

Developing Future Urban Leaders from Bangladeshi Cities & Municipalities

Main Outcomes

- Local government officials learned about the issues related to climate change.
- The participants of this short course will be enlisted as ICCCAD Alumni.
- Interactive short courses to build capacity on the issue of climate change and urbanisation will be organised at district level.
- Participants are enabled to be a part of a larger knowledge platform network.

I. Overview of the Short Course

During June 4-8, 2017, the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) co-organised a short course programme on “Developing Future Urban Leaders from Bangladeshi Cities & Municipalities” in Dhaka, Bangladesh. 21 professionals from different City Corporations, municipalities, NGOs and other organisations joined the short course programme. The Facilitators and the participants discussed about the existing hurdles in their cities and how to find a cohesive solution to overcome the issues. The short course was enriched with taught sessions, talks from experts and group discussions to capacitate the participants to develop a strategy for inclusive and resilient development in their respective cities.

The Programme found that contrary to reservation that rural-urban migration as a consequence of natural disasters and climatic phenomenon would make it difficult to accommodate this increasing population into the city; in fact rural-urban migration seem to provide incentive to build more resilient towns and cities with better socio-economic amenities to attract the vulnerable people to settle down in these towns.

II. Summary of the Discussions

Dr. Saleemul Huq, Director, ICCCAD opened the Short Course Programme. He emphasised on the importance of translating learning into actions in regard to developing climate resilient cities that lends support to migrants. This short course aims to capacitate the participants in a way that at the end of this

course each individual is able to develop a plan for making their cities more resilient and migrant friendly. “A city that is migrant friendly, has the ability to become more resilient and sustainable”, said Dr. Huq.

The first day of the course focused on the need for long-term planning for sustainable cities and the status quo of ecosystem services under the present policies associated to urban planning, as well as had a group exercise for the participants to develop data collection strategies to understand current gaps in data. In recent time repeated natural disaster, changing climate and absence of better livelihood facilities are forcing more and more people to come to cities causing the cities to become more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and environmental hazards. Long term planning in line with Sustainable Development Goal 11 on ‘sustainable cities and communities’ is essential to enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanisation. The participants were invited to become a member of ACCCRN, a network that connects scholars, academicians and researchers across the Asian cities and is a platform for exchanging relevant resource materials. Speakers noted that the first step to building resiliencies is to have complete knowledge of one’s city. Thus, the participants were divided into groups to collectively complete the exercise. All the four groups came out with similar assessment that in their cities primarily the government agencies and research institutes collect data from the two sources: primary (FGD, KII, CBOs etc.) and secondary (different reports, online etc.); however there is gap and limitation in regard to both the sources, such as unavailability of information, lack of education.

“In addition to the gap in data availability, most policy documents lack detailed information on ecosystem services in urban contexts, on procedures, funding, timeframes, circumstances and responsible actors - weakening planned urbanisation”, presented Mr. Sarder Shafiqul Alam.

The second day of the course laid emphasis on the need to rethink about urban livelihood and introduce appropriate policy approaches by developing an inclusive framework for the urban poor. The first speaker, Dr.



Group photo taken during the workshop

William Monteith, IIED conferred that the rapid increase in global urban population is destabilising the capacity of cities to create new employment opportunities. Urban

informality triggered from the bottom (the urban poor) and the top (the local government or state) is another major concern. The second lecture by Dr. David Dodman highlighted that the main obstacle for the New Urban Agenda will be to guarantee commitment from the national government that will aid the implementation of more inclusive, sustainable and equitable policies. To cultivate the learning from the first two sessions, a group exercise was conducted to find solution by mapping the vulnerable groups and existing barriers in the cities. Later on the day, an expert talk by John Taylor, Programme Manager, NUPRP, UNDP-BD discussed about methods to collect participatory data and how participants can harness collective process as a tool to build capacity for understanding and addressing vulnerability and resilience in a city.



John Taylor giving his speech

For the first two days the participants attended talks and group discussions to enable them to address the existing issues in data analysis and securing ecosystem services; and to recognise ways to overcome these socio-economic barriers in the cities. The third day focused on a more practical learning to enhance the knowledge gained from the indoor taught lessons. The group was first taken for a tour to the NCC office and were given a short talk on the development activities of NCC, as well as an overview of the activities of the Urban Poverty Reduction Project. The participants were taken to visit HrishiPara slum and the river-port area in the city with an aim to acquaint them with hands on experience and practical work.



Participants visiting a slum during field trip

The sessions on the fourth day covered the science behind climate change and how human interventions are contributing to global warming; and how the people contributing the least in raising the earth's temperature are bearing the brunt of the adversities associated to this changing climate. From the group discussion aimed



Mr. Mostafa Quaium Khan's lecture session

to coach the participants on how to prioritize actions and take the right measure to address the hazards and find the vulnerable groups in a city. All the groups identified women, children, older people and people belonging from third gender communities as more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and that training for building climate capacity should be undertaken for the officials as well as community people on a district by district basis. Time is of the essence in institutionalising climate smart urban policies. Mr. Mostafa Quaium Khan, Advisor, Bangladesh Urban Forum delivered a lecture covering the ongoing actions at national level in the context of developing an inclusive and climate resilient urban policy.

In the fifth day of the short course, all the participants gave brief presentations about their cities and how they will practice the lessons learned to address the issues discussed in the course. It was evident from the discussion that each city is unique in nature and responds to different drivers of climate change depending on its ecosystem and spatial characteristics.

Takeaway messages from the course

The challenges facing the cities are apparent and climate change is going to exacerbate the situation. Thus, policy commitments should look into the ways to ensure just distribution of resources for people from every spectrum of life. Planning should be formulated based on real life challenges and opportunities, while one approach may work for some cities and fail for the rest. Therefore, city level policy needs to incorporate a city by city work plan to make the best use of unique opportunities available in each city. In addition to this, it is essential to build the sense of 'citizenship' among each member of a society to help them recognise their individual rights as well as their contribution in the development of the city. ICCCAD aims to conduct country-wide short courses for local governments (e.g. Mayors, Chairman and Union Councillors etc.) and different groups of people to capacitate them to take lead in their respective communities for a better and greener future.



Course participants in front of the Narayanganj river port site