



KOBE REPORT draft
Report of Session 1.10, Thematic Cluster 1

**Addressing the root causes of vulnerability of
human settlements in mega-cities**

1. Summary of the session's presentations and discussions

Rapid rural migration to already high-density urban areas has contributed to an alarming increase in vulnerability of cities. Risk from natural and human-induced disasters continues to increase due to these population increases combined with unplanned land use and construction, lack of attention to risks and hazards in the development process, weakness in governance, regulations and lack of awareness among the population and its governing institutions.

Incorporating principles and practice of disaster risk management in urban governance at all levels will find that major strides can be accomplished towards sustainable development and poverty reduction.

Following opening statements by UN-Habitat, five city managers and leading practitioners presented the range of hazards they faced, and the programs they implemented to reduce vulnerabilities:

- Outlining the complex nature of disaster reduction in cities due to increasing urbanisation, and its inherent problems of poverty, proliferation of slums, and exploitation of risk prone land for settlements, UN-Habitat stated that good urban governance was the key to reducing vulnerabilities in the worlds' cities. Further that while disasters often turned back the development path, there was also a need to initiate development programming at the immediate onset of crises and during humanitarian relief.
- Development and implementation of disaster risk management master plans by some municipalities (e. g. Istanbul, Turkey) have resulted in positive impacts in governance practices both at the local and central levels, resulting in legislative reform and policy implementation.
- Experiences in terms of assessing and reducing the vulnerability of slums and migrant populations. Case studies presented the ubiquitous problems posed by traditional housing, which is highly vulnerable to collapse in earthquakes, yet also has an important social, cultural and historical value was also presented. As conclusions and recommendations, several cities concurred that ancient constructions constitute an extreme vulnerability due to technical and financial difficulties; the case of ancient construction is particularly difficult to deal with because it has significant historical value but is very difficult and costly to retrofit; several programs have been launched in recent years to reduce the concentration of population in ancient cities and to replace slums with low-cost housing and finally recognize that major progress has been made in reducing the vulnerability of slums.
- The City of Quito, described dealing with unplanned urbanization and illicit constructions that often takes place on hazardous slopes subject to land erosion, landslide, and flooding. This illicit construction imposes significant strain on the city governance structures. As conclusion and recommendations: it is necessary to establish an

adequate institutional arrangement for prevention and crisis, for designing and implementing permanent policies related to risk prevention and mitigation and establish appropriate legislation and control mechanisms. Cities must overcome weak institutions, leadership, and coordination to incorporate disaster prevention and crisis planning and develop adequate institutional frameworks. Finally, leaders must provide institutional coordination to involve many community stakeholders for risk reduction to be institutionalised in megacities.

- The Municipality of Santa Fe de Bogotá provided its experience in using information technology for disaster risk assessment, risk communication, education and the involvement of stakeholders and policy makers in understanding the concept of disaster risk reduction. As conclusion and recommendation; only interventions on the political, economical, social and cultural processes that determinate the territorial and population characteristics of our cities, would be able to act over the risk generating factors. Hazard and risk information must overall allow the intervention of the above-mentioned processes, attending to the nature of the spaces and actors that participate in them.
- Finally, the cities demonstrated the value of community-based disaster-risk reduction programmes to provide know-how through training and advocacy at the community level. Local experiences positively impact on governance.

2. Primary issues

- Governance issues related to the implementation of Risk Reduction Plans.
- Reducing the vulnerability of slums, traditional housing, and migrant populations.
- Illicit constructions places.
- Risk Assessment and risk communication
- Stakeholders' involvement in Identifying and Implementing Risk Mitigation Options.

3. a) Suggested targets and indicators to measure accomplishments

- Develop and implement disaster risk management master plans in municipalities (local level).
- Reduce the concentration of population in ancient-historical cities and replace slums with low-cost housing.
- Establish adequate institutional arrangements for prevention and crisis, for designing and implementing permanent policies related to risk prevention and mitigation.
- Establish appropriate legislation and control mechanisms; overcome weak institutions and institutional arrangement, leadership and coordination, to incorporate disaster prevention and crisis.
- Risk institutionalisation should be led by municipalities, with significant involvement by community stakeholders.
- Interventions on the political, economical, social and cultural processes that determine the territorial and population characteristics of cities. (This needs further explanation)
- Hazard and risk information is essential.
- Promote community-based disaster-risk reduction programmes.

b) Existing indicators with reference

- Primary indicators exist within the Millennium Development Goals

4. Partnerships

- Earthquakes and Megacities Initiative - EMI
- UN-HABITAT
- UNDP
- Kobe University
- Pacific Disaster Center (PDC)

5. a) Name, affiliation and contacts of presenters and titles of presentations:

- **Daniel Lewis**, Chief, Disaster, Post Conflict and Safety Section, UN-Habitat, Nairobi. *Opening remarks on Thematic Session*
- **Mesut Pektaş**, Deputy Secretary General, Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, Turkey. *“Governance issues related to the implementation of the Istanbul Earthquake Risk Reduction Plan”.*
- **Mohamed El-Malti and Ali Gueddira**, Director of Urban Planning, Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, Kingdom of Morocco. *“Evaluating and reducing the vulnerability of slums, traditional housing, and migrant populations – Experience from Morocco”*
- **Arch. Diego Carrion**. Director of Dept. of Urban Planning, Quito Municipal Government, Ecuador. *Dealing with illicit construction – Experience from Quito.*
- **Fernando Ramirez**, Director of the Direccion de Prevencion y Atencion de Emergencias de Bogota DPAAE, Colombia. *Risk Assessment and risk communication – Developing policy and understanding trade-offs – Experience from Santa Fe de Bogota.*
- **Amod Dixit**, Executive Director National Society of Earthquake Technology, Nepal. *Stakeholders’ involvement in Identifying and Implementing Risk Mitigation Options– Experience from Kathmandu.*

b) Name, affiliation and contact of person filling in the form

- **Esteban Leon**, UN-HABITAT
- **Jim Buika**, PDC