

The 7th Spatial Planning Platform (SPP) Online Meeting

13 March 2025

Summary Report

The 7th SPP Meeting Agenda

What is SPP?

Unplanned development and rapid urban growth are major issues in developing countries and require improved urban and territorial planning. The Spatial Planning Platform (SPP) was established by the Government of Japan and UN-Habitat's Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific in 2018 as a network of stakeholders aiming to achieve the formulation and implementation of more effective spatial plans, at all territorial levels. SPP contributes to the sharing of experiences and knowledge, complementing UN-Habitat's global engagements as focal point for the implementation the New Urban Agenda (hereinafter referred to as NUA) in general and the International Guidelines for Urban and Territorial Planning in particular.

Background and Objective

In the rapidly growing economies of Asia and the Pacific, the concentration of population in urban areas has not been matched by the development of housing and infrastructure, resulting in a lack of affordable housing, land use confusion due to inadequate laws and regulations governing land ownership and use, and the underdevelopment of living infrastructure. Many countries have expressed their requests to UN-HABITAT for assistance in planning capacity building and technology transfer to local governments and other organizations to address issues related to urban and regional development.

UN-HABITAT, which is responsible for promoting “SDG Goal 11: Sustainable Urban Development,” is currently in the process of formulating its mid-term plan, “Strategic Plan for the period 2026-2029,” and UN member states are discussing the plan to reach a consensus. The new strategy focuses on “housing, land issues, and basic services for all”, and spatial planning is gaining new prominence as a means of achieving this goal. In Japan, there is a history of promoting national and regional development through spatial planning, including national land planning, metropolitan area planning, and urban planning.

The 7th Conference focuses on the role of spatial planning in the global trend of urban and regional policies, including housing, land issues, and living infrastructure.

Since discussions on urban and regional policy at the UN are likely to revolve around UN-Habitat's next strategic plan in the future, the SPP meeting to be held this year has the following three main objectives:

1. for Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT), to share Japan's experience and knowledge in addressing issues related to housing, land and basic services in national land planning, as well as Japan's status on these issues;
2. for countries in the Asia-Pacific region, to present their current situations and problems related to housing, land and basic services, and to exchange views on how to cooperate with the SPP;
3. after the next Strategic Plan is approved by the UN Member States, we will discuss how to implement the Strategic Plan in the context of the Asia-Pacific region.

Compile the outcomes of the SPP meeting and contribute to the discussions at the UN on the formulation of the global strategy and subsequent urban and regional policies to implement the strategy, as well as to the World Urban Forum, one of the largest urban policy meetings in the world, to be held in May 2026. It will also contribute to the direction of Japan's international cooperation in national land planning and, more broadly, in infrastructure and urban development.

Agenda

Welcome Remarks

Mr. Masayoshi Kuroda

Director-General, National Spatial Planning and Regional Policy Bureau, MLIT

Keynote Speeches

Ms. Kazuko Ishigaki

Regional Director, UN-Habitat Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

Mr. Masakuni Fujita

Deputy Director-General, National Spatial Planning and Regional Policy Bureau, MLIT

Session 1: Current Situation and Challenges of Housing, Land, and Basic Services

Speakers

Mr. Padma Kumar Mainalee

Joint Secretary, Ministry of Urban Development, Nepal

Dr. Dok Doma

Deputy Director General, The General Department of Housing, Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction

Mr. Souksavanh Hanephom

Smart City Expert, Department of Housing and Urban Planning, Ministry of Public Works and Transport (MPWT), Laos

Facilitator

Prof. Yoshinobu Fukasawa

Specially Appointed Professor, Kyushu Sangyo University

Session 2: Toward International Cooperation to Solve Housing, Land, and Basic Services Issues in Asia

Speakers

Mr. Naomichi Murooka

Urban and Regional Development Group, Infrastructure Management Department, JICA

Mr. Hiroyasu Kudo

Yachiyo Engineering Co., Ltd.

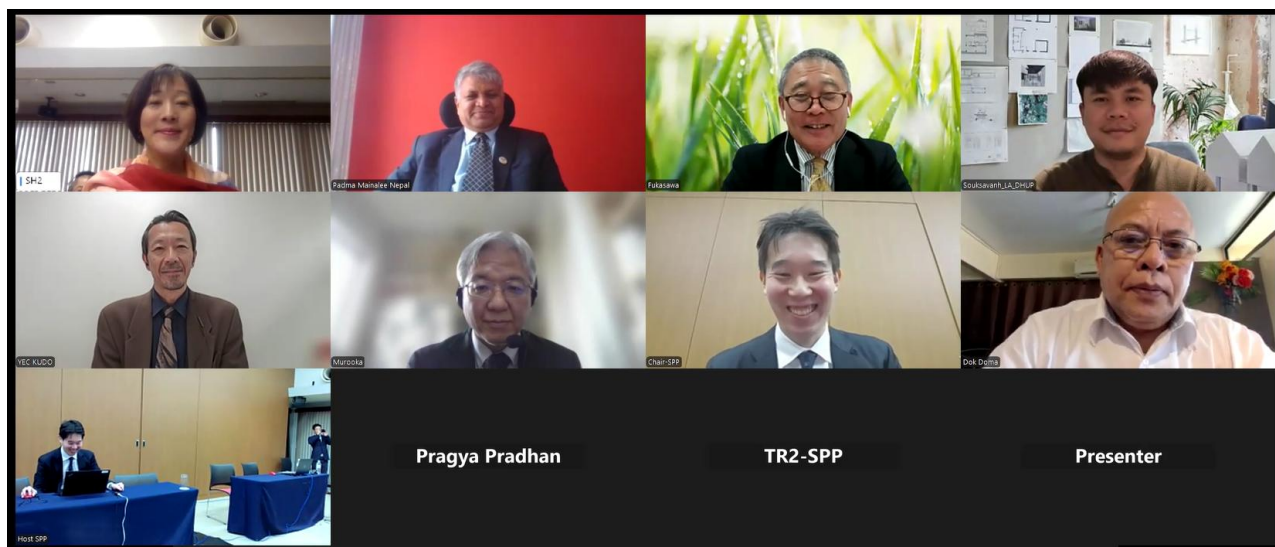
Ms. Kazuko Ishigaki

Regional Director, UN-Habitat Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

Closing Remarks:

Mr. Katsuhiro Watanabe

Director, General Affairs Division, National Spatial Planning and Regional Policy Bureau, MLIT



Acknowledgement

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Table of Contents

Opening Remarks for the 7th Spatial Planning Platform (SPP) Meeting	5
Message from Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, Government of Japan	5
Keynote Speeches	6
1. The 7 th Spatial Planning Platform.....	6
2. Initiatives for Housing, Land, and Basic Services in Japan's National Land Planning.....	9
Session 1: Current Situation and Challenges of Housing, Land, and Basic Services	11
1. Current Situation and Challenges of Housing, Land, and Basic Services in Nepal.....	11
2. The Affordable Housing and Overall Operation in Cambodia.....	13
3. National Sustainability Initiatives of Urban/Housing Development	14
4. Wrap-up	16
Session 2: Toward International Cooperation to Solve Housing, Land, and Basic Services Issues in Asia 18	
1. Role of Spatial Planning in emerging global trends of urban and regional policies	18
2. JICA's Technical Assistance for Urban Planning and Project Activities.....	20
3. UN-Habitat project in Asia and the Pacific Region.....	22
Final Comments from the participants	25

Opening Remarks for the 7th Spatial Planning Platform (SPP) Meeting

Message from Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, Government of Japan

**Mr. Masayoshi Kuroda, Director-General, National Spatial Planning and Regional Policy
Bureau, MLIT, Japan**

The Spatial Planning Platform (SPP) was jointly established by UN HABITAT and Japan's Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT) to support the development and promotion of national and regional land planning. It is an international platform, and the conference has been held every fiscal year since its establishment in 2018, and this is the seventh conference.

Japan has made eight national land plans so far. The first plan was based on population growth after World War II. The current plan assumes population decline, low birth rate, aging population, huge disaster risk, climate change, etc. These plans were developed in response to the historical background of the country. Although the challenges each country faces are different, Japan's national land plan has been developed in many aspects, so I'm sure you will find some points in Japan's national land plan that can be used as a reference point.

For those of you here today, I know that you face various challenges on a daily basis in formulating national and regional land plans and in implementing the policies set out in each plan. Through this conference, we hope to share knowledge and experience on the current status, challenges and countermeasures for national and regional planning in each country. I look forward to a meaningful and active discussion at this conference.

We also hope that this meeting will help us to consider the direction of Japan's international cooperation in the field of land and regional planning, as well as infrastructure and urban development. More broadly, Japan will continue to deepen its cooperation with you in supporting the formulation of national and regional plans. In conclusion, I would like to thank you all for joining us today.

Keynote Speeches

1. The 7th Spatial Planning Platform

Ms. Kazuko Ishigaki, Regional Director, UN-Habitat Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

The UN-Habitat has been extensively discussing the new strategic plan “The draft Strategic Plan for 2026–2029” with member states. The plan’s central focus is on ensuring adequate housing, land, and basic services for all, with a particular emphasis on transforming informal settlements and slums. This strategic focus is intended to drive progress in three key impact areas: equitable and inclusive prosperity for poverty eradication, humanitarian crisis response and recovery, and environment and climate action. The plan outlines five means of implementation, including integrated urban and territorial planning, investment and finance, multi-level governance, knowledge and capacity development, and partnerships and resource mobilization.



The regional consultation process, can be named as the "Roadmap to Baku", aims to gather input for effective implementation of the strategic plan ahead of the next World Urban Forum which will be held in Baku in May 2026. UN-Habitat will continue to promote consistent message at key regional events, such as the UNESCAP Commission Session in Bangkok, the ASEAN Sustainable Urbanization Forum in Kuala Lumpur, and the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development in Penang. These engagements are designed to enhance understanding, foster engagement, and tailor the plan’s implementation to specific regional and national contexts.



2. ROAP Roadmap to Baku

- a) To brief new (draft) strategic plan b) To receive input for regional implementation
c) To mobilize more stakeholders to WUF13 d) To deliver consistent message as UN-Habitat



The Asia-Pacific region faces significant challenges, including rapid urbanization, climate change, social inequality, and governance issues. Urban populations are growing faster than housing and infrastructure development, leading to a rise in informal settlements and slums, particularly in cities like Mumbai, Jakarta, Manila, and Dhaka. The region is also highly vulnerable to climate-related disasters, which disproportionately affect those living in informal housing. Economic disparities further limit access to adequate housing and essential services, while governance challenges hinder progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals. Addressing these issues requires improved data collection, cross-sectoral collaboration among various ministries, enhanced technical support and capacity building for local governments, and the mainstreaming of climate change and gender considerations in urban policy. UN-Habitat remains committed to working with member states and partners to ensure safe, affordable, and dignified housing for all, and to deliver long-term, transformative impacts for vulnerable communities in the region.



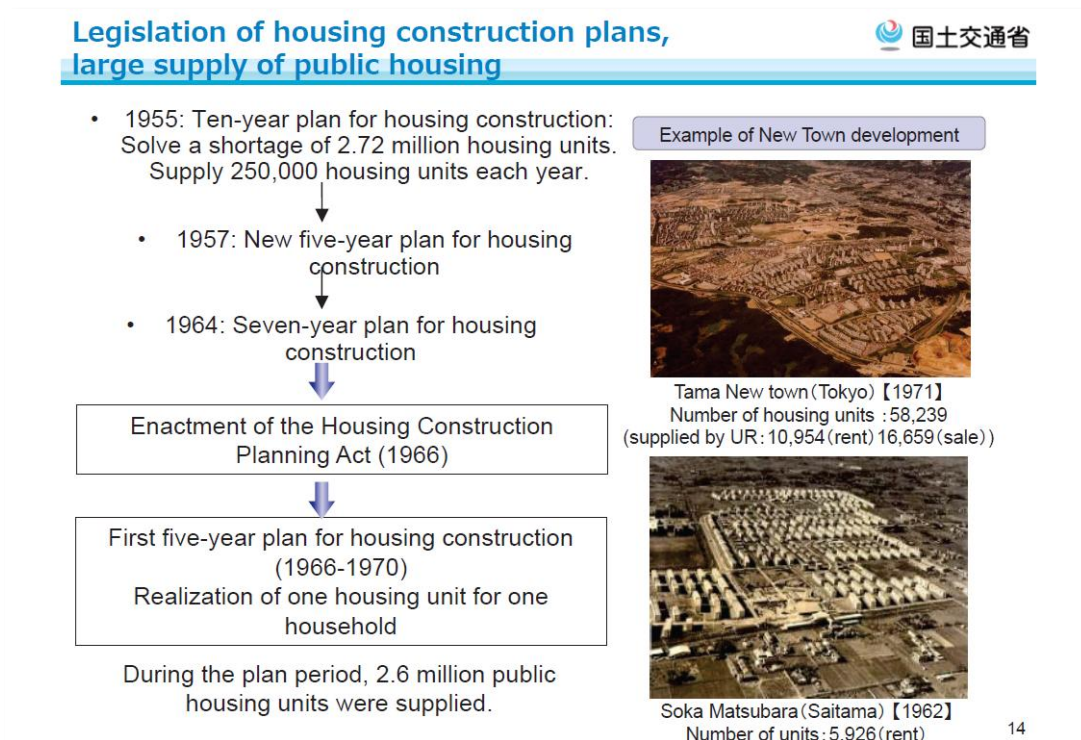
Reflection from our experience: Some challenges

- **Insufficient data:** Need to strengthen data collection to design evidence-based project and track the progress
- **Cross-sectoral partnership:** Housing and urban policies are intrinsically cross-sectoral. We need to discuss with, and work together with not only our traditional line ministries but also more ministries, for example, ministry of environment, ministry of finance and ministry of social welfare. Cross-sectoral partnership needs to be promoted.
- **More support for local governments:** Strengthened support for SDG localization needed. Technical capacity building and policy advice functions should be enhanced.
- **Climate change and gender:** must be mainstreamed in urban policy.

2. Initiatives for Housing, Land, and Basic Services in Japan's National Land Planning

Mr. Masakuni Fujita, Deputy Director-General, National Spatial Planning and Regional Policy Bureau, MLIT

Japan, with a population of approximately 125 million and a limited proportion of buildable land, has undergone significant demographic changes over the past 150 years. The population peaked in 2008 and is now in decline, creating new challenges for land use and housing policy. Historically, national land planning has evolved through multiple stages, with early efforts focusing on post-war reconstruction, food and energy security, and the development of comprehensive land and housing policies. These policies aimed to ensure all citizens had access to adequate housing, support economic growth, and manage urbanization through measures such as high-rise construction, suburban development, and integrated transport and housing projects.



In recent decades, Japan has faced issues related to population decline, low birth rates, and an aging society, which have resulted in increasing vacancy rates in the housing sector and underutilized land. The vacancy rate for houses has reached 13%, and there is a growing amount of unused agricultural and residential land. This trend is particularly pronounced in rural municipalities, where population decline is more severe. In response, the government has amended the Basic Land Law to prioritize appropriate land management, disaster prevention, and the resolution of ownership issues for vacant properties. Legal reforms now allow courts to appoint managers for properties with unclear ownership, and stricter regulations are being introduced to ensure proper management of vacant land and houses.

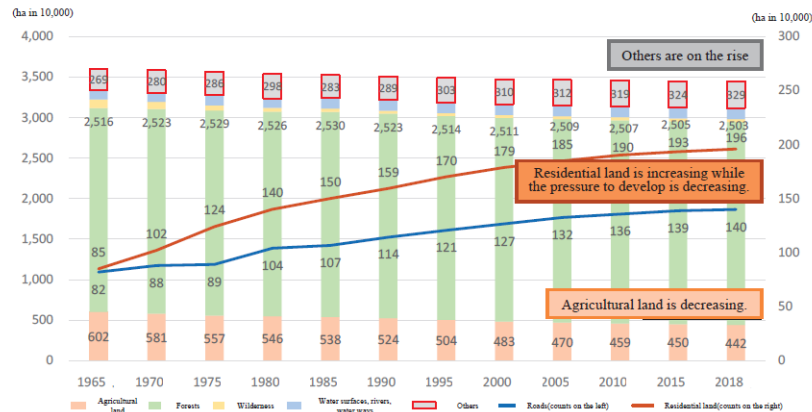
Increase in underutilized and unused land and vacant houses 国土交通省

- Although the demand for new urban land use has decreased, the conversion from agricultural land to new urban land use has proceeded. On the other hand, underutilized and unused land has increased in urban areas.

In 2019, 12,800 hectares of farmland converted to urban land use. (2022 White Paper on Land)

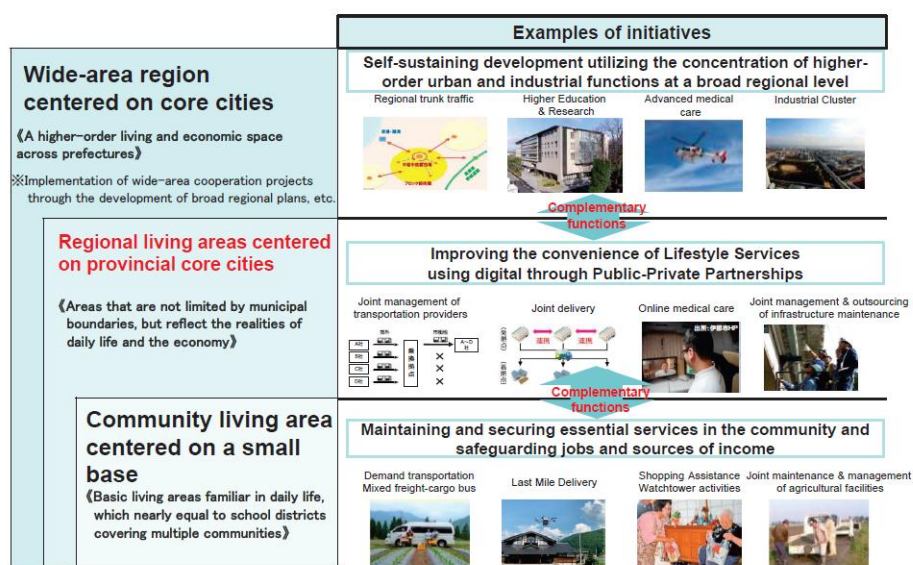
Among houses with no family living, the number of vacant houses was about 8,500 thousand in 2018, hitting a record high.

(Statistics Bureau of Japan, "2018 Housing and Land Survey")



To address these challenges, Japan's national spatial strategy now emphasizes the sustainable use of land and the revitalization of regional areas through digital technology and integrated service provision. Efforts are being made to utilize vacant houses, differentiate the management of agricultural and urban land, and return some land to its natural state. The government is also promoting the creation of regional living areas where essential services—such as transportation, shopping, and healthcare—are sustainably provided through digital integration. Initiatives include human resource development, job matching, and the use of diverse data to support vibrant regional communities, even amid ongoing population decline.

Positioning regional living areas in a multi-layered spatial structure 国土交通省

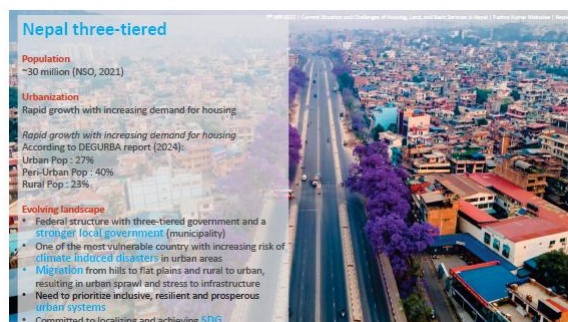


Session 1: Current Situation and Challenges of Housing, Land, and Basic Services

In the first session, participants from each country gave presentations on the current status and issues of housing, land, and basic services in their respective countries.

1. Current Situation and Challenges of Housing, Land, and Basic Services in Nepal

Mr. Padma Kumar Mainalee, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Urban Development, Nepal



Nepal is a country of approximately 30 million people experiencing rapid urbanization, with 40% of the population living in peri-urban areas. The country has a federal structure with increasingly empowered local governments. However, Nepal faces significant challenges from climate-induced disasters and internal migration, which has led to urban sprawl and pressure on infrastructure. The government is committed to developing inclusive, resilient, and prosperous urban systems and is focused on localizing and achieving the SDGs.

Land, Housing and Basic Services in the Constitution of Nepal



Article 25 Right to Property: (1) Every citizen shall, subject to laws, have the right to acquire, enjoy own, sell, have professional gains, and otherwise utilize, or dispose of property.

Article 37 Right to Housing: (1) Each citizen shall have the right to appropriate housing

Article 38 Right of Women: (1) Every woman shall have equal right to lineage without any gender discriminations. (6) Both the spouses shall have equal rights in property and family affairs

National Acts and Policies

National Urban Policy (2024)
National Land Act (2021)

National Land Policy (2019)
Right of the Housing Act (2013)

National WASH Policy (2023)
National WASH Regulation (2024)

The Constitution of Nepal guarantees the right to property, the right to housing, and equal rights for women regarding lineage and property. These rights are supported by a comprehensive policy framework, including the National Urban Policy, National Land Act, Right to Housing Act, and WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) policies and regulations. The constitutional and legislative framework places people at the center, ensuring that housing and property rights are protected for all citizens.

Status : Land, Housing, and Basic Services



Housing Gap

- 15th Development Plan (2019–2024) highlighted need to construct 2 million housing units by 2023 to meet housing gap
- 400,000 units required for poor, endangered, and marginalized communities
- 17,000 housing units constructed for vulnerable groups (as of 2018/19)
- Grants provided for zinc sheets and timber to support the construction of 7,000 safe citizen houses

Inclusion

Overall, 23.8 percent of the total households have ownership of land or a housing unit or both (land & housing unit) in the name of female household member (National Population and Housing Census, 2021)



Despite these legal guarantees, Nepal faces a significant housing gap. The 15th Development Plan (2019–2024) called for the construction of 2 million new housing units by 2023, with 400,000 units specifically targeted for poor, endangered, and marginalized communities. However, only around 23,000 housing units have been constructed for vulnerable groups so far, and efforts to improve housing conditions for the poorest remain insufficient. Notably, about 23% of households have land or housing ownership in the name of a female member, reflecting progress in inclusion.

Status : Land, Housing, and Basic Services



Resilience

- At least 33% of houses (2.2 million houses) are non-engineered and remain vulnerable to large earthquakes, as seen in 2015 (Gorkha) and 2023 (Jajarkot), posing a critical humanitarian crisis
- Reinforced Concrete (RC) structures are considered safe, while their quality remains unassessed

Rental Housing

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Q.1.1.1.1.1	5-79.1.1	5-28	<6.4.8	5.628	5.628
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Q.1.1.1.1.1.1	5-80.644	5.628	875.995	5.628	8.1.1.1
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(National Population and Housing Census, 2022)

- Urbanization has led to a rise in rental population
- Over 40% of the total population in metropolitan cities are renters
- 18% of the population in sub-metropolitan cities are renters

Status : Land, Housing, and Basic Services



Landlessness

- Over 1.34 million households are landless or near-landless
- Includes people living in informal settlements, those facing eviction threats, and subsistence farmers



Basic Services

- 57% of households have access to piped water
- Only 16% have access to safe water
- 5% of households lack toilet facilities
- 39% lack safe sanitation services

Key Achievements



Post-2015 Earthquake Reconstruction

- 1 million houses rebuilt – A global model of owner-driven reconstruction



Legal Frameworks for Housing

- Right to Housing Act & National Urban Policy – Securing housing rights & addressing informal settlements



Sanitation & WASH Milestones

- Nepal declared Open Defecation Free (ODF) in 2019 – First in South Asia
- WASH policy ensures inclusive access to water, sanitation, and hygiene



Land Tenure & Security

- Land Policy & Land Act recognize informal land tenure & promote a pro-poor approach
- Implemented in 723 of 753 municipalities
- Social tenure data for 984,000 households collected
- 4,500 land ownership certificates distributed

Strategic Actions

- Climate-Resilient Development pathways for achieving Resilience and Net-zero Target by 2045
- Inclusion and resilience as the core to link urban development with economic prosperity

Housing



Evidence-Based Decision Making

- Strengthen data-driven housing policies to support strategic investments

Affordable Housing Access

- Develop social, cooperative, community, and rental housing models

Sustainable Housing Finance

- Strengthen Nepal Housing Company
- Mobilize funding from development banks & private sector

Multi-Level Housing Programs

- Develop and implement national & sub-national strategies for inclusive, resilient, and affordable housing

Retrofitting & Sustainability

- Upgrade existing buildings to improve earthquake resilience
- Reduce carbon footprint through sustainable housing solutions

Strategic Actions



Land

Stronger Land-Urban Development Nexus

- Align land use planning with urban development for inclusive & risk-informed growth

Enhanced Local Implementation

- Strengthen intersectoral coordination and provide technical support to local governments for effective implementation

Basic Services

Improved Access to Basic Services

- Enhance quality, reliability, and accessibility to WASH services
- Expand access to safely managed water and sanitation

Nepal's housing stock remains vulnerable, with 2.2 million houses (about 33%) being non-engineered and at risk from earthquakes, as seen in the 2015 and 2023 disasters. Even many reinforced concrete buildings have not been properly assessed for safety. Urbanization has led to a sharp increase in rental housing, with 18% of the population in sub-metropolitan cities being renters, highlighting the growing demand and the critical need for improved housing conditions.

Landlessness is a persistent issue, with over 1.34 million households either landless or nearly landless, including those living in informal settlements and subsistence farmers. Access to basic services remains inadequate: only 57% of households have piped water (and just 16% have access to safe water), 5% lack toilet facilities, and 39% do not have safe sanitation services, underscoring the urgent need for improved infrastructure and service delivery.

Nepal has made notable progress in several areas. After the 2015 earthquake, 1 million houses were rebuilt through an owner-driven reconstruction model, which has been recognized globally. The country has established strong legal frameworks for housing rights and urban policy, achieved Open Defecation Free status in 2019 (the first in South Asia), and implemented inclusive WASH policies. Land policy reforms now recognize informal tenure and promote pro-poor approaches, with significant advances in social tenure data collection and land certification.

Strategic actions for housing focus on evidence-based decision-making, expanding access to affordable and decent housing, and promoting sustainable housing finance. The government aims to strengthen the Nepal Housing Company, mobilize funding from development banks and the private sector, and develop multi-level housing programs. There is also an emphasis on retrofitting existing buildings for earthquake resilience and reducing the carbon footprint through sustainable housing solutions, with a target of achieving net-zero emissions by 2045.

For land management, Nepal is working to align land use planning with urban development to ensure inclusive and risk-informed growth. Enhanced local implementation is being pursued through stronger intersectoral coordination and technical support for local governments. Improving access to basic services is a priority, with efforts to enhance the quality, reliability, and accessibility of WASH services and to expand access to safely managed water and sanitation across the country.

2. The Affordable Housing and Overall Operation in Cambodia

Dr. Dok Doma, Deputy Director General, The General Department of Housing, Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction, Cambodia



Training of officers through the support of the Japanese side

- The Japanese side provided capacity training on the National Housing Policy to leaders and civil servants in charge of housing in three sessions in **2016, 2017 and 2018**, with a total of 54 participants, including 31 nationals and 23 sub-nationals.
- The three training sessions focused on the study of theories related to the implementation of the National Housing Policy in Japan and visits to affordable and low-income housing development cities.
- After completing each training course in Japan, the General Department of Housing collaborated with JICA to organize three consultative workshops in three target provinces, including Banteay Meanchey, Siem Reap and Kep, with the participation of officials in charge. Housing in the 25 provincial capitals.

The participation of Japanese company Arakawa in solving the "White" Building

- "White" Building is located in Village 1 and Village 2, Street 3 (Sotheasos Street), Sangkat Tonle Bassac, Khan Chamkarmon, Phnom Penh.
- It has a total land area of 6,531.67 m² and a total private area of 16,694.27 m².
- The White Building consists of six buildings: A, B, C, D, E and F, with a total of 493 private owners and 2,055 private members, including 993 men and 1 woman., 062 people
- Most of the people living in the "White" building are civil servants of the Ministry of Fine Arts and the military, vendors, etc.
- Completed, they agreed to settle at \$ 1,400 per square meter.



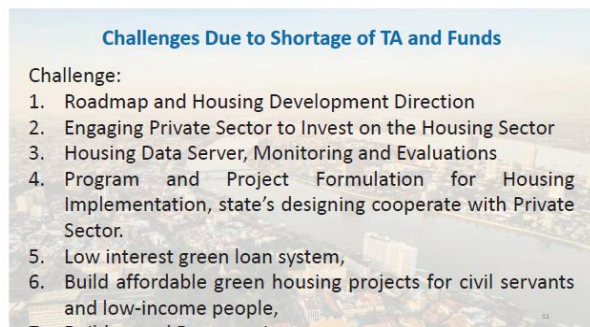
The General Department of Housing in Cambodia was established in 2014 as part of the national policy to address housing challenges. The department is structured into four main divisions: the Technical Department, the Legal and Planning Department, the Housing Finance Department, and the Social Land Concession Department. The Social Land Concession program is particularly important, as it provides land to people either freely or with government subsidies, enabling them to build homes. This organizational structure allows the department to manage various aspects of housing policy, construction, finance, and land allocation. Since the inception of Cambodia's housing policy, the Japanese government, through MLIT, has played a crucial role in building the capacity of Cambodian housing officers. From 2016 onwards, several training sessions have been conducted in Japan, focusing on data management, policy implementation, and technical solutions for housing challenges. Cambodian officers have benefited greatly from these programs, gaining knowledge that has been shared across the country to improve housing policy and practice.

A notable example of Japanese cooperation is the involvement of the Japanese company Arakawa in addressing the issues surrounding the "White Building," an old and deteriorating residential complex in Phnom Penh. With technical assistance from Arakawa, the Cambodian government was able to safely evacuate residents, provide them with alternative land or housing, and redevelop the site. This intervention prevented potential casualties and served as a model for addressing similar aging buildings in the city.

Since 2014, Cambodia has actively promoted affordable housing development, attracting both local and international investors, including Japanese companies. Several projects have been implemented, offering housing units priced between \$23,000 and \$38,000 per unit, making them accessible to low- and middle-income families. These projects are designed to be resilient to economic fluctuations and climate change, and there are ongoing efforts to expand such investments to meet the growing demand for affordable housing across the country.



Affordable housing in Cambodia is defined by its accessibility to low- and middle-income families, with a focus on resilience to both economic and environmental challenges. The government has established technical standards to ensure quality and sustainability, and has encouraged private sector participation to diversify housing options. Affordable housing projects aim to provide safe, durable, and cost-effective homes, supporting the country's rapid urbanization and the increasing movement of people from rural to urban areas.



Despite progress, Cambodia faces significant challenges in the housing sector due to limited technical assistance and funding. There is a pressing need for a comprehensive roadmap to guide housing development, as well as enhanced legal frameworks and investment incentives. Urbanization is accelerating, with nearly 40% of the population projected to live in urban areas, increasing the demand for affordable housing. Additionally, the lack of robust data systems, low-interest financing options, and sufficient private sector engagement hampers the sector's growth. Addressing these challenges will require continued international cooperation and innovative policy solutions.

3. National Sustainability Initiatives of Urban/Housing Development

Mr. Souksavanh Hanephom , Smart City Expert, Department of Housing and Urban Planning, Ministry of Public Works and Transport, Laos



The Department of Housing and Urban Planning (DHUP) in Laos is responsible for policy formulation, implementation, and enforcement in areas such as housing, urban development, and solid waste management. Rapid urbanization has brought complex challenges, including environmental degradation, inadequate infrastructure, limited connectivity, and increasing demand for basic services. However, these challenges also present opportunities to improve climate resilience, promote environmental sustainability, and enhance urban planning and resource efficiency, ultimately aiming to raise the quality of life and foster sustainable urban development.

Inclusive and Sustainable Future

- What kind of urban transformation do we need?
 - Can the digital innovation & technology can improve city operation efficiency and quality of life of urban people by utilizing advanced IT technology.

Enabling Cities

- Aiming at...
 - Appropriate Utilization of Digital Technology
 - Smart Governance
 - Urban Management by GIS Platform



The Lao government's vision for urban development is centered on inclusivity and sustainability. This vision emphasizes resilience, economic stability, people-centered services, and the integration of digital solutions. The goal is to ensure that urban development benefits all citizens, supports economic growth, and leverages technology to create more livable and sustainable communities for the future.

WHY SMART CITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE?



Cities are the backbone of socio-economic development with continuous urbanization, cities are becoming larger and larger in terms of physical size and population.

The expansion and population growth of cities have brought about challenges for government to efficiently manage public infrastructure and maintain/improve the cities livability. Common urban problems that are difficult to deal with include: traffic congestion, environmental pollution, affordable housing, water and sanitation, safety and security, climate changes and so on.



Smart cities have become a key focus in Laos' development strategy, as they are essential for managing urban growth and improving public infrastructure. As cities expand in both size and population, efficient infrastructure becomes increasingly important. Strong basic infrastructure is the backbone of socio-economic development and is crucial for meeting the growing needs of urban populations. By prioritizing smart city development, Laos aims to enhance the efficiency, resilience, and livability of its cities.

Greater Mekong Subregion Project Working with DHUP, MPWT

Second Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS2)

Fourth GMS Corridor Towns Development Project (GMS4)



The Greater Mekong Subregion is working to improve the quality of life and economic vibrancy of its cities through the development of national strategies and projects that incorporate global best practices into the subregion's urban development. This work has included the first and second Corridor Towns Development Project, which is developing competitive and environmentally friendly cities along vital economic arteries in the subregion. Cross-border economic zones are also being developed.



"Vibrant, livable cities and towns play an important role in the development of industry and services, particularly manufacturing, agrobusiness, and tourism."

A major initiative in this area is the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) corridor development project, implemented by the Ministry of Public Works and Transport (MPWT) and DHUP. With significant funding, this project aims to improve urban environmental services along the Mekong River. Key activities include constructing wastewater treatment plants, improving solid waste management, and enhancing river management. The project also supports climate-resilient urban planning and aims to strengthen regional connectivity.

GIS Platform "VirGo" under the CDUDCP Project With JICA

'GIS Platform' will enable easy sharing of GIS data and analysis results, so that stakeholders can refer to the data and discuss urban policies based on data.

Improvement of work processes before/after introducing GIS platform

	Before	After
Public Sector	- Inconsistency of GIS data - Uncertainty of urban issues	- Integrated database to view and share various urban information - Visualized information to solve issues easier
Private Sector	- Inconvenient data access - Incomprehension of urban system	- Easy accessibility to the latest data and maps - Comprehensive service for building permission

Concepts of GIS Platform

- Formulated as a portal site to share maps, documents and activity reports related to urban control and promotion.
- Data is stored in common server.
- Has expandability to add contents.



To modernize urban planning, Laos has partnered with JICA to develop the VirGo GIS platform under the CDUDCP project. This platform enables easy sharing and analysis of spatial data, supporting better decision-making for urban development. Stakeholders can access maps, reports, and activity updates, all stored on a common server with expandable content. This digital tool enhances transparency, coordination, and efficiency in urban planning and management.

Green City Action Plan for Vientiane Capital City using IFC Advanced Practices for Environmental Excellence in Cities (APEX) tool



Another significant initiative is the development of a Green City Action Plan for Vientiane Capital City. Using tools from the APEC Green City Initiative, this project supports the transition to low-carbon and resource-efficient pathways. The plan utilizes software to collect and analyze local data, estimating the city's environmental footprint across key sectors such as environment, energy, transportation, waste, and water. This approach helps guide transformative policy actions and investments for a greener, more sustainable urban future.

Laos is developing its first-ever national smart city strategy, which will serve as a roadmap for future urban development. The strategy focuses on six objectives: smart urban planning, improved living conditions, employment opportunities, professional development, green development, and smart urban governance. The aim is to align with global standards while meeting local needs, supporting the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the New Urban Agenda. The strategy also emphasizes the use of technology and digital solutions in line with the capacity and literacy of each city.

Looking ahead, Laos will continue to focus on strategies and policies that leverage technology to improve quality of life and environmental sustainability. The government encourages collaboration with the private sector, NGOs, and international partners such as ADB. Strengthening internal frameworks, clarifying responsibilities in spatial planning, and fostering cooperation across sectors are key priorities. By combining smart solutions with financial and technical support, Laos aims to build inclusive, resilient, and sustainable cities for all its citizens.

Development Actions



Ways Forward

- Develop integrated development strategy and policies that focus on the use of technology to improve the quality of life, robust economy and sustainable environment;
- Seek financial and technical support for stocktaking, studying and planning of smart initiatives/projects as well as investing in hard and soft infrastructure;
- Identify internal framework of responsibilities of relevant spatial planning tasks;
- Cooperation with all sectors, ASEAN member states and external partners.



4. Wrap-up

Prof. Yoshinobu Fukasawa, Specially Appointed Professor, Kyushu Sangyo University

Three presentations were delivered in this session, each providing valuable insights into the current state and future direction of housing, land, and basic services in the respective countries.

Mr. Mainalee from Nepal presented a comprehensive overview of the latest developments in housing, land, and basic services, aligning closely with the structure of the UN Habitat draft strategic plan. The presentation included detailed and concrete descriptions of Nepal's strategic plans, offering a clear illustration of how these strategies are being implemented. The role of spatial planning in addressing these issues on the ground was highlighted as an area of ongoing interest.

Dr. Doma from Cambodia provided an in-depth update on the country's housing policy. The presentation emphasized the positive impact of international cooperation, particularly with Japan, in advancing Cambodia's housing sector. The necessity of promoting public-private partnerships was also discussed. Spatial planning was identified as a potentially effective tool for coordinating various initiatives and fostering a common understanding among stakeholders, which may facilitate the realization of comprehensive plans at the local level.

Mr. Hanephom from Laos addressed the challenges of achieving sustainability in urban and housing development. The presentation outlined the significant pressures resulting from rapid urban expansion and population growth, including traffic congestion, environmental degradation, a shortage of affordable housing, and the need for improved water distribution networks. To address these challenges, the latest progress of the Greater Mekong Subregion project was shared, demonstrating its value as an international framework that could serve as a relevant reference for other countries and regions facing similar issues.

Overall, the session provided a broad perspective on the strategies and challenges related to housing and urban development in Nepal, Cambodia, and Laos. The experiences and approaches presented offer important lessons and potential models for other countries seeking to advance sustainable urban development.

Session 2: Toward International Cooperation to Solve Housing, Land, and Basic Services Issues in Asia

In the Second session, discussions centered around the ways to strengthen planning capacity and promote technology transfer to local governments and other organizations working on urban and regional development issues.

1. Role of Spatial Planning in emerging global trends of urban and regional policies

Mr. Naomichi Murooka, Urban and Regional Development Group, Infrastructure Management Department, JICA

The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has developed a comprehensive strategy for urban and regional development, known as "Machizukuri" or "Cities for People." This approach emphasizes city planning and management with active public participation. Recognizing that over half of the world's population now resides in cities—a figure expected to rise—JICA's strategy focuses on three core strengths: green development (such as transit-oriented development and compact land use), resilience (drawing from Japan's extensive experience in disaster recovery and reconstruction), and inclusivity (promoting integrated societies through public transport and participatory planning). JICA leverages Japanese local and national expertise, scientific evidence, and a variety of implementation tools, including technical cooperation, financial support, public-private partnerships, and volunteer programs, to address the diverse challenges of urbanization.

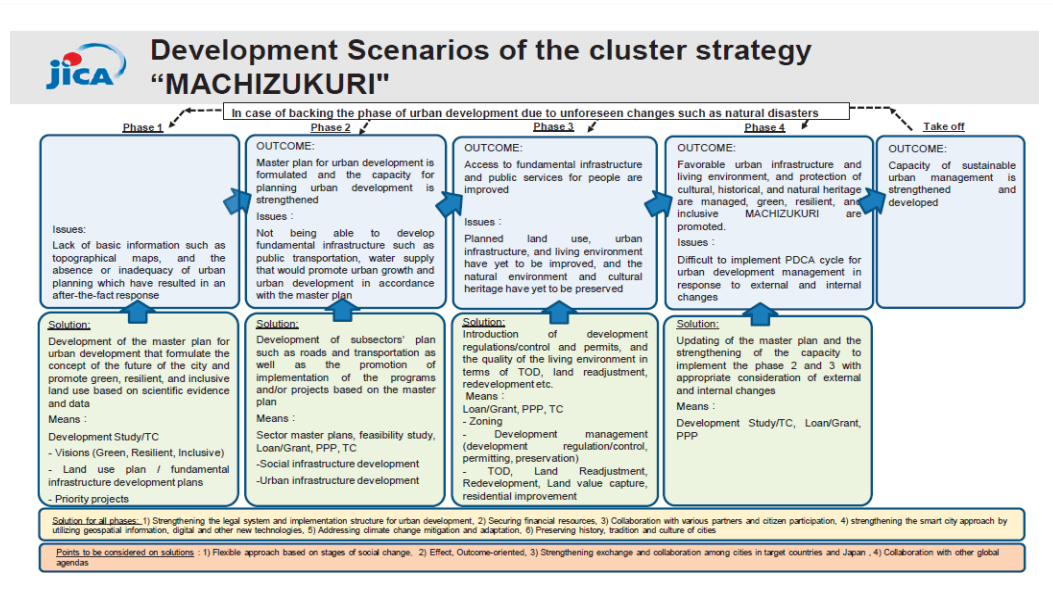
JICA MACHIZUKURI -Cities for People-

- **PRESENT:** The world's population is expected to reach 9.7 billion by 2050, 68% of which will be concentrated in cities. Today, cities cover only 2% of the world's land area, yet they are estimated to consume about 60-80% of the world's energy and emit about 75% of carbon dioxide in the world through their economic and social activities.
- **ISSUES:** By comprehensive responses to multifaceted urban issues, to put cities on a sustainable development trajectory is essential to achieving the SDGs which incorporate the principles of human security
- **RECOGNITION:**
A Master Plan for Urban Development is one of the effective means of addressing the urban issues such as traffic congestion and deteriorating living environment. The cluster strategy **"MACHIZUKURI"** aims to solve urban issues by **citizen participation** and **citizen-led initiatives**, **public-private partnerships**, **improvement of administrative capacity** to support local communities, and to increase the number of sustainable cities that can realize and continue green, resilient, and inclusive urban development through the appropriate utilization of new technologies such as digital technology.
- **JAPAN'S STRENGTHS:**

Green	Transit Oriented Development (TOD) which is a combination of public transportation and urban development	Resilient	Experience of recovery and reconstruction from natural disasters	Inclusive	Compact land use and public transportation, citizen participation
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- **JICA'S APPROACH:**
 - Practical knowledge of local governments of Japan,
 - Comprehensive approach based on scientific evidence,
 - Consistent implementation system from planning to implementation,
 - Human resource development

JICA's theory of change identifies four phases of urban issues: (1) cities with no or inadequate plans, leading to problems like congestion and environmental degradation; (2) cities with plans but lacking the necessary infrastructure to guide growth and ensure access to services; (3) cities with infrastructure but limited spatial improvements and positive impacts on surrounding environments; and (4) cities with both

infrastructure and spatial improvements but lacking the capacity to manage external shocks and sustain development. Most cities in developing countries fall within the first two phases, so JICA allocates the majority of its resources to supporting master planning and the development of key infrastructure such as roads, public transport, and water systems. For more advanced phases, JICA focuses on technical cooperation to maximize the benefits of public transport and address emerging issues such as aging populations and population decline.



Several projects illustrate JICA's strategy in action. In Phnom Penh, Cambodia, JICA is supporting the formulation and updating of the urban transport master plan to accommodate rapid urbanization and new developments, such as a new airport and expansion along the Mekong River. In Vientiane, Laos, JICA has assisted in the development and management of land use plans using digital technologies like GIS, which has improved efficiency in issuing construction permits and enhanced public involvement in city planning. Additionally, in the Rebana region adjacent to Jakarta, Indonesia, JICA is providing technical cooperation for regional development planning to leverage new infrastructure investments and the region's strengths in agriculture, fisheries, and proximity to Jakarta. These examples demonstrate JICA's commitment to supporting sustainable urban and regional development through tailored, participatory, and evidence-based approaches.



Development of Urban Growth Axis: Cambodia



Project for Development of Integrated Urban Transport Management Mechanism in Phnom Penh Capital City (2024-2027)

- Background:
Urbanization, new development opportunities (new airport, east bank of Mekong River)
- Purpose:
To strengthen the capacity for comprehensive planning and management of urban transport in Phnom Penh Capital City.
- Outputs:
 1. Under the lead of PPCA, PPUTMP is updated based on a process of discussion, examination, and consensus building across multiple related organizations.
 2. Through the practice of pilot projects for short-term measures, in which collaboration among multiple organizations is essential, the ability to implement cross-sectoral projects in urban transport is enhanced.
 3. Organizational structure for public transportation management and operation is strengthened.



5

2. JICA's Technical Assistance for Urban Planning and Project Activities

Mr. Hiroyasu Kudo, Yachiyo Engineering Co., Ltd.

Yachiyo Engineering Co., Ltd., a private consulting firm specializing in urban and regional development, has played a key role in implementing JICA's technical assistance programs, particularly in the areas of urban planning and land use. The primary purpose of JICA's technical assistance is to provide on-the-job training and capacity development for local counterparts, ensuring strong local ownership of projects. Consultants from Yachiyo Engineering work closely with local agencies to deliver technical support, facilitate coordination among stakeholders, and ensure that project activities align with statutory norms and environmental and social considerations. Their responsibilities include sharing essential information, identifying stakeholders, collecting data, analyzing challenges, setting project goals and visions, and assisting in the formulation of development master plans.

1. Purpose of JICA's Technical Assistance (TA)



What to do in TA

Achieve the followings through the Capacity Development Project

- ✓ Work-together through **coordination and collaboration with all concerned Stakeholders** of the project development
- ✓ Engage all required project works and tasks in order to develop understanding of the work including the **management of Joint Coordination Committee (JCC)**
- ✓ Timely **deliver necessary outputs** by seeking supports and assistance by the project consultant
- ✓ Respect all concerned **statutory norms (laws & regulations)** of the country including **Environmental and Social Considerations** to complete the project work

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3

An illustrative example of this approach is the Urban Development Planning Project in Morobe Province, Papua New Guinea, completed in 2017. The project focused on comprehensive development planning for the province, which is a key center for mining and logistics with a population of approximately 200,000. The project addressed a wide range of topics, including socioeconomic development, land use, infrastructure, environmental and social impacts, and policy frameworks. Activities included extensive public consultations, community meetings in remote areas, stakeholder coordination, on-site surveys, and collaboration with both local and central government officials. The project also proposed a pilot road development project based on a feasibility study and considered social aspects such as resettlement and improvement of living conditions.

3. Activities from Papua New Guinea Project



Public Consultation & Community Meetings



Working Group (Spatial Planning) & Technical Working



Project Site Visit & Data Collection



Other Project related Activities

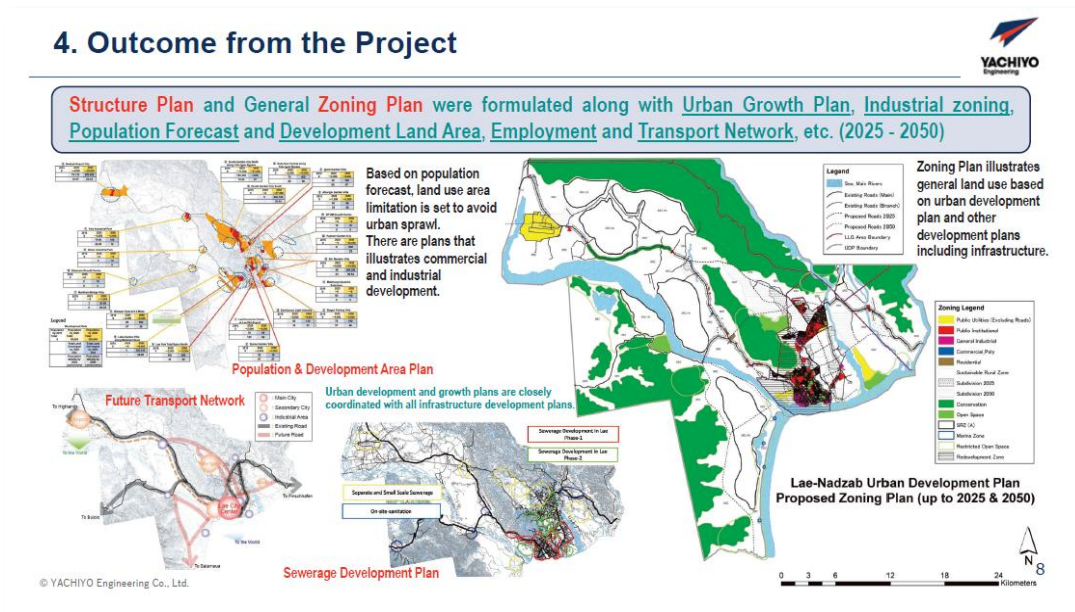


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The outcomes of technical assistance in Morobe Province were significant. The local counterpart agency developed stronger systems and organizational structures for regional development planning, enhanced their relationships with other government bodies, and improved their technical and planning skills. The project resulted in the creation of a comprehensive master plan for 2025–2050, including a structure plan

and zoning plan that addressed residential, industrial, commercial, and activity centers, as well as future transport and infrastructure needs. The process fostered active collaboration with local communities and empowered the counterpart agency to take responsible roles in decision-making and implementation, ensuring the sustainability and effectiveness of development initiatives beyond the project's completion.



3. UN-Habitat project in Asia and the Pacific Region

Ms. Kazuko Ishigaki, Regional Director, UN-Habitat Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

UN-Habitat has been actively engaged in a variety of projects across Asia and the Pacific, focusing on reconstruction, resilient housing, and innovative public-private partnerships for project development and implementation. A central feature of these efforts is the “people’s process,” a methodology that places community needs and rights at the heart of urban development. This approach emphasizes people’s participation, integrated planning, and collaboration with local organizations such as community development councils. UN-Habitat also promotes capacity building, gender-sensitive strategies, and the use of local construction methods and materials, which contribute to affordability, sustainability, and rapid recovery in post-disaster and post-conflict contexts.



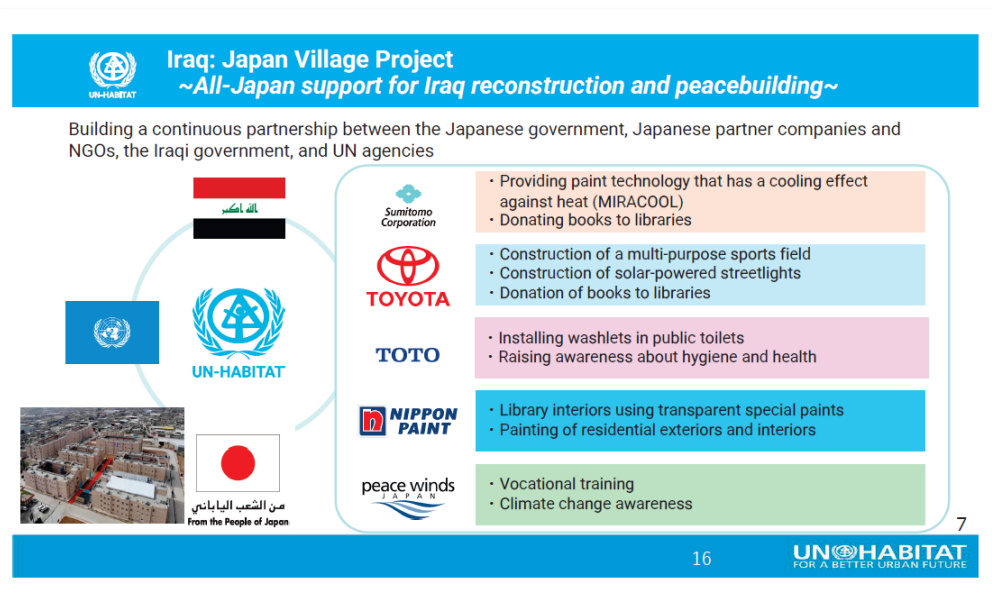
Common characteristics of UNH projects in Asia and the Pacific Region

- ✓ People's process: people/community centered approach
- ✓ Build Back Better
- ✓ Gender sensitive: Female participation and empowerment
- ✓ Capacity building for people (e.g. training of construction method)
- ✓ Utilization of local construction method & materials
- ✓ Integration of normative and operational elements

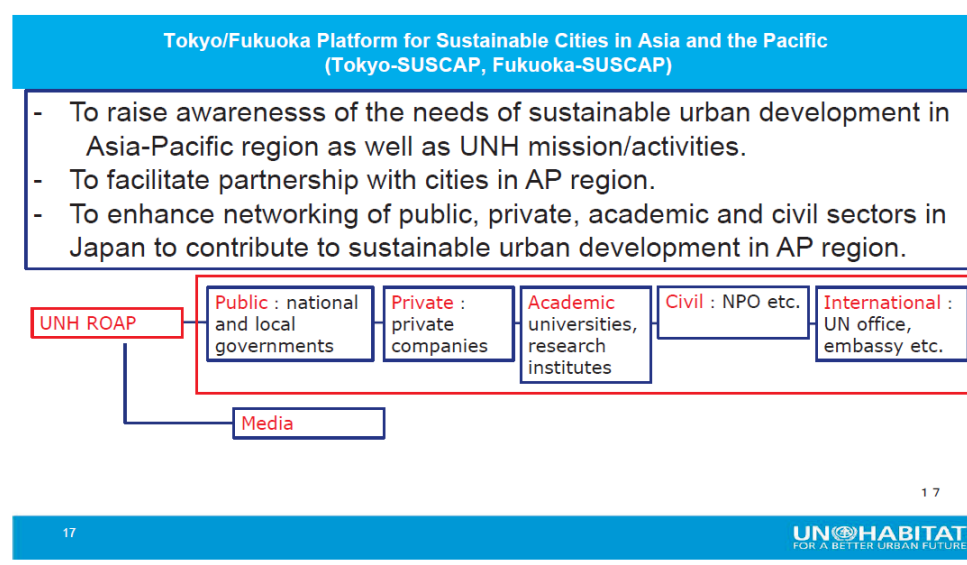
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Several concrete examples illustrate the impact of these principles. In Cambodia, following the 2018 floods, UN-Habitat facilitated the reconstruction of 202 affordable, climate-resilient houses using local materials and skills, while training over 170 construction workers and ensuring women's participation in community development committees. In the Philippines, after the 2017 conflict in Marawi City, the agency supported the construction of 1,000 permanent homes for internally displaced persons, integrating community engagement in site selection, planning, and monitoring. In Myanmar, a project aimed at upgrading informal settlements improved access to safe water, with technical support from Japanese small and medium-sized enterprises, demonstrating successful mobilization of private sector expertise. A notable example of cross-sectoral collaboration is the ongoing post-conflict reconstruction project in Iraq. This initiative, supported by the Japanese government and implemented by UN-Habitat in partnership with the Iraqi government and Japanese private companies, aims to build housing and public infrastructure for approximately 10,000 people. The project includes vocational training, climate change awareness programs, and capacity building for government officials, all supported by Japanese expertise and technology. To further promote sustainable urban development, UN-Habitat is establishing networking platforms in Tokyo and Fukuoka to facilitate partnerships among public, private, academic, and civil sectors, aiming to enhance collaboration and knowledge sharing throughout the Asia-Pacific region.



UN-Habitat is also expanding its efforts through digital initiatives and cross-sectoral partnerships. Since 2020, the organization has supported ASEAN in implementing sustainable urbanization strategies, with housing identified as a key priority. An example of an innovative public-private partnership is the ongoing post-conflict reconstruction project in Iraq, where UN-Habitat, in collaboration with the Japanese government, local authorities, and private companies, is building housing and public infrastructure for approximately 10,000 people. This project includes vocational training, climate change awareness programs, and capacity building for government officials, all supported by Japanese expertise and technology. To further promote sustainable urban development, UN-Habitat is establishing networking platforms in Tokyo and Fukuoka to facilitate partnerships among public, private, academic, and civil sectors, aiming to enhance collaboration and knowledge sharing throughout the Asia-Pacific region.



Comments from the participants

Mr. Mainalee:

I believe the Spatial Planning Platform can play a significant role in supporting housing, land, and basic services. For us, implementing integrated urban development plans at the municipal level is key, along with linking land use planning to housing and economic needs. We need to recognize urban systems, corridors, and clusters, and build planning capacity at both municipal and provincial levels. Encouraging public-private partnerships and strengthening local housing companies are also important. Our main challenge is not land availability, but land management and regulation. For basic services, the issue is not resources but ensuring commitment and targeting the right communities. I suggest the SPP should invent best practices, promote cooperation and cross-learning, and track positive changes, with housing as a starting point for broader improvements in resilience and sustainability.

Dr. Doma:

I agree with the previous points and see similar conditions in Cambodia as in Nepal. For us, it is crucial to integrate spatial planning with the housing sector, and I hope that regional strategic plans, such as those by UN-Habitat, will create frameworks that bring these two areas together. We also need to establish better infrastructure data and mechanisms to ensure the housing sector has enough information to effectively connect with spatial planning.

Mr. Murooka:

I appreciate the great presentations and the recognition of JICA's support. Although my presentation did not focus much on housing, I recognize that housing is a major issue in urban development. While JICA has not been heavily involved in housing due to its private nature, we acknowledge its importance and have completed research in this sector. Based on our findings, we plan to strengthen our cooperation in housing as part of our broader urban development efforts.

Mr. Kudo:

From today's presentations, I see that many countries, not just in Asia, face significant development challenges, and many donors are eager to support them. As consultants, we play a vital role in bridging the gap between countries seeking opportunities and donor activities. We need to put more effort into finding effective solutions and ensuring that master plans lead to real action. It's important for consultants, donors, and country leaders to work together to maintain momentum and ensure that plans are actually implemented.

Ms. Ishigaki:

I found the presentations from Nepal, Cambodia, and Lao PDR very informative and see a strong need for capacity building and technical support. The UN is here to respond to the needs of each

country, and your input is very important for us as we design regional implementation plans to meet global objectives. Please feel free to contact our country offices and share your opinions and guidance. We value ongoing communication and are always ready to listen and support you.

Prof. Fukasawa:

I appreciate the comprehensive overview from UN-Habitat, which helped clarify where we stand on housing, land, and basic services. It was valuable to compare specific country cases with regional trends and to identify both commonalities and unique aspects. Discussing these issues in an integrated way, rather than in isolation, highlighted the importance of spatial planning as a platform for addressing complex challenges. I also welcome the idea of the Tokyo-Fukuoka platform, which aims to involve a wide range of stakeholders, and I look forward to seeing this concept further developed and realized.