



ASEAN - Germany Development Partnership Expert Forum on Creating Pathways for Urban Resilience 20-21 November 2018 – Singapore

Summary



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On 20-21 November 2018, the German Federal Foreign Office, adelphi, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources of the Philippines (DENR), the National Environment Agency of Singapore (NEA), and the ASEAN Secretariat jointly hosted the 1st Expert Forum on creating pathways for urban resilience in the context of the ASEAN-Germany Development Partnership in Singapore. The Expert Forum was facilitated by adelphi's director Alexander Carius and attended by 60 representatives from the ASEAN Working Group on Climate Change (AWGCC), the ASEAN Working Group on Environmentally Sustainable Cities (AWGESC), the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM), cities of ASEAN member states, city networks, the private sector and academia as well as the German Federal Foreign Office and the ASEAN Secretariat. The Expert Forum took stock of current approaches and challenges in building resilient cities within ASEAN and Germany and identified the enabling conditions needed to scale up urban resilience efforts.

Contextualizing the ASEAN-Germany Development Partnership

The ASEAN-Germany Development Partnership, which was initiated at the 1st ASEAN-Germany Development Partnership Committee Meeting held on 23 January 2017 in Jakarta, builds on years of intense cooperation between both partners. With its new focus on building urban resilience, the partnership addresses an issue of pressing concern in the region. It provides a unique opportunity to catalyze efforts to reduce climate-related risks in ASEAN and to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, as called upon by the latest IPCC special report (2018). The world's leading scientists urged that the clock is ticking and unprecedented changes are needed to avert the worst risks from climate change. While limits to the adaptive capacities of ASEAN cities will already be felt at 1.5°C of global warming, these limits will become even more pronounced at higher levels of warming and likely

result in the largest reduction in growth globally and devastating impacts on communities and people. The political implications of this scenario are far-reaching and will have an impact on the stability of nation states and entire regions. The ASEAN-Germany Development Partnership is therefore a timely opportunity to address this issue by helping to scale up action on building resilient cities in ASEAN and building a political momentum beyond technical development cooperation.

Urban resilience in the ASEAN region

The ASEAN region is one of the most exposed and in part vulnerable regions to climate change. According to the 5th ASEAN State of Environment Report (2018) heatwaves, typhoons and particularly floods are among the greatest risks. At the same time, ASEAN countries are urbanizing at an unprecedented rate. Especially small and medium-

sized cities are the agglomerations that grow fastest, often along coastlines which exacerbate existing vulnerabilities to climate change. Already today, over 700 million people in the ASEAN region live in cities exposed to 'extreme' or 'high' disaster risks. This number is expected to reach one billion by 2030. However, the nexus between urbanization processes, slow onset climate change and disaster risk management has not been sufficiently explored and most cities are not adequately equipped to deal with the impacts of climate change.

Despite the political, economic and social diversity of ASEAN member states, the Expert Forum showed that concerns and priorities in regard to urban resilience building are largely shared, as urban disasters have the potential to disrupt the regional economy and pose a threat to peace and security. Building urban resilience to disasters and climate-related risks has thus become a priority in the ASEAN region.

What are current ASEAN initiatives?

In line with the tagline of "Resilient and Innovative" as put forward by the Singapore ASEAN Chairmanship 2018, several initiatives related to smart and sustainable urban development have been launched this year. Most recently, the ASEAN Sustainable Urbanisation Strategy (ASUS) - a key initiative under the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity - was published, highlighting the issue of resilience as a priority area for ASEAN cities. The ASUS supports other existing initiatives and networks in the region, including the ASEAN Smart Cities Network and the ASEAN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Frontrunner Cities Programme. The three ASEAN Working Groups support urban resilience building through initiatives such as the ASEAN ESC Model Cities Programme and the recently developed Guidebook for Urban Resilience in ASEAN.

Challenges ahead

Building urban resilience is gaining momentum and the number of related programs and initiatives in the ASEAN region is long. Yet, participants agreed that more strategic and collaborative action will be needed to speed and scale up action across ASEAN member states. Cities play a vital role in driving transformative change and to increase the adaptive capacities of people to deal with environmental change, yet their political, economic, and financial

capacities to do so are still limited. Creating an enabling environment, including legal frameworks, greater financial autonomy and partnerships across different levels of government as well as between different stakeholders and different cities in the ASEAN region has been identified as key to advancing ambitions on building urban resilience.

As urban growth will be strongest in small and medium-sized cities, participants suggested to shift attention from megacities to those which are growing the fastest, yet often lack the capacities and resources to shape climate-resilient development. As these cities are closely linked with their hinterland it will also be crucial to start thinking and planning for urban regions. Three parallel workshops on policy and planning, finance and technology allowed to deal with these issues in greater depth and to explore solutions for addressing existing gaps and challenges to build resilient cities.

Tacking stock of current approaches and gaps

Planning and Policy

In light of a changing climate, hazards and extreme weather events are becoming harder to predict. Planning processes have to account for these uncertainties and allow for a certain flexibility and adaptiveness. In this regard, participants called for a closer collaboration between scientists and policy makers as well as the involvement of local communities in designing and implementing resilience strategies and plans. The discussion proved that mainstreaming adaptation and urban resilience into ordinary planning processes is already underway, yet the synergies between disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and urban development have not been fully realized. For example, cooperation between respective agencies and scientific experts working in these fields is often still limited.

There was broad consensus among participants that bringing the different thematic communities into dialogue will be an important way forward. In this context, it was recommended that the three ASEAN Working Groups (AWGCC, AWGESC, ACDM) work closer together within the existing framework and mechanisms. This could be taken up by Thailand as the new chair of ASEAN in 2019. As for the enabling conditions, participants highlighted the relevance of political leadership, legitimacy, enabling law and

legislation as well as an environment that allows for learning and innovation. They also suggested building on synergies between urban resilience and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and linking local and regional action with global targets.

Finance

Accessing available sources of finance is a key challenge, especially for small and medium-sized cities. Participants of the workshop underlined the importance of supporting ASEAN cities in early-stage project development. The workshop participants highlighted that cities face challenges in terms of translating visions and strategies into actual projects on the ground. Currently, a steady pipeline of viable and bankable infrastructure projects is missing, which leads to a lack of investment. Project preparation facilities such as the C40 Cities Finance Facility (CFF) or the Cities Climate Finance Leadership Alliance (CCFLA) are important to bridge the gap between project preparation funding and access to finance. However, there is a need to strengthen the facilities' activities and other similar initiatives that emerged numerously to meet the needs of the region over the last years. Although international donors are increasingly offering funding windows for projects with an urban focus, they are still mostly targeting larger infrastructure projects or specific programs of a certain scale and it is not yet clear how sustainable infrastructure is differentiated from conventional investments. The participants highlighted the need for international donors to provide clearer parameters and transparency in what constitutes bankable projects that they can support.

Technology

Technologies to tackle climate-related risks and urbanization challenges are getting more powerful and available. However, the discussion showed that ASEAN cities differ widely in terms of readiness to produce and implement complex, high cost technologies. Only few ASEAN cities are ready to use key technologies such as Internet of Things (IoT), mobile internet, cloud computing and big data. Alternatively, lower-cost, open-source applications and initiatives (e.g. Ur-systems, Tepmachcha, Open Data for Resilience Initiative) show increasingly to be suitable for small and medium-sized cities,

especially to layer previously disconnected data to provide a higher degree of information and trigger discussions on hazards and risks. Besides customization to specific urban contexts, strengthening the capacity of local governments to use existing technologies properly has been identified as current need by workshop participants. Further, it was highlighted that many city-led efforts to capture urban risk data tend to be compromised by the lack of continuity and engagement with vulnerable, informal groups. However, rapidly progressing climate change means that both governments and the private sector will face growing unmet demands for risk-related data. There are opportunities to align these shared interests through innovative modes of public-private partnerships and public participation (e.g. crowdsourced community data using mobile applications). In order to go forward with public-private partnerships, there is a need to improve governments' awareness on the benefits of investing in technologies as well as to develop national legal frameworks on data privacy and protection in ASEAN member states.

Way forward

The 1st Expert Forum on building pathways for urban resilience demonstrated the need for continuing policy dialogue on this issue within ASEAN as well as between ASEAN and Germany. There was broad consensus among participants to recommend considering having the forum as a regular exchange format in the future, with a particular focus on small and medium-sized cities. In addition to the specific recommendations formulated in the break out groups of policy and planning, finance and technology, four suggestions were brought forward on how to scale up action on building urban resilience under the framework of the ASEAN-Germany Development Partnership.

First, there is need for a clear narrative on why and what transformative action is needed to build urban resilience in the ASEAN region. The latest IPCC special report (2018) on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C called the attention of policy makers globally. However, its relevance for the ASEAN region was not sufficiently communicated to result in necessary political action. A special report on transformative action for building resilient cities in ASEAN could help fill this gap by translating the IPCC's results into local and regional realities and

formulating clear recommendations for action. The ASEAN-Germany Partnership would be an excellent framework for developing such a knowledge base.

Second, in order to provide for the growing importance of cities in ASEAN, it was proposed to develop an urban work stream within ASEAN. This would allow for mainstreaming the issues across ASEAN activities and working groups, defining clear responsibilities and establishing ownership on the urban topic. The ASEAN-Germany Partnership should initiate a pilot project exploring the thematic areas for such a work stream, as well as institutional arrangements and the enabling conditions to translate policies into action at regional, national and local level. In addition, the ASEAN-Germany Partnership should explore how to best support Thailand as ASEAN chair in 2019 on this task.

Third, the work of ASEAN on building resilient cities should form stronger links to global processes. It was recommended to build on synergies between urban resilience and the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, the New Urban Agenda, the Paris Climate Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction to take other concerns such as inclusion, equity or quality of life into account. The ASEAN-Germany Development Partnership should review existing development cooperation between Germany and AMS in order to synthesize entry points to better link global development agendas with AMS' needs and programs. It should also initiate a series of ASEAN-Germany projects with a particularly focus of supporting AMS at local level to contribute to global processes.

Fourth, the forum itself was a successful format in strengthening the exchange between the three ASEAN working groups as well as between ASEAN and Germany on a topic of mutual interest. There was consensus to develop this forum into a series of regular dialogues in order to facilitate a platform for interaction between policy makers and academics, national and local government representatives on regional as well as thematic cooperation. The forum provided a fruitful ground for linking scientists from ASEAN and Europe interested in urban resilience and served as an exchange platform to discuss relevant past and ongoing projects in the region and in different local and national contexts.

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