TURKEY LOCAL AGENDA 21 PROGRAM*:
Improved planning and service delivery in participatory and transparent manner.

BACKGROUND

Chapter 28 of “Agenda 21” produced by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (the “Earth Summit”), held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, called upon local authorities in every country “to undertake a consultative process with their populations and achieve a consensus on Local Agenda 21 for their communities”.

IULA-EMME – International Union of Local Authorities, Section for the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East Region (currently UCLG-MEWA – United Cities and Local Governments, Middle East and West Asia, launched in 1997 a project entitled “Promotion and Development of Local Agenda 21s in Turkey”, encompassing a number of pilot cities of varying sizes from all over the country to conduct their respective Local Agenda 21 processes. Main aim was to mobilize local government and local stakeholders to seek control of the future of their settlements for sustainable development and improved service delivery.

Building upon the achievements of the first phase, the continuation project entitled “Implementing Local Agenda 21s in Turkey” started in January 2000, following the termination of the first phase project at the end of 1999. During the second phase, two Decrees dated 19 March 1998 and 7 November 2000 respectively, were issued by the Ministry of Interior to support the LA-21 processes. Thus, more effective state-stakeholders collaboration was facilitated.

Partners of the Local Agenda 21 Program

Partnership to the LA-21 Program is open to all local authorities in Turkey, except village administrations, as they require a different setup. New applications to join the Program are discussed and decided by the National LA-21 Program Steering Committee.

The partnership structure, discussed and revised by the National LA-21 Program Steering Committee in its meeting held on 19 November 2004, encompasses the following 61 local authorities as “partners”:

Metropolitan Municipalities: İstanbul (supporting partner & the term Presidency of IULA-EMME), Adana, Adapazar, Antalya, Bursa, Diyarbakır, Eskişehir, İzmir, İzmit, Mersin and Samsun. Special Provincial Administrations: Edirne, Elazığ, Kastamonu and Nevşehir.

* This report has been compiled from project documents, for the sole aim of conveying the case to wider audiences, to facilitate discussion.
Municipalities (Province Centers): Afyon, Antakya, Aydın, Bingöl, Bitlis, Burdur, Çanakkale, Denizli, Hakkari, Kars, Kütahya, Malatya, Manisa, Mardin, Sinop, Trabzon, Van, Yalova and Zonguldak. Municipalities (District): Doğubeyazıt ( Ağrı), Çankaya and Keçiören (Ankara), Kuşadası (Aydın), Nilüfer, Osmangazi, İzmir and Orhangazi (Bursa), Biga (Çanakkale), İskilip (Çorum), Bakırköy, Beşiktaş, Beyoğlu, Şişli and Zeytinburnu (İstanbul), Foça, Karaburun and Ödemiş (İzmir), Talas (Kayseri), Babaesi (Kırklareli), Kızıltepe (Mardin), Gölcük (Kocaeli), Tarsus (Mersin), Dalyan (Muğla), Ürgüp and Mustafapaşa (Nevşehir), Harran/Yaylak (Şanlıurfa).

The Program is being supported by a number of regional unions of municipalities in Turkey, as well as the Union of Historical Cities. In addition, a number of partner supporting organizations continue to provide multi-faceted support to the Program, including the Youth Association for Habitat and Agenda 21 (the coordinating agency of the youth component of the LA-21).

COORDINATION

Overall Coordination of the LA-21 Program

The LA-21 Program is coordinated by IULA-EMME (currently UCLG-MEWA), which has been the executing agency of the Program since 1997. IULA-EMME is responsible for the overall coordination of the Program.

LA-21 National Program Steering Committee

As a coordination mechanism at the national level, the LA-21 Program Steering Committee (PSC) continues to function since the commencement of the LA-21 Program in Turkey. The PSC meets at least once annually, with more frequent meetings being held as deemed necessary. The PSC currently includes the representatives of the Undersecretariat of the Prime Ministry, the State Planning Organization, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Forestry and Environment, General Secretariat of the European Union, the Directorate General on the Status and Problems of Women, partner supporting organizations, IULA-EMME and UNDP.

Local Agenda 21 General Secretariats

In all partner cities, LA-21 General Secretariats were established to coordinate the respective activities, who also serve as the counterparts to the coordinating agencies of the LA-21 Program. The LA-21 Secretary Generals continue to play a key role in the overall performance and success of the Program. In the majority of partner cities, the LA-21 Secretary Generals are elected to the post by the respective City Councils. In others, particularly in relatively small cities, they are designated by respective mayors, often from among municipal assembly members or senior municipal officials.
PARTICIPATORY PLATFORMS AND MECHANISMS

City Councils

City-wide participatory mechanisms (City Councils and other platforms), consist of the representatives of a wide spectrum of local partners, including ex officio members such as the Governor, Mayor and Parliamentarians of the respective province, elected local councilors and neighborhood heads, and the designated representatives of foundations and associations, professional chambers, private sector organizations, trade unions, academic institutions, etc., as well as the representatives of working groups and platforms for women, youth, elderly and children.

LA-21 City Councils, which are unique to the Turkish context, constitute an effective example of “governance” that manages to bring together central government, local government and civil society within a collaborative framework of partnerships. In general, the central government and municipal representation constitute about one-third of the city councils, with the remaining two-thirds consists of NGOs. Depending on the size of the cities, membership to such councils range from 100 to 600 organizations. City Councils prepare and endorse their own working principles or statutes, and function accordingly. City councils currently function in around 50 partner cities.

In virtually all cases, the local authorities support the activities and decisions of the City Council by including these decisions in their respective agendas to accommodate the demands of the City Council.

The establishment of City Councils in new partner cities is apparently built upon the existing models and modus operandi of City Councils in partner cities that display outstanding achievements in their respective contexts.

Working Groups

In conjunction with city-wide participatory platforms, Working Groups focusing on priority issues of the respective Local Agenda 21 processes function with the active participation of a wide range of volunteers from different sectors and backgrounds.

In general, working groups tend to be organized around relatively broad topics, splitting amongst themselves in smaller sub-groups on more specific or ad hoc issues. The general listing of working group topics manifest a basic similarity across the country, albeit the main focus and priority areas of action significantly differ depending on the geographical locations, sized and characteristics of partner cities.

Currently all partner cities conduct their pertinent activities via working groups. The number of working groups range from a minimum of 3 to over 20, wherein the majority of partner cities have between 10 to 15 priority topics for their Local Agenda 21 and the corresponding working groups. Each group generally consists of between 40 to 80 persons in relatively large partner cities.
The establishment of working groups in new partner cities is facilitated by, and drawn upon the relevant experiences of, partner cities that have already “institutionalized” such groups as part of their Local Agenda 21 processes.

**Women**
Pursuant to the heavy emphasis of the LA-21 Program upon the involvement of women in local decision-making processes and mechanisms, the women not only participate in City Councils and working groups, but also establish their own participatory platforms, which subsequently develop into Women Councils. Such platforms and councils, established in over 35 partner cities, continue to function effectively. The Women Councils also prepare and endorse their own working principles or statutes, and function accordingly.

Furthermore, multi-purpose women centers, serving as venues for training, augmenting employment opportunities, arts and handicrafts, social events, mother and children care, etc, as well as sheltering of women sufferers have been established to date in more than 20 partner cities. The effective operation of these centers encourages other partners to launch similar initiatives. The centers help establish new standards for improved service delivery and experiment with innovative methods.

In conjunction with their active involvement in Local Agenda 21 Secretariats and working groups, the women act as the driving force behind all successfully-conducted Local Agenda 21 processes.

**Youth**
Under the coordination of the Youth for Habitat International Network, youth activities have been launched effectively in all partner cities, paving the way for the establishment of Youth Councils and Youth Centers. The Youth Councils bring together the youth organizations, as well as students and employed and unemployed youth in partner cities. They conduct training programs to make the unemployed ‘re-employable’; help find jobs for them and collaborate with local authorities to expand the range and improve the quality of services provided.

**Groups Requiring Special Attention (the socially and economically disadvantaged)**
The special focus of the LA-21 Program on groups requiring special attention, including the children, the elderly (“senior citizens”) and the disabled, has started to become an indispensable aspect of respective LA-21 processes. In a significant number of partner cities, special platforms for the children, the elderly and the disabled were established.

Children are given due importance in all partner cities, particularly with regard to providing training on sustainable development as part of formal curricula, as well as getting them to train their own parents. The establishment of LA-21 Children Councils started to become a common practice. Special programs for the street children and other vulnerable children groups continue to be conducted.
The platforms for the elderly, established in a significant number of partner cities, allow the elderly to highlight their specific problems, as well as contributing the process as “senior citizens”. A number of partner cities have allocated special premises to serve as the centers for the elderly, in a similar manner as LA-21 Houses.

The platforms of the disabled also actively participate in the respective LA-21 processes, which facilitates the breaking up of their isolation and conveying their problems and messages to other stakeholders.

THE PROCESS

Launching of the LA-21 Processes

Although each city has a particular modality and means of conducting its own LA-21 process, the launching of the respective processes in partner cities basically follow a similar path.

In the majority of partner cities where global agendas are virtually unknown by the local stakeholders and local mechanisms of participation are feeble, the respective LA-21 processes are being launched via awareness-raising symposia at the city/province level. The partner local authorities are encouraged to invite all potential constituents of the City Council, as well as interested citizens so that local stakeholders would receive first hand information on the concept and practical implementation of LA-21. Such meetings generally commence with introductory remarks of local leaders to convey their commitment to the process to the audience, followed by an informative session including the film on the LA-21 Program. A selected number of other partner cities that provide relevant examples for the host city are also invited to present their LA-21 activities. The experience to date has manifested that the participants of these symposia constitute the core group and dedicated initiators of the LA-21 process in their contexts.

As the next steps, a “facilitation team” is constituted to coordinate the establishment of the City Council, working groups and other platforms. Each platform starts to develop its own means of functioning, drawing upon the relevant experience of other partner cities. As the process gradually develops, the LA-21 General Secretariat and other coordinative bodies are firmly put into place by local partners.

“LA-21 GOVERNANCE NETWORK”

Constituents of the Network

The broad spectrum of public agencies, local authorities and civil society organizations constituting the City Councils and other participatory platforms at the local level, as well as the LA-21 Program
coordinating agencies, Steering Committee members and supporting organizations form the basic constituents of the LA-21 Network. The LA-21 Secretary Generals constitute the focal points of the “LA-21 Governance Network”. The LA-21 Secretary Generals of partner cities regularly come together on a regional or national basis in order to exchange views and experiences, overview the implementation of the LA-21 Program in general and to discuss future actions. In terms of the venue, one of the major achievements has been the allocation of buildings (generally with unique historical-cultural characteristics) by partner local authorities to serve as “Local Agenda 21 Houses”, which continue to serve the public at large in these cities. Currently, over 25 partner cities have special premises utilized as LA-21 Houses, which also serve as local pillars of the LA-21 Governance Network.

“LA-21 Governance Network” Website

The web site, providing essential and detailed information in Turkish and English on the LA-21 Program, constitutes the main pillar of dissemination and sharing of information on LA-21 activities and outputs at the local, national and international levels. Recent efforts focus on developing the “LA-21 Governance Network” to improve the effective sharing of information and exchange of experience between its constituents. An experienced group of designers engaged for this purpose updated the existing web site to become more interactive and user-friendly. Access to the website is via the domain name http://www.la21turkey.net

LA-21 ACTION PLAN DEVELOPMENT

The LA-21 Program encourages the building of, and reaching a consensus on, a “sustainable community” vision in partner cities, encompassing long-term, mid-term and short-term goals, and the subsequent preparation of local action plans. Then, these plans are ‘translated’ into specific, concrete programs for efficient service delivery.

As the first step, all partners are encouraged to prepare “Description of Existing Situation” reports prior to the development of their action plans. In this context, these reports were completed in the majority of partner cities. These reports contain in general a diagnosis of the existing situation, data collection and analysis on environmental, socio-economic and cultural factors, and the identification of main challenges and problems, as well as priorities and policy options for addressing them. Activities geared toward preparing the local action plans via the consultative LA-21 processes are continuing in all partner cities at varying degrees of progress. In virtually all cases, the overall action
plans consist of, and enriched by, sectoral action plans and priority projects, developed by the respective working groups.

In general, the action plans are prepared with a long-term perspective, including a definition of the goals and objectives adopted by the local community to guide the actions that need to be taken, as well as implementation arrangements. Priority projects that are likely to have a short-term demonstration effect upon the viability of local action plans are also being identified. In fact, a significant number of partner cities have started to implement their priority demonstration projects. Each project is constantly monitored to ensure that it is cost-effective, efficient and utilizes the most appropriate technology. Thus, improved service delivery is at the heart of the approach.

FACILITATING SUSTAINABILITY

Partners of the LA-21 Program have been devoting considerable time and effort to ensure the sustainability of the LA-21 process at the local and national levels. In this respect, the priorities identified for the subsequent periods of implementation of the LA-21 Program include the following:

- Maintenance and further development of the LA-21 Governance Network to augment the sharing of experience and information amongst partners at all levels.

- Advocating for a suitable legislative framework for the institutional set-up to pave the way for the “institutionalization” of LA-21, particularly via developing a commonly-endorsed model for institutionalizing the participatory platforms and other mechanisms and processes. A major success in this direction was registered when ‘city councils’ were formally incorporated into local government structure with the new reform legislation.

- Promoting the ownership of the LA-21 by the Turkish Grand National Assembly and central government organizations.

- Promoting the better understanding and appreciation at the national and local levels of the crucial role of LA-21 in European Union accession process. In line with EU’s strong emphasis on LA-21, utilizing this enormous and unprecedented opportunity to promote the LA-21 movement as a basic strategic tool in realizing the national vision of EU accession.

- Enhancing the general awareness on and recognition of the national press/media in relation to LA-21, with a view towards involving the media not only as supporters, but also as essential partners in the process.

- Promoting the establishment of concrete linkages between the LA-21 action plans and the programs and budgets of concerned municipalities and public agencies.
• Developing improved channels for increasing the involvement of the private sector via promoting its “social responsibility”.

• Capacity building and training activities on LA-21 for local partners, including the municipal staff, as well as representatives of local participatory platforms.

• Enhancing the capacity of regional unions of municipalities that are partners of the LA-21 Program to foster inter-municipal cooperation and effectively promote and guide the implementation of good governance practices in their member municipalities, with particular emphasis on LA-21 processes.

• Developing a strategy with regard to the expansion of the Program to encompass other local authorities in Turkey, and adjusting the existing coordination mechanism to accommodate the enlarged program.

The overall success and achievements of the programme brought up the question of its continuation and expansion, and highlighted the need for the second phase of the programme, focusing on the sustainability and growth of the LA21 process.

The experience of the programme’s first phase was valuable not only in terms of its numerous achievements, but it also served to identify crucial bottlenecks and problems that needed to be dealt with in order to attain the programme’s objectives and goals.

The major problems, and the lessons drawn from them, are delineated below:

• In general, although LA21 has imposed its imprint upon the partner cities, many apparently involved local stakeholders remained half-committed to, or not fully aware of the processes. Furthermore, public surveys conducted in a number of cities revealed that very few people were aware of ongoing LA21 process, with notably low levels of ownership for their community and even less concern for the goals of sustainability. Thus, the experience in the first phase taught that, unless LA21 is viewed as a main-stream process that perforates and embraces all aspects of local governance, it will not challenge the status quo. To develop the necessary awareness, particularly emphasis was placed on increasing visibility at all levels, to ensure that LA21 receives long-term sustained support and is able to expand to cover the whole country in subsequent phases.

• City councils and other participatory platforms have managed to bring together the representatives of a large spectrum of local stakeholders. Nevertheless, despite the active involvement of NGOs and other relatively organized groups in the society, LA21 processes in
partner cities manifested a widespread difficulty in reaching unorganized groups in local communities, particularly the urban poor. These groups were not receptive in general to the slogans of global agendas, and the alien concept of sustainable development was not easily applicable to their everyday life. A degree of success was attained through the organization of neighborhood forums, particularly in poorer districts of partner cities, during which a large number of residents had the opportunity to discuss their particular concerns and problems with other local stakeholders. It became evident that it was necessary in subsequent phases to develop special programmes to reach the unorganized community groups, particularly in close collaboration with neighborhood authorities, and to launch effective publicity campaigns to increase public participants.

- During the first phase, there was widespread difficulty with regard to actively involving the private sector in the LA21 process. Private sector organizations, including businesses, small and medium-sized industries and tourism, were regularly or occasionally represented in local participatory platforms, and a considerable number of small-scale local projects were sponsored by the private sector, albeit as a apparent bystander rather than a committed partner in the process. The private sector’s reluctance to participate in LA21 was augmented by the widespread conception by other local stakeholder that the private sector was purely financial source, rather than a full-fledged partner. As a result, in the subsequent phase, priority was given to promoting and developing innovative partnerships in order to increase the level of private-sector involvement.

- The action-planning process during the phase was accompanied by the development of a stream of local projects to address pressing concerns. Funding for these projects was not readily available, either from local, national or international sources. Thus, funding for implementation of priority demonstration projects developed within the framework of LA21 processes soon emerged as a major problem. It became apparent that, if appropriate funds could not be secured in a reasonable time frame, local stakeholders might lose interest in sustaining LA21 activities. The second phase, therefore, emphasized mobilization of appropriate mechanisms to provide financial support to projects developed under the umbrella of LA21.

- In the face of different sized partner cities, ranging from over 2.4 million (Izmir) to less than 6,000 (Harran) from highly developed metropolitan centers of industry and tourism (Bursa, Izmit, Antalya, Adana) to cities in the provinces with the lowest GNP in the country (Agri, Dogubeyazit, Hakkari), coupled with different levels of progress and achievements in partner
cities, it was necessary to develop performance indicators, based upon the experience of the first phase of the programme. Priority was given to the development of performance indicators for the assessment of LA21 programme impacts, the sustainability of LA21 process in each city, as well as for making comparisons between different cities.

It is in this context that the second phase of the programme was prepared and launched, with the aim of contributing to the development of more democratic and participatory forms of local governance in Turkey.

STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS OF LA21

Methodology and Approach

A unique characteristic that constitutes the basic strength of Turkey’s LA21 programme is its methodology and approach, which has repercussions for the management and conduct of the programme.

The programme reflects a decentralized and enabling approach, based upon networking and collaboration among equal partners instead of being managed from a central office. The primary decision-making and implementation mechanisms are the local networks, supported by national and international partners. The primary linkage between the participatory platforms in partner cities and the co-ordinating agencies is sustained by LA21 general secretaries, who are also authorized to make expenditures from the local budgets.

The functioning of city councils and working groups reflects the same democratic, facilitating approach. The widespread tendency in Turkey to work with hierarchical structures has been significantly eroded during the course of the functioning of local participatory platforms, being gradually replaced by more horizontal and collaborative working relationships among local stakeholders.

LA21 processes are launched through awareness-raising meetings. During these meetings, the participants are presented with the global aspect of the programme, its goals and outputs, as well as with the experiences of a number of partner cities.

Levels and Scopes of Participation
Recent evaluations of the progress in partner cities indicate considerable differences in the levels and scope of participation. In about, one-half of partner cities, local stakeholders are very active, and thousands of volunteers take part in local participatory platforms. In these cities, civil society organizations, including associations, foundations, professional chambers, academic institutions and other organized local stakeholders, as well as women, youth, vulnerable groups and unorganized segments of the society, are notably-sometimes remarkably-active.

In the remaining group of partner cities, the number committed local stakeholders and volunteers is limited, and the majority of local stakeholders appear disinterested, often including respective local authorities and public agencies. In these cities, LA21 processes continue, by virtue of the commitment of the limited group of participating organizations and volunteers, albeit with a slower pace of progress. It is interesting to note that such less-active partner cities are scattered all over the country and often located side by side with more active partners; thus, geographical locations, sizes and levels of development do not justify the differences in the levels and scope of participation among partner cities.

In virtually all cases, the level of private sector involvement continues to be far from satisfactory. The apparent reluctance of the private sector to participate in LA21 stems mainly from the relatively low level of local allegiance, or sense of local responsibility, of the business community in general. The lack of experience in establishing a working relationship and a mutual trust between local authorities and NGOs on the one side and the private sector on the other magnifies this problem. Despite some recent, and some increasing numbers of, examples of local partnership with businesses, the general reluctance of private sector institutions to become full-fledged partners in the LA21 process continues.

Ownership and Support

Implementation to date manifests varying degrees of interest and commitment on the part of local authorities participating in the programme. About one-half of partner cities fully committed to LA21, with relatively active local stakeholders. The local authorities in these cities have assumed a facilitating role with regard to the functioning of the participatory mechanisms. About one-quarter of partner local authorities are also committed to LA21, but to a lesser extent. The level of participation in these cities has also remained limited. The remaining one-quarter of partner local authorities have been unable to manifest a commitment or progress in their representative processes, mainly due to local politics.

Regarding central government, ownership and support to the programme has remained limited. A major achievement was the (second) Decree in LA21, issued by the Ministry of Interior on
November 2000. The decree, circulated to all governorates and relevant public institutions, underlines the commitment of the ministry to support the programme. The decree also addresses the pressing problem of municipal expenditures in relation to LA21, making reference to specific budget items to guide and encourage the local authorities to allocate and realize relevant expenditures.

The Project Steering Committee (PSC), established for the purpose of ensuring an effective management and supervision mechanisms, constitutes the basic mechanism to augment ownership and support of the central government. Each PSC member, including the representatives of the Environmental Commission of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, the State Planning Organization, and the Ministries of Environment, the Interior, and Tourism, is expected to act as a focal point of the programme in her or his respective organizations. Despite a number of encouraging initiatives, the role of the PSC has remained limited.

The difficulties encountered in obtaining ownership and support of the LA21 programme, at both the local and national levels, is closely related to its low visibility. Despite the outstanding performance of the programme in general, LA21 continues to be little known, particularly at the national level. This weakness continues to impose severe restrictions upon the overall performance and progress of the programme.

Impact of the LA21 Programme

The LA21 programme – based on community participation, involvement of local stakeholders, establishment of local partnerships, and decentralization of local decision making processes – has provided a unique opportunity for the enhancement of local democracy and for practical implementations of the concept of good governance in Turkey.

Local stakeholders have built the structures and mechanisms suitable for this collective undertaking. Various active local-stakeholder groups, including professional chambers and NGOs that had been networking among themselves in a rather closed circuit, have found the opportunity for cross-sectoral collaboration and establishment dialogue with the “other side”.

Women’s organizations have joined forces through platforms and councils, which has helped raise awareness of gender issues. This collaboration has also had a significant impact on the development of new and innovative mechanisms to mobilize increasing numbers of women in local participatory mechanisms, particularly unorganized and disadvantaged women. The programme has also had a
visible impact upon the youth. The international dimension and central government support provided a suitable legal and institutional framework for youth activities, particularly in the partner cities located in less developed regions of the country as well as in cities affected by the earthquake. The establishment of youth councils and youth centers in partner cities has encouraged the launching of new youth programmes in the South-east Anatolia region.

LA21 programme has paved the way for the development of a new local governance model in Turkey, whereby public institutions, local authorities and civil society organizations are forming the triangle of local decision-making processes. The emerging model of city councils and other participatory platforms has already started to influence local and municipal policies and decisions.

The impact of the programme has begun to be reflected at the national level. During the National Habitat Forum organized in Ankara in September 2000, general evaluations pertaining to Istanbul+5 acknowledged that the LA21 programme has been the outstanding achievement at the country level since the Habitat II conference in relation to localizing global UN agendas in Turkey.

The LA21 programme in Turkey is emerging, not only as a municipal movement, but also and essentially as a civil society movement that coincides with the expectations and needs of the people. It is gradually gaining ground in penetrating the concept of sustainable development in the everyday lives of local communities. It has demonstrated its potential to trigger societal transformation that accelerates the decentralization and democratization process in the country, as well as the process of integration.

Looking Ahead with LA21

Experiences and Lessons Learned

The process itself is valuable: The most important lesson to be drawn from the experience to date is the immeasurable value gained from the involvement of local stakeholders and the community at large as partners in the LA21 process, with a view towards integrating social, economic and environmental policies and concerns, and leading to a more open, participatory, transparent governance at the local level.

Learning from each other: the establishment of local participatory platforms and the preparation of local action plans in cities that are at the beginning or early stages of their LA21 processes is facilitated by the experiences of other cities that have already made significant progress. Various
means, including the sharing of experiences in awareness-raising meetings, establishing sister-city relationships between partner cities in different geographical locations, organizing information-exchange programmes and mutual site visits, have proved to be effective ways of learning from each other.

**Developing local capacity:** The programme experience highlighted the importance of ensuring the broadest possible community participation. The participation of organized sections of the society was essential, but not sufficient. Appealing to the unorganized masses through global-agenda slogans had limited impact. Thus, a special focus was given to developing the local capacity at the neighborhood level, coupled with programmes aiming at poverty alleviation, public health, and other social programmes encompassing the urban poor. Relatively advanced partner cities began to provide voluntary technical-assistance support to disadvantaged cities, particularly to improve the relative weakness of local capacity in the cities from the east and south-east Anatolia regions.

**Role of demonstration projects:** during the course of local action-planning processes, numerous demonstration projects have been developed in partner cities. These projects not only served to address priority local issues, but also, to surprising degree, increased the commitment of local stakeholders to the process, binding them together around concrete areas of joint action. This impact was also observed in the cities from the earthquake region, where small-scale projects encouraged partnership and mobilized new local stakeholders. Pilot projects have also constituted a basic means of establishing partnerships with the private sector in the LA21 process.

**Significance of decentralized management of the programme:** One of the essential lessons about the programme’s success has been the momentum and motivation sustained by the programme’s decentralized management at the national and local levels. The experience to date justifies the value of a network of partners jointly co-ordinating the programme, whereas a centralized programme-management approach would have narrowed both the process and its impact. Similarly, the decentralized approach at the local level enabled the participatory mechanisms to serve as a school of local democracy, accumulating the experience in horizontal, non-hierarchical and collaborative platforms of equal partners.

Having briefly evaluated some of the lessons learned through various initiatives, it is time to review some of the exemplary practices, to appreciate the variety of projects and activities involved.
EXEMPLARY LOCAL AGENDA 21 PRACTICES

1) Participation of Women in Aliağa and its Surroundings in the Process of Raising Life Standards

The Development of sustainable human settlements was proposed in the declaration adopted during the Earth Summit, which brought together the world leaders in Rio in 1992. This document, emphasized the concept of sustainable human development as a priority. There is a need to associate leading groups and their own practices with the concept of sustainable development in order to achieve the objects of sustainable human settlements.

With these ideas in mind, a project was launched with the contributions of Municipality of Aliağa (a medium-sized town in Western Turkey) and with the partnership of Aliağa Local Agenda 21, Aegean University Agricultural Applied Research Centre, Aegean University Women’s Issues Applied Research Centre, Sub-governor of Aliağa, People’s Education Centre and Aliağa Agricultural Directorate.

The Project entitled “Participation of Women in Aliağa and its Surroundings in the Process of Raising Life Standards” covers a two-year period. The pilot regions were defined as Aliağa Kültür and Kurtuluş neighborhoods and Çakmaklı village. The project is planned to be commenced in other villages of Aliağa in the future.

The ultimate aim of this project is to promote and strengthen the participation of women in social, economic and political life.

The project is composed of rural and urban components which are executed with the participation of volunteer women with different qualifications.

Within the framework of the Rural Component, women living in rural areas are assisted in defining their problems, developing proposals for their solution, seeking institutional support and establishing partnerships for realizing these proposals.

Within the framework of the Urban Component, women with economic and social disadvantages, who migrated to Aliağa are assisted in strengthening their status within the family and society, and to enable them to assist themselves in the solution of their problems.
The expected results of the project are as follows:

- The data acquired as a result of the urban and rural components of the project will reveal the diversity among women’s groups living in different conditions.
- Skills and capacities of women participating in the project will have been increased.
- Disparities between urban and rural areas will have been reduced and will have complemented each other.
- Rural settlements will have started to benefit from services which are known to be provided only in urban areas. The rural population will have become urbanized without having to migrate, will have become stronger without being unattached from their land.
- An infrastructure will have been established to adopt a flow of change in the rural areas which is open to progress.

Outcomes

The project activities commenced in March 2003 where basic training of 130 women volunteers has been completed. At the moment, activities are being carried out with the contributions of volunteer women to define problems and needs of women by utilizing a participatory rural evaluation method.

During the forthcoming stages of the project, planning and support services will be defined to meet the needs; social activities will be organized to promote and support the participation of women; training programs will be planned.

The data acquired during the needs assessment activities will act as a starting point to measure progress.

2) Neighborhood Service Chambers

The project is rooted in the Advisory Centers established by the Metropolitan Municipality of Bursa (a large metropolis in Northwestern Turkey) in 1994, where the aim was to achieve efficiency and effectiveness in services and to implement the principle of local self-governance.

After the year 2000, the Centers were restructured under the title “Neighborhood Service Chambers” within the framework of the “Healthy City Project”.

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Within the framework of the Neighborhood Service Chambers, children, youth and women committees have developed such projects as researches on socio-economic situation of families, their attitudes, education levels, problems and needs; projects geared towards improving the status of women in the society, for raising awareness among children and the youth, for integration of the disabled in the society, for changing consumption habits; establishment of search and rescue teams have been developed and implemented.

In addition, legal and health advice are provided in the Neighborhood Service Chambers.

Bursa has been divided into 17 regions for providing efficient service.

Neighborhood Service Chambers have been established in nine regions. The aim is to establish Neighborhood Service Chambers in every region.

The personnel and maintenance expenses of the Neighborhood Service Chambers are provided by the municipal budget and support of the private sector is received for activities.

Outcomes

Within the framework of the services and activities of the Neighborhood Service Chambers, participation of people in decision-making processes and collective urban management has been operationalized. In addition to providing services to the urban population, awareness on social responsibility has arisen thanks to the increased participation in the activities and in the decision-making processes at the neighborhood level. Instead of passively waiting for solutions, sense of collective action has become prevalent.

The people in the neighborhood now can communicate their complaints, proposals and contributions to the officers of the Neighborhood Service Chambers. The officer in turn communicates the issue to the Service Desk on the same day and provides feedback to the people.

Children, youth and women committees within the Neighborhood Service Chambers have developed the concept of partnership among the local community and have significantly contributed to the adoption of democratic life at the local level.

Thanks to the Neighborhood Service Chambers, previously non-accessible groups have been reached. An increase in the participation of people and in the programs geared towards education, training and awareness raising has been observed.
3) Sustaining the Historical Heritage

There are nearly 90,000 people living in Surçi, a district of Diyarbakır, a metropolis in Southeastern Turkey. The aim of the project is to maintain sustainable development, a healthy environment, to ensure the safety of historical attractions in this area.

For 5,000 years Surçi has been the symbol of the historical background of the city and cultural identity of the people. Therefore, the goal is to improve the conditions in this area in order to contribute to the development of tourism as well.

The project locations for that purpose are the historical remainings in Sumerpark and Surçi. The main strategies that have been used for the project are:

- Voluntary efforts of people.
- Partnership of NGOs, public and private sector.
- Raising awareness about the sense of ownership of the city and about its own history.
- Utilizing the efforts of all persons and institutions that have participated in the process.

The partnership dimension of the project is coordinated by the Conservation of Historical Heritage working group secretariat and the relevant units of Diyarbakır LA 21. The main partners are Directorate of Museums, relevant units of Turkish Engineers and Architects Union, representative of Foundation for the Protection and Promotion of the Environmental and Cultural Heritage in Diyarbakır, Historical and Cultural Foundation of Diyarbakır, individual contributions from scholars, Dicle University Engineering Department and Art Center Co. in Diyarbakır.

The project has been designed by taking into consideration the civil architecture remnants in Surçi and the streets that connect those remnants to one another.

Within the framework of the project in Sümërpark, an area of 80,000 m2, which used to be a carpet factory is planned to be converted to an art exhibition. Moreover, three hangar rooms are planned to be art studios and the transformer rooms will be converted to be used for similar purposes.

Outcomes

- Streets full of mud and puddles have been listed and restructured to ensure easier transportation and access for tourists to historical and cultural places.
Prior to the restructuring of the street, numerous pathogen habitats had been destroyed, which were carried from streets to houses.

The problem of mud and potholes in the street, making the traffic flow difficult especially in rainy weather, has been fixed.

Old city walls, close to 5km. in length have been restored, lighted and opened to tourism.

4) Municipality of Doğubeyazıt Local Agenda 21 Women and Children’s Health Training Center

The Project was initiated upon a visit of the mayor of Doğubeyazıt (a medium-sized town in Southeastern Turkey) to the Metropolitan Municipality of Ancona, which is located in Italy.

The Metropolitan Municipality of Ancona funds the project.

The aim of the project is to provide training and health services to women, who are in a disadvantageous situation due to the lack of education, intensity of economic problems and inefficiency of health institutions.

Doğubeyazıt Women and Children’s Health Training Center is operated under the framework of Local Agenda 21 project.

In the Center, examination rooms, a doctors’ room, a nurses’ room, a maternity room, an injection room, a meeting room, an exhibition room, a computer room, a library and a guesthouse are present.

Outcomes

Doğubeyazıt Women and Children’s Health Training Center has been established to respond to the health, education and culture related needs of all women in the district.

- Health problems of women and children in the city have been determined and necessary equipment has been provided and staff has been recruited.
- Such services as examination, injection, and blood pressure measurement for women have been provided.
- Awareness raising activities have been carried out by the staff on women’s health, pre-pregnancy, pregnancy, post-pregnancy, infant nutrition, childcare, hygiene and women-related diseases.
• Education needs of women and children have been determined. Courses have been provided to illiterate women.
• Exhibitions have been organized for marketing handicrafts of women.
• The Center also accommodated a guesthouse for women coming from other cities and towns.

5) Izmir Local Agenda 21 Integrated Coastal Zone Management

The multiple problems related to pollution and the obstruction of the balance of use-protection in the basin of the Izmir (the third most populous metropolis in Turkey) Gulf began to emerge in the 1960s and partial solutions have been implemented so far: Although most of the issues have been defined in the academic environment, very few could be practiced.

Since the 1990s the necessity of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) has been discussed in meetings by the academic, civil and public organizations of Izmir.

In the meeting held on November 20, 2001 a working group called “Izmir Zone Management” has been created and transferred to local partners in the LA 21 City Council in February 2002 with relevant work, participation and contributions. It is aimed to develop long-term projects in cooperation with relevant interest groups.

To this end, interest groups have organized a series of meetings. Following exchange of opinions and discussions in these meetings, a consensus has been set to develop an action plan in order to render the issue more concrete.

An invitation has been sent to all relevant institutions and organizations such as central and local public institutions, relevant faculties and departments of the University, professional chambers in order to set this action plan.

A working group formed by professionals has started to work on an implementation procedure of the ICZM in cooperation with Izmir Local Agenda 21, which facilitated the organization of such an event for the first time. Limits and institutional structures have been discussed at the first action plan preparation meeting on the ICZM.

The necessity of creating an “Information system” for Izmir was the result of that meeting. Four strategy meetings have been organized with the contribution of public, private and civil sectors working in Izmir city. Moreover, sub-working groups have been created.
During the meetings, Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), Methodological Approach of Integrated Coastal Region Management (UNESCO, 1997) have been presented to the participants and activities continued in this framework.

Methodological Approach of ICZM has 6 phases: 1) Analyze of problems 2) Definition of management units 3) Quality of coasts 4) Indicators and indexes 5) Information systems 6) Propositions and guidances for aims / objectives.

Outcomes

The Local Agenda 21 objectives of bringing together the organizations in a discussion environment, the ICZM program, has been achieved in the first and second phases even though with a low level of participation. The phase of creating information systems has been discussed. It is accepted that the control of public benefit will be ensured by access to information. It is thought that thanks to the possibility of updating, information should not stay in the related organization at it should be shared via a credible and agreed method.

Therefore it is not supported that “data” should stay in a given centralized organization. The issue of gathering “information” to serve decision making mechanisms in an administrative or a technical center has been discussed.

Activities are based on ensuring participation and access to information, accelerating the decision making process and on the participatory administration model.

This work has been presented as a paper during the sixth national conference entitled ‘Coasts and Seas of Turkey’ and in the City Council. The Integrated Coastal Zone Management Project was published and distributed as a lobbying tool.

The City Council has supported the activities which ensured further participation in the Coast Group. The renovated Coast Group is developing strategies in the following issues:

- Harbour Management Model and Search and Rescue.
- Coastal security in the Izmir Gulf.
- Sectoral harmonization plan in EU integration.
- Signing of a contract between the interest groups in the coastal zone and fostering cooperation.
6) Neighborhood Disaster Support Project

Izmit (city of almost a million, close to Istanbul, which experienced a devastating earthquake in 1999) City Council has undertaken important functions for the development and implementation of various projects since its establishment in 1998. Neighborhood Disaster Support Project is one of such projects. The earthquake of 17 August 1999 highly affected the priorities of the Council. It developed a post-earthquake action plan through intensive work. One of the important issues brought up by the action plan is the priority of public education on disaster preparedness.

An action plan was developed to solve this problem in cooperation with the SDC (Swiss Development Cooperation Agency). A secretariat was established to carry out the activities. The secretariat is comprised of the representatives of the Council and the SDC, and has organized various meetings with numerous institutions in Izmit. Representatives of NGOs, state agencies and local authorities participated in these meetings. In July 2000, “International Disaster Management Conference” and “International Workshop on Disaster Management” were held. The current state of Turkey in terms of disaster preparedness and management was evaluated during these two meetings.

It was indicated that the education of public was crucial in reduction of cost of disasters. However, an applicable model for this was not present. A new action plan was prepared. The draft developed was brought into discussion and a series of meetings were held to provide input of various institutions. As a consequence, the “Neighborhood Disaster Support Project” was developed. 90% of the people who survived the disaster are those rescued with the non-professional efforts of the neighborhood residents. The project aimed to change these into professional intervention, controlling the situation until experienced rescue units arrive.

The project is being carried out by an executive board comprised of representatives from Izmit City Council, Governorship, Provincial Civil Defense Directorate, Metropolitan Municipality Department of Fire Brigade, Kocaeli University and SDC. The project was initiated in 2000 and is still going on. 50 volunteers in every neighborhood have been trained for nine months on disaster preparedness, first aid, basic fire extinction, basic search and rescue and disaster psychology.

A container with equipments for these volunteers are installed in every neighborhood. In order to carry out these activities in good discipline, neighborhood disaster boards have been established. These boards focus on means to increase pre- and post-disaster preparedness capacities of neighborhoods.

These activities include defining industrial risks that the city might face during disasters, logistical support during and after a disaster, evaluation of the status of buildings and roads.
The boards also ensure the sustainability of training of the volunteers as well as safety and maintenance of the equipments in the containers.

**Outcomes**

- Under the Project, Neighborhood Disaster boards have been established in 15 neighborhoods and also training of 570 volunteers has been completed with granting them certificates. Containers have been installed in these neighborhoods and the equipments have been handed out.
- The project was initiated with the contributions of hundreds of people and institutions and is still going on.
- The project is a model for disaster preparedness for Turkey. Istanbul and Yalova used the project as a model.
- Members of the neighborhoods where the project has been carried out feel safer and believe that they are prepared for possible disasters.
- The project has developed a permanent spirit of cooperation among many institutions.
- So far, around 70 institutions and over a thousand of people have taken part and contributed to the project.

**7) Conservation of Cultural Heritage**

Merdinar Project (Mardin Participatory Urban Rehabilitation Project), which aims at conservation of historical and cultural values of Mardin (a provincial center in Southeastern Turkey) and introducing them to the world, has been commenced with the financial support of the government of Switzerland through UNDP. The project was executed under the co-ordination of Istanbul Technical University. Mardin City Council had a critical role during the implementation of this project. The City Council has provided advice and the project team regularly informed the City Council about the progress of the project. The restoration area of the project, the historical Tellallar Market was chosen by the City Council and was executed by the Construction Committee established under the City Council.

One of the outcomes of the Merdinar project has been the Social Development and Cultural Heritage Project which is being executed by the Ministry of Culture and funded by the World Bank. This is a critical project for Mardin Local Agenda 21 as it encompasses large-scale restoration activities. Therefore, Mardin Local Agenda 21 and the City Council have exerted considerable efforts to realize this project.
Officials from the World Bank and the Ministry of Culture organized meetings with the City Council and the project has been shaped with respect to the needs and demands of the city. Moreover, Mardin Local Agenda 21 communicated its willingness to undertake responsibilities in this project similar to those within the framework of the Merdinar project, and received positive responses.

The preliminary application by the Ministry of Culture to UNESCO to recognize Mardin as a city of world heritage was approved. In the aftermath of the approval, Mardin Local Agenda 21 General Secretariat has taken part in related meetings and members of the City Council have regularly been updated about developments. This activity has been executed in co-ordination with Mardin Local Agenda 21, Governorship of Mardin and Municipality of Mardin.

After the approval of the preliminary application, a UNESCO expert visited Mardin, participated in the City Council meeting and was impressed by the high level interest of the people in the city. Mardin City Council has significantly contributed to the preparation of necessary additional documents.

The City Council also carries out activities for the promotion of the cultural heritage of Mardin. The working group on tourism established within the framework of Mardin Local Agenda 21 has found out that there was lack of promotional materials in many of the touristic attractions and steps have been taken to publish pamphlets.

As a result of this, funds have been provided by the Mardin Education and Mutual Support Foundation to publish 2,500 pamphlets. Moreover, important steps have been taken to declare Mardin as a tourism site, which is an effort of the Ministry of Tourism, by virtue of the support and follow-up activities of Mardin Local Agenda 21.

**Outcomes**

- Mardin Local Agenda 21 City Council has been actively involved in the above-mentioned projects, which has developed a spirit of collective action in Mardin.
- The City Council has gained experience thanks to its status and activities in the Merdinar Project, which can be utilized for future similar projects.
- As a result of these activities, important steps have been taken to raise awareness on conservation among people in the city.
- These activities have contributed to commencement of private restorations in Mardin.
Conclusion

Although relatively new, the local agenda 21 program in Turkey has developed into an effective area of stake-holders collaboration and an important instrument of improved service delivery and democratization. Furthermore, this is facilitated by also empowering community groups; facilitating their participation in expressing their needs, and in taking decisions to address these needs. The result of this transparent process is more client-centered service delivery; enhanced legitimacy for public administration and increased opportunities for civic engagement. They key for the success of such initiatives is a degree of awareness on the part of citizens (which can be initiated or augmented through ‘sensivity’ programs); existence of “stakeholders” willing to participate (or responsive to certain incentives); and public officials/local politicians who can detect the advantage in kindling/adding fuel to dynamics of local governance.