

Urban Environmental Management the Experience of MEIP in Sri Lanka

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The Metropolitan Environmental Improvement Programme (MEIP), an UNDP and World Bank funded initiative is currently being executed in five Asian metropolitan cities - Beijing, Bombay, Colombo, Jakarta and Manila. This programme assists the public and private sector in the major cities to arrest and begin reversing the process of environmental degradation that is taking place as a result of urbanisation, industrial pollution and environmental neglect.

In Colombo, the programme functions under the Minister of Policy Planning & Implementation (MPPI) and works in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment & Parliamentary Affairs (MEPA). Policy guidance and directions is provided by the Inter-Ministerial, National Environmental Steering Committee (NESC), chaired by the Secretary, MPPI and co-chaired by Secretary, MEPA. This Committee has been effectively co-ordinating the major environmental initiatives and ensuring the intergration of environmental perspectives in development planning; operational level co-ordination is achieved through the Technical Working Group (TWG) established for different programme elements.

Colombo has identified the following environmental concerns and is presently mobilizing resources to undertake preparatory work prior to investment opportunities:

- (a) Solid Waste Management;
- (b) Deteriorating surface and ground water quality (due to industrial pollution, slums and shanties, etc);
- (c) Flooding and stagnation of water due to reclamation of low-lying areas in and around the City;

- (d) Traffic and vehicular congestion due to poor traffic management; and
- (e) Adverse outdoor air quality, primarily due to vehicle exhaust emissions.

MEIP in Colombo has undertaken several important tasks since its commencement in November 1990 towards environmental improvement of the metropolis. The activities of the MEIP are briefly summarized below:

- (a) **Environmental Management Strategy (EMS).** The formulation of an Environmental Management Strategy for the Colombo Metropolis has commenced. This Strategy will supplement the Colombo Master Plan of 1978-79 and the Colombo City Development Plan of 1948-85. This Strategy, once completed will provide the environmental framework for spatial planning and urban development of the metropolis. The EMS will be followed by an Action Plan which will define the investment outlay required to effect improvements to environmental infrastructure;
- (b) **Industrial Pollution Management (IPM.)** Assessment of problems associated with public and private sector industries which are discharging untreated wastes on their premises and in surrounding streams and channels, including treatment alternatives and methods of financing investments. The MEIP will shortly execute a US\$ 1 Million Technical Assistance Program, which aims at upgrading institutional capacities and technical skills, and undertaking feasibility studies for the construction of a central waste treatment plant for industries located in Ratmalana and Moratuwa.

Specific activities include: developing guidelines and manuals; economic instruments; feasibility studies for central waste water treatment plants pollution control strategy; and provision of laboratory equipment;

- (c) **Beira Lake Restoration.** Restoring Beira Lake is one of the priorities of the MEIP. Presently sources of funding have been determined to undertake a feasibility study and develop and appropriate restoration strategy. The consultants will commence work in early July 1992;
- (d) **Solid Waste Management.** Carrying out of detailed feasibility studies, including mapping and environmental assessments, and preparation of detailed plans for future solid waste transfer facilities and future regional sanitary landfill sites in line with the overall solid waste management strategy for the area;
- (e) **Clean Settlements Project.** This project focuses on improving the living environment of communities residing in low-income settlements, through their participation. The execution is through Community Based Organizations (CBO) and Non - Governmental Organizations (NGO). The first such demonstration project at Gajabapura - Bosevana in Narahenpita is progressing satisfactorily. A funding request for the second demonstration project and Stadiumgama, Grandpass has been made. The initial experience indicate strong community interest and commitment for improving the immediate living environment.

MEIP - Colombo assigns high priority for training and dissemination activities. The program conducted three National level workshops on Industrial Pollution Management, Air Quality Management and Human Settlements and the Living Environment, in collaboration with several agencies. The follow-up to these workshops are the Technical Assistance on IPM, a

short-course on Air Quality Management and the Clean Settlements Project, respectively.

The Short-course on Air Quality Management to be held in July 1992, will bring together the experience of two other MEIP cities - Beijing and Bombay, in designing an appropriate strategy for the Colombo Metropolis.

A joint UNDP / World Bank Mission reviewed the progress of MEIP in the five cities in November 1991. The Mission viewed that “.... on most accounts Colombo is well ahead of the other four cities. The city came late into the programme but has made quick strides and progressed rapidly.....” The reasons attributed to this include;

- * The high level of commitment and support given by the Government of Sri Lanka;
- * The functioning of MEIP under the aegis of Ministry of Policy Planning and Implementation which ensures multi-sectoral inputs and coordination;
- * The continued policy guidance and directions given by the Inter-Ministerial National Environment Steering Committee (NESC);
- * The active support of the UNDP and World Bank Resident Missions in Colombo; and
- * The effective and efficient functioning of the MEIP-Colombo Unit which has well defined programme objectives;

The Mission concluded that the level of activity of the MEIP in Colombo is high, the level of government support is high, expectations for the programme are very high and what results have been obtained in the short period of time the programme has been in effect are impressive. MEIP will afford an unique opportunity to integrate different urban sectoral activities to ensure sound urban environmental management.