

Urban Management in Brazil

Claudio Acioly Jr.

More than 75% of Brazilians live in urban centres which makes proper urban governance an extremely important feature to enable the development of the country. Furthermore, Brazilian local governments have enjoyed since 1935 a significant degree of political, administrative and fiscal autonomy. Some local government experts consider Brazilian municipalities as one of the most autonomous in the world. This is recently highlighted in Rio de Janeiro.

Restoring Local Governance in Rio

The previous administration in Rio (1993-96) took office with a determined political will to put an end on what it called the urban chaos, the economic decline and the absence of governance. The municipality was restructured to ensure a more efficient management system which involved modern financial management procedures, investments in public security, modernisation of the police apparatus and the development of social programmes. A strategic planning process was launched and provided different mechanisms at different levels for participation of stakeholders in the formulation of what is probably the first strategic plan formulated in Latin America. The strengthening of human resources also gained a prominent position in the agenda of urban reform which helped to design and implement a series of urban revitalization initiatives, focussing on both the strategic areas of the city and the informal settlements. The IHS was involved in assisting the municipality and particularly the IPLANRIO-Municipal Planning and Information Agency in the development of skills and methods in project planning and project management in urban renewal and informal settlement upgrading projects through tailor-made training. The target group of these training programs were the professional cadre - urban managers - of the municipality, particularly those who are involved with the Rio Cidade Revitalization Program and the Favela Bairro upgrading program.

The former aimed at the restructuring of inner city areas and major public spaces and commercial axis which were selected due to their strategic function in the overall functionality of the city and their role in the general image of the city. The basic approach of the Rio Cidade was to revitalize the streets and public spaces through physical restructuring and urban design innovations aiming at its devolution to the pedestrians, users and population. By creating more discipline and urban order, the municipality was restoring the basics of governance and citizenship. In practice, the interventions tackled infrastructure networks, separation and protection for circulation of pedestrians, new urban visual communication, urban furnitures and equipments, city lighting, traffic signs, public parks, restructuring of squares, monuments, etc. Urban managers were expected to play a crucial role in managing the process of project development tendered to architecture and urban design offices; conductin the negotiation with private and community sectors; assuring conflict resolution and supervision of all public utility companies; and managing the coordination and supervision of building contractors responsible for implementation works. The IHS training was addressing these issues and serve as an instrument to strengthen team building and project planning and management procedures.

PHOTO: Closing ceremony of the first course

Claudio Acioly from IHS emphasizing the importance of linking human resources development with actual program development and implementation, in the presence of the mayor of Rio de Janeiro, Mr. Cesar Maia who was also secretary of the G+4 Global Local Government Coalition (centre), Mrs. Verena Andreatta de Carvalho, president of IPLANRIO and IHS alumni, and Mr. Sergio Magalhães, Municipal Secretary of Housing.