

Citizens Charter in Cities

Advancing a national Urban Solidarity Programme (USP)

This discussion paper presents the emerging thinking for a national Urban Solidarity Programme (USP), which is aligned to the Citizens Charter, and is a proposed flagship action of the Urban National Priority Programme (U-NPP). The paper provides an overview of what USP aims to achieve, and where and how it would be implemented. The paper continues to advocate for increased alignment with the overall Citizens Charter programme to ensure that all Afghans – both rural and urban – are engaged in community-based governance, state-building and improved service delivery for balanced territorial development.

Discussion Paper #8, Series Two, April 2016

Situating the proposed Urban Solidarity Programme (USP)

The USP is envisaged as a flagship action of the Urban National Priority Programme (U-NPP). It reflects the importance of Afghan cities, which are home to approximately 1/3 of the Afghan population. It reflects the National Unity Government's (NUG) objective to bridge the gap between the inhabitants of cities/municipalities by formalising community governance mechanisms such as Gozar Assemblies and Community Development Councils (CDCs) with the ultimate aim of improving service delivery and municipal development.

"The more cities grow, the more there's a gap between inhabitants of the city and the municipality. Our pledge is that we will create elected people's councils... and just like that the national solidarity programme, we will create an urban solidarity programme so that necessary opportunities for active participation of the people is created."

H.E Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai

USP is not a new idea. It builds on the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) experience from rural areas. As well, USP-type programming has been implemented in various cities over the past decade; see Discussion Paper #2 in Series One, "Urban Solidarity" for an overview of this experience. Thus the proposal for scaling-up to a national programme is not revolutionary, but it does require considerable thinking in several areas, such as:

- What is the exact relationship between Citizens Charter (CC) Programme and USP?
- What is 'urban' and what is 'rural', and therefore which programme would be implemented where?
- What are the main differences between rural and urban communities and therefore how will the programmes cater to these differences?
- Which cities should be prioritized given that full coverage is unlikely due to the limited resources available?
- How can USP be more than a community-grants programme, particularly by aiming to strengthen municipal governance and improve municipal revenues?
- What is the current absorptive capacity of communities and municipalities for large-scale implementation?

Positive progress has been made over the past months on improving the alignment between various upcoming programmes. The latest information suggests that the USP will be financed under the national Citizens Charter 'umbrella' programme, although it is still 'housed' under the U-NPP. This is a logical decision as it allows a more coherent approach to national territorial development, is more equitable to meet the needs of all Afghans, and enables the Deputy Ministry for Municipalities (IDLG/DMM)¹ and Municipalities to harness the considerable experience of NSP, particularly in terms of the fiscal aspects of programme planning, delivery and monitoring and evaluation.

Weak governance, rule of law, and citizen participation in cities

Unclear boundary demarcation of CDCs, Gozers, Nahias, Cities
Lack of reliable urban data for planning purposes
Lack of knowledge among urban dwellers about urban culture and citizens' rights and responsibilities
Lack of coordination among urban stakeholders

Financial and economic constraints

Insufficient municipal revenues to meet mandate for service delivery
No support from national budget for municipalities
Lack of urban economic development plans
Urban dwellers reluctant to pay municipal fees and charges due to lack of trust

Current challenges and needs of USP

Informal settlements and spatial inequality

Significant proportion of cities informal (~70%) with limited services
Limited tenure security for urban dwellers in informal settlements
Uncontrolled urban growth, land grabbing and unplanned areas

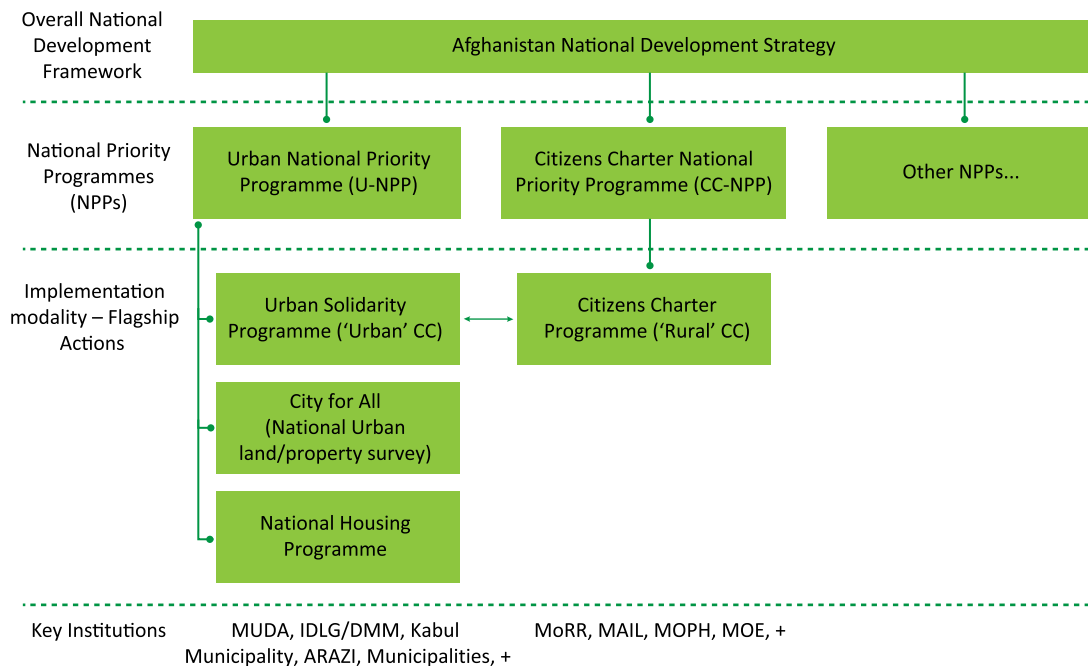
Significant infrastructure deficits and weak private sector investment

Weak sustainable economic development in cities
Insufficient private sector engagement and productive investment in cities
Women and youth especially excluded and under-represented
Urgent need for job creation and urban investment

⁴More consideration in programme design will need to be given to how to deal with previous-funded CDCs and USP work. A vulnerability criteria and transparent selection process will need to be established to ensure USP meets the needs of the most vulnerable neighbourhoods.

¹Formerly the General Directorate of Municipal Affairs (GDMA)

Situating the USP



What is USP?

As currently envisaged, USP will be a national programme, implemented by DMM, Kabul Municipality, and other municipalities financed through on-budget mechanisms. The expected overall impact is: “Strengthened local governance and economic development in Afghanistan’s major cities”. The four expected results include:

- Strengthened municipal capacity and community-based governance
- Improved living conditions in urban neighbourhoods
- Increased private sector and household investment in cities and job creation
- Increased sustainable municipal revenues for service delivery

USP is designed around five main components, as follows:

Component 1: Citizen empowerment through CDCs and Gozar Assemblies;

This component focuses on citizen participation structured through a hierarchy of urban development councils. A Community Development Council (CDC) has up to 250 households and a Gozar Assembly (GA) is a cluster of four to five CDCs, with up to 1,250 households². Activities would include mobilisation and the democratic elections of councils, delineation of boundaries, strengthening linkages with Municipal Advisory Boards, and civic education and awareness to Council members and residents.

Structuring Urban Engagement



Spatial arrangement of Nahia, Gozar and CDC



²UN-Habitat (2014) Urban Solidarity. Discussion Paper #2. <ADD WEB LINK>

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Component 2: Service delivery and neighbourhood upgrading through neighbourhood planning, block grants and community and municipal contributions;

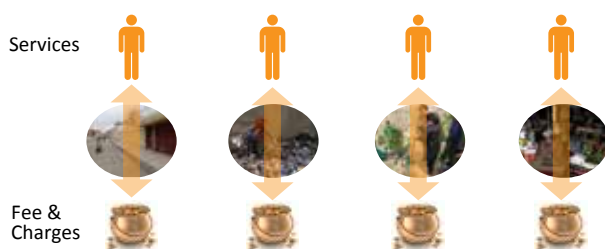
This component is very similar to the NSP, with Councils undertaking participatory action planning at CDCs and Gozar levels; identifying and preparing sub-project proposals; developing a financing strategy (e.g. cash contribution/funding and implementation of local projects with financial support given through block-grants as well as upto 40 percent community contribution); and sub-project implementation, monitoring and evaluation by Councils and Nahia Offices. Sub-projects may include waste management, greening, road and drainage construction, street lighting and house numbering, and be aligned with regularization and tenure security improvements especially for informal/unplanned areas. Furthermore, spatial planning at Nahia level will attempt to identify interlinkages and synergies between these sub-projects for more comprehensive urban development.



Component 3: Sustainable municipal revenue enhancement, economic development and job creation

This component focuses on financial reform and revenue enhancement of municipalities, at both Nahia and city level with the goal to increase revenues and improve municipal accountability and transparency. Activities would include a shift to performance-based budgetting and resource allocation across Nahias; strengthening sustainable revenue sources such as Safayi fees, business licences, etc.; and establishing electronic systems for financial transparency and accountability. Economic development activities would include creating and implementing Local Economic Development (LED) Plans (rural urban linkages such as food processing, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) etc, and advancing PPPs by encouraging the private sector to invest in urban facilities and services.

Benefits-received Principle



Benefits-received principle: clear relationship between revenues collected and services delivered and as income from fees and charges increase services can be improved.

Component 4: Municipal human and institutional capacity development

The success of a municipal governance and financial reforms will depend to a large extent on the ability of municipal staff and systems to implement them. Therefore this component aims to address the significant human and institutional capacity deficits in municipalities³. Activities will include capacity development of municipal staff through on-the-job training and skills development; institutional capacity development of systems and procedures at Municipal and Nahia levels; strengthening Municipal Advisory Boards (MABs); reorganisation and tashkeel reform of Nahias; gender mainstreaming in municipal staffing; and improved inter-institution coordination with line departments at local level.

Component 5: Improved national enabling environment and Strengthened DMM

To see impacts in the above components requires a stronger enabling environment at the National level along with strengthened Deputy Ministry of Municipalities (DMM). Component five will therefore focus on activities such as reviewing and/or developing the required policies and laws such as the informal settlements upgrading policy; municipal law; urban services law, etc., developing a municipal development fund or fiscal transfers from central government to municipalities; and capacity development of DMM.

The USP will include cross-cutting issues of gender, youth, environment, human rights, and peacebuilding in the above components and activities. See Paper #5 <link> for more details on how youth could be engaged through either Youth Development Councils or with Youth Representatives on the CDCs; and Paper #2, Series One <link>, on how women are empowered to engage through women or mixed-CDCs and become local leaders and have a role in decision making.

How is USP different to NSP?

There are considerable differences between the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) that has created CDCs in rural areas and the proposed USP designed to create urban CDCs in municipalities. Urban areas require a more complex structure of community representation than rural areas. The need for a hierarchical structure of urban assemblies is closely tied to the need for boundaries that divide large communities into smaller entities. USP complements, and is based on, a substantial municipal governance reform and a fiscal reform designed to increase municipal financial self-sustainability so USP is less reliant on community block grants. Community contributions are significantly higher than in rural areas (around 30-40% in urban areas) and communities are also enrolled in the payment of municipal fees and charges to promote sustainability. This is particularly important in regard to informal settlements which have so far been excluded from municipal services; they will benefit substantially from a process of regularization, which will provide tenure security to many, and an opportunity to upgrade “slum-like conditions”, as well as expand the municipal revenue base.

³See an overview of these challenges in Chapter Two of: GoIRA (2015) The State of Afghan Cities 2015. GoIRA; Kabul, Afghanistan.

How and where?

It is envisaged that USP will adopt a phased approach, starting with Kabul and the four Regional Hub cities of Herat, Mazar-i-Sharif, Kandahar and Jalalabad in the initial two years. Full city coverage of in these five cities would account to approximately 3,000 CDCs and 600 Gozar Assemblies, although precise numbers depends on a survey also taking into account the already established CDCs and Gozar Assemblies (see table below)⁴. It is envisaged that with an average of 35% community contribution over 70 million USD can be mobilized from urban citizens for sub-project implementation. In due course the programme would be expanded to include secondary cities, such as LashkarGah, Taloqan, Kunduz, and strategic district municipalities such as Spin Boldak, Injil, and Andkhoy. As mentioned above, the USP is an on-budget programme that would be implemented by DMM and Kabul Municipality at the national level, and municipalities at the



Previous USP experience	Strategic Shifts 2016+
CDC as primary governance unit	Strengthening Gozars (avg. 1,000HH) as primary governance unit
Not spatial and not connected to Nahia and City Plan	Gozar plans linked to Nahia and City spatial Plans for effective city re-organisation/redevelopment
Service delivery through CDC's	Nahia offices and line departments delivering services in line with Gozar and Nahia plans
Community contribution (30%); Donor (70%)	"Urban" financing split: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donor 50%; • Community contribution (30%)
Only residential areas	Create Business Development Committees (BDCs) for commercial and economics areas to stimulate economics development

Ways forward

- Build consensus within government, private sector, and the international community around the transformative potential of USP to address many of the short-, medium- and long-term challenges facing Afghanistan;
- Continue to advance programme design complementarities between 'rural' citizens charter and USP;
- Develop the USP documentation in a participatory manner, enabling municipalities and citizens to provide inputs and refine the proposal;
- Advance the legal and regulatory basis for USP, for example regularizing CDCs and Gozar Assemblies in the SNG Policy;
- Improve the gender and youth dimensions to ensure that the programme is designed for the meaningful participation of these actors.



The Future of Afghan Cities (FoAC), is a government-led programme of MUDA, IDLG/GDMA, Kabul Municipality and ARAZI that focuses on the development of a Urban National Priority Programme (U-NPP) that will set Afghanistan's urban priorities for the coming decade. To support this, FoAC will also undertake a detailed analysis of five city regions and at least 20 strategic district municipalities to provide key data and recommendations for policy and programme design.

