



Regional Conference on Peri-urban Ecosystems for Enhancing Urban Resilience

18th -19th
SEPTEMBER
2017
New Delhi

Background

Currently, 50 percent of the world's population is living in cities, largely seeking increased economic opportunity to sustain them and by 2050 it will grow to 72 percent¹. The point of concern is that most of this growing population will be absorbed into rapidly growing cities, notably in Asia's fast developing economies² including India. Though urbanization has positively contributed in lifting people out of poverty but this development is neither inclusive nor sustainable because most of the Asian cities are more vulnerable to natural disasters and the projected impacts of climate change.

With regard to South Asia, it is home to more than 23 per cent of the world's population and 14 per cent of the urban population. The urban population of South Asia grew by 130 million people between 2001 and 2011 and it is predicted to rise by 250 million more by the next fifteen years³. The process of urbanization in South Asia is termed as "messy and hidden" urbanization. The widespread existence of slums and sprawls leads to messy urbanization, specifically on the peripheries of major cities (also known as the peri-urban) which is often not captured in official statistics. Hidden urbanization can be seen as a larger proportion of population of the region is living in settlements possessing urban characteristics but do not satisfy the criterion to be officially classified as urban. "Inadequate provision of housing, infrastructure and basic urban services, as well as a failure to deal with pollution, are constraining the potential of the region's cities to fully realize the benefits of agglomeration." Rapid and unplanned urban growth leads to multiple transformation-physical, social-economic, cultural and functional on the city fringes. These transformations affect the resilience of the city by irreversible change in ecosystems and services they provide.

1 UNDESA (2012). World Urbanization Prospects: The 2011 Revision. Department of Social and Economic Affairs, Population Division. United Nations, New York. Retrieved from http://esa.un.org/unup/pdf/wup2011_highlights.pdf
2 Bentham, J. (2011). Water, Energy and Food Security in Urban Context. Published speech on World Water Week-Stockholm.

3 <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/22549/9781464806629.pdf?sequence=17&isAllowed=y>

Why protecting peri-urban ecosystems?

Peri-urban areas are considered as transitional zones from rural to urban land uses, located between the outer limits of urban and regional centres and the rural environment. They represent a wide range of uses, such as water catchments, forestry, recreation, and productive farming, as well as offering a unique ambience and lifestyle. The outward expansion of cities, changes in land use pattern and occupations have transformed the rural hinterland into semi-urban areas. Inhabitants of these peri-urban regions are vulnerable and increasingly threatened by deteriorating quality of ecosystems leading to resource scarcity and a host of problems that very often have no solution in

the short run. Due to lack of basic knowledge about the urbanization process and its long term ecological impacts, urban and regional planners in South Asian countries have not been able to analyze, manage and restore the ecosystems in peri-urban areas. The lack of clear cut conception and related concrete policy from national to local, they have been the most threatened areas with regards to loss of biodiversity, and land use changes.

Managing the environment of this interface is pertinent in present context, because various ecosystem services provided by these transition zones have significant

impact on resilience of both urban and peri-urban spaces. Thus, it becomes important to understand the demographic trends, socio-economic change, ongoing process of urbanization, expected climate change impacts on natural resources and livelihoods in these transition zones. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (Goal No.11) also emphasizes on making cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable by implementing integrated policies and plans for resource use efficiency and adaptation to climate change⁴ which is not possible without protecting these peri-urban regions.

4 United Nations SDGs (<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/cities/>)



About the conference

A Regional Conference on **“Peri-Urban Ecosystems for Enhancing Urban Resilience”** is being organized by Gorakhpur Environmental Action Group (GEAG), Gorakhpur and ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, South Asia in collaboration with ACCCRN.NET, UNICEF India and School of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi India with the support of the Rockefeller Foundation, on **18th and 19th September 2017** in **New Delhi, India**. The conference will examine various themes including urbanization, managing the peri-urban spaces, maintaining critical natural resources, food-water-livelihood security of poor and marginalized, gender dimensions, political frameworks, and governance issues exacerbating due to the inevitable drift of cities into peri-urban areas as well as the challenges

of climate change impacts on these vulnerable areas.

In addition, The ICLEI-RUAF CITYFOOD will also be part of this conference which will be open to local and regional governments to develop a strategic approach to their city-region food systems. Food provides a vital link between cities and rural communities. It offers a key opportunity for addressing hunger, poverty and unemployment, climate change impacts and environmental degradation. The CITYFOOD network aims to accelerate local and regional government action on sustainable and resilient city-region food systems by combining networking with training, policy guidance and technical expertise.

Objectives

- To review and analyze challenges and opportunities associated with peri-urban ecosystems
- To review the contribution of peri-urban areas to food-water-livelihood security and resilience of the people residing in urban and peri-urban regions
- To understand the current state of affairs and governance issues pertaining to planning in peri-urban areas and resilience building through case studies
- To draw a line of action for peri-urban developmental planning recognizing eco-system services with disaster and climate resilience for sustainable development

Thematic Strands

THE CONFERENCE WILL AIM TO ADDRESS THE FOLLOWING MAJOR THEMATIC STRANDS:

1 **ROLE OF PERI-URBAN ECOSYSTEMS IN BUILDING URBAN RESILIENCE**

2 **URBAN PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

3 **GOVERNANCE MECHANISMS**

4 **ADDRESSING GENDER CONCERNS AND SPECIFICALLY VULNERABLE GROUPS**

1 **Role of peri-urban ecosystems in building urban resilience:** Maintaining the health of an ecosystem is crucial to develop the resilience of urban spaces. The four ecosystem services provided by peri-urban areas including: supporting, provisioning, regulating and cultural services enhance the redundancy and flexibility of urban systems, provide livelihoods to urban and peri-urban residents and also augment the resilience to climate shocks. For cities to be liveable as well as sustainable there is a need to maintain the natural resources base in the peri-urban areas surrounding the cities. Water cycle management, groundwater-surface water connectivity, biodiversity, food, nutritional and livelihood security of cities, peri-urban agriculture and allied activities, storm water management, drought management, ecotourism, innovative approaches for urban water management etc. are few areas that can be explored under this theme.

The expected outcomes from this session are:

- Initiating a dialogue towards understanding the concept of 'peri-urban' and formalizing the definition of 'peri-urban' for urban development
- Identifying significance of peri-urban spaces and ecosystem services provided by them that are crucial for urban development/resilience
- Identifying the linkages and continuum of urban-peri-urban- rural areas for sustainability of cities



2 **Urban planning and development:** Peri-urban areas of cities experience significant land transformation, due to expansion of urban core. Rapid and unplanned urban growth leads to multiple transformation-physical, social-economic, cultural and functional on the city fringes. The environmental degradation, natural resources conflicts, health concerns and social injustice in most of the peri-urban areas are due to exclusion from formal planning process and non-recognition of these areas as deserving urban civic status. Sooner or later, these haphazardly developed peri-urban areas are adopted by adjoining cities and the chaos in these areas becomes part of city. Master Plans of cities are limited in this context and are seen mostly as land use plans. Understanding the urbanization trends, land-use planning, integrated urban-peri-urban planning and management taking into account the aspects of development, disaster management and climate change together, etc. can be explored under this theme.

The expected outcomes from this session are:

- Urban Planning to take cognisance of rural-urban continuum with peri-urban spaces as transitional zones
- Master Plans of the cities to recognize these spaces beyond its scope as 'cities-in-waiting' - as live spaces providing essential services to cities. Due importance to peri-urban areas and ecosystems in long term urban plans
- Understanding capacity needs of planners and mechanisms to address these
- Relevance of peri-urban spaces in Disaster Risk Reduction-Development- Climate Change Resilience integration in city level planning

3 Governance mechanisms: In general, direct attention to peri-urban areas is lacking, at least in the discourse of officials and policy makers in developing countries including India. The lack of clear cut conception and related concrete policy from national to local, have threatened these areas with regards to loss of biodiversity and land-use changes. Thus, new multi-level and collaborative governance systems are required to manage the resilience of these porous boundaries. Governance and water reforms, water rights, legislations related to land-use, identification of political and institutional frameworks for peri-urban regions in the larger context of resilient cities can be explored under this theme.

The expected outcomes from this session are:

- Identifying key gaps in coordination amongst ULBs, Parastatal Bodies, Government departments and Private sector leading to haphazard development in peri-urban areas
- Identifying institutional cooperation mechanisms that can address the issues of peri urban areas
- Cases of various existing policies and programmes relevant for vulnerable areas (affected by flood, drought, cyclone, salt water intrusion, etc.) helping in taking preventive measures for urban resilience and scope of such convergence at city level

4 Addressing gender concerns and specifically vulnerable groups: Urban growth based on migration and the absorption of rural areas into the urban has led to immense problems ranging from impoverishment, ill-health, malnutrition, loss of fertile land, food insecurity, water insecurity, social insecurity, gender inequality as well as over-concentration in slums and squatter settlements that also often get flooded as well as prone to other disasters. Most of these urban poor work in informal sector, give services to the city but does not get the due acclaim or remuneration. Exploring the opportunities to strengthen peri-urban and urban agriculture based livelihoods, empowering the deprived groups especially small and marginal women farmers by forming community organizations, multi-disciplinary and integrated land-use planning, diversification of economy for the marginalized group for livelihood security can be explored under this theme.

The expected outcomes from this session are:

- Identify mechanisms to address specific vulnerabilities of peri-urban areas and its inhabitants
- Mapping required priority actions for specifically vulnerable groups
- Identifying successful best practices to promote replication

Target Audience

The conference aims to create an interface between urban planners, city leaders (elected representatives), administrators, researchers, academicians, civil society organizations, policy makers, regional and national government officials, multilateral agencies, private sector players and community to debate on how peri-urban areas can be mainstreamed into the development process without jeopardizing the environmental integrity.

Main Outputs

- Conference Proceedings
- An Advocacy Brief on “**Common Concerns for Peri-Urban**” for further advocacy use.
- A network of stakeholders and practitioners to identify avenues for future collaborative work on urban and peri-urban ecosystems.

KEY CONTACT PERSONS

Ms Nivedita Mani

Coordinator
Gorakhpur Environmental Action Group,
A-187, First Floor, Shivalik, Malviya Nagar, New Delhi- 110017, India
T +91 11 41667754
M +91 9818037010
E geagdelhi@geagindia.org

Dr Monalisa Sen

Senior Manager (Sustainability Management)
ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability, South Asia;
C-3, Green Park Extension; New Delhi-110016
T +91 11 4974 7200
M +91 9871747467
E monalisa.sen@iclei.org

ORGANISED BY



COLLABORATION



SUPPORTED BY

