



## Climate Change, Disaster Risk, and the Urban Poor

Poor people living in slums are at particularly high risk from the impacts of climate change and natural hazards. They live on the most vulnerable lands within cities, typically areas that are deemed undesirable by others and are thus affordable. Residents are exposed to the impacts of landslides, sea-level rise, flooding, and other hazards.

Exposure to risk is exacerbated by overcrowding living conditions, lack of adequate infrastructure and services, unsafe housing, inadequate nutrition, and poor health.

These conditions can turn a natural hazard or change in climate into a disaster, and result in the loss of basic services, damage or destruction to homes, loss of livelihoods, disease, disability, and loss of life.





## Mayor's Task Force on Climate Change, Disaster Risk and the Urban Poor

The Mayor's Task Force on Climate Change, Disaster Risk and the Urban Poor was launched at the Mayor's Summit in Copenhagen in 2009 with the aim to better understand these issues, identify good practice examples, and propose policy and investment programs to improve the resilience of the urban poor. The Task Force is comprised of the Mayors of Dar es Salaam, Jakarta, Mexico City and Sao Paulo, who have recognized the importance of these issues in their cities and have demonstrated strong support for taking action.

A global study *Climate Change, Disaster Risk and the Urban Poor* carried out by the World Bank as part of the Mayor's Task Force work program underscores the following:

- **The urban poor are on the front line.** The poor are particularly vulnerable to climate change and natural hazards due

to where they live within cities, and the lack of reliable basic services.

- **City governments are the drivers for addressing risks.** Local governments play a vital role in providing basic services which are critical to improving the resilience of the urban poor.
- **City officials build resilience by mainstreaming risk reduction into urban management.** Climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction can be best addressed and sustained over time through integration with existing urban planning and management practices.
- **Significant financial support is needed.** Local governments need to leverage existing and new resources to meet the shortfalls in service delivery and basic infrastructure adaptation.



## Recommended Actions to Build Resilience of the Urban Poor

A set of broad actions can help build resilience for those at greatest risk in cities. Implementing these will involve a strong commitment by local governments working with communities, as well as national and international institutions.

**Assessing risk at the city and community level.** City level case studies carried out in Dar es Salaam, Jakarta, Mexico City, and Sao Paulo as part of the Mayor's Task Force work program have demonstrated the importance of understanding hazard, socioeconomic, and institutional risks as an important first step to developing adaptation and disaster risk reduction plans. Experiences from these cities and elsewhere also demonstrate that it is imperative to get multiple agencies and community residents involved to exchange ideas, collaborate, and communicate with the aim of establishing an effective system of adaptation and disaster risk reduction planning.

**Integrating climate change and disaster risk reduction policies for the poor into urban planning and management.** Comprehensive urban planning is critical



to managing the risks from climate change and natural hazards in cities. Better policies for land use planning and management will have the biggest impact. Proactive policies can assist in making safe and affordable sites available for low income residents, reducing risk for the poor. A framework for the regularization of land tenure, including partial or incremental solutions, can also spawn investments and encourage infrastructure improvements.

**Building institutional capacity to deliver basic services and reduce vulnerability to climate and disaster risk.** In many cities, weak institutional capacity is a major constraint to delivering services. Investments in building capacity for better urban planning and management have the potential to strengthen the resilience of cities. Emerging examples include Boston, Cape Town, Ho Chi Minh City, London, New York City, Quito, Rotterdam, and Toronto.

**Bridging communities and local governments to work together on local solutions.** At the household and community level, there is already much happening. There

are also a number of examples of successful partnerships between community organizations and local governments around basic services. For example, initiatives in Iloilo, Philippines and Quelimane City, Mozambique demonstrate effective community mapping and the creation of partnerships for effective service delivery.

**Opening new finance opportunities for cities to address climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction.** Cities need financing for risk assessments, urban infrastructure, basic services for the urban poor, capacity building, and tools for integrating climate change and disaster risk management into urban planning. Concessional sources such as climate funds should be catalytic but the bulk of investments will come from targeted government expenditures. A new **Program for Climate Finance and Assistance for Cities** proposed by the World Bank will require bringing together existing resources and drawing on new and innovative instruments.

For more information:

[www.worldbank.org/urban](http://www.worldbank.org/urban)

