



2nd Bangladesh Urban Forum

Draft Concept Note



Background

The Bangladesh Urban Forum (BUF) is one of the most important national development events and processes in recent times, and arguably the most important for the country's urban future. Given Bangladesh's rapid and continually increasing rate of urbanization, a large numbers of urban stakeholders identified the need to host a national urban forum relevant and receptive to addressing the challenges surrounding urbanization.

BUF was officially launched in December 2011 as a three day long ground-breaking event, inaugurated by the Honourable President of Bangladesh and attended by the Minister of Local Government, Housing and Public Works and the Minister of Finance. It attracted major urban stakeholders in Bangladesh. This innovative forum accommodated more than twenty-one thematic sessions and an urban exhibition. It culminated in a declaration upholding the people's demand as well as institutional promises towards sustainable and inclusive urbanization. (www.bufbd.org).

BUF is a broad-based stakeholder platform promoting dialogue and action to address a multitude of urban issues. It is both a process, with regular events involving its stakeholders, as well as an institution comprising all urban stakeholders. The institution will ensure that the dialogue and action is rooted in a broad-based consensus on the challenges arising from and priority responses to urbanization and urban poverty—will be effective and sustainable.

The Forum, as an inclusive space for urban sector stakeholders, offers an opportunity for mutual exchange of ideas, presentation of cutting edge concepts, best practices and policy discussion on urbanization and urban development. It also provides an opportunity for development partners to reaffirm their commitment to Bangladesh's urban future and to support efforts to make cities and towns that are liveable for all.

1st Bangladesh Urban Forum, 5-7 December, 2011, Dhaka

The first Bangladesh Urban Forum was organized jointly by the Government of Bangladesh, with leadership from two key Ministries (Ministry of LGRD&C, Ministry of Housing & Public Works) UNDP and other stakeholders in the form of a national conference 5-7 December 2011. Nearly a hundred organizations were involved in the event with participation from more than 2,500 people across the country, including national and international experts, ministers, representatives of government and non-governmental organizations, development partners, elected representatives and community representatives.

The outcome of the 3-day national conference was a set of comprehensive recommendations on directions for future action. In addition, a detailed Declaration of the Bangladesh Urban Forum was adopted by the stakeholders drawing inputs from the

discussions and deliberations during the forum. The Declaration recognized the importance of the urban sector and the urbanization process for Bangladesh's future development, calling for inclusive urbanization and a more proactive national strategic management.

2nd Bangladesh Urban Forum, February 2015

Context

Bangladesh's urban sector has expanded dramatically since the launch of the first Bangladesh Urban Forum in late 2011. Various steps have been taken to institutionalize the BUF including the: i) The creation of high level inter-Ministerial committee to institutionalize the BUF, ii) Establishment of a permanent secretariat, iii) Formation of eight thematic clusters comprising more than hundred organizations, iv) Development of a business plan and v) Mobilization and coordination of inputs from various stakeholders to support the draft national urban policy and housing policy.

The second session of the Bangladesh Urban Forum (BUF II) is due to take place in early February 2015. BUF II comes at an opportune moment, against a backdrop of dynamic political, economic and social development in Bangladesh. Political and social support for sustainable urbanization has also been growing not only globally, but also within Bangladesh in particular. The BUF itself has emerged as a platform for national level dialogue and debate around critical issues of urbanization that can shape national and local level policies. The 2015 Forum and its outcomes will inform future policies for sustainable and inclusive urbanization, including the following:-

The Planning Process for the Seventh 5-Year Plan

While the Sixth Five-Year-Plan laid out a detailed strategy to offset the negative impacts of an urban transition, especially in the short-term, it outlined a vision for 2021. BUF II aims to contribute more specifically to the process of planning of the 7th Five Year Plan with clear-cut medium to long term policy directives building on the lessons learned and best practices.

Draft National Urban Sector Policy

The draft of the National Urban Sector Policy can benefit from a shared vision of an equitable, efficient and sustainable urban future whereby: (i) All stakeholders play a role and (ii) All people are free of hunger and poverty and have access to education, shelter and basic services in a secure and liveable environment. The discussions and deliberations of the second session of the BUF can help policy makers in advancing relevant policy issues. This ensures involvement of all stakeholders as well as their commitment in upholding the vision promulgated during the first BUF.

Post 2015 Sustainable Development Agenda

The Forum is expected to provide an opportunity to take stock of the progress made towards achieving the MDGs and most importantly shed some light on the architecture of post 2015 sustainable development agenda. In preparation for the Habitat III conference, Bangladesh's government will need to engage in forming an urban agenda for Asia and the Pacific region in the coming decades and consider its own strategy for meeting the challenges of sustainable development and climate change. In the context of the need to identify urbanization challenges and advocate for a "sustainable urbanization" approach in the post-2015 agenda, the BUF II will provide stakeholders with the opportunity to hear the views of experts and mayors as city managers. The Mayors represent the implementers of urban policies, in "localizing" the post-2015 agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

New generation urban program for Bangladesh

The extensive multi-disciplinary framework of the Bangladesh Urban Forum will generate innovative strategies and ideas aimed towards the design of new programmes and investment plans for development and government agencies. It will draw on the experiences of the Urban Partnership for Poverty Reduction Project (UPPRP) which is one of the largest poverty reduction programs in Bangladesh and now after 15 years of implementation will form the basis of a National Urban Poverty Reduction Strategy. The financing of low cost housing is a priority for future urban development policies. Building from the foundations laid by UPPR, as well as the BUF, the government of Bangladesh will renew its efforts and address the needs of its citizens through the design of sustainable capacity building policies with support from the participation of multiple urban stakeholders.

Theme

"Framing a shared urban vision for Bangladesh"

The Bangladesh Sixth Five Year Plan: 2011-2015 stated that "This growth path, while ambitious, is achievable through a strategy that transforms Bangladesh from a rural agro-based economy towards an urban manufacturing-based economy". The Government therefore recognises the importance of planned urbanisation in its economic growth strategy. Today's 55 million city dwellers, representing 34% of the total population will double by 2050. More than half of us will live in cities by 2040.

Until recently, urbanization was seen as something to be avoided with the emphasis on rural development. Today, planned urbanisation is welcomed as a basis for sustainable economic and social development. It is seen as an essential component of transforming Bangladesh into a middle income economy in less than a decade.

But it presents us with many challenges. As cities grow rapidly so does inequality. The rich show off their wealth through the size and design of their houses and the cars they drive. The gap between the “Haves” and the Have Nots” grows wider. Quality of life in terms of urban environment and resilience to absorb weather extremes are forgotten in the race to get maximum gain from available land. Inclusive citizens’ participation is put on one side by the march of the rich and powerful.

What kind of urbanisation pattern do we really want - a few large cities, many small towns, or something in between? How should cities develop? High, low or medium density? Walkable and drivable? What is an appropriate balance between the use of private vehicles and the use of public transport? What do we mean by “quality of life and how can this be retained in a growing urban environment? Can cities provide homes for the poor as well as the rich? How to prepare for and plan for our growing urban populations? What is our vision for our future cities and what do we need to do to achieve that vision? What can we learn from our neighbouring countries in terms of their success stories and failures and how can this be reflected in the preparation of Bangladesh’s 7th 5-year plan and national urbanization policies.

2nd Bangladesh Urban Forum continues the dialogue to help shape the urban future of Bangladesh.

Sub Themes

Urban Equity

Poverty and inequality stand out as major challenges in the development of our cities and towns, perpetuated by a lack of access to basic services and civic amenities and unequal access to economic opportunities. Cities and towns need to ensure the equitable distribution and redistribution of the benefits of a prosperous city, reduce poverty and the incidence of slums, value the contributions from the informal economy, undertake city wide participatory and inclusive planning, linking informal settlements and workers to formal/traditional urban planning, protect the rights of marginal and vulnerable groups, enhance gender equality, and ensure civic participation in the social, political and cultural spheres.

Urban Resilience

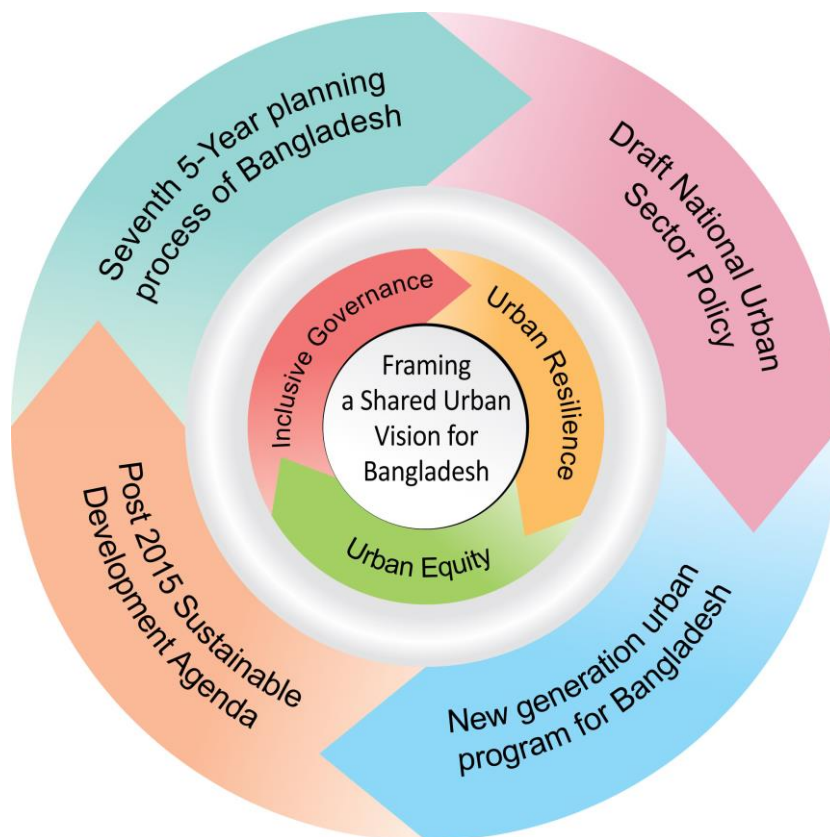
A resilient city is one that values the protection of the urban environment and natural assets while ensuring growth, quality of life, and seeks ways to use energy more efficiently, minimize pressure on surrounding land and natural resources, minimize environmental losses by generating creative solutions to enhance the quality of the urban environment. A resilient city anticipates and plans for changes that are

anticipated in the future and builds into its planning processes resilience to resist extreme weather and climatic change conditions.

Inclusive Governance

Meaningful participation of all citizens as partners in decision-making and urban management are a key elements in good governance and making cities and towns work for all. Urban governance is inextricably linked to the welfare of the city's population and underpins the performance of all investments in infrastructure and service delivery. Participatory governance begins at the local level. Citizen participation should be encouraged at the lowest administrative levels, where people are closest to the institutions that affect them. Direct democracy and decentralization, at their best, give both women and men a better chance to participate, help protect the rights of minorities and increase efficiency and transparency of service delivery.

As pressure on financial and human resources at the local government level grow, there is an increasing need for all citizen groups to become partners in the development of our cities and not to remain as beneficiaries. Creating opportunities for these partnerships to develop and flourish is an important component of inclusive governance.



Proposed Programs and Format

Lead up Events

Lead-up events will be organized ahead of the BUF. The events may include media briefings, social media campaigns, cycle rallies, social networking, OpEds, launching of a new urban theme, installation of information booth at suitable locations.

Conference Programs and Format

The main part of the second BUF will consist of several parallel conferences, whose programmes are focused on the subject of eight thematic clusters' prioritized areas. The objective of these sessions, within the main theme of the forum, is to suggest ways forward for drafting an urban vision for Bangladesh. These sessions will be led by sectoral experts and representatives of stakeholders. A plenary session will be held following the inauguration of the event where all stakeholders are expected to meet at a common forum.

Exhibition

The Urban Exhibition will comprise two sub-exhibitions that will provide an opportunity to exhibit the best examples of as well as future interventions in urban practices.

Vision of Future Professionals

This will be attended by public and private Universities with architecture or planning departments. Urban Planning and architecture students will submit models of their visions of five urban themes: a) Water Front Development b) Urban Renewal c) Inclusive Housing d) Urban Mobility & e) Urban Open Space.

Best Practices on urban solution and innovation

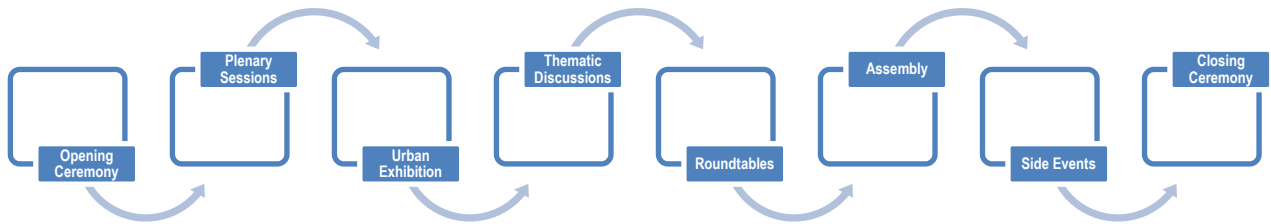
An exhibition of solution-oriented good practices in chosen areas will be showcased with inputs from GoB agencies, development partners, urban projects, INGOs/NGOs, etc. Chosen urban issues include Water and Sanitation, Waste Management, Housing Solution, Transportation, Health, Education, Environment, Poverty, Urban Governance, Social Security, Safer City, Disaster and Risk Management, Youth and Children.

Research & Publications

In addition to the advertising and communications campaign, urban sector research and publications will be commissioned to generate knowledge and further raise public and stakeholder awareness.

Programme Outline:

The 2nd Bangladesh Urban Forum 2015 will be a two day event to accommodate the interests of a diverse group of participants through various sessions designed to support the key objectives and reflect the overarching theme and sub-themes.



Session outline is provided in Annex-1

Organizers

With the guidance of the BUF Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee, BUF II will be organized by the BUF Secretariat runs by the Govt. of Bangladesh and UNDP in collaboration with UN organizations, Development Partners and many national organizations. International and national organizations and networks will join as sponsors and strategic partners. BUF Secretariat and a core group of agencies involved will extend the preparatory and financial assistance to the organization of Forum.

Participation in the Forum

In order to promote a successful forum, it is crucial to ensure a participatory process where all the stakeholders are involved and represented. Key stakeholders will include Government institutions; public representatives; civil society and professional organizations; private sector organizations; national and international institutes; community-based organizations, including slum dweller organizations and social groups; and development partners. A special effort will be made to involve stakeholders from outside Dhaka, women, disabled, minorities and youth. In this regard, clusters shall play a key role in involving the stakeholders to participate in the events.

Bangladesh Urban Forum II Programme Outline

Day 1		Day 2		
9.00 to 11.030	Registration Opening Session & Inauguration of The Urban Exhibition 1	Housing for the Urban Poor: Exploring Options for Public Private Partnership in Housing Finance 10	Urban Policy and Governanc e 11	Human Resources Developm ent/ Social and Cultural Developm ent 12
11.30 to 13.00	High Level Plenarry on Framing a Shared Urban Vision for Bangladesh 2	Children, Women, Youth & Person with Disabilities 13	Mayors Roundtable 14	Inclusive Municipal Finance 15
14.00 to 15.30	3 Economic Dev & Poverty Alleviation	4 Youth Assembly	5 Demystifying Urban Resilience	Book/Report Launch 16
15.30 to 17.00	Urban Poor Assembly 6	Urban Planning, Infrastructure & Transport 7	Land, Housing and Services 8	CSOs Roundtable 9
		Urban Vision Statement & Closing Ceremony 17		Closing Party

Exhibition