

Regional Seminar & Learning Event on Local Government and Pro-poor Service Delivery

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Urban Governance and Poverty: Lessons from a Study of Ten Cities

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Cities

- Ahmedabad
- Bangalore
- Vizakhapatnam
- Colombo
- Cebu
- Johannesburg
- Kumasi
- Mombasa
- Recife
- Santiago

Research questions

- How can and do the poor influence institutions of city governance?
- What political and institutional systems, processes and mechanisms result in inclusive, pro-poor decisions and outcomes?

Learning points

- **Address ‘bad governance’ before trying to construct good governance**
- **Develop systems of information and policy analysis to understand urban poverty and role of local government**
- **Address constraints on local government: legal, powers, information, capacity, revenue collection**
- **Bottom-up development of civil society organizations at city-level to overcome parochialism and strengthen ‘voice’.**

Themes

- The form of economic growth
- Understanding urban poverty
- Civil society organization
- Voice and governance
- Political arrangements
- Capacity of city government
- Access to land and infrastructure
- Lessons

1. Urban Economic Growth

Important but not sufficient for poverty reduction

- Impact of form of growth on labour markets
- Possible clash between formal and informal employment

Importance also of.....

Capacity of local institutions to influence opportunities of market for poor

Depending on level of decentralization of powers

And control of infrastructure and services that affect urban development and poverty

2. Understanding Urban Poverty

- Inadequate data on urban poverty
 - Multiple aspects: income, services, environment, relationships, location
 - Lack of understanding by city govts
- Therefore, interventions can upset fragile position of poor
- ‘Bad governance’ destroys livelihoods of poor

3. Civil Society

- Grass-roots organizations
 - mutual support but also instrument of clientelism and exclusion
- Struggle situations produce active, pro-poor civil society
- Poor can exert influence by organising
 - escape clientelism by cross-city federation (Cebu, Jo'burg, Recife)
- NGOs often have low capacity and weak accountability to communities
- From confrontation to constructive engagement

4. Linking Voice to City Governance

- Incremental gains by poor through persistence and patronage
- Democratization at local level has widened scope for poor to make claims
- Widespread rise of civil society organizations
- From clientelism to more open political bargaining - participatory democracy
- Public information and media - Philippines

5. Urban Political Arrangements

Some political arrangements may offer opportunities for voice of the poor:

- Directly elected mayors – decisive but unstable
- Ward-based councillors - Bangalore
- Reserved seats for women and minorities – India, Philippines

Appropriateness to poor depends on local factors:

- Electoral system - PR/majoritarian and distribution of poor
- Sub-city levels of government – barangays
- Scrutiny by executive – public meetings, legislature, media
- Alternative forms of participation

6. Constraints on City

Government

Legal exclusions

- Poor often live outside city boundaries
- Municipal divisions
- Legal limits on working in illicit areas

Central-local relationships

- Lack of support framework
- Unclear responsibilities and competition

Limits of organization

- Inadequate local resource base
- Weak information and management skills
- Leadership without institutionalized accountability
- Fragmented responsibilities for basic services

7. Access to Land, Infrastructure and Services

- Widespread inadequacy of water, sanitation, SWM, healthcare
 - Fundamental effects of service access on health, income and productivity
- Service access is a matter of supply as well as demand
- Critical importance of bulk infrastructure
- Land access as basic limit on service access
 - Cebu's land transfer programme
- Access management through formal planning, legalization, toleration or eviction

8. Lessons

- Services are always locally delivered; the question is how
- Information on urban poverty
- Address bad governance first
- Recognize limits of CSOs
- Move CSOs from confrontation to engagement
- Build federations of CBOs
- Importance of design of local political systems systems to representation of poor
- Representative plus participatory politics

Lessons continued

- Importance of bulk infrastructure and policy frameworks with local delivery
- Assign local functions to elected local government
- Address constraints on local government: legal, powers, information, capacity, revenue collection
- Two tier local government in big cities
- **With decentralization and democratization, city governments can and do become more efficient and responsive.**