

2. Evaluation

The attribution of success or failure in any endeavour turns on the precision of objectives and associated principles and criteria. Imprecision makes it difficult or impossible to give clear judgements except by means of indicators which may or may not capture the exact intention of the objectives. The same comment affects the possibility of quantification. The more precise the objectives, the greater the possibility of this, but often the less possibility of capturing exactly what we want to include.

2.1 Objectives

To alleviate or reduce the scale of poverty in the cities of the developing countries, the CA has defined four objectives. The first reads:

- i) “to improve the quality of urban development co-operation and urban lending”.
The indicators here would include how far all participants in urban development could be seen to collaborate, and do so on the basis of mutual knowledge of each others programmes, the frequency and forms of such collaboration. This would cover donors, bilateral and multilateral, banks and other financial agencies engaged in urban development, local governments, the slum dwellers associations, and any other interested parties. Secondly, this collaboration should lead to an increase in the scale of urban lending and an increase in the precision with which it was employed to alleviate poverty.
- ii) “to strengthen the impact of grant-funded urban development co-operation”.
Again, this implies the development of a pattern of complementarities, based on a knowledge of each others programmes, between grant-giving agencies through collaboration, resulting in a higher rate of success in projects, an increased number of beneficiaries and the units improved (or whatever other outcome of the urban development project is targeted). By implication, improvements take place against the measure of some equivalent benchmark, the outcomes of a set of equivalent urban development projects in the past, occurring in similar circumstances, before the creation of the CA.
- iii) “to expand the level of resources reaching the urban poor by increasing the coherence of programmes and sharpening the focus on scaling-up successful approaches”.
The criterion here is on the surface straightforward – to increase the volume of expenditure on programmes to assist the urban poor – but to do so by enhancing the precision and complementarities of programmes, increasing the consensus on priority actions, as well as by introducing best practices in scaled up versions.
- iv) “to provide a structured vehicle for advancing collective know-how”.
The CA seeks to sum up a key element in the preceding three objectives, the pooling of knowledge about urban development; it is accordingly to create a structure in order to draw and disseminate lessons of successful urban development – from the use of its own grant-making facilities to fund innovation and to exchange other lessons drawn from the programmes of other donors, from successful cities and from the poor themselves.

It is clear that with a handful of exceptions, the more important indicators cannot be properly tested at this stage in the life of the CA. It is possible to assess increases in the degree of collaboration, increases in the scale of urban development funding by all

donors, the degree of mutual influence of the aid community, the degree to which up-scaling of urban projects has taken place at the design stage (but not at the outcome stage), the creation of a 'learning alliance', with the associated mechanisms for evaluation and dissemination. But the final judgement on the outcome of these means must necessarily be postponed until a later evaluation. That later assessment must also suggest how far the achievements made could have been secured more economically, and what the foregone opportunities are by following this course of action.

2.2 Strategy

The four objectives are operationalised through a three-part strategy:

i) 'political commitment'¹.

The success here is to be measured by the changes in the climate of opinion of those concerned with urban development as the result of the initiatives of the CA, changes in the associated policy stances of the agencies concerned and in their behaviour and expenditure patterns. It is also measured by increases in the partners involved in the CA and the growth of the trust fund. This, again, presumably ultimately should cover all the proposed partners in the alliance – from the donors, through the cities to the slum dwellers. The changes in the climate of opinion can be partly documented at the world level and perhaps in terms of some governments, but not at this stage, strong behavioural consequences. The cities of the world remain at this stage generally only engaged through local government associations.

ii) 'scaling-up'

This is one of the most important measures of CA success – how far its initiatives lead to a major qualitative and quantitative expansion in its chosen programmes of urban development by donors, governments and cities with appropriate financial leveraging of funds. Changes in the behaviour of city managements towards embracing this strategy are still likely to be too few to draw any strong conclusions. Some signs might be detected, but it is still too early to expect very significant changes.

iii) 'learning and sharing'

This implies the development of a conscious and deliberate process of evaluation of experience by the CA partners and cities, the drawing of robust lessons that allow for different contexts, priorities and alternative explanations, and their dissemination. This pooling and sharing of experience is in many ways the heart of the CA initiative as the means to enhance the quality and scope of urban development programmes.

2.3 Principles

To shape the pursuit of the strategies and lay down conditions for its actions, the CA has laid down six 'guiding principles' – focussing on the urban poor, pursuit of pro-poor policies, promoting the role of women, supporting existing initiatives, focussing on scaling-up efforts by cities, and promoting partnerships.

The issues here are more straightforward although again, the criteria – the indicators - by which we might judge whether the principles had been reasonably applied are not self-evident, and therefore not beyond reasonable dispute. Only detailed analysis of particular

¹ For the full text, see Terms of Reference in Annex IV.

cities will indicate what 'pro-policies' might mean in that place, what specific burdens are born by the poor, and what might appear as 'pro-poor' but are in fact not. How far does pro-poor mean the delivery of specific benefits – the provision of free or cheap land, of particular services – or policies at a city level to seek to expand the demand for the labour of the poor? Nor are there adequate indicators of what kind of participation by what number of women on what occasions constitutes evidence of gender equity, particularly bearing in mind the very different cultural contexts of developing countries.

Furthermore, the principles do not guide us on what trade offs are possible, what is the envisaged order of priorities. In practice local circumstances will enforce local priorities unless CA projects are tightly defined to seek to prevent that occurring.

In what follows we seek insofar as is practicable to judge the activity of the CA in its first three years, bearing in mind its evolution over that period, against the objectives laid down, the strategies chosen and the principles listed, in the light of the three criteria: relevance, efficacy and efficiency. In the first instance we look at the institutional structure, the working of the various parts of the CA. From there we move on to consider the content of the CA's activities under the headings Slum Upgrading, City Development Strategies (both of which are by and large restricted to one country, although there are a few regional knowledge-sharing actions) and Global initiatives. The Report then goes on to look briefly at the handful of non-core funded projects and a number of other topics, before examining the financing of the CA and the procedure and content for future evaluations. Annex II covers a history of the foundation and operation of the CA.