



KEY LEARNINGS FROM THE 50 PARTNERSHIPS FOR CLIMATE CHANGE LEARNING FORUM

Knowledge sharing to deal with climate change challenges

In the drive by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Co-operation and Development (BMZ) to achieve 50 partnerships for climate change by 2015 – 15 of which to be in Africa - 9 cities met in Durban/eThekweni, South Africa on 8 – 10 October 2012 to share their climate change challenges, network and learn from the other cities, and concretise programmes of action for responding constructively to their challenges.

Speakers from the host city, Durban/eThekweni, including its Municipal Institute of Learning (MILE), and Communities in One World (the German agency managing the project) elaborated on the potential of local governments in Africa to adopt existing learning and to find viable ways to counteract and eliminate the effects of climate change, urgently, as these are impacting negatively on people and prospects for cities' prosperity.

There was emphasis on the reality that we are living in a global village, and the huge value in partnerships, dialogue and learning networks for mutual learning and sharing. It was noted that the role of local governments in the response to world crises should not be ignored - local government has a strong voice and does vibrant and dynamic work.

Clever cities are eager to learn from one another and Knowledge Management (KM) is a critical paradigm for local government. The KM platform is to create, organise, share and store knowledge. Municipal departments should share their learning to assist and capacitate fellow professionals in the correct ways to deal with climate change and other challenges. It is also a widely-accepted view that successful cities are those that work with their universities in developing new approaches. Learning from one another is smart and knowledge-sharing and networking can lead to African cities accessing good practice climate change interventions that have been developed by their peers.

The workshop was reminded about the Durban Adaptation Charter (DAC) signed by approximately 950 municipalities at COP 17 /CMP 7 in December 2011 and which is partner to the Mexico City Pact; Mayor James Nxumalo is championing the DAC internationally. There is also an Africa desk in Durban/eThekweni to promote fruitful relationships with African municipalities and capacity building in areas such as climate change.

BMZ's Climate Change partnerships project involves strengthening support to local government and civil society by German cities to facilitate new African perspectives in Sub-Saharan Africa which challenge established approaches. The project enables German and African municipalities to exchange experiences on adaptation to climate change and mitigation thereof, and conceptualise projects.

Climate change challenges

The participating cities Cape Coast, Dar es Salaam, eThekweni, Kumesi, Masasi , Moshi, rural, Moshi urban, Mwanza, Zanzibar were asked to present information on their top five climate change challenges. There was a wide range of challenges reported and good deal of overlap:

- financial - plans but no resources to implement
- political decisions
- regulatory red tape
- urbanisation – environment depletion
- over-population
- solid waste management
- land shortage
- maintenance of open spaces
- temperature increase
- drought/flooding
- food shortages
- de-forestation/erosion/degradation
- sandwinning and loss of riverine vegetation

After the presentations, it was reflected from the floor that it was important for cities to try various interventions without external help; adopt minor technologies; commence pilot projects. The power of partnership was also highlighted as it was observed that African cities with German city partners became more concrete with their climate change intervention plans after their initial engagements.

eThekwini Municipality presentations

Climate change and engineering officials made detailed presentations which are available on the MILE website, some learnings and observations are noted below:

- we are in the Anthropocene Age – people have made a permanent record on the geology of the earth
- environmental instability has been acknowledged since the late 19th century although linked to temperature from the 1960s
- climate change and loss of biodiversity have reached a tipping point and together with current economic problems and social unrest, it is a grave problem
- management of climate change problems mustn't increase social inequalities
- there are stronger climate change effects in the global south but there is strength in cities and intellectual property available to tackle the challenges
- cities should review the range of renewable and sustainable energy activities possibilities for their location and conditions
- some energy efficiency items deliver a quick payback
- educating school children is vital
- with respect to eco-system-based adaptation as in the Buffelsdraai project, it was found that one cannot separate the community from the project
- a project-based approach is discrete and avoids a number of bureaucratic difficulties; integration can follow
- cities must try by doing; there will be successes (to be upscaled and replicated) and failures (offering valuable lessons)
- working with the eco-system as in Buffelsdraai offers social upliftment and a green economy payback
- scientific information on which to base projects is essential and should be updated regularly
- it is more expensive to engineer out of problems and better to work with nature
- understand city assets and use well
- public awareness is a big factor
- municipal officials must be on board, developers fully-informed
- if catchment is poorly managed, it affects everyone
- need services and jobs and can't waste resources replacing infrastructure destroyed by poorly-managed stormwater
- green economy – use local people to do some necessary tasks

The discussion following these presentations highlighted the need for municipal technical capacity, investment in scientific research and analysis, collaboration with universities, networking, internal municipal collaboration for best result but the project-based approach scores successes.

Communities in One World

It was observed that all the partnerships are unique and details on the exchanges, project achievements, future co-operation between the African cities and their German partners, and funding opportunities should be accessed on the agency's website. However, the key practical learnings from the cities' presentations on their exchanges are:

- the need to be honest and realistic
- the practical fact of using existing structures
- implementation - proposals into real projects
- commitment to working with willing funders to operationalise joint action programmes
- not losing institutional memory when there are staff changes.

Learnings and observations from the keynote address by Dr Debra Roberts

- must start with analysis, then plan what to do (Durban/eThekweni large, poor, growing, high levels of social inequity, port and associated logistics, one of most biodiverse areas in world – mix of problems that resistant to resolution)
- need to work towards being a climate smart city
- it is common sense to prioritise adaptation
- human capital is critical to adaptation
- the role eco-systems play in adaptation is not recognized
- must make projects relevant to other municipal departments
- use a priority methodology
- biodiversity is the foundation for sustainable development and the state of biodiversity affects what you build on top so the impact of climate change on biodiversity is central
- community adaptation strategies – people have to learn to save themselves
- look for technical assistance – eThekweni is partnered with a British institution to develop an integrative assessment tool. The Toolkit will evaluate long term city plans and policies against the impacts of climate change, inform mitigation and adaptation planning. It is a useful first step – but will need refining and demonstrates the complexity involved in integrating climate change into urban planning
- significant actions have been taken to mainstream climate change interventions – go cross-sectoral –institutionalise

- uMhlangane Catchment Project is an example of this business unusual approach. It also involves stakeholder engagement and a focus on the city's natural resources, can enhance efforts to manage catchments as key climate change adaptation tools within the municipality. Examples of current focus areas:
 - coordination of cross-sectoral team
 - biophysical and socio-economic assessment (baseline)
 - ecosystem restoration for flood attenuation and stormwater management
 - climate change responsive town planning
 - water quality monitoring
 - partnership with sister city (Bremen) – funding and knowledge exchange
- in the subsequent discussion, it was noted that the role of leadership is vital, champions are needed, must work with the youth and be clear when communicating, the not-young are also important, climate change must be made intelligible and transform the way people think about the inevitably messy problem-solving that is required by climate change, disasters can be used for awareness and education.

Learnings and observations based on the site visits:

- sandbags are a simple technology
- when undertaking re-forestation, use indigenous trees
- a number of cities have similar projects as Durban but they must take them to the next level
- need passion and commitment at the project site
- jobs are related to the sustainability of projects
- apply new learnings to existing projects
- start small but look for the long term benefits
- need to navigate through funding challenges
- sensitisation of communities is essential
- build climate change into your city's story
- waste management site that is also a conservancy – brilliant
- guard against using financial constraints and lack of political will as an excuse – can still do something
- many people realise that the climate is changing and need to be helped to draw the relevant conclusions
- younger people who have always known climate change so they don't always see the need to act
- must move away from a wish list to reality
- document lessons learned, take them to the politicians, draw out best practice elements and use these to get buy in
- establish regional learning forums

Concluding remarks

After the African cities and the agency compiled a list of various aspects of the partnerships to act on, the following was noted in conclusion:

- Durban learned considerably from the other African cities' stories and had been challenged by the questions. Learning should be taken forward and implemented with the passion that is necessary to inspire action.
- Communities in One World was impressed that the partnerships' plans made in 2011, while ambitious, were showing results due to hard work. The stories from the various cities had been extraordinary and the learnings shared should be considered in future project planning. The hope was expressed that the co-operation and partnerships would thrive.

