

IX. NETWORKING

There were two presentations on networking arrangements that have been successful in improving municipal services delivery, particularly to the poor.

Dr. Fahmy Ismail described the role of CityNet in transferring and implementing effective practices. Elaborating on the concepts of best practices and peer-to-peer learning, he stated that it was not enough to simply document best practices; the critical issue is that of transferring and extending these practices effectively to a wide range of cities. He enumerated the presently-used indicators of effective transfer, which include participation, transparency, accountability, inclusion, financial feasibility, and sustainability.

In his presentation on the concept and establishment of the City Managers' Association of Gujarat (CMAG), Mr. P.U. Asnani elaborated further on the need to establish mechanisms for exchange of information. This is one of the objectives of CMAG, the others being training and advocacy. CMAG conducts events such as workshops and symposia on contemporary urban issues on a regular basis for its members. The presentation once again brought to the fore the importance of such organizations and networks in the urban sector.

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CityNet is a unique and innovative institution that puts the idea of "local-local" dialogue and partnership in practice.

CityNet is the regional network of local authorities for the management of human settlements. Starting with 28 members in 1987, it currently has over 110 members representing 19 countries, including local governments, development authorities, national organizations, NGOs, and research and training institutions, mostly in Asia and the Pacific. CityNet has consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council, and is a unique and innovative institution that puts the idea of "local-local" dialogue and partnership in practice.

CityNet's ultimate goal is to help urban managers in the Asia-Pacific region to work for more people-friendly cities that are socially just, ecologically sustainable, politically participatory, economically productive, and culturally vibrant. Its main areas of activities are poverty alleviation, environment and health, municipal finance, and management of infrastructure and services. CityNet is committed to local initiatives. It is progressively decentralizing as it grows, by promoting subregional nodes and national chapters. CityNet-Sri Lanka National Chapter is one of the successful examples.

CityNet recognizes that the identification of best practices is not sufficient and goes further by initiating and developing guidelines for transfer and implementation of best practices. This initiative was taken in close collaboration with UNCHS and UNDP.

This paper will only touch the surface of the guidelines and provide a succinct summary. For a complete set of guidelines, you are encouraged to

¹ This presentation was prepared with assistance from the CityNet Secretariat.

contact the CityNet Secretariat to obtain their publication.

Transferring Best Practices

A transfer is a structured process of learning. Key components of a transfer can be identified as "knowledge derived from real-world experience together with the human expertise capable of transforming that knowledge into social action." A transfer implies, at a minimum, the identification and awareness of solutions, the matching of demand for learning with supply of experience and expertise, and a series of steps that need to be taken to help bring about the desired change. Such change may range from policy reform, management systems, and technology to attitudes and behavior.

- Transfers typically fall into three main categories: technical—the transfer of skills and technology applications/processes; informational—the transfer and exchange of ideas and solutions; and managerial—a system or series of decision-making and resource allocation processes that can be transferred and adapted.

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Some examples of successful transfers include the transfer of Yokohama's technical expertise on flood control to the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration; the development of information materials on solid waste disposal by the Municipality of Olongapo to the Municipality of Tansen; and the transfer of managerial methods of the Mahila Sewa Bank (India) to Sevanatha (Sri Lanka).

The elements and processes required for an effective transfer, as in CityNet's guidelines, are summarized in Fig. IX.1.

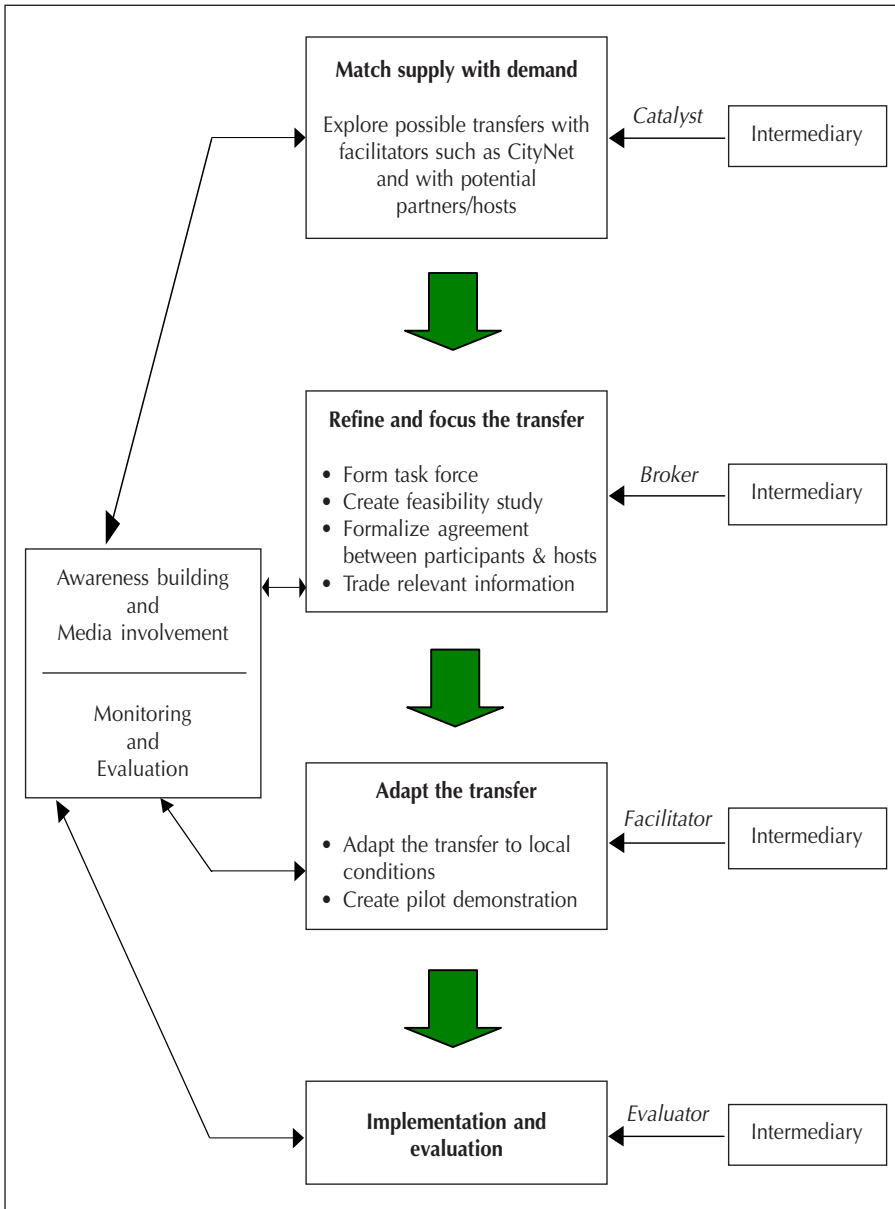


Figure IX.1. Elements and Processes of Transfer

A transfer can be deemed successful even if it has encountered several obstacles during its development and implementation. The following process indicators provide a nonexhaustive checklist for actors involved in the transfer process. They should be viewed as a tool for assessing an initiative's development and effectiveness:

- participation;
- transparency;
- accountability;
- inclusion;
- financial feasibility; and
- sustainability.

These indicators should provide participants with a framework for qualitative feedback on the status and potential success of their initiatives. It is recommended that as the actors develop and proceed with the transfer process, additional indicators be considered.

Obstacles to Transfer

Many challenges and obstacles can impede the implementation and adaptation of a transfer. By recognizing common obstacles, participants and hosts can make better use of their resources and time, and focus on issues involved in ensuring an effective transfer. For this reason, it is highly recommended that peer-to-peer learning² and study tour exercises involve all key stakeholders, including elected officials, technical and managerial staff, and community leaders. A few obstacles and recommended responses are listed on the following page.

² As used in CityNet's guidelines, this is the process of exchange of knowledge, expertise, and experience between people and organizations that have similar roles and responsibilities and face similar issues and problems.

Obstacle	Responses
Political resistance to change	Face-to-face meetings and discussions among elected officials can help overcome reluctance to engage in institutional change.
Staff resistance to change	Peer-to-peer learning and on-the-job training can help empower staff and allay fears that new ways of doing things may affect one's power base or cause major disruption in "standard operating procedure".
Inappropriate rules and regulations	"Seeing is believing" — peer-to-peer learning and study tours can often be more convincing than textbook solutions, and help create the awareness and understanding of the need to modify outdated rules, regulations, and norms.
Corruption	Best practices have, in many cases, forged a win-win situation, thus overcoming the traditional "win-lose" options that underlie corrupt practices. The involvement of stakeholders and partners also contributes directly to more transparent and accountable processes.
Inability to work across departmental or divisional boundaries	Study tours and staff exchanges involving a team of decision makers and stakeholders can help forge a team spirit and break down fiefdoms. They can also provide an opportunity to reexamine the respective roles and responsibilities of different work units.
Little or no local involvement in policy formulation and decision making	Through best-practice transfers, the effectiveness of partnerships with grass-roots and community-based organizations can be effectively demonstrated.

It is important to note that flexibility is a requirement for any transfer process. Not all obstacles can be predicted, but through the transfer process, participants can learn from hosts about what to expect and eventually minimize the impact of obstacles. By weaving flexibility into the design flow of a project, all parties involved can work proactively towards overcoming challenges, rather than reactively.

Evaluation of Transfers

The sustainability of a transfer and the implementation of an innovative practice rely upon the follow-through process and an honest evaluation of both the innovation and the transfer. Prior to the transfer, a clear monitoring plan should be devised to provide a framework by which progress can be assessed, impact measured in accordance with initial objectives or anticipated results, and the implementation process analyzed for lessons learned.

The effective transfer of a practice is not simply replication but rather an innovative adaptation using lessons derived from successes as well as failures. Developing a solution applicable to a community's specific problem is itself a good practice and should be evaluated and documented for the benefit of others.

The following steps are proposed for effective evaluation of a transfer.

- Gather key participants together as a group to evaluate the results of the transfer.
- Develop a list of criteria from the previous stages of the transfer process that best represent the critical factors of the project.
- Using the criteria developed by the participants, develop a survey feedback instrument to be distributed to and

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completed by community stakeholders, e.g. residents, NGOs, businesses, government.

- Collect, compile, and document survey results.
- Identify key success and problem areas.
- Schedule on-going evaluative processes to highlight successes and discuss remedies/alternatives for problems.

Role of CityNet and Networks in General

The exchange of information and experience among local organizations can only take place with accurate and current information, which is increasingly being transmitted through intricate networks. Intermediary organizations such as international, bilateral, and national organizations, universities, think tanks, and NGOs are opening up channels of contacts and communication among cities. Their role is an important aspect in this process because they provide the necessary guidance and expertise for successful implementation and continuation of a project.

CityNet serves not only as repository of information, but also actively shares information and expertise in a packaged form that is adequate to the needs of each member. CityNet also acts as a catalyst, facilitator, or broker of transfers, assists in the implementation, and often sponsors transfers.

Workshops and seminars form the starting point for exchange among CityNet members. Technical Cooperation among Cities in Developing Countries study visits often follow from workshops, allowing members to learn directly from one another and replicate good and best practices elsewhere. Advisory services are CityNet's successful niche activity, whereby it identifies an appropriate expert or team, and arranges for them to visit other members needing advice or support on a specific problem.

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These guidelines are still a work in progress and CityNet welcomes any comments, suggestions, or inputs.

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Most urban local bodies do not know how to handle the serious problems they face because of lack of in-house capacity. Quite often, they go abroad to find the solutions, unaware that their neighbors have done something great that could solve such problems. In Gujarat, there was no forum to support professional development of urban managers or to raise the sensitivity of state and central government on urban issues. Also, there was no sharing of successful experiences and no dissemination of information.

To overcome these deficiencies, the City Managers' Association of Gujarat (CMAG) was formed during the Urban Managers' Workshop in May 1997, with the help of USAID and the International City/County Managers' Association (ICMA) of the USA. The participating mayors, commissioners, and senior local officials worked for two days and decided to form CMAG as a professional, nonpolitical body with three objectives:

- exchanging and disseminating information on urban issues, best city management practices, technologies, and cross-country management experiences;
- training and upgrading the skills of local managers, engineers, and local health officials; and
- advocacy.

The first objective was met through networking with national and international bodies, documentation of best practices within the state, making a database of experts/services/ technologies, publications (newsletters, manuals, books), developing audiovisual media, and providing exposure to urban managers within and outside the country.

Training and skill upgrading were done through workshops, seminars, short training programs, regular in-house discussions/ brainstorming sessions, use of think tanks, and overseas training.

Advocacy was taken up by placing urban issues on the agenda of state government. Some of the issues that we wanted to bring to the attention of the central and state governments are

- devolution of full powers to urban local bodies to strengthen their financial base in terms of the 74th Amendment of the Constitution;
- the need for total autonomy of municipalities to raise taxes and introduce nontax revenues;
- inclusion of the cities in infrastructure master plans at the state and central level;
- tax exemption on municipal bonds;
- encouragement of the privatization concept;
- development of a cadre of professional city managers;
- financial support for infrastructure development in the cities in view of their economic contribution; and
- urban agglomeration planning through a consultative process.

Membership in CMAG is categorized as institutional, individual, associate, and patron. The institutional members include all municipal corporations, urban development authorities, and

municipalities in Gujarat with a population of more than one million; institutions involved in research, training, or urban management; and NGOs involved in providing municipal services. The associate members include municipalities with populations less than one million; students connected with urban design, planning, management, and other related urban services; individuals who are eligible to become members of the association but cannot be given membership due to the prescribed limit on individual membership, which should not exceed 50 percent of institutional membership; and professionals engaged in activities related to urban planning, management, design, and governance. The patrons include the mayors of municipal corporations in Gujarat and industrial houses. Associate members and patrons do not have voting rights.

CMAG has a small office equipped with two computers, telephone, and email facilities; and a collection of books on urban management, governance, and related fields. There is a full-time consultant, with two assistants, who coordinates CMAG activities under the guidance of the executive committee.

Activities of CMAG

Workshops

Since 1997, CMAG has conducted several workshops for its members in association with other institutions. The subject areas have included strategic planning, stress management, the judicial system, handling public complaints, operation and maintenance of water supply and sanitation systems, and other practical methods for handling various urban problems.

The outcomes of these workshops are noteworthy. For example, the Workshop on

Improving Financial Resources of Urban Local Bodies Through Non-Tax Revenues, held in December 1997, resulted in the submission of a memorandum to the Government of Gujarat requesting autonomy for these bodies to raise financial resources from nontax revenues and impact fees.

During a Symposium on Best Practices and Transferability, 14 short-listed best practices were presented, selected from 59 practices that were documented in the Best Practices Catalogue. CMAG also awarded trophies to some municipal bodies for best practices, and gave citations to others.

Newsletter/Publications

CMAG publishes a quarterly newsletter for its members. It also circulates interesting articles to its members taken from sources such as the Internet. CMAG also publishes reports of its workshops.

International Exposure

CMAG has sent representatives to the ICMA Annual Conferences, the Asian mayors' forums, and training programs at the University of Illinois. The International Managers Exchange Programs have enabled city managers from India to visit cities in the USA and vice versa to learn how different cities are managed and how problems are solved. These international exposures help CMAG disseminate and share best practices with its members through regional workshops, seminars, and training programs.

Other Programs

CMAG identifies experts in various fields and makes them available to its members. This allows local bodies to choose the right experts to assist them

International exposures help CMAG disseminate and share best practices with its members.

with their needs. CMAG also provides project-specific technical assistance to cities through panels of experts.

CMAG plans to implement an urban indicators and performance measurement program, establish an urban management center for continuing education, prepare the urban agenda for 2021 for the cities of Gujarat, and develop a World Wide Web site for dissemination of experiences and information.

Based on the experience of Gujarat over the last three years, four more states have come forward to network with CMAG and form their own associations. It is also expected that additional states will organize their own associations, which will network with each other for continuous capacity building, sharing of experiences, and dissemination of information and knowledge.