Urbanisation, Sustainable Growth and Poverty Reduction in Asia

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Summary

Introduction

One in three people in Asia live in a town or city, and the urban population is growing at a very fast rate. This poses a number of challenges for policymakers and governments, as they continue efforts to enhance economic development, tackle poverty and contribute to meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Main findings

Urbanisation generally reflects, and contributes to, economic growth and economic development. But it also presents several major challenges in relation to land use, provision for shelter, infrastructure provision, social services and low incomes. Poverty and exclusion in urban areas are often related to these challenges.

Asian countries have found innovative ways of dealing with these urban development issues. The challenge partly lies in scaling up, adapting and mainstreaming these innovations. A recurring feature is the need to generate locally rooted information with which to plan, negotiate and monitor urban development solutions. This information could then be integrated into national planning, including Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) where appropriate.

Successful Asian initiatives demonstrate the importance of enhancing governance relationships through working partnerships between the urban poor, local government and other stakeholders. Donors can support financial mechanisms that both increase capital financing for urban development and create opportunities for such partnerships to be formed.

Key research findings

Governments and donors can promote sustainable urbanisation and pro-poor growth through policies and alternative approaches that:

- build on successful initiatives already developed in Asia. Donors can support the practical sharing of ideas and experiences
- generate better local information for planning, negotiating and monitoring
- create long-term working partnerships that involve the poor
- focus on integrated development solutions
- improve regulatory frameworks to encourage participatory urban development
- decentralise resources and capacity to match decentralised responsibilities
- improve capital financing for urban development.

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[1] Homeless International.