

Research into Lessons Learnt from DFID India Urban Investments over 20 years

Background

The Department for International Development (DFID) has been working in the urban sector in India since the early 1980's. Increased population growth and increased rural to urban migration with the attendant inability of urban areas to cope¹, have increased the scale, scope and urgency for this work. In order to better inform their existing and future urban work in India as well as other income countries, DFID India commissioned a retrospective review of its urban programme² covering the following projects:

Project	Timelines
Hyderabad Slum Improvement Project (HSIP), phase III	1994 – 1998
Calcutta Slum Improvement Project (CSIP), phase Ia –c	1991 –2006
Andhra Pradesh Urban Services for the Poor (APUSP)	2001 – 2008
Kolkata Environment Improvement Project (KEIP) capacity building component	2001 – 2009
Kolkata Urban Services for the Poor (KUSP)	2003 – 2011
Madhya Pradesh Urban Services for the Poor (MPUSP)	2006 – 2011
Support Programmes for Urban Reforms (SPUR), Bihar	2010 – 2016

What does the review tell us?

The findings can be summarised under three broad headings:

A) Context of DFID's urban programmes

While DFID's core focus has remained the alleviation of poverty, its programmes have been largely responsive to both National programmes and policies towards poverty reduction, as well as to the challenges for the poorer States in implementing such policies through Central sector schemes and programmes. In the initial years, DfID focused on improving the delivery of Central sector schemes through localised interventions, viz. adapting participatory approaches to slum improvement projects. In the later years, in response to the devolution of powers and responsibilities to local self-Governments, DfID programmes focused on augmenting municipal capacities towards alleviating urban poverty. In the last few years, DfID has increasingly been focusing on policy and other macro-level issues that have caused urban poverty to persist, apart from continuing with local level innovations and Municipal capacity development towards poverty alleviation. In effect, it can be stated that DfID programmes in the urban sector have grown in size, scale and most importantly – perspective, in response to National and sub-national priorities.

B) Generational nature of the projects

The analysis suggests that the projects undertaken as part of DFID's urban programme can be broadly divided into three generations, with the following characteristics:

What was done?

The methodology for the review involved comparing and synthesising information across the seven projects to draw broader conclusions for the urban programme as a whole. Sources of information included existing documents as well as some limited key informant interviews to fill gaps.

An overall conceptual framework of urban development was used to identify the important components of urban projects. Information related to this was extracted for each project into a data extraction template. An inductive methodology adapting thematic synthesis was then undertaken to draw out patterns or themes across the projects as well as identify the main trends and changes over time. Critical lessons were drawn from this analysis with the aim of informing current and future DFID and possibly other urban development projects in the Indian and global context.

¹ State of the Asian Cities Report 2010/11

² The review was conducted by Oxford Policy Management, Asia and CRISIL Infrastructure Advisory.

3rd Generation : state level

MPUSP and SPUR

Predominantly distal interventions towards making projects sustainable; and addressing policy concerns across the sector at the state level. Focused on reforms related to the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM)

Technical Assistance Task Teams (state level and city/cluster level) of external consultants set up. DFID members involved in management oversight. Community based organisations empowered to participate in urban governance

State level reforms implemented related to regulations and safeguards.

Successful leverage of central sector schemes. Government more responsive to new reforms e.g. related to climate change, energy efficiency, etc,

2nd Generation : city/town focused

KUSP, KEIP and APUSP

Earlier 'proximal' interventions complemented with 'distal' interventions like municipal reforms to increase Government capacity to implement the former.

Government commissioned Project management Unit as implementing body with DFID involved in quality assurance and management oversight. Draft development plans developed. CSOs and community involvement more organised

Municipal capacity increased; dedicated poverty alleviation institutional entities e.g. Mission for the Elimination of Poverty in Municipal Areas (MEPMA) in Andhra Pradesh set up

1st Generation: slum focused

CSIP and HSIP

Mainly environmental improvement through intervention in basic services and infrastructure

Implemented by urban local bodies (ULB's); but DFID experts involved in implementation, quality and process assurance and management oversight. Limited community involvement

Benefits at slum level; some community based structures established to take ownership

Legend to diagram: =

Interventions

Delivery mechanism

Outcomes

First generation projects were focused on improvements at the level of individual slums. The second generation projects were scaled-up versions of the slum improvement projects (SIPs) in their respective states, but involved a planned process of bringing about a wider impact and change through improving institutions and systems, e.g., bringing about city-wide changes through municipal reforms. The third generation projects, in addition to supporting reforms of urban local bodies (ULBs), extended their scope to undertaking sector wide reforms at the state level (addressing state policies, regulations, and executive functions), thus buttressing the local reforms and contributing to sustainability. The focus can be seen as moving from the 'act' (slum improvement) to the 'actor' (ULBs) to the wider 'stage' (state environment).

C) DFID influence on Government Policy

Although direct attribution is difficult, the chronology and nature of some aspects of government policies are suggestive of some DFID urban initiatives having influenced (especially during the 2000's) state initiatives. For example, the emphasis in DFID's projects on accrual based accounting reforms, e-governance, infrastructure action plans and draft development plans find resonance in similar components within the JNNURM. E-governance for instance has been made mandatory under JNNURM. Energy saving initiatives under APUSP appear to have played a key role in the development of an Energy Mission by the AP Government. The Reform Infrastructure Action Plans (RIAP) also initiated under APUSP have helped the Andhra Pradesh government in initiating reform implementation under JNNURM. Furthermore DFID initiated the concept of professional municipal cadres who are specifically trained and attuned to municipal needs which the government was receptive to as long as it was funded from the TAST budget. A decade later however the Gol is now taking this up separately through a capacity building for urban development project funded by the World Bank.

What does the review suggest?

From the review lessons have been drawn related both to planning and implementation of urban development programmes which can be taken into account by DFID in India and globally

A) Planning

- While a choice of states may be limited as DFID responds to 'demand-driven' requests for assistance from the government, working in those with clear commitments to reform, where work towards this has been initiated and which are responsive to external assistance is likely to result in smoother implementation.
- Initial needs assessment, appraisal and project design involving the participating state and nodal agencies including the ULB's is extremely important in minimising hurdles during implementation as well as building the base for sustainability.
- Conducting a detailed Political Economy Analysis (PEA) during programme design stages, including a localised PEA at the municipal level would be useful to predict and plan for hurdles during implementation. It would help DFID, the Government and DFID's contractors understand the role of and power relations between different stake holders as well as the influence of formal and informal institutions on the incentives and motivations of stake holders.
- DFID has progressively included distal interventions in its urban development portfolio while continuing to retain some proximal interventions. This was found to be quite important as interventions related to slum infrastructure were found to help establish rapport and gain the confidence of poor communities, given that this is often stated as the biggest need.

B) Implementation

- Step wise implementation with building of Municipal capacity through reforms and thus enabling the municipal level to undertake and internalise policy level reforms (undertaken at the state government level) is important for success including sustainability.
- While the engagement with civil society organisations has met with limited success, there may be room for increasing this by involving them in core processes rather than for "add-on" targeted interventions.
- Impact could be amplified through better coordination with other sectoral programmes of DFID in the same intervention areas (e.g. other DFID supported programmes covering health, nutrition, sanitation and hygiene) as this could facilitate an integrated approach to urban well-being.

C) Evaluation

- Most impact evaluations undertaken of urban projects in this review were not planned prospectively, thus resulting in a lack of data at baseline as also related to appropriate control groups. The resulting study designs do not allow impact to be attributed. Future evaluations thus need to be planned prospectively at the start of implementation, thus allowing for robust study designs and also reduced costs by incorporating requisite data collection into routine monitoring systems.
- To guide the qualitative data to be collected, an explicit theory of change which outlines assumptions between the links needs to be developed (this was not done in most evaluations). Mixed data with qualitative data and analysis exploring assumptions, and quantitative assessing impact need to be included.
- Process evaluations looking at a) the role of the community and b) the role of TAST's in the success and sustainability of projects, would provide useful insights
- Apart from including an analysis related to value for money (hitherto not undertaken explicitly in the projects), evaluations need to assess equity and sustainability. Evaluations assessing sustainability could do so either indirectly (by looking at indicators /signs during project implementation that suggest sustainability or otherwise) or directly (if undertaken some period around 3-5 years after completion).
- Urban programme evaluations need to particularly consider issues related to spill over effects (e.g. better health outcomes for surrounding areas) which if neglected could underestimate programme benefits, as well as unintended effects (e.g. increase in cost of living) and indirect effects (e.g. effects on fertility, livelihoods and mental health – including stress and depression). Evaluations also need to plan for issues specific to such evaluations (e.g. high mobility of slum populations which can result in high attrition of survey data).