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The Urban Forum for the Near East and North Africa

Inventory Of Urban Networks In The NENA Region

Housing and Urban Programs: Design, Planning, and Delivery of the
RHUDO/NENA Policy Workshop on Building a Sustainable Regional Forum for
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EXISTING URBAN-RELATED NETWORKS IN THE NENA REGION

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INTRODUCTION

At the request of RHUDO/NENA a survey has been made of regional networks which concentrate upon urban topics, and of regional urban programs which include networking as a primary objective. The information which follows is intended to provide input for the formulation of a proposal for a NENA urban network, which would in all likelihood be broad in its programmatic focus, yet specific in its geographical coverage (the countries of RHUDO and UMP programs). Of primary interest for this survey are networks operative in the NENA region, and networks which have member funding as well as donor funding. The survey is not exhaustive, but it is intended to cover the principal networks in the region that have as their primary focus some aspect of urban development.

The information contained in this report is a brief synthesis of interviews and published documents. The report is not intended as a complete program description, nor have summaries been cross checked for accuracy or completeness with the organizations described herein. The primary objective of the report is provide a general description of the forms of networks and their respective objectives as examples for a potential NENA Urban Forum and to identify the niches which existing networks already fill. Specifically, networks were examined from four perspectives: objectives, activities, organization or structure, and funding sources. The questions to which answers were sought are:

1. What are the objectives of the network? Is a single interest or multi-interest network?
2. What is the membership base, and what is the geographical coverage?
3. What activities are undertaken?
4. Organizational structure: how is it run and staffed, who makes decisions, accountability, degree of centralization.
5. What are fund sources?
6. Major points of interest or lessons learned.

EXISTING URBAN-RELATED NETWORKS IN THE NENA REGION

1. MEDTAP/MEDCITIES

Medtap is the multi-donor program for environmental protection of the mediterranean created in 1991(EU, UNDP, EIB, WB). There are several networks which form part of this program, namely **Medcities**, **Medwan**(water agencies) **Mednea** (environmental agencies), **Medpan** (national parks) and **Medpol** (network for monitoring and research).

Medcities focus most closely parallels that of RHUDO activities in the region, and is described below.

Objectives of Network:

Medcities network exists as an extension of the METAP program which has far broader objectives, including institution building, action planning, policy change, facilitating and planning investments. Specific Medcities objectives are:

-to link Mediterranean coast cities with similar pollution problems in four areas of concern: integrated water resources, coastal zones, solid and hazardous waste, and marine pollution.

-to mobilize participation and maximize institutional impact at the regional and local level, through information sharing, and training.

-identification of projects for donor lending

-institution and capacity building for achieving the strategic goals of environmental management

Membership Base:

There are 18 participating cities. Those located within countries of interest to RHUDO/UMP are: Alexandria, Tripoli el mina, Lattaquie, Tangiers, Oran and Sousse . While these are the primary focus cities, the METAP program provides assistance to many institutions, both public and private, within participating countries as part of an integrated technical assistance program. Other cities in MENA region have been involved through other METAP networks.

Activities

Medcities has concentrated on conducting environmental audits (5 performed) and formulating environmental strategies and action plans in member cities, providing training in environmental planning and management, seminars and training which include participants

from other cities and diverse institutions. Future activities include twinning activities for assistance between cities, and more training for institutional development.

Organizational Structure

Initially, World Bank staff managed the program using mainly UNDP funds, plus World Bank staff time. Cities were invited by the donors to participate in network, and contributed in-kind resources. The mayor of each city is the key contact person for Medcities network. As the program funding shifted to the European Union, the World Bank has withdrawn from active management, which has been taken over by other donors. United Towns Development Agency coordinates the networking, twinning/TA and Audits, on behalf of the EU, while other donors coordinate training.

There is a general assembly composed of mayors of all participating cities. Activities and programs are proposed by the cities, and negotiated with the donors.

Funding

Currently the program is mainly EU funded, and is more and more integrated into the Medurbs program, which channels investment through the EIB and World Bank. In addition, the World Bank provides a small amount of funding for participant travel, German technical assistance (GTZ) and Swiss Cooperation fund selected training activities.

Lessons Learned

While cities have the resources and contacts to get information from each other when they need it or want it, outside donor money is necessary in order to "get things done" (undertake specific projects, especially assist the smaller cities in doing the spade-work for major investments).

2. MEDURBS

MedUrbs is one of the networks which form part of the European Union north-south development fund linking EU member cities with Mediterranean southern tier cities. Networks are established based on the demand from a Mediterranean city for assistance centering about a particular area of concern. There must be a minimum of four countries represented in a network, and a maximum of eight, equally divided between "North and South". The network cities chose a coordinator-city, and meet to determine their activities and program, which is agreed and funded by the MedUrbs supervising agency. There are currently 42 networks.

Objectives

The improvement of quality of life in Mediterranean cities , strengthening of local democracy, and decentralized cooperation through:

- creation of trans-mediterranean cooperation networks
- development of joint contractual relations, and sustainable cooperation between partners in networks
- exchange and transfer of experience and know-how in municipal management and urban development on the following subjects: social action, economic development, cultural promotion, local democracy, local taxation, energy resource management, human resource management, municipal management, town planning, environmental protection, economic development, urban transport, water management, urban infrastructure;

Membership base

109 local authorities participate from the following countries: Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Syria, Palestine, Tunisia, Turkey. 127 local authorities from 15 EU member countries participate.

Activities

Each network proposes activities related to the theme. Generally these involve an aspect of technical assistance furnished by the European city to the Mediterranean city, the technical supervisory organization, plus training or seminars if necessary, and some monetary assistance from the Medurbs program to carry out the project.

Structure

The European Union has contracted for administration, management and technical support from United Towns Development Agency (an arm of Cités Unies International) and the European chapter of IULA, working together. UTDA gives the technical support, reviews requests and furnishes TA, supervises the accomplishments of the networks.

Networks are established when one or two cities propose working on a particular issue. The secretariat then solicits other cities to become partners. Each network develops a work program, TA program, etc, and annual budget. There is a lead city in each network which acts as "secretariat" for that network, and receives funding for secretariat functions.(In some cases this has been delegated to organizations, as in the case of IULA-EMME which functions as secretariat for the Med-Dem network and has a contract from UTDA for this work). Supervision and coordination is carried out by UTDA and IULA-Europe under contract to the EU.

Funding

Funding is mainly through the European Union. The United Towns Development Agency approves budgets for each network, which range from 200,000 to 300,000 ECU/yr of which the EU will fund up to 80%. Projects are approved for a two year period, with evaluation after the first year based on effectiveness and project feasibility. Other funding comes from mainly regional and municipal sources.

Lessons Learned

The MEDURBS program has set a very ambitious agenda, but there has been some criticism that while there have been many meetings and discussions, productive results have been slow in coming. Also, some cities appear to have joined the network without fully understanding their responsibilities or the purpose of the program, but in hopes that funding for projects would result from their participation. However, even though MEDURBS is 80 percent donor, funded, there has been a real attempt to keep decision making and control in the hands of each network, rather than with the donor agency.

3. MEGACITIES

Objectives

Megacities operates in 18 of the largest cities in the world, but only Cairo participates from this region. Its activities are mainly research and documentation of best urban practices. The objective is to identify and document what works/ what does not work, and to exchange information.

There are four main areas of interest: poverty alleviation, environmental regeneration, democracy and decentralization, woman's empowerment.

Membership

Membership is through selected individuals, rather than institutions or government bodies, although some institutions have been brought in through the members. Individual members are heavily drawn from research and academia.

Structure

Each city has a steering committee selected by an (unpaid) city coordinator, selected by Dr. Janice Perlman, director of Megacities. The committee includes government organizations, NGOs grass roots representatives, media, and private sector. In addition, there is a global advisory Board made up of well-known people, and a Board of Directors. There is substantial control over funds and activities by the central secretariat.

Megacities is registered as a US non-profit.

Activities

Projects link several cities together to look at a particular problem. The thrust of Megacities projects is decided by the steering committee, especially when it concerns international projects where several cities are involved. Then the search begins for funding both internationally and locally. Central core staff carries out some research and secretariat functions, as do the local coordinators. Each member organization and individual has to put up some time and money; the local institutions serve as the grantee recipient for carrying out projects, which sustains their interest in participating in the network as a means of getting money to do research projects, through megacities.

Funding

Activities are funded by specific grants for specific projects. The choice and orientation of activities, and the cities which participate are heavily influenced by donor funding. For example, Megacities has recently requested USAID funding for a 5-city PVO participation study. The choice of participating cities will probably be heavily determined by USAID's interests.

4. UNITED TOWNS ORGANIZATION (formerly Fédération des Villes Jumelées)

This is a world-wide network of local authorities working in 80 countries. The secretariat, located in Paris, coordinates the network and services for members. Of major importance is twinning cities for provision of specific technical assistance needs cited by a member city, and training. Services include finding a suitable partner city, and assistance in setting up the twinning. In each country with a significant number of member cities, there is a national committee which organizes national activities.

Objectives

UTO's objective is twinning for specific cooperation efforts, coordination, and representation of cities within countries, and to international donors and organizations, municipal training, exchanges, and documentation. Through the United Towns Development Agency, execution and coordination of donor-funded programs (Medcities, Medurbs, African Municipal Development Program, etc.)

Membership

Membership is composed exclusively of local authorities, especially in Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and southeast Asia. As an organization, UTO has consultative status with the Council of Europe, UNESCO and the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

Structure

National committees organize the activities of member towns in 20 countries with significant membership. There are three main bodies; A president and 12 presidential delegates, an international Council composed of 180 members, and an Executive committee. A secretary general is elected by the international council, whereas the general director is appointed by the president.

The development arm, United Towns Development Agency is responsible for implementing, under contract, the cooperation programs which correspond to UTO objectives and are funded by many different donors. Money flows through UTO/UTDA from Medurbs, French Cooperation, UNDP, divers EU fund sources, Municipal Development Program for Africa, other bi-lateral donors who provide funding for regional urban programs, UNESCO MOST program, etc. .

Funding

As stated above, much of the activity of the organization is funded through multinational donors for the development of specific regional programs. In addition to UN agencies , French Cooperation provides substantial assistance, and the EU Twinning fund has provided support for nearly 10,000 European towns besides funding the Medurbs and Medcities programs. (Membership fees for individual cities unknown).

5. INTERNATIONAL UNION OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES (IULA-EMME)

IULA/EMME is the section for the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East of the International Union of Local Authorities. It has special non-profit status granted by the Republic of Turkey.

Objectives

IULA/EMME has two primary objectives:

- to promote and develop effective and democratic local government in the region;
- to serve as a catalyst and facilitator bringing innovative ideas to local governments.

Membership

Membership includes local authorities, Associations of local authorities, regional organizations(such as Association of Arab Towns) and local and governmental associations. Representation in region mainly in eastern mediterranean region and turkey. No presence in North Africa.

Structure

A regional Council is responsible for establishing policy. The Regional Executive Committee is composed of representatives of member cities and organizations. A small secretariat in Istanbul is headed by the Secretary General, who is also a Vice President of the International Union of Local Authorities.

Activities

The regional affiliates of the international organization all contribute to preparation of a common methodology and program, but IULA-EMME sets its own specific program . Activities include lobbying in host countries on behalf of municipalities, workshops, newsletter, information exchange, documentation, acting as implementation agency for certain donor programs(MedUrbs democracy network), research on urban issues through donor funds. The Center for Local Government Training and the World Academy for Local Government and Democracy have provided services for EU and OECD projects.

Funds

Funding derived from membership fees, grants from local government (city of Istanbul) other donors (EU five year grant) project implementation contracts, other regional organizations.

6. ARAB TOWNS ORGANIZATION

Objectives

The Arab Towns Organization has several objectives related to municipal development:

- inter-city cooperation and exchange of experience,
- improvement of municipal services,
- preservation of national heritage,
- development of local institutions,
- loans for municipal development.

Membership

Over 400 cities are members.

Activities

Activities are carried out mainly through three institutions: The Arab Towns Development Fund, which gives low cost loans for municipal projects; the Arab Towns Organization Award, which was set up to encourage conservation of the Arab character in cities; the Arab Urban Development Institute, which carries out municipal training.

Funds

Operations and activities of the organization are funded by annual dues and grants from Arab governments.

7. ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC CAPITALS AND CITIES

Objectives

The primary objectives of the Organization of Islamic Capitals and Cities are:

- the preservation of Arab identity and heritage of member cities,
- promoting cooperation and exchange between members,
- promotion of a high standard of urban planning.

Membership

The organization is composed of 117 member cities from 54 countries. It is associated with IULA, ICLEI, Arab Towns Organization, etc.

Activities

The organization undertakes a range of seminars, workshops, training, and studies in addition to funding projects for the preservation of Arab monuments.

Funds

Funding sources include membership dues, grants from large cities and from Saudi Arabia.