

26. Promoting sustainable, resilient and inclusive cities in Myanmar

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If not planned carefully, the speed and size of urbanisation processes put people and areas at risk of being left behind

It is projected that more than two-thirds of the world's population will be living in urban areas by 2030. The unprecedented speed, size and impact of urbanisation has been observed globally. Amid this, unplanned urbanisation can often leave behind certain areas or people. Considerations of affordability and accessibility - such as setting affordable fees for basic infrastructure services like public transport, water and electricity - are necessary for inclusive urban development. It is, moreover, crucial to ensure the sustainability and resilience of cities in order to ensure that urbanisation leaves no one behind.

The Development Cooperation Charter of Japan aims to realise quality growth and poverty eradication that is inclusive, sustainable and resilient. This notion of inclusiveness, sustainability and resilience shares the same approach as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the concept of leaving no one behind. Inclusiveness is not excluding certain groups; sustainability is the responsibility we share to protect the planet; resilience is empowering the vulnerable against natural hazards and economic crises. Japan's approach, based on the concept of "human security", focuses on individuals, along with the SDGs, and is a powerful force to realise a world where no one is left behind.

A master plan for sustainable and inclusive urban development in Yangon City

Responding to the rapidly changing circumstances around urban areas, as stated above, JICA strives to achieve the objective of realising sustainable cities spelled out in SDG 11. For this purpose, JICA is supporting the development of urban foundations, both through construction of infrastructure and capacity development. Together with partner countries, it is also following innovative approaches to ensure that no one will be left behind.

An example of one of JICA's interventions is the Urban Development Master Plan in Greater Yangon.¹ JICA supported the Yangon Region and the Yangon City Development Committee in drawing up a future vision and developing the Master Plan for 2040. Under the Master Plan, JICA has further supported infrastructure development, institutional capacity development and human resource development.

During the Master Plan development phase, JICA, through discussions with the Government of Myanmar, elaborated a vision of the future city and proposed a land use plan, a city development plan and a transport plan.² Based on the Master Plan, JICA financed the improvement of the Yangon Circular Railway, the provision of a water supply network,³ and the construction of multiple bridges.⁴ In addition, in collaboration

with UN-Habitat, JICA supported the provision of affordable housing and water supply to residents of slum areas.⁵ However, supporting infrastructure investment was not sufficient to realise the future vision of Yangon City. JICA therefore provided additional capacity development support in the areas of institutional setup, law and regulation, mapping, and human resource development. For example, JICA helped strengthen urban development management capacity through the establishment of development permission systems based on land use plans; supported improvement of the bus service system and network;⁶ strengthened management capacities of the water supply system; and promoted increased resilience in flood management.

Coupling investment in infrastructure, capacity development and lessons from the past

In order to accelerate dynamic and sustainable city growth, JICA supported both infrastructure investment and capacity development. The Urban Development Master Plan in Greater Yangon shows that the Master Plan approach can contribute to avoiding uncontrolled development, and it can also lead a city into urban transit-oriented development - maximising the amount of residential, business and leisure space within walking distance of public transport - that can ensure accessibility and affordability for every resident. It can enable all residents to access public transport, reduce costs and energy use, and ensure the sustainability of a city in the long term. For the project in Yangon, JICA reinforced these points by utilising Japan's own experiences of rapid urbanisation and of solving its related problems.

What next?

JICA continues to support the formulation of Urban Development Master Plans around the world. For urban development, new tools such as information and communications technologies and artificial intelligence are becoming more effective. For example, these can be applied to the provision of information on real traffic situations, reducing the need for traffic counts and manually developed simulation models and helping to reduce project costs. JICA aims to introduce such technologies in order to further increase the quality of life of all urban residents.

Notes

¹ http://open_jicareport.jica.go.jp/pdf/12122511.pdf.

² <https://www.jica.go.jp/myanmar/english/office/topics/140514.html>.

³ <https://www.jica.go.jp/myanmar/english/office/topics/press180510.html>.

⁴ https://www.jica.go.jp/english/news/press/2014/140610_01.html.

⁵ <https://unhabitat.org/japan-hands-over-houses-for-the-poor-to-un-habitat/>.

⁶ <https://www.jica.go.jp/myanmar/office/information/press/180207.html>.



From:

Case Studies on Leaving No One Behind

A companion volume to the Development Co-operation Report 2018

Access the complete publication at:

<https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264309333-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2018), "Promoting sustainable, resilient and inclusive cities in Myanmar", in *Case Studies on Leaving No One Behind: A companion volume to the Development Co-operation Report 2018*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264309333-28-en>

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