

# Reducing Risks in Peri-Urban Areas of South Asia

A greater degree of attention is warranted by the Asia Regional Plan implementation process due to the presence of huge peri-urban areas in the region. Here is a publication that helps in doing exactly that:

The compact publication "Urban Resilience and Sustainability" is useful to all those who are busy building urban ecosystems; to city and regional planners; to urban administrators and elected leaders of rapidly growing cities; and to those who wish the right to sustainable living for women, children and others be protected.

The Asian Regional Plan (ARP) for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) was launched at Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (AMCDRR) in November 2016, Delhi.

This timely publication offers both, guidance on what process to follow to build resilience in peri-urban areas as well as initial training hand book for practitioners and activists. The publication is produced by Gorakhpur Environmental Action Group (GEAG), Asian Cities Climate Change Resilience Network (ACCCRN), and The Rockefeller Foundation (RF). The publication was launched at the Regional Conference on Peri-Urban

Ecosystems for Enhancing Urban Resilience, September 18 and 19, 2017, Delhi.

"Raising risk awareness is the first and most important step in Asia's cities", said Ashwin Dayal, Vice President (Asia), of Rockefeller Foundation at the launch.

The authors—Dr. Anil Kumar Gupta of National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM); Dr. Shiraz Wajih and Dr. Nivedita Mani of Gorakhpur Environment Action Group (GEAG); and Ms. Swati Singh of Sustainability and Resilience Academy (SRA)—are stalwarts of reducing risk and building resilience in India and have consolidated years of work on resilience and peri-urban areas into this publication.

The publication is divided into two distinct parts. Part one is on peri-urban ecosystem and how best to understand it—tools, concepts, data, science, rules and trends—from the city planning perspective. Part two is a detailed training module that any State Disaster Management Authority such as Assam Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) or State Disaster Management Institute such as Gujarat Institute for Disaster Management (GIDM) can pick up to localise and contextualize for its trainees.

It is well-known that South Asia is home to more than 23% of the world's population and 14% of the urban population. The burgeoning of the peri-urban areas in South Asia represent the struggles of the poor of the region to lift themselves out of poverty with minimal help from the government. However, the growth of such peri-urban areas has been haphazard and unplanned which has exacerbated existing vulnerabilities and exposure to risk.

It is here that lies a disguised opportunity. By working on urban resilience and sustainability, of what is called "messy" and "hidden" growth of the peri-urban areas of South Asia, which are often regarded with

emancipatory awe, can be protected from the onslaught of various risks that routinely ravage the region. This in turn would help in protecting the "vibrant" and "energetic" struggle of the poor of South Asia to pull themselves out of poverty and live with dignity.

What is the best way to support this struggle with resource and opportunities so that the citizens of peri-urban areas can in fact become leaders of urban risk reduction?

Perhaps the four cities where this publication will be immediately useful in India are Jaipur, Pune, Surat and Chennai which are a part of 100 Resilient Cities initiative pioneered by The Rockefeller Foundation.

Organisations such as Save the Children and donors such as ECHO have a lot to pick up from this publication in terms of what to do on the ground to make South Asia move towards sustainable cities where children are the leaders for change.

Peri-urban ecosystems need greater attention not only because they are suffering from loss and damage to their economic and ecological value but also because they offer the underlying factors to plan initiatives for urban resilience: water, land, vegetables and fauna.

The training module in the publication is timely as Kiran Sura, Clime and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN), points out in her ongoing work on Raising Risk Awareness, that building capacity for risk management in a changing climate is very urgent if the Paris Agreement has to be operationalised.

What can be added in the next or follow up publication may include loss and damage in peri-urban areas due to extreme events; ways of transferring risk to urban or rural areas; and the role "green" investment can play in making peri-urban areas a source of urban sustainability. ■

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