

Thematic Cluster J
Emerging Issues and Concerns
Session 26
Urban Risk Management

Introduction

Over millennia cities have been seen as benchmarks of the greatness of civilizations. The precise planning and governance of Mohenjo-daro, Babylon, Alexandria, Rome, Pompeii and Neapolis, to name a few, have awed mankind as marvels of innovation and engineering. Many of these great cities have gone into oblivion due natural and man made disasters, while many others have survived many catastrophes. The resilience of cities in the modern ages has been demonstrated time and again, as cities as engines of economic growth have bounced back to life, but often at huge costs and miseries, which could be avoided if the cities are better planned to mitigate the hazards of nature and the vulnerabilities of socio-economic and environmental conditions that confront them.

Today the world is witnessing exponential urban growth, especially in the developing countries. For the first time in history the global urban population has equaled urban population at 3.25 billion in 2007 and it is projected that by 2030 another 1.8 billion people would be added to the cities mostly propelled by migration of poor people from the rural areas to large urban centers in the developing countries in search of employment and livelihood. Most of this growth is likely to take place in Asia and Africa.

India would be one of the main theatres of urban explosion in the coming years, the parallel of which was not seen before in the history of civilization. At 285 India stood relatively less urbanized (28.5%) in 2001, but by 2021 India would have 550 million people living in its cities. The number of cities with million plus population would swell from 35 at present to 75 in 2021.

Many countries of South and South East Asia and Western Africa would be experiencing similar urban growth. Before 1975 only 4 cities in the world had more than 10 million population each (Tokyo, New York, Shanghai and Mexico), by 2015 the number of 10 million plus cities would go up to 26, most of them from the developing world (Cairo, Lagos, Dhaka, Beijing, Tianjin, Mumbai, Kolkata, Delhi, Jakarta, Osaka,

Karachi, Seoul, Manila, Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo, Mexico, Los Angeles, Hyderabad, Teheran, Lahore, Bangkok and Istanbul),

Contexts

Increasing concentration of people, infrastructure and human activities in cities would create risks of unparalleled dimensions. While some of these risks are embedded in the historical location of many cities along river side or sea coasts, the spatial expansion of cities to new low-lying, flood prone and other vulnerable areas and unplanned slum settlements without safe buildings and adequate infrastructure would expose increasingly large number of people to different kinds risks of nature such as flood, storm surge, earthquake, landslides etc.

While devastating earthquakes have struck large urban centers like Tokyo (1923), Kobe (1995), San Francisco (1906), Mexico City (1985), Morocco (1960) and Chengdu (2008), typhoons and cyclones have regularly affected great cities across the world like Manila, New Orleans, while floods have remained recurring phenomena in most of the riverine and coastal cities.

In India as many as 38 cities with a population of over half a million each are located in seismically active zones III, IV and V. This includes the four mega cities of Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai and Chennai. Considering the large mass of unsafe buildings and high density of population in these cities any earthquake of even moderate intensity would cause catastrophic damages to people, property and infrastructure in these cities.

The Mumbai flood of 2005 and the regular floods in metropolitan cities are grim reminders of the risks hydro-meteorological disasters, which would worsen further due to global warming and climate change. Many coastal cities would have to grapple with the problems of sea level rise.

The risks of natural hazards have been compounded manifold by human-made threats like fire, environmental pollution, accidents, epidemics, industrial disasters, terrorism, civil disturbances etc which take toll of thousand of lives every year. The Bhopal Gas tragedy of 1984, the Surat plague of 1994, the terror attacks in New York, Mumbai and many places and the current threats of swine flu in many cities are examples of some of human induced disasters faced by the cities.

The Thematic Session on Urban Risk Management would discuss these emerging risks and find solution for mitigation and management of these risks.

Objectives

The broad objectives of the session would be to:

- Discuss the various dimensions of urban risks in different contexts and vulnerabilities.
- Discuss challenges, shortcomings and opportunities in safe and sustainable urban development
- Share technological and social innovations for risk reduction of urban communities as learning opportunities
- Integrate knowledge from various urban development sectors to formulate actions for urban risk reduction.

Themes

The Thematic Session will cover the entire gamut of issues in urban risk mitigation. The session will particularly focus on the following themes:

- Dimensions of Urban Disaster Risks
- Urban Governance
- Disaster sensitive Planning for Urban Areas
- Disaster-resistant Building Practices
- Mainstreaming of Disaster Risk Reduction for Sustainable Urban Development
- Building Climate Resilient Cities

Expected Outcome

The session is expected to bring together scholars, researchers and practitioners to identify issues and discuss areas of mutual cooperation and research. An expected outcome would be to collate the conclusions drawn from research and practice into a published format for further research and action.

Technical Session on Urban Risk Mitigation

**Dated: 4th November, 2009, Hall-1
3.30 pm**

Time : 2.00 pm-

Session Chaired by:

Shri D.S. Meshram,

Former Chief Planner, TCPO, M/o Urban Development, Govt. of India,

President, Institute of Town Planners, India, New Delhi and

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Session Co-Chaired by:

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