

# Special themed issue of the IJDRBE

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Special themed issue of the International Journal of Disaster Resilience in the Built Environment (IJDRBE) on "The State of Disaster Risk Reduction at the Local Level: Patterns of DRR Actions"

**Guest Editorial** by Jerry Velasquez, United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR)

## Background

The Rio+20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development and the consultations for the Post-2015 Disaster Risk Reduction Framework (HFA2) reaffirmed the importance of building the resilience of people and communities to disasters. The world is steadily becoming more urban, and although the level of urbanization is far higher in the developed world, the annual 'urbanization rate' is much faster in the developing world. Not surprisingly, the primary urban agglomerations with the highest concentrations of people and economic activity mostly overlap with the areas of extreme or high risk related to disasters such as coastal areas, along rivers and in flood plains. It is estimated by World Bank that the population in large cities exposed to cyclones will increase from 310 to 680 million between 2000 and 2050. It is also estimated that urban population exposed in areas with a significant probability of a major earthquake will increase from 370 million in 2000 to 870 million in 2050.

Fast growing cities and urban areas of the world are engines of growth and wealth accumulation. This growth has positive results in social improvements, cultural, educational and other positive impacts. On the other hand, evidence demonstrates that fast economic growth, combined with fast population expansion in urban areas, also increases disaster vulnerability and exposure. The challenges relate to answering the questions of what factors motivate or influence decisions to invest in DRR, and more specifically, to what extent can risk-related information gathered from land-use and development planning be used in an expanded professional environment to inform investment decisions enhanced by the inclusion of DRR values?

With local governments increasingly taking centre stage in the sustainable development and prosperity of nations, the need for globally comparable data and knowledge of disasters risks has even become greater. Though national and regional patterns of risks are known, what is less understood is how local governments, the institutions closest to citizens and their communities, respond to these threats by proactively reducing these risks. Also, while there is some understanding on the expectations and division of responsibilities between central and local government actions on disaster risk reduction, little is known on how these expectations are empowered in terms of provision of capacity, resources and abilities at the local level. In addition, it is also not clear how existing gaps, barriers, and challenges to implement DRR at local level (both urban and rural) can be overcome by learning from sound practices and experience existing elsewhere.

This themed issue, in collaboration with Global Disaster Resilience Centre at the University of Huddersfield, UK and the ANDROID Disaster Resilience network, will consolidate available knowledge on the patterns of disaster risk reduction actions and analyses of what enables successful practices at the local level. It will be based on the UNISDR DRR report, a first attempt to establish an evidence base from local data to inform decision-making, and can also serve as a basis for developing the HFA2 implementation plan at the local level after the UN World Conference on Disaster Reduction to be held in March 2015 in Sendai, Japan, which will serve as an evidence base for inclusion of a stronger "local government voice" in HFA2 and to serve as an inspiration on "how to do effective DRR" at the local level, as stakeholders consider means of strengthening implementation of HFA2.



## Contents of the themed issue:

- Editorial – **Making Cities Resilient and the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction** (*Jerry Velasquez*)
- Research papers –
  - **The role of individual adaptive practices for sustainable adaptation** (*Christine Wamsler, Ebba Brink*)
  - **Urban transformations and changing patterns of local risk: lessons from the Mekong Region** (*Richard M. Friend, Pakamas Thinphanga, Kenneth MacClune, Justin Henceroth, Phong Van Gai Tran, Tuyen Phuong Nghiem*)
  - **Grass-root preparedness against potential flood risk among residential and commercial property holders** (*Namrata Bhattacharya Mis, Rotimi Joseph, David Proverbs, Jessica Lamond*)
  - **Improving the social performance of flash flood early warnings using mobile services** (*Lydia Cumiskey, Micha Werner, Karen Meijer, S.H.M. Fakhruddin, Ahmadul Hassan*)
  - **CBDRM in Nepal: A Matter of Risk Perceptions** (*Maria Risom Laursen*)
  - **Lessons from Self-Assessments within Urban Climate Resilience Programs** (*Justin Henceroth, Richard M. Friend, Pakamas Thinphanga, Phong Van Gai Tran, Tuyen Phuong Nghiem*)
  - **A disaster resilient built environment in urban cities: the need to empower local governments** (*Chamindi Malalgoda, Dilanthi Amaratunga*)
- News article – **Empowering local governments in making cities resilient to disasters** (*Chamindi Malalgoda*)

## Special issue launch

This special issue will be launched at the UN World conference on Disaster Risk Reduction to be held in Sendai City, Japan from 14 to 18 March 2015. UNISDR Chief Margareta Wahlström said: "The 3rd World Conference provides us with a rare opportunity to forge universal agreement on how to build disaster resilience across all sectors of society. It is particularly important that we have a strong urban focus as we expect 75% of the world's population to be living in towns and cities by 2050." It is the intention that this themed issue will contribute towards achieving this mission.

## Free Access

Papers of this issue can be accessed for free from 1<sup>st</sup> March 2015 until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015 via this link:

<http://www.emeraldinsight.com/toc/ijdrbe/6/1> (<http://www.emeraldinsight.com/toc/ijdrbe/6/1>)

## Best paper award

Best Paper award – "State of DRR at the Local Level" with a certificate and a prize for the author(s) will be presented at the World Disaster Conference in Japan, March 2015. This Best Paper will be selected from among the shortlisted papers by the journal editorial board representative(s).

**International Journal of Disaster Resilience in the Built Environment (IJDRBE) and the UNISDR "Making Cities Resilient Campaign"**



*International Journal of Disaster Resilience in the Built Environment* is the leading academic journal to promote research and scholarly activity associated with the UNISDR "Making Cities Resilient" Campaign in partnership with UNISDR. In particular, it aims at developing the skills and knowledge of the built environment professions and will strengthen their capacity in strategic and practical aspects of disaster prevention, mitigation, response and reconstruction to mitigate the effects of disasters nationally and internationally. The journal publishes original and refereed material that contributes to the advancement of the research and practice, and provides contributing authors with an opportunity to disseminate their research and experience to a broad audience. It is indexed in prestigious indexing services including SCOPUS.

The Journal is edited by Professors Dilanthi Amaratunga & Richard Haigh from the Global Disaster Resilience Centre at the University of Huddersfield, UK which is a key partner of the UNISDR "Making Cities Resilient" Campaign. Please visit: [www.emeraldinsight.com/ijdrbe.htm](http://www.emeraldinsight.com/ijdrbe.htm) (<http://www.emeraldinsight.com/ijdrbe.htm>) to read more about the Journal. Further details on the Global Disaster Resilience Centre are available at: <http://www.hud.ac.uk/gdrc> (<http://www.hud.ac.uk/research/researchcentres/gdrc/>)

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