

Narrative Report

Narrative Report – The Fifth Urban Research Symposium 2009 – “Cities and Climate Change: Responding to an Urgent Agenda”

Submission to DDRN

CEFI

NARRATIVE REPORT

NARRATIVE REPORT – THE FIFTH URBAN RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM – “CITIES AND CLIMATE CHANGE: RESPONDING TO AN URGENT AGENDA”

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INTRODUCTION & SUMMARY

I would like to begin by thanking the Danish Development Research Network for its support on the issue of urban climate change in South Asia and for the opportunity to participate in the Urban Research Symposium. The symposium featured the latest research on Urban Climate Change and was an opportunity for the Climate Resilient Centre (CRC) at Community Enterprise Forum International to present a poster on "Tracking Climate Resilient Cities in South Asia". The symposium also allowed the CRC to develop contacts in the field of urban climate change. It also provided tools and data that will be the foundation of further CRC work on urban climate change.

DETAILS OF THE ACTIVITY

Title: Fifth Urban Research Symposium - "Cities and Climate Change: Responding to an Urgent Agenda"

Venue: Palais du Pharo, Marseille, France

Date: 28-30th June

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of participation at the Urban Research Symposium were:

- To present a poster on the use of indicators to track climate change hotspots in South Asia.
- Increase awareness regarding the vulnerability of cities in South Asia to climate change and to promote research in the area.
- To distribute issues of the newsletter "Climate Watch- Cities of South Asia" at the event and encourage researchers to disseminate their findings through the newsletter.
- Connect with researchers and other NGOs at the Symposium in order to develop its database on participants on urban climate change.

KEY ISSUES FROM PRESENTATIONS

KEY ISSUES FROM RESEARCH PRESENTED:

- A key focus of several presentations was the negative affect of climate change on development and the urban poor.
- The need for global, immediate, innovative actions to fight climate change in urban areas was summarized succinctly by recommendations to: Act now; Act together and Act differently.
- Much greater community involvement in urban planning was suggested.
- The importance of mainstreaming climate change in development strategies; monitoring climate change vulnerability and raising awareness on the issue were also acknowledged.

- A new political pact was suggested for mainstreaming of climate change as 70% of mayors do not consider it their responsibility to educate their city population on climate change.
- Examinations of cities that were active on climate change found that having a leader championing the subject was a major motivator of action on climate change.
- Local projects on adaptation that use local knowledge and focus on food security have been recognised as innovative solutions and have been scaled up in cities such as Quito, Ecuador.
- Presentations also highlighted the paradox of climate change as the largest polluters are the most protected and the least polluting are most at risk.
- The tendency to report cities as the largest producers of GHG emissions (which has been quoted by several resources as anything from 80% to 66%) was also refuted in presentations at the symposium. Instead the ability of some communities within the city to be climate positive due to increased recycling was recognized.
- The importance of providing insurance to the poorest that are most at risk was addressed.
- The focus on mitigation instead of adaptation by civil authorities was criticized. The issues of adaptation methods, which could negatively affect the poor through legitimate removal of settlements was explored.
- Overall pro poor, effective governance and efficient adaptation methods were recommended.
- The CRC focus on the importance of disseminating research was validated by presentations that stated that science must be sensitized into action.

KEY ISSUES FROM THE POSTER PRESENTATION:

- The poster was accommodated in the Exhibition Area. Printed copies of the newsletter and DDRN leaflets were prominently left on all surfaces to be picked up.
- Copies of the newsletter were specifically handed out to those working in the area of climate change in South Asian cities. Researchers working in South Asian cities were also targeted for future editions of the newsletter. Their research will feature in the next newsletter.
- During breaks and exhibition times people viewing the posters were asked of their opinion of CEFI's poster which received a generally positive review.

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS:

To conclude, the symposium was a success in terms of research that was accumulated and contacts that were developed for the database. A number of resources were also made available for future newsletters and reports by the Climate Resilience Centre.

ISSUES TO FOLLOW UP

The symposium highlighted some new data that is being developed by the World Bank which would be useful for the city tracking study. This includes:

- The Global City Indicators Facility which has 22 core Indicators and 27 Supporting Indicators. Unfortunately these are not available for South Asian cities but the Indicator methodology has been useful for development of CEFI indicators.
- Work on “A standard vulnerability assessment tool for cities” which is common, replicable and effective. It is being developed by Frederica Ranghieri at the World Bank. Vulnerability assessments are seen as good tools for sensitizing officials and communities to climate change making this especially important to CEFI’s initiative.
- The Cities Alliance online catalogue of studies and research projects on urban climate change will also be a useful additional resource.

Literature to watch out for:

- The Global Report for Human Settlements on climate change is to be completed in 2011.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

There were nearly 600 registered participants of the Symposium and 150 speakers.

The list of speakers is available on the Symposium website at:

<http://www.urs2009.net/speakers.html>

A hard copy of the list of participants was available to participants at the event.