

# World Conference on Disaster Reduction

Kobe, Hyogo, 18-22 January 2005

## **Addressing the Root Causes of Vulnerability of Human Settlements in Megacities**

EMI – UN-HABITAT – UNDP - Kobe University – Pacific Disaster Center  
A parallel Thematic Session of the WCDR (**Theme 1: Governance**)  
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### **AGENDA (Draft 25 Oct 2004)**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The surging migration of people from rural areas into high-density urban areas has contributed to a rapid growth of megacities (generally defined as cities with populations that exceed 8 million people). Given their sheer size, as well as their economic and social importance, these cities are at a particularly acute risk with regards to disasters. As more cities have swelled into megacities over the last few decades and even more cities are expected to join this rank, their risk from natural and human-made disasters continues to increase.

Effective urban governance is at the heart of reducing disaster risk. All three factors that contribute to urban risk viz. hazard, vulnerability, and human settlement, are directly influenced by urban planning, enforcement of regulatory environments, improvement of social welfare and other acts of governance. Similarly, public policy has failed to effectively address the issue of illicit construction that continues to swell the population of megacities and to contribute to their vulnerability. The rapid increase in disaster risk of megacities can therefore be ascribed to a great extent to failures in urban governance. The strain to provide basic civic amenities combined with the complexity of the issues relegates the attention of megacities' managers and policy-makers from the disaster risk reduction agenda. Disaster management practice continues to focus on post-disaster response and recovery, causing major gaps in public policy and leaving an increasingly larger fraction of the population at risk from disasters. Local implementation remains the weakest link in disaster risk management. Disaster risk reduction should find roots within city functions because these functions service the public, build infrastructure and enforce regulation. This is the essence of mainstreaming and of sustainable development. A governance system that assigns authority of policy setting, resource allocation and oversight to central government but shifts implementation towards local government and local institutions is paramount to enable the shift from response to mitigation.

## **PROGRAM**

This session will focus on issues of governance related to disaster risk reduction of megacities on the basis of actual experiences from megacities. Each speaker will have 20 minutes for discussing a specific theme in relation to the experience of his/her city. The rest of the time will be for discussion and for taking questions and comments from participants.

**Opening Remark and Introduction** (Head of UN-HABITAT OR UNDP)

1. **Governance issues related to the implementation of the Istanbul Earthquake Master Plan.** *Mesut Pektaş*, Deputy Secretary General, Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality

This issue will explore how the development and implementation of the Istanbul Earthquake Master Plan by the Municipality of Istanbul has impacted governance practices both at the local and central government levels, in particular, the participation of a large academic constituency in formulating a holistic plan; the involvement of professional organizations; the review by independent international experts; the decentralization to the district municipalities for actual implementation; and the pressure on the central government to enable implementation by undertake legislative reforms and enacting new policies.

2. **Dealing with illicit construction – Quito Case Study.** *Arch. Diego Carrion*, Director of Dept. of Urban Planning, Quito Municipal Government.

Illicit construction is a failure of governance and the example of Quito's deforestation and un-planned use of land is an illustration of the socio-political difficulties that are imposed on local governments to deal with this issue. The sprawling of un-planned urbanization is acute in Quito where most of this development takes place on hazardous slopes that are subject to land erosion, landslide, flash-flooding and other geo-meteorological hazards and which resulted in the increase of vulnerability.

3. **Dealing with migrant population and slums – Experiences from Nairobi**

This session is organized by UN-HABITAT

4. **Stakeholders' involvement in Identifying and Implementing Risk Mitigation Options– Experience from Kathmandu–** *Mr. Amod Dixit*, *National Society of Earthquake Technology, Nepal.*

This session explores the Theme of education and involvement of stakeholders. Kathmandu has a long-standing and rich experience in community-based disaster-risk reduction programs. These experiences and their impact on governance will be reported and discussed in this session.

5. **Risk Assessment and risk communication – Developing policy and understanding trade-offs - Case of Bogota.**

**Fernando Ramirez**, Direccion de Prevencion y Atencion de Emergencias de Bogota, DPAE.

The Municipality of Santa Fe de Bogota' has successfully used information technology not only for disaster risk assessment but also for risk communication, education and for involving stakeholders and policy makers in understanding their options for disaster risk reduction and for understanding the trade-offs involved in the policy and decision making process.

## **Discussion**

## **Summary from the Chair**