

Good governance

Good governance at local level is a key prerequisite for sustainable urban development. This includes not only government and administration but also participation by the people living in cities. Democracy and participation at local level are a fundamental requirement for sustainable urban development, and for establishing the conditions in which decisions on local affairs can indeed be taken in the local communities and municipalities. For this to be done, responsibility, decision-making powers and planning competences must be organized on a decentralised basis, as must budgets too.

The challenge in itself is not new: cities have created their own forms of local rule throughout history and in every culture. What is new today is the scale of the challenge: at a political and socio-economic level and in the processes of urban development, the cities must try to safeguard social integration, citizen participation and an appropriate quality of life for all. New concepts are needed, especially in large agglomerations with millions of inhabitants.

In many large cities in developing countries and emerging economies, the ability to maintain political and administrative control can barely keep pace with the enormous rate of population growth and headlong economic development. The planning and development of infrastructure often fails to keep up with requirements. Good governance in these huge and further expanding urban agglomerations is becoming increasingly difficult.

Many cities are in fact characterized by widening socio-economic disparities, isolated enclaves of affluence and proliferating illegal settlements. At the same time, an increasing number of stakeholders from civil society and the private sector are helping to keep the city system afloat. The organs of state are gradually losing their capacity to act, while private and informal actors are becoming stronger.

In most cases, given this complex mix of circumstances, there can be no question of “sustainable urban development” taking place. Instead, a city’s development often goes hand in hand with growing financial difficulties, making the provision of even basic infrastructure a substantial challenge. At the same time, global business enterprises are exerting an increasing influence on the development of major conurbations in particular, above all as a result of competition for the location of investment and jobs.

One of the reasons why environmental problems have emerged on such a serious scale, extending far beyond city boundaries, is that urban development is poorly managed. Uncontrollably expanding large cities impose their ecological footprint on the surrounding region – and it is deep and often irreversible.

The purpose of the concept of “good local governance” is to highlight possible ways out of this dilemma. It embraces a range of considerations extending from the provision of municipal services for all through to the principle of the rule of law, including transparency, predictability and accessibility of local government bodies and the delivery of municipal services without discrimination. For this to succeed, cooperation is required between the elected political decision-makers (mayors, city parliaments) and the administrative authorities, civil society and the private sector: at all levels, in all areas of urban development, in planning, implementation and monitoring.

Germany is researching and supporting local governments in various countries and cities. Within the scientific initiatives undertaken by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, the German Research Foundation (DFG) and the Helmholtz Association, the focus of analysis is directed at the complex processes and interrelationships in megacities. One important issue in this context is the governability of this new form of human settlement.

Through its implementing organizations and research institutions, the German Government provides practical assistance to cities and local communities in the form of technical and scientific expertise, the development of relevant know-how and financial promotion of urban infrastructure,

and the exchange of information. The promotion of good governance plays a particularly important role here.

Germany is one of a small number of donors to pursue a multi-level approach. Measures are coordinated and implemented at all levels of government in the partner country: the creation of a legislative framework is just as important as the establishment of a properly functioning administration. The training and upgrading of employees goes hand in hand with the implementation of practical measures, in conjunction with the population. The idea behind this is that good local governance cannot be achieved simply by deploying the methods of “traditional” research and development cooperation. It calls for a joint effort on several levels and the application of the political will of all concerned.

Support for Decentralization Processes and Local Governance (Tanzania)

Democratization and decentralization often go hand in hand – as is the case in Tanzania, where local responsibilities and competences have been transferred to the local administrative authorities on a large scale. A considerable amount of training is required to enable the authorities’ employees to perform their new tasks. Operating on behalf of the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Capacity Building International, Germany (InWEnt) has thus been providing training for local authorities since 2006 as part of the Support for Decentralisation Processes and Local Governance in Tanzania programme, to enable them to make their services more efficient and citizen-friendly.

This includes the ability to impart practical knowledge in the best possible way in the context of providing advisory services. The aim is also to enable local government bodies to develop the resources and competences of civil society and private sector representatives. Efficiently operating local authorities provide for transparency and reinforce trust in the administration among citizens and investors.

Participatory Development Programme in Urban Areas (Egypt)

There are now some 18 million people living in Cairo, six times as many as 60 years ago. As in other Egyptian cities, illegal settlements have often sprung up there. The city authorities can significantly improve the situation of the residents by exerting influence on the framework conditions. This is where the Participatory Development Programme in Urban Areas (PDP) plays a part. It helps the authorities in Cairo, Gizeh and other cities to establish concepts of citizen participation in urban development and the fight against poverty.

In a programme extending over 12 years, the Egyptian Ministry of Economic Development has teamed up with KfW Entwicklungsbank (KfW development bank) and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) to advise local authorities on how to develop their infrastructure and build networks between stakeholders in politics, civil society and the private sector. At the same time, KfW is financing infrastructure projects. The programme has reached 2.8 million people to date. Encouraged by the programme’s activities, many of those living in the illegal settlements have now begun to look for solutions to their problems themselves – on their own initiative and with support from civil society organizations.