

HIGHLIGHTS 2.0 | 2011

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DELGO'SEA

Partnership for Democratic Local
Governance in Southeast-Asia

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A project implemented by the consortium: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V., Thailand Environment Institute (TEI), Local Government Development Foundation Inc. (LOGODEF), United Cities and Local Governments for Asia and Pacific (UCLG-ASPAC), Association of Indonesian Regency Governments (APKASI), Association of Cities of Vietnam (ACVN), and National League of Communes/Sangkats of the Kingdom of Cambodia (NLC/S).

WELCOME

Welcome to the second edition of DELGOSEA Highlights, introducing a series of publications drawing attention to various aspects of the DELGOSEA project, the exciting promotion of best practices in Southeast Asia local public administration.

Almost 18 months of the DELGOSEA project have passed: Time to look back, share lessons-learned and review the status quo of activities implementation. It is also time to start thinking ahead – how to extend and maintain the network on the local, national and transnational level beyond the project lifetime in August 2012?

So this edition of the highlights concentrates on reports from the midterm conference, the midterm evaluation results, lessons-learned from the numerous study tours but also articles related to maintaining and extending the network by strategic partners and effective network communication.

The DELGOSEA team is publishing these highlights at regular intervals, focusing in each edition on a different aspect of the project, so that a complete picture of the project's aims, activities and results will emerge.

You are new at DELGOSEA and would like to know what is behind the acronym? Read our short teaser on page 8.

DELGOSEA MIDTERM CONFERENCE - STAKEHOLDERS FROM ALL COUNTRIES COMING TOGETHER



DELGOSEA's midterm conference took place on the Indonesian island of Batam from 27 - 28 September. It provided a great opportunity for all actors involved in the project to get together and take stock. Nearly 140 representatives of both pilot and best practice cities, members of local government associations (LGAs), government bodies, speakers from the EU and ASEAN found plenty to talk about, both in plenary sessions and working groups.



The word ‘midterm’ speaks for itself, and the conference struck a fine balance between looking back, sharing the experience of project implementation so far, and moving forward, drawing lessons for the final year and grappling with the thorny issue of sustainability. How can it be ensured that all these experiences and results are not lost, how can more cities across the region benefit from best practice examples?

One of the highlights was the market place: the 16 pilot cities had put together impressive displays, offering amazing insights into the progress of each city so far. Everybody was keen to share their enthusiasm and draw the other delegates into their world. The participants thronged around the displays, finding it fascinating to see what the other pilot cities were up to and what they themselves could learn from it. It was inspiring to see how far some of the cities have come already!

In three roundtables, the most important issues were discussed: the pilot cities were able to give their perspective on the replication process so far and talk frankly about the challenges they encountered. A common theme was the challenge of adapting the best practices from different political systems and cultures. Encouragingly, quite some pilot cities had found ways of dealing with these challenges encountered and were happy to share their experience with their colleagues from other municipalities. The input of the national coordinators and coaches was very much appreciated; they were able to provide some insider knowledge on the process of the implementation and the challenges faced by the cities. There was general agreement that people’s participation was the key to success.

On the second day, the conference was looking ahead - how can DELGOSEA move forward and sustain the impact of the project? Some first ideas were given by Dr. Marion Fischer who presented the preliminary findings of the midterm evaluation - encouragingly enough, the project is on track to reach all of it’s hoped for results on time. Dr. Fischer described DELGOSEA as ‘a success story’, the secrets of its success being, above all, a commitment of all actors involved, a willingness to share and communicate across borders, sound project management and, most importantly, the participation and involvement of the people on the ground, the citizens of the pilot cities.

However, while the project is clearly on track to meet its objectives, the question of what will happen when the EU-funding stops is becoming increasingly relevant. Ideas were put forward by many of the stakeholders, including the representatives of the EU, ASEAN, KAS and UCLG-ASPAC who presented funding and non-funding opportunities for sustainability. The LGAs of each country were brimming with good ideas and presenting information on the progress of decentralization and the role of good governance in their countries. All concerned felt that the mechanism of best practice exchanges should be formally introduced in all LGAs and that a coordination group on both national and regional levels would be useful to oversee future efforts.

The conference ended on a positive note with the project director, Dr. Peter Köppinger of KAS, stressing that the pilot cities and LGUs will not be abandoned. Every effort will be made to help them sustain their endeavors and to keep the spirit of DELGOSEA alive.



THE MIDTERM REPORT CARD: EXCELLENT MARKS FOR DELGOSEA

“We have a success story” – these were the encouraging words used by Dr. Marion Fischer, the evaluator of the DELGOSEA project, to introduce the results of the midterm evaluation to the packed conference hall in Batam where DELGOSEA’s midterm conference was taking place.

The halfway point is reached and half of the project aims and goals have been achieved: best practices of democratic local governance have been identified, analysed and described, transfer concepts have been developed and replication has started in 16 pilot municipalities in five countries.

The project is very much on track to achieve all its objectives by the end of its allocated time – “the cornerstones are well in place”, Dr. Fischer praised.

How did DELGOSEA manage this achievement, what are the secrets of its success? According to Marion Fischer, big contributing factors are a solid project structure, with activities building logically upon each other, as well as sound project management. It helps that DELGOSEA has local offices in each of the project countries as well as a central project office. The communication strategy is excellent and the process of project monitoring is continuous, providing feedback and new ideas on a regular basis.

The project has also been very good in reaching out to its target groups by providing targeted trainings and encouraging networking and enhancing the capacity of LGAs to support the pilot cities. Perhaps the key to DELGOSEA’s success has been the way it encourages people to share and cooperate – be it best practice cities sharing their experience with the pilot cities, all stakeholders getting together at meetings and conferences, or the way in which the pilot cities involved their own citizens to create a sense of ownership for their projects.

Focusing more closely on the core of the DELGOSEA project – the replication of best practices – Dr. Fischer attempted to shed some light on what made a successful replication. Not surprisingly, though not always easy to achieve, meeting people’s needs, concentrating on what really matters to citizens, was one of the main features of a successful replication. One example of that is Pangkal Pinang in Indonesia, where the municipality is successfully raising living standards while improving the environment. Another important factor is commitment from all sides as is displayed by Tra Vinh City, Vietnam – support from all levels of government and promotion of the project by the LGA on a national level is very much helping this city along. Finally, it comes down to, yet again, people participation and involvement: if you get local citizens on your side and put them at the heart of the project, you are already halfway there. It was inspiring to see how Yala City, for example, is working with informal and traditional leadership, involving neglected social groups.

And, at the end of the day, a successful project boils down to a simple fact: it needs a vision of what could become of a place when everybody is working together towards a common goal.

However, Dr. Fisher also reminded everybody that there is still a lot to be done: the pilot cities need to finish their replications successfully, the project results have to be promoted on a national and international level and the emerging networks between the different stakeholders from all the countries need to be strengthened. Looks like the remaining 12 months will be busy indeed!

EXCHANGE VISITS NEARLY COMPLETED - WHAT HAVE THE PILOT CITIES LEARNT?



The last three months were busy times for DELGOSEA’s pilot cities – nearly all of them have by now completed a study trip to their best practice partner city, gaining practical experience and, perhaps most importantly, striking up friendships across national and cultural borders.

These exchange visits formed an important element of capacity building for the pilot cities. While the best practice descriptions on which the individual

transfer concepts for each city were based, were carefully drafted and managed to convey a good picture of the project, they were of course only description. It was invaluable to pay a visit to the best practice cities, to see the reality behind the story. The study groups from the pilot cities were able to actually experience the changes brought about by the best practices and felt inspired by the enthusiasm of their hosts.

With nearly all the visits being completed by now, is there anything that emerges as a common theme? It might sound like a cliché, but all participants of the exchange visits were unanimous in reporting how their journeys made their own projects come to life they felt the vision of their best practice counterparts and responded to it. Problems could be raised, advice on tricky issues was forthcoming. The pilot cities got the feeling that they were not alone in their undertaking. There was also the realization that it was not possible to take on a best practice example without adapting it, the cultural, political and social context had to be taken into account. Again, this had been known in theory, but was reinforced on a personal level by experiencing the different settings.

The intense preoccupation with the best practice examples led to many transfer concepts being fine-tuned, so that the project implementation could be even more appropriate and ultimately successful. In many cases, pilot cities have asked experts from their best practice partners to help them further by

providing concrete advice and training. As was noted by Dr. Marion Fischer in her midterm evaluation: “One can see the cooperation between best practice and pilot cities as a nursery of an unfolding network action.”



CREATING A SUPPORT NETWORK FOR DELGOSEA - THE ROLE OF STRATEGIC PARTNERS

DELGOSEA is all about creating connections, about bringing together cities and people in Southeast Asia - it is, therefore, not surprising that networks and networking play a big role in the project.

In the current project phase, it has become an important priority to increase and strengthen the support network surrounding DELGOSEA, offering help and advice not only to each pilot city but also to other cities that are interested in implementing best practices.

One such way of offering support is to recruit strategic partners: organizations and individuals who are showing a clear commitment to DELGOSEA and who are happy to share their skills and expertise and who are committed to work for better framework conditions for good local governance.

These strategic partners are usually drawn a better term is perhaps that they volunteered themselves from the networks of DELGOSEA's national partners, as well as from the Local Government Associations

(LGAs) or the Government sector. This initiative is designed not only to create a stronger, more diverse and geographically wider support network, but also to give the partner networks a greater sense of involvement in the DELGOSEA vision.

This support takes various forms and shapes - some people are happy and qualified to be available as expert consultants, sharing their specific skills with cities keen on implementing a best practice project. This applies particularly to the national coaches who have been intensively trained as part of the project and are eager to put their new expertise into action. Another example is various people from the academic sector who committed themselves in supporting the pilot cities during best practice replication. The Government officials from national and local level should also be mentioned. They play a crucial role in supporting the DELGOSEA network in terms of better political and legal framework conditions. Last but not least, there is also a role for NGOs or media to play who are warmly invited to advertise their interest and support availability on the DELGOSEA website.

Looking beyond the project implementation period, strategic partners can be key actors in helping DELGOSEA achieve sustainability. Although this support network is still in its infancy, there are an impressive number of individuals and organizations which have committed themselves already – more than 50 academic experts, nearly 30 representatives of civil society and more than 80 members of local

municipalities including the Government sector. The aim is to get even more partners from all key areas - academia, civil society, the media and governments. Together with the pilot cities who will themselves be able to act as best practice examples, these individuals and organizations will work together to ensure DELGOSEA's future success.



SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKING DELGOSEA



- Do you like what we are doing and always wanted to express that with a click on the famous 'like'-button?
- Do you want to read our latest Tweets and stay updated on what happens next to the Wakatobi delegation visiting Muangklang in Thailand?
- Do you want to see what happened last summer when the First National Workshop took place in the Philippines?
- Do you want to LinkedIn with us and discuss why everywhere we are so is our mascot, the green square?
- You don't have time to regularly check out these sites but want to read the gist of what happened last months while enjoying a hot latte in your favorite coffee shop?

If that is the case you are lucky: The EU co-funded project Partnership for Democratic Local Governance in South-East Asia (DELGOSEA) joined the major social networks Facebook, Youtube, Twitter and LinkedIn. Additionally, our first electronic newsletter has been sent out in the middle of June and will continue to be spread, compiling the most important news of the month.

Our efforts towards a strong network of experts, local governments (LGUs) and local governments associations (LGAs) grows stronger every day and recently expanded into the sphere of social media. It not only enables us to share thoughts and information more efficiently but also increases our relations towards prospective representatives from government, academe and civil society.

As soon as our news are out, they will be blasted through all our walls, tweets and websites in order to keep you up-to-date in time. Videos and pictures will support the visibility and understanding of our information.

Become part of the DELGOSEA network; Subscribe to the newsletter by emailing an empty email with the subject 'subscribe' to Communications-Office@delgosea.eu



WHAT'S NEXT FOR DELGOSEA?

Having reached the halfway point, what will happen in the DELGOSEA project until the end of its implementation time? There still is a lot that needs to be done before the finish line is crossed!

The focus will be on giving assistance and guidance to the pilot cities by accompanying them on their replication process. Monitoring, coaching and field visits to the pilot cities are taking off in earnest, ensuring that all the cities are on track and helping them solve problems they might encounter on the way. In the same spirit, capacity building activities are continuing to take place in the pilot cities, refreshing participants' skills and imparting new ones. The very successful exchange visits between best practice cities and pilot cities are continuing – in fact, in some cases unscheduled return visits, so called field visits to the pilot cities, have been planned as the cooperation between cities is deepening. Many best practice cities will be providing expert advice to their counterparts, helping to ensure sustainability of the project results.

There are also still several national workshops planned aimed at strengthening networking and cooperation between pilot and best practice cities while also working out the final policy recommendations for each country. There will also be the presentation of the regional policy recommendations, which will be linked to the

ASEAN/regional conference with the aim of strengthening the links between the DELGOSEA network and ASEAN – the ultimate goal being the set-up of a working group for local governance within the ASEAN framework. The development of an ‘exit strategy’ to ensure that the project results do not get lost and that the work of DELGOSEA continues is another high priority for the coming months. Here the 11 Local Government Associations being the key stakeholders of the DELGOSEA network will play a crucial role by sustaining the exchange of knowledge and best practices into their regular member services.

Last, but not least, what would the project be without a final conference? This will take place in the last project months and will include giving out awards to the best pilot cities – it will be hard to choose between so many fascinating and convincing projects!

FOR DELGOSEA NEWCOMERS

DELGOSEA is a network of 32 cities from five countries – Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam – with the aim to share knowledge and replicate best practices on good local governance. This network is supported by 11 Local Government Associations, five partners and various other stakeholders from Government, civil society, academia and media. They all play a crucial role to make best practice replication a success.

The network is management by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and co-financed by the European Union and the German Ministry of Development Cooperation.

Any local government unit that is interested in improving its local services be it on peoples participation, institutional governance, urban environment or fiscal management, can join and learn from the best practices. There is no need to re-invent the wheel.

Join DELGOSEA: www.DELGOSEA.eu





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