

Seoul, Republic of Korea

Sharing best-practice policy with the world



Through its Global Urban Policy Sharing initiative, Seoul Metropolitan Government has developed a cooperation mechanism which enables cities from all over the world to receive policy and implementation support from a global sustainability leader. Since the launch of the initiative in 2012, Seoul has provided consultation for 32 cities across 24 countries.

ICLEI Case Study #198 - December 2017

Introduction

Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG) has experienced substantial urbanization, achieving globally unparalleled levels of development in a period of only 60 years. Through its Global Urban Policy Sharing initiative, SMG is now contributing to the economic and social development of cities outside of South Korea through a systematic knowledge transfer process that provides policy support and replicates discrete initiatives.

Why city-to-city learning?

Municipalities all over the world face similar challenges to the provision of socially inclusive, environmentally sustainable, and economically stable development. Proactively engaging with these challenges - through a process of discovering, interpreting, and utilizing new information - is made even more difficult by barriers to learning which exist at the municipal level, such as a short supply of funding and staff capacity. Additionally, municipalities are also vulnerable to the loss of organizational knowledge as a result of staff and elected official turnover.

One response to this challenge is facilitated city-to-city learning, which encourages municipalities to draw lessons from the experience of their peers. City-to-city learning looks different depending on the needs and capacity of the municipality.

A range of approaches encourages and accommodates international education. However, when a city-to-city process is actively guided and facilitated - as in the case of SMG's Global Urban Policy Sharing initiative - it can accelerate the transfer of knowledge and decrease the time required to pilot projects in the partner city.

Seoul in context

Seoul is the largest and capital city of South Korea, comprising of about 10 million inhabitants. It is the financial and cultural hub of the country and East Asia and is considered to be one of the premier 'smart' cities in the world, having been awarded 1st place in a World Electronic Government survey carried out by the United Nations in 2008. Seoul was also ranked 1st overall in Mobility and Transportation by IESE in the 2016 Business School. Yet following the Korean War, while rich in culture and potential, Seoul was both war-torn and underdeveloped. Nevertheless, over the last 60 years, Seoul has experienced rapid growth both in size and economy.



Facts & Figures

Population (2015)

10.02 million

Land area

605 km²

Seoul has been a Member of ICLEI since 1999 and the host city to the ICLEI East Asia Secretariat since 2012

The population in Seoul increased drastically from 2 million to 10 million inhabitants from the 1960s to the 1990s. Municipal GDP has grown by a factor of 330, from \$84 in 1961 to \$27,964 in 2014. This exponential growth resulted in a drastic expansion of the built environment in Seoul, which was accompanied by numerous social and environmental challenges which pressured the city government to develop a progressive and reactive urban planning system.

Through this experience, Seoul has accumulated knowledge and lessons from a rapid development path which sets it apart from other cities in developed countries.

Description of activities

From receiving foreign aid to sharing best-practice policies with the world

SMG's Global Urban Policy Sharing is an initiative which enables Seoul to transfer its institutional knowledge of successful policies and projects that it has accumulated during its rapid urbanization process to cities outside of South Korea, therein contributing to their economy, social development and welfare improvement. The aim of this initiative is to reduce trial-and-error costs and time, thus allowing local governments to leapfrog into the next level of development in shorter period of time. This initiative enables Seoul to increase its international recognition as a sustainable and advanced city, enhance its partnerships with other local governments around the globe, and support local and national businesses to expand their market.

For this initiative, Seoul provides not only intellectual capital through consultation, dispatching experts, organizing workshop and supporting research, but also material and technical support (e.g. building hard infrastructure).

Since 2006, SMG has been placing a strong focus on city diplomacy by establishing relationships with cities around the world in order to learn the best practices from other cities. Through this process, SMG learned that many local governments are facing similar urban challenges and going through trial-and-error phases which are similar to what Seoul experienced. As other local governments began to engage in city diplomacy, the unique experience of SMG has made it a desirable learning partner for knowledge transfer.

Under the leadership of Mayor Park Won-soon - winner of the Gothenburg Award for Sustainable Development for his outstanding 'Sharing Cities' policy - the mechanism for which other cities could engage with SMG as learning-partner was crystallized. The Division of International Exchange facilitated policy exchanges from 2012 until 2015, at which time a dedicated Division was created to systematically and professionally provide knowledge transfer support.

1960's



1980's



2000's



Source: © Seoul Metropolitan Government

Image 1: The transformation of the Cheonggyecheon stream area through the 1960s, 1980s and 2000s

In 2015, the new Global Urban Partnership Division enabled SMG to use policy sharing as the basis of establishing partnerships with foreign cities. The distinguishing characteristic of the Global Urban Policy Sharing initiative is its systematic approach and its focus on practical, quantifiable results.

How the initiative works

The Policy Sharing Initiative process (please see Figure 2) takes one of two different approaches which depends on the financial situation of the participating local government. For cities that have sufficient funding capacity to finance the implementation, the focus of the exchange is given to consultation and providing tailor-made advice to the city. If the partner local government lacks financial capacity - and especially if that city is in a developing country - the service which Seoul provides is not limited to consultation. It can also include an evaluation of available in-house or external funding to support the participating local government.

Policy-sharing in practice: Seoul & Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

The City of Ulaanbaatar faces severe traffic congestion as a result of population increases. This traffic congestion is exacerbated by poor traffic management and the bus is the only public transport means, which is also often stuck in traffic. As the City of Ulaanbaatar was seeking practical solutions to their traffic problems, they started to be interested in Seoul's public transport reform.

The Korean Smart Card Company, which was established by Seoul Metropolitan Government and implemented the Automatic Fare Collection of Seoul during its public transport reform in 2004, consulted with the City of Ulaanbaatar. This later enabled them to successfully win the bid to become the implementer and operator of the Ulaanbaatar's system. Through the introduction of Smart Card, the payment became more transparent and the number of accidents was reduced as bus drivers do not need to compete. Since its introduction in 2015, now 68% (as of October 2016) of commuters in Ulaanbaatar are using 'U-Money.

Policy-sharing in practice: Seoul & Chanchamayo, Peru

Due to the large seasonal variations of precipitation and lack of water utility services, water supply was one of the major challenges in the City of Chanchamayo as many other Peruvian cities. The City of Chanchamayo is home to 200-thousand people and located between the Andes and the Amazon. The water utilities were built 60 years ago without proper maintenance and the water supply was unstable in dry season and polluted in the rainy season.

As part of the Seoul Metropolitan Government's Global Urban Policy Sharing and overseas aid program, Seoul provided consultation and funding for improving the capacity of San Ramon water purification plant. By providing about 270,000 EUR of funding and technical consultation, Seoul replaced 3 km of the water intake pipeline and expanded the storing capacity from 3,000 ton/day to 7,000 ton/day. This gives access of clean potable water to about 10% of the inhabitants, and represents the first phase of three water improvement plans.



Image 2: U-Money in Ulaanbaatar

Source: © Seoul Metropolitan Government



Image 3: Improved water services in Chanchamayo

Source: © Seoul Metropolitan Government

After the screening process within Seoul Metropolitan Government, a task force team will be formed to conduct analysis and research on the local government. Depending on the needs and the given situation in the city, the services that the team provides can include some combination of the following: study visits, training programs, advisory/consulting, project implementation, and support for establishing public-private partnerships.

In most of the cases, experts from Seoul travel to the partner city to establish relationships and conduct a site visit to investigate the unique challenges that each local government is facing. The consultation process includes recommendations from SMG and inputs from the local government to design a tailor-made approach.

Institutional structure

This initiative is primarily led by the Global Urban Partnership Division in Seoul Metropolitan Government in cooperation with different affiliated organizations that each serve a different role. Seoul Urban Solutions Agency (SUSA), under Seoul Housing (SH) Corporation, provides expertise and direct support in consultation to participating local governments, localizing Seoul's policies, and collaborating with public sector, private corporations and financial institutions. SUSA formed Seoul Policy Consulting Group, a pool of more than 70 experts which consist of the former and current officials, researchers, and concerned parties who have extensive urban development policy knowledge. The theories and technical information of the policies are backed by Seoul Institute, a think tank founded by Seoul Metropolitan Government to improve municipal administration of Seoul through professional research.

Results

- **32 cities consulted and more than 1,200 city officials trained:** Since the launch of the initiative in 2012, Seoul has provided consultation to 32 cities in 24 countries, contributing to more than 38 initiatives. The support has ranged from technical assistance to building actual local systems. The consultation given has not been limited to cities in developing countries, and includes countries such as New Zealand. In parallel to consultation services, Seoul has been offering various programs for city officials who are interested in getting first-hand experience of Seoul's approach to governance. This program includes training city officials on learner-dictated urban themes and running a masters program on urban administration and planning that is fully funded by Seoul. Since its launch in 2005, more than 1,200 city officials from various countries have benefited from Seoul's training programs.



Image 4: Seoul receives a warm welcome in Peru

Source: © Seoul Metropolitan Government

- **Established platforms to share policy knowledge:** Seoul launched the Seoul Solution Platform, an online policy archive for knowledge sharing, which includes almost 200 cases of Seoul's urban policies that contributed to addressing its urban challenges. In addition to this database, Seoul created a platform which provides direct solutions to achieve each of the Sustainable Development Goals, translating the international goals into existing local actions. Building upon the urban SDG platform, Seoul pledges to host the "International Forum on Urban Policy for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)" biannually together with UNESCAP and CityNet to support vibrant discussion of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with peer local governments.
- **Attracting funding for implementation for cities in emerging countries:** The Policy Sharing initiative also enabled Seoul to attract national and international funding for participating cities, resulting in greater opportunities for those cities in emerging countries in implementing localized policies. Through the public-private partnership network launched in July 2014, Seoul secured 3.2 million EUR to fund activities in 12 countries from the national partners such as KOICA (Korea International Cooperation Agency), MOLIT (Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport), MOI (Ministry of Interior). Considering the short amount of time since the launch of the initiative, it is expected that more national and international funds will be raised in the next years.
- **Support for local and national businesses:** As development and implementation of policy goes hand in hand with businesses, this initiative provides competitive advantages to local and national businesses. The businesses that were involved in implementing the policies in Seoul, and gained practical experience using Seoul as a test bed, receive project references. Seoul places special focus on small and medium sized enterprises that often do not have enough networks or platforms to export their technologies.

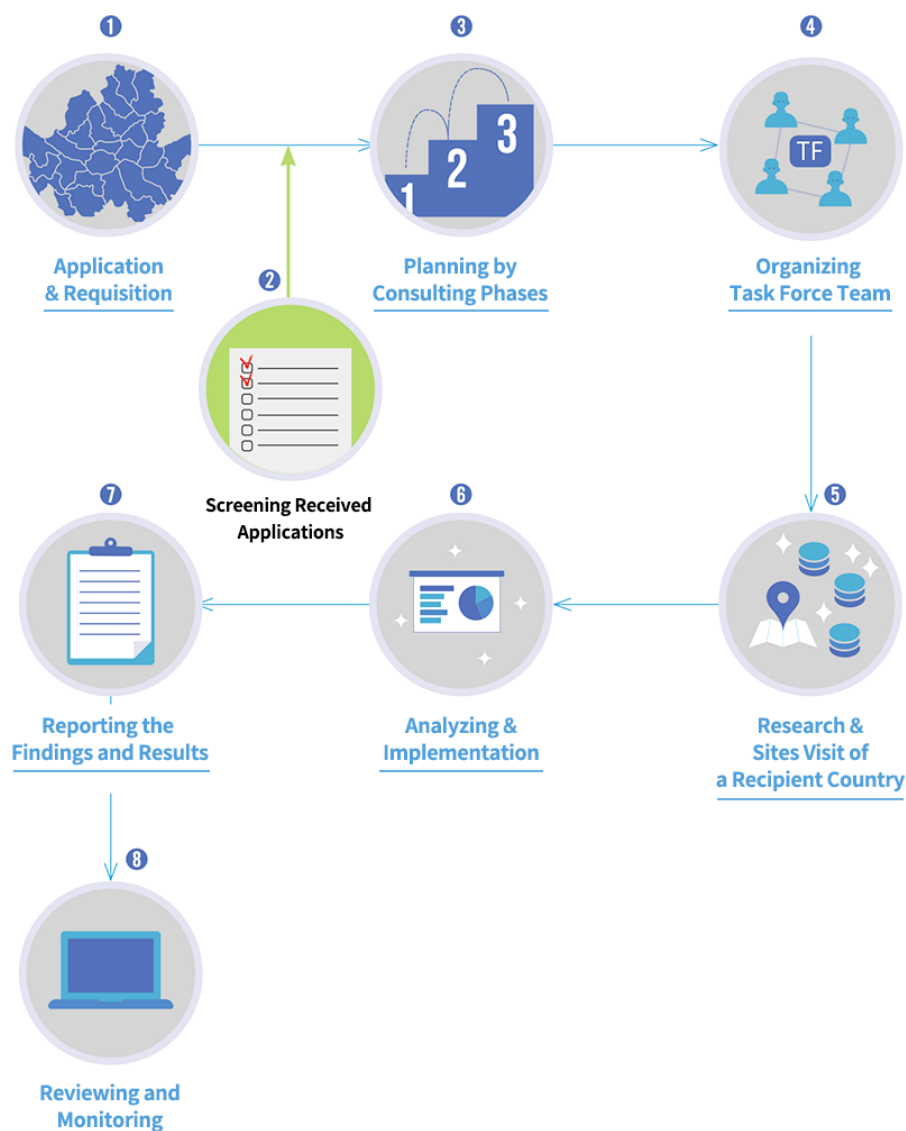


Image 5: The eight stages of SMG's consulting system Source: © Seoul Metropolitan Government

Key Contacts

ICLEI East Asia Secretariat

14/F, Seoul Global Center Building,
38 Jongno, Jongno-gu,
Seoul, 03188, South Korea
Tel: +82-2-3789-0496
Email: iclei-eastasia@iclei.org
www.eastasia.iclei.org/

ICLEI World Secretariat

Kaiser-Friedrich-Str. 7
53113 Bonn, Germany
Tel. +49-228 / 976299-00
Email: iclei@iclei.org
www.iclei.org

Acknowledgements

Author

Ms. Jiwon Lee
ICLEI World Secretariat

Contributors

Michael Woodbridge; Pourya
Salehi; Monika Zimmermann;
Helen Kwon
ICLEI World Secretariat

Urban Partnership Division
Seoul Metropolitan Government

Lessons learned for replication .

- Identifying and forming the policy and technology into modules is the first step to planning for city-to-city cooperation in Seoul. Policy sharing cities need to objectively assess if there are attractive aspects of the policies they want to promote and match these with the needs of, and potential benefits for, the participating cities. Identified policies should reflect the various interests, needs, resources, and situations of potential participating cities. The policies and technology should be easily presentable and some policies could be combined into a bigger scheme as one policy often addresses several cross-cutting issues.
- Availability of funding sources is important, but not a must. Typically, local government budgets are constrained, which makes it difficult to secure funding from their own-budget to facilitate the implementation of policy and technology transfer into a participating municipality. Nevertheless, there are possibilities to complement such needs with financial support from business and industry, as well as national and international funding. Moreover, it is still possible to conduct the policy exchange with a lesser emphasis on implementation that does not require large amounts of funding, such as consultation, training, and capacity building.
- A flexible time scale is required due to different political frameworks and culture as many of the projects that are implemented through the Policy Sharing initiative are highly dependent on the political decisions and situations. There are many cases that the project gets delayed or halted because of unforeseeable changes such as change of political leader.
- Face-to-face interaction is one of the key success factor for city-to-city cooperation. The aim of this initiative is not to conduct a one-time consultation, but to establish long-lasting systems which require taking various aspects into consideration.
- The consultation needs to capture the complexity of the urban challenges and solutions as each local government has its unique condition that makes it difficult to provide a one-size-fits-all solution. There are limitations when the exchange is solely virtual; specifically, it is difficult to grasp the societal and political background that might have an influence in the customized solution. Face-to-face interactions can further facilitate the learning process of participating cities.

References and further reading

- Campbell, T., 2012. *Beyond Smart Cities: How Cities Network, Learn and Innovate*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Kim, I., Kim, Y. S., Kang, J., 2016. *Guidebook on overseas expansion of Seoul's advanced policy*, Global Urban Partnership Division, Seoul Metropolitan Government.
- Advisory Group for Urban Planning., 2016. *Seoul Urban Planning*, Seoul Metropolitan Government.
- Seoul Solution platform: www.seoulsolution.kr/en/



ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability is the world's leading network of over 1,500 cities, towns and metropolises committed to building a sustainable future. By helping our Members to make their cities sustainable, low-carbon, resilient, biodiverse, resource-efficient, healthy and happy, with a green economy and smart infrastructure, we impact over 25% of the global urban population.

The ICLEI Case Study series (www.iclei.org/casestudies) focuses on urban sustainability activities of ICLEI Members and local governments that are part of ICLEI projects across the world.

ICLEI World Secretariat. Kaiser-Friedrich-Straße 7, 53113 Bonn, Germany
Email: urban.research@iclei.org

© ICLEI December 2017