

Heritage renovation & integrated infrastructure development to catalyse urban regeneration in Yangon

Client: [Yangon City Development Committee](#) (YCDC) and [Yangon Heritage Trust](#) (YHT)

Financing Agency: [Cities Development Initiative for Asia \(CDIA\)](#)

Project timeline: Jan-June 2015

Background: Yangon is the only city in Asia with its historic core largely intact, reflecting the unique rich and cosmopolitan past of the city. The city's historic heart is also the commercial centre and location of choice for the many international business and brands establishing a presence in Yangon.

In a long denied strive for modernisation; many of the original properties in the historic core are being demolished to make way for modern buildings. Almost invariably this means that original 3-4 storey historic properties are being replaced by modern 8-12 storey structures transforming the cityscape at rapid pace. In an environment where legislation is still being developed and market conditions dictate, new development is happening rather abruptly, often completely distorting the urban fabric and uprooting the local community. In addition, physical improvements are often confined to buildings only without much improvement to the public and common spaces.

Appreciation of the economic value of historic buildings is largely absent, there is little awareness about heritage conservation among the resident population and business, local construction companies lack knowledge and technical skills to modernise with respect of the historic streetscape and investment capacity among residents appears limited.

Given the speed of developments, there is only a short window of opportunity before the unique character of Yangon's city center will be lost. YCDC's objective for development of the historic core is to upgrade infrastructure and improve living conditions within the following parameters:

- Not to increase the density (population, traffic congestion etc.)
- Maintain the residential function & livelihood including current residents
- Keep the historic identity, unique character & streetscape

Project scope: The main focus of this project is to provide to help YCDC and YHT to provide a feasible development alternative that is *more respectful to the historic fabric* and also provides *more acceptable and affordable alternatives* to residents compared to the current practice of real estate development. These alternatives are perhaps less profitable in the short term but brings greater economic and social benefits in the long term. The PROJECT aims to provide the ammunition to make this a convincing alternative: providing the technical, financial, economic and legal parameters all in conjunction with exploring alternatives with home- owners associations and models that can generate investment beyond individual buildings leading to an upgrade in the urban environment in downtown Yangon.

The purpose of this project is to show how heritage conservation, development and investment can catalyse urban regeneration and improve city livability. The approach of the project will be to conserve landmarks and infrastructure, historic core, housing and land that would perhaps not qualify individually for protection but taken collectively have enough character to be recognisable features that give to each city its uniqueness. '*Integrated conservation*' will underpin the work of this project.

Project activities:

The project will focus on a maximum of three pilot areas (streets) in Yangon's historic core and could include the following components:

1. VISION & STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE PILOT AREAS

Based on the shared vision and guidelines for the urban conservation zone by YCDC and YHT, articulate and visualise the development vision and strategic plan for each of the pilot areas.

2. IDENTIFY SPECIFIC OPPORTUNITIES/ PROJECTS FOR HERITAGE RENOVATION

Determine the development and investment opportunities and constraints in each of the pilot areas and create a property portfolio detailing the technical, legal and ownership details, historical background plus an indication and visual impression of the development potential of selected heritage buildings for two types of properties:

- a) Properties that are potentially bankable heritage renovation projects, i.e. suitable for commercial exploitation (retail, office, residential).
- b) Properties that have redevelopment potential as public/cultural facilities i.e. properties with specific heritage value or cultural identity (community centre, library, museum, art galleries, etc.).

3. LINKING THESE PROJECTS TO DOWNSTREAM FINANCE

The PROJECT team will then assist YCDC and YHT in to link the potential heritage renovation projects in the portfolio to finance in four ways:

- a) Explore models that have been successful in heritage revitalisation as a catalyst for urban regeneration in Asia and assess the suitability for the Yangon context as well as the legal and financial constraints and opportunities that would apply.
- b) Marketing the portfolio to local and foreign investors/developers, companies and institutional investors seeking a healthy long term financial return alongside a social impact (for properties in category a) as well as local and international private foundations and cultural institutions (for properties in category b).
- c) Assess the opportunity for a targeted housing finance vehicle that can help unlock current investment potential among residents, channel investment into renovation and maintenance of properties as well as upgrade the common space in the buildings.
- d) Assess the feasibility of a Special Purpose Vehicle for integrated neighbourhood regeneration and infrastructure improvement to be able to receive funds from international financiers.

4. IDENTIFY ADDITIONAL RESOURCES REQUIRED FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- a) Identify current gaps in regulatory, policy framework and institutional capacity to realise the identified heritage renovation projects
- b) Identify the current gaps in knowledge and skills for respectful urban upgrading among local developers and construction companies and formulate a strategy and action plan in which the neighbourhood upgrading initiative is used to spearhead an improvement to the current situation.

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Project Team:

Below is an indicative list of human resources required for the implementation of this project. Ideally a team of international and national experts deployed on an intermittent basis. The team will be based in Yangon and will complement the existing expertise available within the local counterparts YCDC and YHT. A project steering committee comprising key stakeholders will be established and be responsible for guiding the project team and its work.

INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS
Urban Heritage Economist
Heritage and Conservation Architect
Real Estate Development Specialist
PPP Specialist
Community & Cultural Investment Specialist
Housing Finance Specialist
Local Outreach/Engagement Specialist
GIS specialist
TOTAL INTERNATIONAL
NATIONAL EXPERTS
Heritage and Conservation Architect
Local outreach/Engagement Specialist
Legal Expert
Social Safeguards Specialist
Finance Specialist
Infrastructure Specialist
Construction Engineer
Real Estate, Marketing & PR Specialist
Project Assistant
TOTAL NATIONAL

Recruitment procedure:

Most likely consultants will be recruited on an individual basis through the Asian Development Bank's CSRN (Consulting Services Recruitment Notices) system. This is an on-line database through which the ADB routinely selects individuals and firms for part-time consultancy assignments for all its operations throughout Asia, including head office.

Registration is open to individuals from all nationalities and professions. Registration in this database is mandatory to qualify for any advisory work for CDIA or ADB. Details can be found at:

https://uxdmz06.adb.org/OA_HTML/adb/adbpos/jsp/ADBCMSLogin.jsp