Urban Risk Reduction

Millennium Development Goal: 
Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

Targets:
• Halve, between 1990-2015, the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day
• Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environment resources

Relevant India Development Goal:
Reduction of poverty ratio by 15 percentage points by 2012

Background

According to the 2011 Indian census, over 377 million people live in India’s urban areas. The exponential growth in urban population is likely to continue with close to 533 million or 40 percent of the population expected to live in urban areas by 2025. A majority of this population will reside in class I cities with a population of over one million. Many of these cities are already prone to multiple hazards such as floods, storms, cyclones and earthquakes. In addition, with growing population pressure and acute land shortages, commercial construction is being extended to vulnerable areas, i.e. low lying areas, landslide prone slopes, etc. India’s cities have, therefore, become even more vulnerable. Furthermore, many new buildings do not follow adequate safety standards, and the capacity for enforcing existing safety and risk reduction also remains limited. The vulnerability of India’s cities to hazards has increased tremendously in the last decade.

Against this backdrop, UNDP has partnered with the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India to implement the Urban Risk Reduction project aiming to reduce urban risk by strengthening urban institutions to undertake various risk reduction activities, thereby, increasing the resilience of cities. The focus is on multiple hazards by building the capacity of various stakeholders, strengthening legal instruments to enforce safety norms and safer construction practices and promoting disaster-resilient technologies.

Project Information

Area: Crisis Prevention and Recovery
Budget: US$ 7.4 million
Duration: 2009 – 2012

Government Counterpart: Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India
Implementing Partner(s): Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India
Other Partner(s): State Governments and respective city administrations
Location(s): The project is implemented in 56 of the most hazard-prone cities in India
Objectives

- Conduct risk and vulnerability assessments in select urban areas. The assessment reports will include developing hazard maps, vulnerability and risk profiles, measuring risk and high-quality data on exposure to hazards
- Strengthen capacities of engineers and architects to implement safer construction practices and urban planning
- Enhance existing institutional training facilities to impart specialized training in hazard-resistant construction practices
- Put in place institutional mechanisms to enforce compliance with building codes, bye-laws and other urban development regulations for urban disaster risk management
- Build capacity of stakeholders such as engineers, architects, masons and builders on hazard-resistant construction practices, and of urban residents on life-saving skills in disaster risk reduction

Results so far

- Forty-two city disaster management plans have been prepared in consultation with various line departments
- Amendments to building bye-laws drafted and submitted to state governments in Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh and Sikkim to ensure safer urban habitats
- Hazard risk vulnerability assessments (HRVA) undertaken in 23 cities. The data gathering process was guided by a baseline document which captured existing approaches and methodologies for HRVA
- Emergency Operation Centres (EOCs) in 36 cities equipped with information technology systems to address coordination gaps in urban response management
- Inputs provided to the government on strengthening early warning systems through technical study undertaken in coastal city of Vijayawada in Andhra Pradesh
- Guidelines for hazard-resistant technologies and training manuals used by city administrations in 36 cities

Looking to the Future

- Institutionalize capacities being developed to promote safer construction practices and build greater awareness on the hazards and vulnerabilities of India’s cities
- Integrate disaster risk reduction in urban development plans

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