sunk cost with no financial return); (f) new business opportunities (resource recovery, recycling, WtE schemes can create green jobs; biotechnology, nanotechnology, renewable energy); (g) pursuing social benefits (environment industry as potential source of employment and long term natural asset protection); and (h) reducing environmental impacts from harmful wastes.

4. Human Security

Human security is a powerful framework that can address threats (environmental, economic, political and social) to individuals and communities and put them on

sustainable footing. Territorial security depends on capacity to resist and recover from multiple threats that the territory and citizens are facing.

5. Disaster Risk Management

Disaster risk management should be seen as an essential part of IRDP since both are intimately related. Before, during and after disasters, an IRDP approach can contribute to creating or strengthening governance processes that are necessary to better comprehend the connections between poverty and transformations of the built environment and the exposure and vulnerability (as well as the resilience) of the citizens towards hazards and disasters at all —community, neighborhood, city, region and country— levels of territorial units, resulting in better disaster mitigation, prevention, preparedness, response and recovery and thus, in a more resilient society. The case of Jakarta flooding highlighted that if the means are found to link regional level land use and construction policies with new ways of gaining coordination across local government boundaries through participatory planning, outcomes might also be more spatially equitable than in the past.

In order to incorporate risk management into IRDP, there is a need to grasp the complexities of, and interlinkages between the problems of the cities and their informal settlements and slums, the challenges faced by their residents, their causes and to identify potential solutions and measures to be implemented as an integrated part of urban planning and management. As through IRDP people are encouraged to participate in planning, they will be made aware of their specific problems and solutions. In addition, decision-making at national level is also extremely important to address regional DRR and resilience building. National authorities should provide direction, guidance but also an enabling environment for DRR and resilience building initiatives to take place at the community, town and city and regional levels.

VI. What UNCRD can/should do in the area of IRDP?

The experts acknowledged that there is a new energy behind the idea of regional development, which sets firmly that regional development is integral to successful national sustainable development planning. Towards the promotion of this contemporary approach to the integrated regional development planning (IRDP), the experts identified four areas of work for UNCRD, namely knowledge platform, training, technical assistance and networking. In particular, with regard to knowledge platform, it was recognized that there was no good structured guidance material available and it was considered urgent that UNCRD put together a reference material that could be termed as “Readers on Regional Development”.

The following are the potential areas where UNCRD may focus its future activities:

- Knowledge platform:
 - Publication of “Readers on Regional Development”: contains case studies and theoretical statements on key features.
 - Development of roster of experts/institutions that are working on IRDP.
 - Linking developing countries with experts/institutions in areas where particular capacity needs have been identified.

- Organize forums to exchange information on range of issues related to IRDP, including policies, implementation mechanisms and best practices, for shared learning and improved decision making.
- Organize technical seminars in areas of concern to developing countries
- Training:
 - In-country training courses – pilot cases
 - Multi-country training courses: ITC, ATC
 - Skill-building for conducting consultations
 - Training of public officials in formulating IRDP
 - Training of local communities in effective participation in IRDP process
 - Training of facilitators for IRDP process
 - Negotiation skill for non-governmental participants in multi-stakeholder consultations
 - Monitoring and evaluation skills development and formulation of actual multi-stakeholder IRDP plans and projects
- Technical assistance:
 - Assistance in plan / policy formulation, including participatory multi-stakeholder consultations, consensus building and prospective strategic planning processes.
 - Assistance in implementation, monitoring and evaluation
- Networking and Partnerships:
 - Networking with collaborators: academic, research and scientific institutions; non-governmental organizations (NGOs); community-based organizations (CBOs); international organizations; bi-lateral and multi-lateral donor agencies; private sector, etc.
 - Keep the network of alumni and explore the possibility of recirculation of human resources, in such a way that people who had been trained at UNCRD or had been affiliated to UNCRD as researchers can lead collaborative efforts with UNCRD in their respective governments or institutions.
 - UNCRD should try to explore networking with local governments and private sector in the region of respective offices. UNCRD can explore building partnership in appropriate scale in the area of regional development. In this regard IPLA (International Partnerships for Expanding Waste Management Services of Local Authorities), coordinated by UNCRD, serves as a model for fostering partnerships and international cooperation.

Looking towards the next decade, UNCRD could aim to be an institution which hosts continuously updated knowledge platform on integrated regional development planning. Given its comparative advantage and resource limitations, UNCRD will utilize networks of relevant UN collaborative offices, academic institutions as well as

alumni of UNCRD training courses and affiliated persons to do so. UNCRD will actively use this platform for its own training courses and the training courses will also feed into the knowledge platform. Through this network, UNCRD can also explore to participate in on-going activities funded externally to meet UNCRD objectives. In addition, UNCRD can seek to develop longer-term collaborative activities in the range of issues that UNCRD is engaged in.

Towards this goal, it is very urgent to establish a network of collaborative institutions and involve them in building the knowledge platform. In the near term, UNCRD should focus its IRDP activities on building the knowledge base, in particular in Nagoya Office, while Africa and LAC Offices start the Development Account project. However, it is important that all offices share the same understanding that it is the knowledge platform for UNCRD as a whole and all offices should collaborate towards that end. In order to do so, UNCRD may need to make a promotional document, based on the executive summary, for fund raising purpose. It would also be useful to seek collaboration with UNOSD for possible “cost”-sharing and promotion of synergies, in relevant work areas, in particular the development of a knowledge portal.

In order to carry out the above, the following time line could be considered.

Quick progress opportunities (within one-year time span):

- Develop roster of experts/institutions that are working on IRDP
- Initiate networking with relevant institutions, including academic institutions, UN system organizations, local and central government institutions, non-governmental organizations
- Rebuild the alumni network and explore recirculation of human resource opportunity
- Convene at least one shared learning forum
- In-country courses offered to pilot countries – through Development Account project in Africa and Latin America

Mid-term targets (1-3 years time frame):

- Knowledge platform up and running, including “Readers on Regional Development” through collaborative efforts on relevant institutions
- Development of e-learning courses
- Revive multi-country training courses
- Continue with networking with relevant stakeholders to support and enrich the many aspects of UNCRD activities

Long-term targets (over 3 years):

- IRDP becomes established approach to promote sustainable development at regional level
- Shared learning forums become established annual event at global and regional levels
- IRDP training institutions established in several developing countries
- Continue with networking with relevant stakeholders to support and enrich the many aspects of UNCRD activities