

The AASCTF Thematic Brochures are a three-part series of stories from the field, centered on sharing the trust fund's impact across three fundamental areas: people, place, and partnerships. Using these as lenses, urban planners and practitioners can find evidence and inspiration to create smarter and more livable cities.



ASEAN
AUSTRALIA
SMART CITIES
TRUST FUND
Asian Development Bank



Australian Government
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade



Convening Partnerships



Convening partnerships speak to wider collaboration, engaging diverse parties and giving people a place at the table. The ASEAN Australia Smart Cities Trust Fund (AASCTF) was founded on partnership—between the Government of Australia, Asian Development Bank (ADB), and Ramboll, as well as the ASEAN Smart Cities Network. This approach is vital for cities to break silos, amplify positive impacts, and create lasting change.



BAGUIO

Baguio City in the Philippines is a prime case of convening partnerships. In this project, centered on piloting a smart flood early warning system (FEWS), layers upon layers of activities were executed, giving plenty of opportunities for the city and AASCTF to collaborate with governments, communities, universities, and other organizations.

Chief among these was training the FEWS operations and maintenance team, which had a supporting peer group from Saint Louis University, University of the Cordilleras, and the regional offices of the country's Department of Science and Technology (DOST) and the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA), or the national meteorological agency. The participation of DOST and PAGASA was reinforced by the previous memoranda of agreement signed by Baguio City Mayor Benjamin Magalong in 2022, to establish a framework of cooperation in support of the project. By creating this larger technical team, the city government could effectively gather real-time weather data, operate and maintain the FEWS, and introduce knowledge exchange that could be beneficial for other cities and towns.

By mid-2023, Mayor Magalong did sign two memoranda of agreement with the mayors of Tuba and La Trinidad, to boost for collective resilience against extreme flooding events.



“

We wanted to emphasize the involvement of the community for [the development of Happy Glen Park], because that was one of the things that was also recommended by the [AASCTF] flood mitigation plan.

— Donna Tabangin

Head, City Planning, Development, and Sustainability Office

Another key feature of the project was the focus on strengthening gender equality, disability, and social inclusion (GEDSI). AASCTF worked together with Practical Action Consulting to conduct a study on identifying the missing voices in flood risk management. Policy recommendations were also prepared to improve disaster preparedness for the vulnerable. With Practical Action’s expertise, the FEWS was designed to become more inclusive and government staff learned how to actualize “leaving no one behind”.

This collaborative spirit, consistent throughout the project, elevated the other impact areas of people and place. The government’s own openness and dedication to the city likewise increased, triggering a chain of more cooperation. Donna Tabangin, Head of the City Planning, Development, and Sustainable Office, shared how the project’s flood mitigation plan prompted the city to pursue nature-based solutions (NBS) in line with other city initiatives. With a grant from the Department of Health, they are joining hands to develop green spaces and promote active mobility in Happy Glen Park, one of the NBS sites proposed in the flood mitigation plan. Furthermore, “the community comes front and center in the plan development [for the park],” she noted.

The FEWS, and all the other related interventions, gained the attention of existing and potential development partners. Both the Australian Embassy (represented by then Ambassador HK Yu) and the United States Embassy in the Philippines (represented by then Chargé d’Affaires Heather Variava) visited the city to learn more about the project.

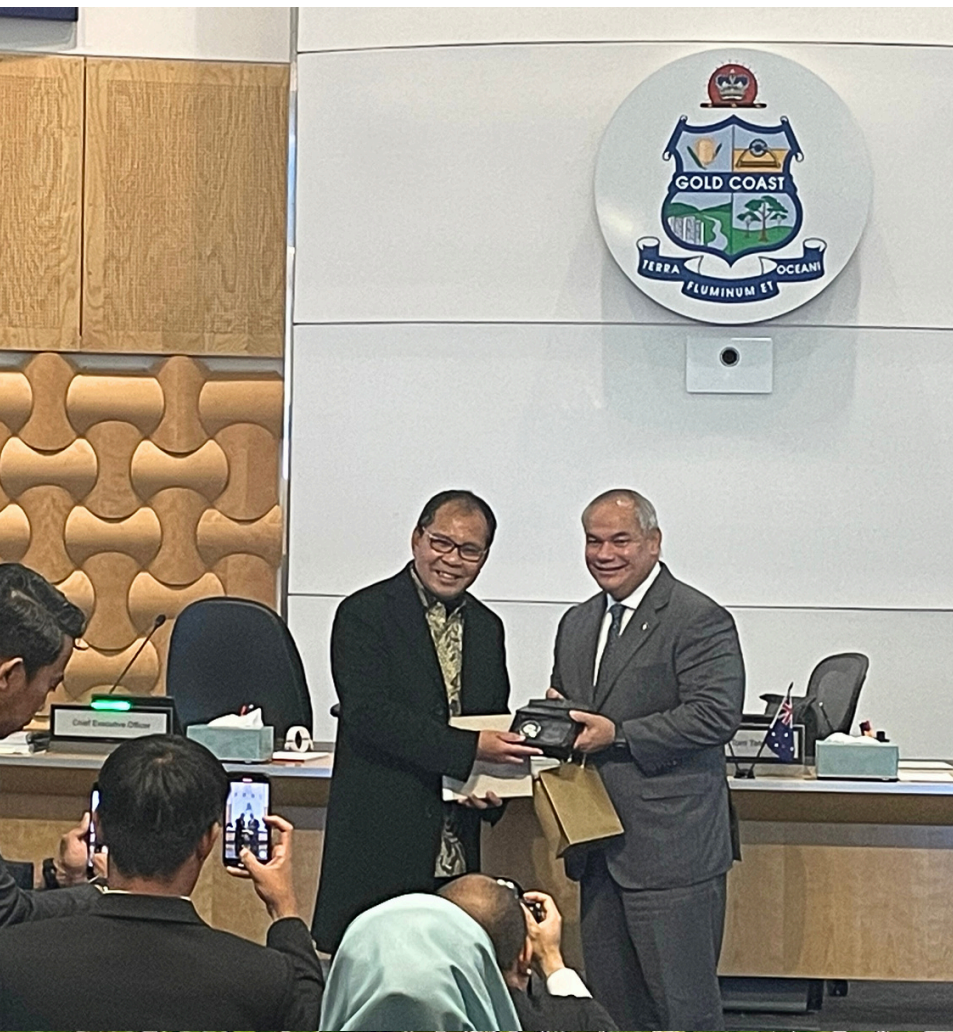


Photo courtesy of Future Cities Lab.

MAKASSAR

Long before AASCTF worked with Makassar, this booming Indonesian city had already pinned its hopes on becoming a world-class smart city. Then Mayor Moh. Ramdhan Pomanto's philosophy centered on "sombere", a Bahasa word for "great hospitality, great humility, and great brotherhood". The idea, he explained, is about putting people first and not the technology, to make the city smart and hospitable. It was an ethos that complemented the trust fund, especially on convening partnerships.

Two such relationships enriched the development of the Makassar Livable City Plan. First, AASCTF collaborated with Australia's national science agency, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), to create a digital climate risk resilience platform. Based on their original INDRA system, the INDRA Makassar platform allowed local authorities to see how people, infrastructure, or different sectors and areas of the city could be affected given changes in temperature, sea level rise, and other factors. AASCTF and CSIRO also partnered with the University of Hasanuddin to include additional datasets, such as land use data, population, and infrastructure layers, providing a more comprehensive platform (albeit a prototype) for urban planning and climate-proofing. Similarly, AASCTF worked with the Future Cities Lab of Singapore to use their ur-scape platform to analyze COVID-19 impacts and plan response measures in the city.



Sharing data and experiences is a key advantage of building partnerships. The second relationship that AASCTF formed for the city was under a pilot twinning program. Makassar was paired with the Gold Coast in Australia. Through webinars and workshops, they deepened their understanding of smart city development, such as on tourism, climate change, and transport. In 2022, Mayor Pomanto visited and met with Gold Coast City Mayor Tom Tate under this twinning initiative (top photo). Another Makassar delegation went to Sydney in 2023 for the "One Map, One Data" workshop on spatial planning and 3D modeling for urban planning (bottom photo).



Aside from these partnerships, the backbone of the project itself was the inter-agency collaboration within the local government. The Makassar Livable City Plan facilitated greater collaboration between different departments as it provided a central hub for various spatial plans to be aligned. Different sectors were intertwined in this planning platform, enabling the agencies to do better decision-making.



KAYSONE PHOMVIHANE

Kaysone Phomvihane is an emerging urban center in the Savannakhet Province of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR). Named after the first prime minister of the country, Kaysone could very well reach a similar stature. The province has Lao PDR's first special economic zone (thanks to its ideal trading position) and Kaysone is also banking on improving the labor market to steer its economic growth.

AASCTF's support focused on addressing the skills gap of the labor market. Through AASCTF funds, educational modules, instructional videos, and the Kaysone Self-Learning app were developed. This funding also allowed ADB to collaborate with 81 local and foreign companies and manufacturers, to gain an understanding of their recruitment process and staffing needs through an online survey.

This helped inform the work with schools, such as Savannakhet University (SKU) and Savannakhet Technical and Vocational College, to ensure crucial soft skills that the private sector require (like negotiation and problem-solving) are taught to tertiary graduates for the long term. About 299 teaching staff from two universities and six technical and vocational education and training colleges were trained to facilitate learning. Three schools also adopted the modules into their communication subject curricula.

“

Using e-learning, SKU wants to upgrade the skills of students, especially their practical skills, so that they are ready and equipped with the skills required by the labor market...

This project will help develop on-boarding tools for students.

— **Sitha Khemmarath**
Vice-President,
Savannakhet University (SKU)





LUANG PRABANG

The Luang Prabang Smart and Integrated Urban Strategy was born out of collaboration—from the government down to myriad members of the community. A visioning exercise for the 2040 development scenario included engaging village chiefs, night market sellers, business owners, and civil society.

Partnerships were also sought for the sustainment of the strategy and to fund proposed smart city projects, since budget was a major obstacle noted by local authorities. AASCTF met with different development partners, including ADB and Monash University, to identify potential avenues and align the needs of the city, such as support for tourism and nature-based solutions.

Smart livable cities flourish with partners.

Creating expanded urban development outcomes begins with partnerships. Convening with the right individuals and organizations emphasizes the multi-sectoral approach, mirroring how cities are complex systems that need everyone's participation to achieve transformative growth.

It also underscores one of AASCTF's crosscutting themes and priorities: strengthening GEDSI and giving people a voice. AASCTF placed a spotlight on this through the regional program on inclusive cities.

By convening partnerships, AASCTF projects and activities have informed ADB programs, such as the Davao public transport project and an urban investment in Luang Prabang—truly ripples of change for Southeast Asia.

ABOUT THE ASEAN AUSTRALIA SMART CITIES TRUST FUND

The ASEAN Australia Smart Cities Trust Fund (AASCTF) assists ASEAN cities in enhancing their planning systems, service delivery, and financial management by developing and testing appropriate digital urban solutions and systems. By working with cities, AASCTF facilitates their transformation to become more livable, resilient, and inclusive, while in the process identifying scalable best and next practices to be replicated across cities in Asia and the Pacific. AASCTF is supported by the Australian Government through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, managed by the Asian Development Bank, and implemented by Ramboll.