

AMBITIOUS CITY PROMISES

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Local Governments
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STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT FOR INCLUSIVE AND PARTICIPATORY LOCAL CLIMATE ACTION

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KEY MESSAGES

- Stakeholder engagement should be at the core of local climate action. Actively engaging with people unlocks a plethora of possibilities that can improve collaboration, participation, and resource mobilization. Further, listening to the people gives the city a sense of direction in implementing and developing programs and projects that respond better to the people's needs and priorities.
- Inclusive and value-laden engagement with various representatives and societal groups of the community enables policy makers and leaders to diversify their perspectives and action plans. While scientific data can provide a basis for identifying priority sectors, engaging with stakeholders presents an opportunity to discover indigenous and local knowledge uncovering possible new solutions.
- Inclusive stakeholder engagement should be institutionalized into local government processes and policy framework as it develops mutual trust between citizens and their duty bearers. This provides the opportunity for greater impact of climate change actions and most importantly creates the possibility that citizen can hold their officials accountable to articulated promises and visions on sustainability.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Climate change governance calls for participatory approaches, including local perspectives, diverse stakeholders, and members of the public. Public engagement in deliberations can greatly improve their understanding of climate change, including future projections, impacts, and responses. Moreover, their engagement bears the potential of annual household emissions to be reduced by changing lifestyles and “downshifting” the household level consumption. Thus, it is imperative that local governments engage with local stakeholders to have an effective and lasting impact on local climate actions.

As part of the Ambitious City Promisesⁱ project implementation, strong support was provided to the local governments with the necessary platform to reach out and ensure the implementation path for their ambitious local climate policy. A series of citizen engagement activities were implemented in key cities of Southeast Asia namely Hanoi (Vietnam), Jakarta (Indonesia) and Pasig (Philippines). These activities took the form of public consultations, online communication campaigns, dialogues, meetings, and discussions with relevant city offices, civil society groups, and stakeholder representatives.

With the aim to increase the space of public engagement and participation into local climate action, these engagement activities were conducted to improve the public knowledge on climate change, greenhouse gas emissions, urban sectors, and corresponding civic action. This participatory approach opened up feedback mechanisms to discuss the citizens' insights regarding climate action and to a larger extent urban planning. These engagement activities with citizens also aimed to bridge the gap between policy makers and the larger public; ensuring that public interest is reflected into climate plans, targets, project, and policies. This in turn, created mutual trust between stakeholders and their duty bearers, which can compel the public to support the implementation and compliance with policy and public action.

Local civil codes in all three cities mandate to build communication mechanisms with the constituents aiming to inform, discuss, and enable participation from different

segments of the community. Further, feedback mechanisms such as public consultations, digital communication, help desks and kiosks, and other feedback mechanisms are present and embedded in the governance processes and are being refined through public feedback as well.

The project was also able to introduce new modes of communication between the government and the public to cater to the ever-growing need of real time and vetted information as well as to present more convenient and modern means for citizens to engage and communicate. Thus, Pasig has launched its own online-based pledge collection platformⁱⁱ while Hanoi and Jakarta are developing theirs, so that citizen can display their individual climate action and learn from others.

Likewise, through these engagement activities, technical working groups consisting of citizen volunteers are forming roots in Jakarta. In 2019, an interfaith coalitionⁱⁱⁱ has been formed with the aim to integrate environmental protection into religious teachings.



Public consultations in Indonesia aimed to solicit insights, challenges, and solutions from different segments of the city. Pictured here are youth and children representatives discussing their own notions of climate action.

PROBLEM DEFINITION

Public consultations carried out in Jakarta (Indonesia), Pasig (Philippines) and Hanoi (Vietnam) reflected that while there are existing feedback mechanisms in these cities, various stakeholders are demanding a more transparent and active communication framework between them and their city officials. Stakeholder engagement in these Southeast Asian cities is not necessarily lacking, but could use drastic improvements in terms of the following considerations:

a) Wider participation of stakeholder segments specifically those that come from vulnerable groups i.e., women, children, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, youth, informal settlers, and others;

b) A more accessible menu of feedback mechanisms that caters to both the digital and offline media;

c) A transparent and data-sensitive citizen charter that effectively regulates how the local government addresses concerns communicated to them, emphasizing citizen-induced policy results, as well as how the peoples' data are used, stored, and protected; and

d) In the context of climate action and urban planning, stakeholders require an inclusive and transparent consultative process that effectively translates their needs, preferences, and insights into the local government's plans and priorities.

KEY FINDINGS

1. Local climate action and urban planning should be people-centric. Scientific data should be taken into account alongside the feedback that citizens are expressing to their leaders and city officials. In the context of climate action, planning should take into consideration not only mitigation goals but also the needs and priorities of the affected public. A city should be planning for its people; ensuring that they are given the chance to exist in a clean, healthy, and livable space. Engaging with stakeholders regularly and sincerely can help city planners in developing aligned programs.

2. Effective stakeholder engagement requires various channels to reach different sectors of the community. Duty bearers should ensure everyone has equal chances of participating in civic discourse. Soliciting feedback for climate action should go beyond the usual echo chambers and extend their reach into the periphery of the community where members are not usually heard nor consulted. In this vein, the city should develop and implement a suite of engagement options that include both offline and on-line channels. Social media feedback should be regularly monitored; schedules of public consultations should be announced as widely and as frequently as possible, and dialogues with key civil society organizations should be conducted on a regular basis. Figure 1 below presents a menu of engagement activities that a city can consider to improve its connection with stakeholders.

Digital Channels	Online Document Repositories	Public Consultation or Town Halls
Social Media	Help Desks and Kiosks	Phone Numbers, Mail Addresses, and Fax
Websites	Traditional Channels	Sector and Issue-Specific Dialogues

Figure 1. A non-exhaustive list of engagement channels that local governments can utilize to ensure maximum reach and engagement from all sectors of the community. Source: ICLEI SEAS, 2020

3. Feedback and insights from stakeholders should be taken into account when evaluating current policies, suggesting improvements to policies and when mobilizing resources across segments of the population, especially the private sector. A value-laden communication framework with stakeholders translates into a sincere, dynamic, and active civic cooperation. When the people feel that they are being heard and included, and have an impact on the cities' policies they will also be more compelled to take action. Likewise, governance that includes and consults stakeholders builds trust among constituents and compels them to be compliant to climate action. Stakeholder engagement offers a grounded, bottom up approach that can deliver policies and plans that address the peoples' concerns. Honest and transparent communication between the city and its constituents can also enable resource mobilization from different segments of the community, especially the private sector. This type of feedback allows the city to develop and implement climate action plans that are informed by public interest.



Figure 2. The framework of stakeholder engagement as followed by ACP implementation in Southeast Asian cities with an aim to increase public participation in the development and implementation of local climate policies, plans, and programs.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Develop and institutionalize multi-stakeholder working groups that will advise and work closely with the city in developing, implementing, and monitoring climate action programs. The ability of the public to participate in the discourse about governance should be protected by a framework (e.g. local ordinance) between the stakeholders and the city. Consequently, this should be further supported by providing mechanisms that will allow the multi-stakeholder representative to have a seat at the Council and represent the community at this level. Institutionalizing multi-stakeholder groups that can advise and support the city's climate action plans assures the sustainability and the integrity of a transparent and inclusive engagement with constituents.

Policy Sample: [Denver's Greenprint Denver Advisory Council](#).

2. Rationalize feedback loops and make these accessible to the public regardless of the media that they prefer. In the same manner, ensure that all segments of the community, especially vulnerable and marginalized sectors are better represented. Cities should go beyond the traditional media in order to expand their reach and improve their engagement with stakeholders. A constituent should easily access feedback mechanisms that respond to his or her resources, for example, whether or not s/he has an internet connection or if the person can physically travel to the city hall. Developing feedback mechanisms which can be accessed across various media and platforms ensures that everyone has the equal chance to express themselves and be heard.

Policy Sample: [Pasig City's Ugnayan Sa Pasig](#).

3. Improve transparency of local governance processes by ensuring that the public is always adequately consulted in the development and implementation of plans, policies, and programs. As evident by the experience of Seoul, South Korea, mobilizing their constituents enabled them to draw up a comprehensive climate action plan that is not only informed by science but by localized public knowledge as well. Ensuring the regular, meaningful, and sincere engagement with the stakeholders creates trust in the process and solicits the buy-in of the citizens to support climate-related programs and activities. Improving the transparency of local governance processes through adequate engagement with stakeholders is key to a bottom-up and grounded approach to climate action.

Policy Sample: [The Promise of Seoul](#)



Stakeholder engagement in Pasig City reflected not only insights and solutions that can help address climate change but also uncovered that basic service delivery such as solid waste management remains to be a top priority among the public.

CONCLUSIONS

An active, transparent, and dynamic engagement with stakeholders unlocks a plethora of possibilities to support a city as it responds to the climate crisis. Talking and listening to the people directs the duty bearers to what should really be prioritized, how the public can support achievement of these goals, and how resource mobilization, particularly from the private sector, can increase the scale and reach of climate-related interventions.

Local governments can leverage the power of the people by revisiting their relationship and engagement with

their constituents. Stakeholders wield unmeasurable potential when it comes to supporting their cities in crafting climate actions that present real and replicable solutions. The move beyond tokenism and acknowledging the public as dynamic and indispensable agents of change lays the foundation of a bottom-up, inclusive, and effective governance. When the people are heard and given the proper avenues to speak, they are also more likely to have buy-in and ownership of their city's climate action goals.

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Endnotes

- i The Ambitious City Promises is a 3.5-year international project supporting cities in Indonesia, Philippines, and Vietnam to formulate local climate action plans directed by concrete targets, enhanced multi-stakeholder engagement, and integrated strategies. It is funded by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, and Nuclear Safety (BMU) through the International Climate Initiative (IKI) program.
- ii Through the citizen engagement efforts of the ACP Team and the officials of DKI Jakarta, the religious sector of the city formed an interfaith coalition representing Indonesia's six official religions: Hindus, Buddha, Islam, Christian, Catholic and Kong Hu Cu. The coalition works together to develop eco-worship modules that aim to magnify teachings about environmental protection and conservation and spread the call to action to care for our common home.
- iii Pasig City launched the EcoPledge Platform before a global audience last October 2019 at the Seoul Mayors Forum. The platform enables the public to record their pledges as they transition into a more sustainable and eco-friendlier lifestyle. Pledges can be made in the following sectors: energy efficiency and conservation, waste management, air quality and sustainable transport.



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The purpose of the policy brief series under the IKI Ambitious City Promises project is to support more informed evidence-based decision-making on the priority areas within the project cities or their respective national governments. It is targeted at the policy-makers and the government officials who are involved in developing and/or executing the climate action plan.

The Ambitious City Promises project supports nine city local governments in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam in developing and implementing low emission development strategies. Through the project, local governments in Southeast Asia adapt this model of inclusive, ambitious climate action, mainstreaming low emission development strategies and creating new climate leaders. The project is implemented by ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability and funded by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU) through the International Climate Initiative (IKI).