LAND POOLING IN THIMPHU, BHUTAN

Why LP, Current status & Dilemma, Bitter experiences, Key lessons, What next, and Reflection
Introduction - The City at a Glance

- Area = 26 sq km
- 40% of Nat. Urban, 12.5% Nat. Population
- Density - 3,030 people/SqKM

- Growth rate = 12%
- The 1st Comprehensive Plan approved in 2003
- Thimphu Structure Plan 2002-27
Why we adopted land pooling

- Planning before 2001 criticized for being unfair:
  - High market value and low govt. approved rates
  - Farmers were losers while business ppl gained
  - Access to information
  - Top down planning
  - No transparency
  - Hasty plans and appraisals

- Land Pooling (LP) introduced during TSP and LAPs
- Several rigorous public consultations
- In LP landowners contribute land for roads, footpaths, open spaces, drains, schools and NN
- Currently 14 LAPs (each about 1sq km)
- Now, other towns also adopted LP as a fair tool
Current Dilemma

1. Few people still claim they were never consulted
   i. Authorities feel they have done enough
   ii. 13 open house meetings, 13 for Lungtenphu LAP, media, one to one meetings
   iii. Oftentimes - take advantage of new faces
   iv. Mostly the rich and powerful don’t agree
   v. They also have time & resources to prolong the process
   vi. Middle and low income ppl suffer - speculation, increased cost of construction, short supply of houses
   vii. Legal cases with few of them. But we avoid in the interest of the majority

2. Few adamantly refuse to participate
   i. Claim that they already have all the facilities & services
   ii. They want the plan to be revised and prolonged
   iii. We try various strategies
      i. Explore possibility of minor surgical exercise without disturbing the focus of overall plan
      ii. A mix of land and monetary contribution
      iii. Criteria is also developed
      iv. Persistently conduct public meetings and one to one meetings to explain the benefits
      v. Engagement of local representatives
3. Administration and management of land
   i. Establishment of NLCS has centralized the powers
   ii. Administrative and bureaucratic delays in rendering services related to land and property transactions, issuance of titles, resolving land related conflicts and in implementation of the plans
   iii. Hope for decentralization - after NCRP

Bitter Experiences
- Projects of major public benefits, of importance to the nation and the future generation gets rejected - eg Ag and E4 precincts
- Public interest litigation (Jan 2003)
- The HC ruled LP as illigal - acquisition?
- Govt saw LP as a better and fair option for financing urban development - more meetings
- Major public campaign - meetings, media, one to one meetings
- Slowly, even those who dragged the govt to court became staunch supporter of LP
- This in turn helped convince the public
Geley Norbu

Key Lessons

1. Understanding the history with regard to relationship between the govt and public is important
2. Trust building between landowners and govt is very important
3. Leadership and HR capacity
4. Having an example for the public to see may help garner support

5. Through public consultations
   1. Build a strong foundation of democratic principles
   2. Encourage participation, collaboration, and a sense of responsibility
   3. Also transparency and accountability
   4. Enrich culture and tradition

Map showing readjusted plots before & after land pooling
Key Lessons

6. More and More public consultations always help
7. Court ruling is not important if a super majority agree. In other words having many laws can hinder progress
8. Decentralization of power on land admin & mgm to the local authorities would expedite the planning & implementation process
9. At all levels, the process should be looked at as a social entrepreneurship, as a trust building process, and as a relationship builder at local and neighborhood level
10. A proficient and committed team is necessary to manage the project
11. Using various strategies to convince the public helps. Consultation meetings, one to one meetings, site visits, media, and talking to as many members of a family as possible
Improved level of satisfaction and trust

Percentage respondents satisfaction with facilities before and after (Dechencholing LAP)

Level of satisfaction with facilities before and after LAP

Very satisfied
Satisfied
Slightly unsatisfied
Very unsatisfied
Very satisfied
Satisfied
Slightly unsatisfied
Very unsatisfied

Urban roads
Water Supply
Garbage collection
Sewerage/sanitation

Before RAP

After RAP

Geley Norbu
Key Lessons

Improved basic services in 2 LAPs

Provision of services - before and after LAP

Percentage respondents having services before & after

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<td>Water provision (tap stands)</td>
<td>0%</td>
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<td>All-season roads</td>
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Discussions so far relate to only two LAPs
We have 12 more LAPs, each a little different from the other. However, the process in general are same
Need to be mindful about specific site conditions - level of public engagement, intensity of existing development, frequency of awareness campaigns, willingness of public officials to tread the extra mile, leadership at all levels and political commitment
The government should now develop a PROCESS GUIDELINE at three specific levels - Inception, Planning and Implementation
IMPLEMENTATION STATUS

- 14 LAPs are prepared & approved (includes Zilukha AAP & Extended workshop area)
- 7 LAPs are at various stage of implementation
  - 3 LAPs are funded through World Bank (Dechencholing, Langjophakha & Lower Taba)
  - 4 LAPs are funded through ADB (Babesa, Semtokha, Lungtenphu & Changbangdu)
- 7 LAPs still do not have funding (Serbithang, C/zamto, Zilukha, Hejo-Samtenling, Jongshina-Pamtsho, Upper Taba)
Total Area = 1846 acres, Total Plots = 3757, Landowners = 2782, Total land pooled = More than 260 acres
IMPLEMENTATION STATUS

Dechencholing LAP - Before and after planning intervention

- Total LAP area = 93 Ac
- Plots = 220
- Landowners = 181
- Land Pooling = 25%

Invested Nu 190,475 mil for civil works (2.85 mil USD)
+ Nu 22,278 mil for WTP (0.33 mil USD)
+ Nu 17,67 mil for STP (0.26 mil USD)
Changzamto LAP Before and after planning intervention (upper and lower)

Densely developed, highly fragmented, Corrective surgery, self-financing, Principles developed

- Total LAP area = 90.46 Ac (excludes middle)
- Total Plots = 268
- Total landowners = 249
- Land Pooling = 25%
- Collected CPLC=Nu 26 million (390000 $)
Reflection: What could have been done differently?

1. More More and More public consultations always help
2. Consultation, Consultation, Consultation is the key to success
3. Court ruling is not important if a super majority agree. In other words having many laws can hinder progress
4. Decentralization of power on land admin & mgm
5. At all levels, the process should be looked at as a social entrepreneurship, as a trust building process, and as a relationship builder
6. A proficient and committed team is necessary to manage the project
7. Using various strategies to convince the public helps.
8. Sometimes it is good to truncate the areas for implementation depending on the level of agreement
9. Get an agreement signed as soon as they agree
10. Elect local representatives during public meetings.
11. As the officials change from time to time some landowners take the advantage of new faces. Therefore, maintain proper records
12. Achieving 100% agreement is important, especially if the infrastructure investment is made by donors.
CHALLENGES & ISSUES

- Reality on the ground is outpacing the plan
- Pressure in E4 areas
- Lack of resources (both human and funding)
- Limited awareness (complacency?) at all levels
- Competing developmental priorities
- Lack of coordination (too many authorities & agencies)
- Low technical and organizational capacity across the sectors
- Lack of a Planning Law
- A few have not yet agreed to land pooling
- **No office of its own to operate from**
- **Only 3 officials in the Urban Planning Division. Lost 15 staffs in 8 years.**
- **Difficult to attract & retain talents** (too many public dealings, ad-hoc works, site visits without TADA)
HOW IS THE CITY SEEN BY THE OUTSIDE WORLD

- CNN special series “The City” ranks Thimphu as the 3rd friendliest cities, next to Florianopolis (Brazil) and Hobart (Tasmania)
- Confidence in the judicial systems of Bhutan = 95% (www1gallup.com/poll/178757) – ranks no 1
- In 2014, Bhutan’s rank in the ease of doing business index is 125, out of a total of 189 countries. (In 2013 the rank was 122): Source: Kuensel dated Nov. 4, 2014
- During the World Bank – IMF conference held in Peru (Oct 2015) Thimphu city was cited in “What Makes a Sustainable City”
A PLEDGE

• We are committed to working towards achieving the TSPs vision of making Thimphu the BEST OF WHAT THE COUNTRY CAN BE

• We pledge to DO MORE WITH LESS

Want to know more?
Take nothing but memories
Leave nothing but footprints

Thank you