

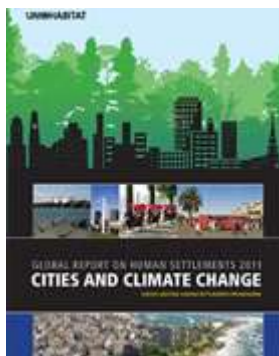
The Global Report on Human Settlements



Prepared under a mandate of the United Nations General Assembly, the Global Report on Human Settlements provides the most up to date assessment of urban conditions and trends globally. It is an essential reference tool for researchers, academics, planners, public authorities and civil society organizations around the world.

Cities and Climate Change: Global Report on Human Settlements 2011 - Responding to the Impacts of Climate Change on Urban Areas

With increasing urbanization, understanding the impacts of climate change on urban areas will become ever more important. Evidence is mounting that climate change presents unique challenges for urban areas and their growing populations. Where urban areas grow rapidly without regard to current and future resource demands and future impacts of climate change, large numbers of people and their assets can find themselves vulnerable to a range of disruptive and damaging risks.



These impacts extend far beyond the physical risks posed by climate change such as sea-level rise and extreme weather events. Cities could face difficulties in providing even the most basic services to their inhabitants as a result of climate change. Climate change may affect water supply, ecosystem goods and services, energy provision, industry and services around the world. It can disrupt local economies and strip populations of their assets and livelihoods, in some cases leading to mass migration. Such impacts are unlikely to be evenly spread among regions and cities, across sectors of the economy or among socio-economic groups. Instead, impacts tend to reinforce existing inequalities and, as a result, climate change can disrupt the social fabric of cities and exacerbate poverty.

Due to differences in geography, historical circumstances and national institutions, different cities will face different challenges posed by climate change. At the same time, there are some basic commonalities across cities, with regards to general adaptation challenges.

1. Climate change impacts may have compounding effects across many sectors of city life. The specific nature of climate change risks is heterogeneous around the world; but these risks have compounding effects in nearly any context. For example, extremely high temperatures have direct impacts upon human health, placing individuals at risk of heat-related illness or mortality. Simultaneously, increasing temperatures in certain locations increase demand for energy, which can reinforce climate change by increasing greenhouse gas emissions and exacerbating the urban heat-island effect. Cities have inherent properties that can interact with climate change effects – including high population density, urban-island impacts and the presence of poverty – such that impacts that may appear minor when considered individually may have serious effects when considered together in local context.

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2. Second, the degree to which human settlements are vulnerable to climate change depends not only on the nature and magnitude of physical changes, but also on the socio-economic characteristics of each city. Cities that experience the same category of hurricane, for example, may incur very different mortality levels and economic losses based on relative wealth and infrastructure. Within cities, too, different population groups are differentially affected by the same weather events and climatic conditions. The poor are often least able to cope and adapt to climate change impacts because they have relatively few resources and tend to be located in the most hazardous areas. Indigenous peoples, minorities and women may be explicitly or tacitly removed from decision-making processes and, in some cases, have limited access to insurance, information and resources. As a result, these groups are both less prepared for physical hazards and less able to adapt. These effects tend to be particularly pronounced in developing countries compared to developed countries, but are evident worldwide.
3. Land-use planning within cities – including siting of residential areas, businesses and transportation infrastructure – often proceeds based on historic climate data, increasing the risk of various sectors to changing climate conditions. Continued infrastructure development in known hazardous zones occurs due to low land prices and less resistance from resident. These assets are long lived and will therefore be subjected to changing conditions such as sea-level rise, more variable precipitation and increased intensity of storms. Weak structural defence mechanisms and oversight of building codes further increase the vulnerability of cities in high-risk areas. In particular, the substandard quality of housing and physical structures in slums increases the exposure of residents to climate change impacts.
4. Climate change impacts can be long lasting and propagate worldwide. When disasters related to climate change occur, focus on the affected areas tends to be limited to a short period of time following the event. Yet, experience reveals that the social and economic impacts of these disasters can extend for months or years. Damage to transportation infrastructure can interfere with a city's ability to recover from extreme climate events. Lack of insurance coverage can make it very difficult for individuals to cope in the aftermath of disasters, particularly among the poor, who may not have savings or assets to use to repair damage, to their homes or to purchase the necessities of recovery. Moreover, cities around the world, in particular large cities, are interconnected by capital and labor markets. Extreme climate events that result in economic losses in urban areas or interruption of trade routes can thus result in long-lasting rebounding global impacts.
5. Limitations on urban governance and planning increase the vulnerability of cities, especially in developing countries, to climate change. Poor planning resulting from scarce resources, limited information and or political corruption limit the ability of cities to prepare for climate change as well as to recover when the climate-related impact occur. In developing countries, in particular, poor planning has encouraged the development of slums and informal settlements that are prone to damage from climate-related impacts. Slum expansion can be difficult to control because these settlements sometimes develop outside the jurisdiction of local government. Across the globe, inadequate preparation for climate-related disasters has led to great losses of life and assets when individuals were not evacuated before a disaster or rapidly attended to afterwards.

In proposing the way forward, Cities and Climate Change stresses the importance of designing policies that address local physical impacts and vulnerabilities, due to the context-specific nature of climate change impacts. Likewise, consideration should be made to the social and economic characteristics of resident populations in order to reduce, rather than reinforce their inequalities. Increasing the participation of groups who have been typically marginalized can help to both reduce the distributional impacts of climate change and broaden the knowledge base to tackle climate change.

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Next Issue: Planning and Design for Urban Mobility: Global Report on Human Settlements 2013

The report will review key trends, practices and policies on sustainable mobility and transportation patterns from cities around the world. It will also provide insights on how to improve the working and living conditions of urban populations by meeting their transport needs in an economically, environmentally and socially sustainable manner. The report will be organized as follows:

- Chapter 1: The urban mobility challenge
- Chapter 2: Trends and conditions of urban mobility
- Chapter 3: Mass transit: Metros and BRTs
- Chapter 4: Urban goods transport
- Chapter 5: Mobility and urban form
- Chapter 6: Access to urban mobility
- Chapter 7: Urban mobility and the environment
- Chapter 8: The economics of urban mobility
- Chapter 9: Institutions and governance for urban mobility
- Chapter 10: Towards sustainable urban mobility

The report is scheduled to be launched in October 2013

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