

ISSUE BRIEF

Urban Risk Management and Resilience



Urban Resilience: an imperative

Reducing urban risks and fostering resilience has assumed centrality in the global pursuit of sustainable development.

Confluence of people, socio-economic development assets, infrastructure along with the convergence of risks of multiple hues in urban areas, their inter-connected nature and systemic impact presents a context marked by complexity and increasing uncertainty. With over half the humanity already urbanized and likely to be two-thirds by 2050, all strands of the aspirational 2030 Agenda reinforce the need for holistic approach to address risks in urban areas and build resilience in all its dimensions viz. socio-economic, physical and environmental.

Urban resilience: renewed focus-global priority

- Cities today account for 55% of humanity, 70% of GHG emissions, 80% of global GDP and 2/3rd of energy consumption
- 90% of Covid cases accompanied by large-scale socio-economic disruption have created 88-115 million “new poor” in cities characterized by invisibilization of poverty
- Nearly 84% of fastest growing cities, primarily in Asia and Africa, will account for 90% of urbanization and will face high exposure and vulnerability to disaster/ climate risks putting \$4tn worth of assets at risk
- By 2030, 12 new megacities, with 10 in Asia and Africa, with over 10 million people are projected to emerge and have over 24% of people living in informal settlements
- 65% of global urban population in coastal zones face high exposure to hydro-met disasters and will increase to 75% by 2025
- Nearly 43% of people in fragile contexts are living in cities, expected to rise to 48% by 2030 and 59% by 2050

Resilience deficits in small and medium cities

Many high-risk cities, especially small and medium-sized ones are located in challenging development contexts like in LICs, LDCs, LMICs, SIDS and face considerable governance deficits as well as capacity and resource constraints. More than half of the world’s ‘new’ cities have developed in LICs, LMICs with high population growth and density. Between 1975 and 2015, small cities (less than 1 million) expanded much faster spatially than large metropolitan areas (more than 5 million) (2.96% vs 1.74% -- OECD). While they face similar development challenges and complex risks, their

governance, resource and technical capacity to deal with them is severely constrained.

Yet less than half of the cities have an explicit urban development strategy and barely 15% of these acknowledge climate change, disaster risks and human development imperatives. An evident shift towards ‘urbanization of risks’ is making risks increasingly systemic with cascading impacts on weaker segments of society, leaving them further behind while undermining developmental sustainability.

Risk-Development Nexus in cities

Good urban resilience practice uses a systems approach to bring together a collaborative focus on managing risks with development policy, planning and practice

Concentration of people, economic activities, development assets, infrastructure and a multitude of risks in urban areas coupled with structural inequities, governance deficits and accentuating socio-economic vulnerabilities has put achievement of SDGs at risk. Given that nearly two-third of infrastructure standing in 2050 is yet to be built calls for reducing existing and emerging multi-dimensional urban risks and investing in resilience building by taking a systems approach i.e. looking at urban services, capacities, resources, institutions, sectors and stakeholders as one whole. Urban areas are witnessing an increasing incidence of systemic risks, where one hazard, originating within or outside the city, can trigger a chain of negative impacts that lead to collapse of the urban system as a whole as evidenced by the Bangkok Floods of 2011 and Hurricane Sandy in New York in 2012.

Given that risk creation in cities happens not only within the city limits but outside the ‘formal’ city while cities also depend on peri-urban and hinterland areas for their resource requirements, it calls for looking at urban resilience by going beyond their jurisdictional remit as well as traditional linear risk understanding to capture the inter-relationships, knock-on effects and consequences of systemic and convergent nature of risks or disasters in an urban context.



For more information: undp.org/expertise

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Unmet Demands and Emerging Priorities

Nearly a decade of strategic and programmatic investments in urban resilience has highlighted unmet demands and emerging resilience building needs. UNDP's urban risk management and resilience practice responds to key gaps and identified priorities and builds on its cross-thematic experience on urban resilience viz.

- i. Disconnect between national policy and city implementation
- ii. Advancing all dimensions of resilience in tandem
- iii. Negotiating the political economy of urban development
- iv. Access to risk analysis and actionable risk data/information
- v. Re-thinking urban governance to imbue systems thinking and scenario-based strategic long-term urban planning
- vi. Weak accountability and resilience benchmarking
- vii. Insufficient attention to socio-economic vulnerabilities

Catalyzing partnerships: All-hands-on-deck

UNDP is internalizing UNSG's dictum that the battle for sustainable development will be won or lost in the cities by catalyzing partnerships. The need to join hands in this Decade of Action to bring the capabilities of all actors and stakeholders to build resilience and achieve SDGs at local level is well recognized. UNDP is fostering partnerships with UNDRR, UN-Habitat, CSOs, IFIs, academia, private sector and leading global/regional initiatives for joined-up policy and programmatic action to adopt an "all hands-on deck" approach to meet current needs, unlock development constraints and address governance deficits while laying the foundation for meeting emerging priorities.

Resilience at work: Programmatic initiatives

- **Ain Drahem, Tunisia:** resilience benchmarking approach for urban services
- **Waling, Nepal:** risk-informed land-use planning, strengthen municipal capacity for enforcement of National Building Code and by-laws and introduction of e-Building Permit System
- **Vientienne, Lao:** capacity of national and city administration for disaster/climate risk mainstreaming into development along with capacity for analysis and application of risk data
- **Yerevan, Armenia:** city resilience plans; strengthen city EW system and its operational capacities through tech support
- **Roseau, Dominica:** set-up City Stakeholder Forum to develop city resilience plan, all-hazard city EW and emergency management system
- **Mogadishu, Somalia:** comprehensive urban resilience initiative addressing multiple risks (going beyond disaster/climate risks)
- **Skopje, Macedonia:** Integrate DRR-CC into city development and spatial planning to address all aspects of resilience building

Integrated urban resilience building approach --

- i. **Resilience:** addressing all resilience dimensions
- ii. **Risks:** multi-risk approach like disasters, CC, conflict, fragility, governance
- iii. **Governance:** engage diverse stakeholders, sectors and interest groups
- iv. **People-centric:** poor, marginalized, vulnerable and left behind segments
- v. **Systems thinking:** urban services, capacities, resources, sectors and stakeholders
- vi. **Risk-informed:** build resilience to risks and secure development gains

Urban Risk Management and Resilience

1. **Focus on neglected geographies where greatest capacity gaps exist** such as small, medium and transitioning cities in LDCs, SIDS and LMICs, including cities in or on margins of crisis/fragile contexts, to provide actionable risk analysis and information to support peculiar risk management and resilience building needs.
2. **Strengthen urban governance by bridging the disconnect between national policy and city implementation.** Engaging all sectors, stakeholders and interest groups can enhance effectiveness of urban governance and shape urban development through connected policies and collective actions. This will improve decision-making processes by fostering participation and overcoming traditional barriers to address existing risks and prevent new ones.
3. **Cater to the specific needs and vulnerabilities of weaker segments of urban communities to ensure that no one is left behind.** It will focus on focus on enhancing citizen participation and amplifying marginalized voices in decision-making to address intersectional vulnerabilities like poverty, marginalization etc. By improving access of weaker segments to urban services like health, education, etc. will help address the circumstances which increase their exposure and vulnerability to growing "everyday" risks.
4. **Augment capacities of less-resourced cities to manage multi-dimensional risks through well-financed risk-informed urban development planning and investments.** Risk-informing urban development and bringing it to scale by fostering an enabling environment that aligns public and private finance, will help realize sustainable development and resilience building objectives.
5. **Harness the potential of innovation and digital technologies for resilient urban futures.** Recognizing the dynamic and evolving needs in cities, application of digital tools and innovative solutions like modelling, scenario planning, resilience benchmarking etc. will be maximized to improve urban services and functionality while augmenting urban planning and crisis management systems. Expertise of UNDP's Accelerator Labs, SDGs AI Lab, Smart City Innovations will help devise and apply contextual solutions.

Enablers:

- A. Strategic partnerships at national and local level
- B. Area-based approaches for cross-thematic input
- C. Engage non-governmental stakeholders and interests
- D. Foster leadership for cultural and behavioral shifts

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