



Building Resilient Cities

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Every year, **World Cities Day is observed on 31st October**. The concept was first brought about by the **United Nations**.

- According to the UN, the day is expected to:
 - promote the international community's interest in global urbanisation,
 - push forward cooperation among countries in meeting opportunities and addressing challenges of urbanisation, and
 - contributing to sustainable urban development around the world.
- The theme for World Cities Day 2018 was '**Building Sustainable and Resilient Cities**' because cities need support to become resilient and develop their capacity to absorb the impact of hazards, protect and preserve human life and limit damage to and destruction of public and private assets while continuing to provide infrastructure and services after a crisis.

Why the world needs to focus on resilience

- About 1.4 million people move to cities around the world every week and nearly **55% of the world's population now lives in urban areas**. Such **rapid urbanisation** can strain local capacities, contributing to increased risk from natural and human made disasters.
- As **more people are concentrated in cities**, dependent on local services and networks, the risks from natural and human made disasters grow.
- The **poor and vulnerable, living in substandard, hazardous places** are most at risk with around 1 billion people living in slums.
- People exposed to natural hazards in poorest nations are more than seven times likely to die than those in the richest.
- Challenges to resilience can also be economic, cultural, civic and social and develop over time such as economic downturns or crises, high unemployment, lack of inclusion, social cohesion or discrimination, disease outbreaks and terrorism.

How to build resilience

- Cities can protect against economic shocks by **diversifying their economy, creating opportunities for business and employment**, and engaging the private sector.
- They can build **socially cohesive societies becoming democratic, sustainable and inclusive** by ensuring residents from all backgrounds take part in decision making.
- To build **climate and environment resilience**, authorities need to plan cities properly to minimize the overall effect on the environment as well as ensuring resilience through **strengthened infrastructure, good planning and public education**.
- **Responses to disasters in urban areas** can promote **greater resilience to future crises** and support long-term development goals.
- The need for resilient cities is recognised in the **Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement for Climate Change, the Sendai Framework** and in the **New Urban Agenda (Habitat-III)**.

UN-Habitat

- **UN-Habitat** is the **United Nations programme** working towards a better urban future. Its mission is to promote socially and environmentally sustainable human settlements development and the achievement of adequate shelter for all.
- The first international UN conference to fully recognize the challenge of urbanization was held in 1976 in **Vancouver, Canada (Habitat I)**
- In 1996, the United Nations held a second conference – **Habitat II in Istanbul, Turkey** to assess two decades of progress since Habitat I in Vancouver and to set fresh goals for the new millennium.
- In 2016, at the **UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) in Quito, Ecuador**, New Urban Agenda was signed. This is an action-oriented document which sets **global standards of achieving SDG11**, rethinking the way cities are built and managed.