

THE MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF URBAN PLANS

Urban planners and decision-makers need to know how best to use limited resources to address the complex urban challenges (and opportunities) that are presented. Urban planning seeks to be **efficient** (make optimal use of resources), **effective** (create desired and meaningful impacts and outcomes), and also seeks to enhance **equity** (of opportunity, rights and power, especially with regard to gender). To achieve this, decision-makers need a solid foundation of information and direction that can be provided by urban planning, specifically the monitoring and evaluation of urban plans.

Urban plan monitoring and evaluation generates many benefits. Continuous monitoring and evaluation of plan relevance, integrity, and coherence helps decision-makers to make informed decisions about resource allocations. Monitoring and evaluation can demonstrate whether urban planning has made a difference, whether it has improved (or undermined) the quality of life and wellbeing of the city's residents, enhanced sustainability, or achieved related goals and objectives.

This chapter provides a brief overview of various types of monitoring and evaluation. It also examines monitoring and evaluation in the context of recent and current urban planning practice.

TYPES OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Given the rapid pace and extent of change in local government decision-making environments, there is a need for constant assessment of trends, activities and performance. This has led to increased interest in programme monitoring and evaluation. Box 10 provides a brief overview of the key components of this process.

The monitoring and evaluation process has been described in many ways. It is, however, possible to identify several core and common stages in monitoring and evaluation design:

- Formulate goals and outcomes;
- Select outcome indicators to monitor;
- Gather baseline information on the current condition;
- Set specific targets to reach and dates;
- Regularly collect data to determine progress; and
- Analyze and report the results.

Organizational culture — the attitudes of staff, as well as demonstrable support from senior management and politicians — is a very important determinant of success or failure of monitoring and evaluation processes. Thus, the monitoring and evaluation approach must reflect organizational realities. Box 11 describes some of the challenges that can be encountered when designing and administering monitoring and evaluation in organizations.

Box 10 Defining 'monitoring', 'evaluation' and 'indicators' in urban planning

Monitoring refers to the ongoing collection and analysis of information about trends, activities and events that could affect the plan's performance. Monitoring can also address whether the plan has been efficiently managed through plan administration processes.

Evaluation tells decision-makers whether, and how effectively, the plan has achieved its intended goals and objectives. It is the measurement of plan performance in terms of the outcomes and impacts compared with intended goals and objectives, and the efficiency with which related resources are used and the programme has been administered. There are three main forms of evaluations of urban plans:

- **Ex ante evaluation** (undertaken during plan formulation, i.e. before implementation starts);
- **Formative evaluation** (undertaken as part of plan administration, i.e. during plan implementation); and
- **Summative (ex post) evaluation** (undertaken normally after completion of plans).

Indicators provide the quantitative data and/or qualitative information that demonstrate trends and patterns.

CURRENT PRACTICE IN URBAN PROGRAMME AND PLAN EVALUATION

Urban monitoring and evaluation has become part of practice in the more progressive planning departments of cities and regions in developed countries. In many cases, monitoring and evaluation of urban plans reflects an interest in evaluating progress made toward achieving urban sustainability or healthy community goals and objectives.

Interest in urban planning applications of plan evaluation emerged in the mid-1990s in developed countries, reflecting increasing concerns for efficiency, effectiveness and accessibility, as well as performance and productivity in

municipal government. However, the first phase of urban plan monitoring and evaluation occurred in the 1960s and early 1970s, coincident with the emergence and early rise of generic programme evaluation theory development. These early approaches — referred to as *ex ante* evaluation — advocated highly rational and technical analyses of urban planning goals and project proposals, including impact analysis, as the urban plan evolved. This application of *ex ante* tools distinguishes urban planning applications of monitoring and evaluation from generic programme or project evaluation, which takes an *ex post* or retrospective (summative) and in-process (formative) view of programme performance and impact.

Performance measurement in cities is of interest to agencies such as the World Bank, which recognizes the pivotal role that indicators serve in the effort to achieve economic development, sustainability and healthy communities. UN-Habitat's Urban Indicators Programme and Global Urban Observatory represent serious efforts to create and institutionalize indicators as a key contributor to enhanced decision-making.

In developing countries, the most extensive urban application of monitoring and evaluation has occurred with programmes that are funded by international agencies, managed by state organizations, and implemented by local authorities. Programmes cover a wide range of social, economic, environmental and institutional topics that include poverty eradication, infrastructure (including water and sanitation), slum upgrading, low-income housing, etc. Examples of monitoring and evaluation practice include the World Bank's Global Monitoring Report, World Development



Ex ante evaluation is an important first step for upgrading programmes

Box 11 Common monitoring and evaluation challenges

- Inadequate understanding of and attention to monitoring and evaluation in project design and subsequently inadequate resource allocation and hierarchical organization of decision-making and analysis.
- Lack of commitment to monitoring by project staff and implementing partners.
- Monitoring is seen as an obligation imposed from outside, with project staff mechanically filling in forms for managers and the project managers seeing monitoring only as a form of data collection in the process of writing reports for donors.
- Irrelevant and poor quality information produced through monitoring that focuses on physical and financial aspects and ignores project outreach, effect and impact.
- Almost no attention to the monitoring and evaluation needs and potentials of other stakeholders such as beneficiaries and community-based and other local cooperating institutions.
- Very few internal project reviews or ongoing evaluations, with adjustments triggered mainly by external evaluations or supervisions.
- Widespread lack of integration and cooperation between project monitoring and evaluation and project management with no clear, mutually agreed-upon guidelines.
- Monitoring and evaluation documentation that does not address or resolve identified problems.
- Over-ambitious monitoring systems.
- Poor use of participatory and qualitative monitoring and evaluation methods.
- Monitoring and evaluation staff with insufficient relevant skills and experiences.
- Differentiation of monitoring from evaluation activities, with evaluation being contracted out.

Source: IFAD, 2002

Indicators, and Development Impact Evaluation (DIME) initiatives. UN-Habitat's Global Urban Observatory supports city-based monitoring and evaluation capacity-building through its country and city projects on local and national urban observatories.

In developed countries, there is considerable experience with monitoring and summative evaluation of urban-related programmes, especially in interventions related to transportation, regional economic development, and the environment. National governments and the more progressive sub-national state or provincial governments have typically required evaluation of programme performance. The intent is to ensure that plans are relevant, strategic, and action-oriented. There is also an expectation that regular evaluations will lead to outcomes and impacts that reflect good planning, and ensure compliance with relevant rules and policies. These evaluation processes are supported by an active monitoring process in which key indicators are tracked and information is assessed.

There is less evidence of community/official plan-level monitoring and evaluation in developing countries. There are few resources for planning generally, and especially for plan enforcement or monitoring. In countries with reasonable planning capacity, the emphasis is typically on the production of comprehensive land-use plans, master plans, and urban

design plans. The emphasis is on problem solving and implementation to meet short-term needs for housing, potable water, waste management, economic development, and infrastructure. Urban planning in this context is often adversely affected by governance problems caused by political instability, and a sheer lack of social and fiscal capital, technical capacity, and institutional instability.

There is, however, considerable evidence indicating the usefulness of participatory monitoring and evaluation approaches. As discussed in Chapter 5, community participation has proved to be an important element in all parts of the urban planning process, including monitoring and evaluation. Participatory urban appraisal and participatory budgeting in particular have proved very useful to achieve the '3Es' of good planning practice — **efficiency**, **effectiveness**, and **equity**. Increased transparency, increased sense of ownership of the development process itself, and increased flexibility to adapt by learning from experiences during plan implementation, are among the main positive outcomes of participatory monitoring and evaluation. The experience with the use of citizen report cards in Bangalore, India (see Box 12), shows the effectiveness of involving the users themselves directly in monitoring and evaluation.

Although there has been very little progress in embracing monitoring and evaluation as integral parts of the

Box 12 Using citizen report cards as a strategic tool to improve service delivery, Bangalore, India

Bangalore is India's third largest city and is located in the southern part of the country. The city's municipal government was aware of the need to provide and deliver urban services in a more efficient and effective manner. Accordingly, in 1994, a civil society organization prepared 'citizen report cards' which were used to communicate the citizens' perspectives on what they considered dreadful levels of service delivery (e.g. water supply, transport, power, health care and transportation).

The report cards were based on random sample surveys, using structured questionnaires, reflecting actual experiences of people with a wide range of public services. Agencies were rated and compared in terms of public satisfaction, corruption and responsiveness. The results of the survey were striking. Almost all public service providers received poor ratings. The 'report cards' were sent to the appropriate government agency for action, and the media were alerted.

The public discussion that followed brought the issue of public services out in the open. Civil society organizations demanded action, and as a result many public service providers took steps to improve their services. The release of new 'citizen report cards' in 1999 and in 2003, revealed that remarkable improvements had been achieved in the city's public services. Intense public scrutiny had in fact been translated into improved levels of service and less corruption.

The Bangalore experience is considered an excellent example of civil society engagement with government authorities. This model has since been used with considerable success elsewhere in India and in other developing countries.

Source: www.capacity.org/en/journal/tools_and_methods/citizen_report_cards_score_in_india

urban planning process in the formerly communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, there are some indications that this may change in the future. The participation of such transitional countries and city governments in internationally funded programmes and projects has made public institutions in participating countries aware of the need to enforce transparency and accountability in all their actions related to the use of public resources.

There is no single, unitary set of indicators for urban plan monitoring and evaluation. Common planning-related measures could include economic, social, environmental, sustainability, and, most recently, urban creativity indicators.



Summative evaluations of urban plans are important, though rare in many countries

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In most cases, numerous potential indicators can be identified for each key issue. As a considerable effort (and cost) may be involved in the collection and maintenance of data for indicators, it is essential to be highly strategic in the choice of a limited number of indicators that specifically support urban plan monitoring and evaluation efforts.

In many developed countries more gendered statistics are being produced at the level of central government. However, such statistics tend to be based on existing data sources which historically may not have taken full account of specific gender issues. Gender statistics need to relate to policy goals and indicators of success. Gendered indicators are important in that they can help drive and focus implementation. Unfortunately, gender is often not considered relevant to high-level indicators. The result is that there are no criteria to assess whether policies and projects promote gender equality.

Performance measurement in urban service delivery is a key policy issue for international development agencies, and for progressive developing countries. Users of public services can tell governments a lot about the quality and value of the public services provided. The city of Bangalore, India, uses the 'report card system' to demonstrate whether and to what extent its services have been delivered (see Box 12).

Box 13 Monitoring and evaluation in China's urban planning system

China is undergoing rapid urbanization, which has increased demands for urban plans to guide city development. Evaluation in urban planning practice, especially in plan implementation, is normally of secondary consideration.

Most planning evaluations in China are formative or *ex ante* in nature. The focus is on evaluation of alternative plans, and there have been few attempts to use summative evaluation. However, with the social, economic, and public reforms and the improvement of information systems, increasing attention has been paid to evaluation and monitoring in planning policy making, in academic research, and in practice during the last ten years.

A system of individual 'monitors' now helps to enforce planning monitoring. This programme was first introduced by the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development in 2006, when 27 planning monitors were sent to 18 cities for a one-year programme. Monitors are usually experienced retired planners or planning officials. They are familiar with planning regulations, standards, and management processes and are good at communicating with different departments. Hence, they can identify most problems in plan implementation and provide measures to solve these in a timely manner. This monitor system is an innovation used to reinforce the current monitoring system. Its implementation has had remarkable effects: planning departments have improved their performance, and many illegal construction sites have been found at an early stage.

Source: Chen, 2008

CAVEATS AND CONSIDERATIONS IN THE MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF URBAN PLANS

It is important to note that most urban plan-based monitoring and evaluation has occurred in the cities of developed countries. These are places that have a reasonable base of finances and technical planning expertise, political stability, sophisticated governance structures, and comparatively manageable rates of urbanization. The scale and type of challenges is significantly different from their counterparts in developing countries.

Furthermore, there has been little critical analysis of these urban plan monitoring and evaluation experiences. This means that there is not yet a good sense of the range of experiences, positive and negative, with urban plan monitoring and evaluation. However, it is possible to learn from the existing body of knowledge and limited experience to identify some key, common lessons for practice.

A key challenge, and a common argument against introducing plan monitoring and evaluation, is the lack of adequate resources – money, technical services, and trained professional staff. This is a real issue in most developing countries, and in some developed countries as well. Many local governments struggle to deliver basic services. In that context, a comprehensive urban planning function is not possible, let alone a sophisticated system of plan monitoring, evaluation and indicators.



Successful implementation of mega-projects requires monitoring and evaluation before, during and after implementation

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The concept of monitoring and evaluation can be difficult to appreciate in local governments that face complex, energy-sapping urban challenges. There may be no time (or will) to learn about and embrace monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring and evaluation could be regarded (and resented) as an obligation imposed by external sources (for example funding agencies, or national government) without consideration for local capacity to design and deliver these systems.

Monitoring and evaluation can produce negative as well as positive results. The latter situation is often embraced by local decision-makers, while the former may be ignored, downplayed or even rejected. Thus, monitoring and evaluation are often looked upon less favourably. Indeed, lack of political will and bureaucratic inertia explains the slow take-up and application of monitoring and evaluation in many countries (as illustrated in Box 13).

It is important to ensure that monitoring and



Monitoring and evaluation of urban regeneration projects is essential for enhancing social equity

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evaluation is integrated with other local government corporate planning and decision-making processes and reporting systems. Monitoring and evaluation should operate in conjunction with well-established local government processes, thereby providing the opportunity to inform decision-making in a comprehensive, integrated and meaningful manner.

It is essential that decision-makers have a very clear understanding of what they need to know to make sound, evidence-based decisions. This requires a solid rationale for introducing and maintaining a monitoring and evaluation model, clarity about the required information, how the information should be collected and by whom, and the uses of the products of monitoring and evaluation. Box 14 provides guidelines to consider when designing an urban plan monitoring and evaluation model.

If poorly designed, urban planning evaluation can become an administrative burden. Planners and planning departments are usually too busy with conducting applied research, managing stakeholder consultation programmes, and crafting and implementing plans; they often simply do not have the time, energy, training, administrative or political support to monitor and evaluate plan implementation in a regular, consistent manner.

In cities that are contemplating the introduction of an urban plan monitoring and evaluation system, it makes sense to select a small, manageable set of urban planning-oriented indicators. Ideally, it would be wise to start with indicators that relate to high-profile and well-established urban planning issues in the community. It is essential to note that the quality and meaning of indicators matters more than the number of indicators.

Box 14 Monitoring and evaluation design strategy

- Think about evaluation from an early stage. Evaluation requires a clear picture of the starting point (the baseline) and of what you are trying to do.
- Build a 'culture' of evaluation — get the commitment of everyone involved — to gathering information and using it.
- Decide what local work is needed to manage a scheme effectively and understand its impact.
- Ensure that evaluation covers the key themes a scheme or project is targeting.
- Make links between monitoring and evaluation.
- Involve the local community.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Monitoring and evaluation of urban plans has the potential to improve decision-making capacity, inform planning practice, and educate community residents. The body of knowledge on monitoring and evaluation practice in urban planning in both developed, transition and developing countries is limited. This calls for primary research that investigates the nature of urban planning practice generally, and the role of monitoring and evaluation in that context; assesses the extent to which monitoring and evaluation of urban plans takes place; and evaluates the models and processes that are used in practice. The results of such research would provide the information needed to support interventions by national governments, funding agencies, local governments and urban planners. A number of strategies can be identified as decision-makers move to implement urban plan monitoring and evaluation:

- Ensure that monitoring and evaluation of urban plans is mandated under national and/or state planning legislation.
- Support local government urban plan monitoring and evaluation.
- Design urban plans that integrate monitoring, evaluation and indicators with goals, objectives and policies.
- The monitoring and evaluation process must be reasonably straightforward.
- Allocate resources to policy planning and research functions.
- Indicators and the monitoring and evaluation system must be simple, easy to understand, and workable within existing resource limits.
- Monitoring and evaluation exercises should involve extensive consultation with, and meaningful participation by, plan stakeholders.
- Continue to evaluate proposed policies, programmes and plans.
- Integrate monitoring and evaluation of plan impacts and outcomes in local government urban planning processes.