

Fourth Annual National Conference on Urban Resilience to Climate Change, Dhaka, Bangladesh, from 22nd to 24th October 2019

The Fourth Annual National Conference on Urban Resilience to Climate Change was jointly organized by the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) at the Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB), and the Asian Cities Climate Change Resilience Network (ACCCRN). Several national and international organizations hosted/co-hosted sessions in the conference. These hosts were BRAC-UDP, BARCIK, Christian Aid, CARE Bangladesh, Concern Worldwide, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), PROKAS, Practical Action and WaterAid. Municipal Association of Bangladesh (MAB) and Bangladesh Urban Forum (BUF) provided advice and organizational support for the conference. The conference was held at Institute of Architects Bangladesh (IAB), Dhaka, Bangladesh from 22nd to 24th October, 2019.

In continuation of the First Annual National Conference on Urban Resilience, the Second Annual Conference on Urban Resilience to Climate Change, and both the Third and Fourth Annual National Conference on Urban Resilience to Climate Change focused on “Building Climate Resilient, Migrant Friendly Cities and Towns in Bangladesh”. It mainly discussed the latest developments in urban resilience policies and practices, challenges and opportunities; the way forward in building cities climate-resilient and migrant-friendly, how to accommodate the sustainable development goals (SDGs), its governance and collaboration and resource management.

Over the three-day period, there were over 700 participants in the conference comprising of academics, government and non-government personnel from a wide variety of sectors. There was a total of 15 sessions in the conference – an inaugural and concluding session, 3 plenary sessions and 10 parallel sessions – from which one session was organized by MAB and 3 by ICCCAD. The other 2 plenary sessions and 5 parallel sessions were hosted by individual organizations along with multiple partner and donor organizations. Each of the session hosts contributed towards the costs of the event. These sessions were successful due to the presence of 6 chief guests, 13 special guests, 12 keynote speakers, 10 session chairs, 8 session moderators, 24 panellists/speakers/presenters and 29 discussants, who provided valuable insights on attaining the stated goal of the conference.

The **first day** of the conference started off with the inaugural session chaired by Dr Saleemul Huq, Director of ICCCAD, welcome address by Sarder Shafiqul Alam, Coordinator of Urban Climate Change Program, ICCCAD. In this session, the keynote paper was presented by Professor John I. Carutther of Cornell University, and as the special guest, Mostafa Quaium Khan, Advisor of Bangladesh Urban Forum (BUF), shared the importance of organizing such an urban conference. Professor Carutther mentioned that, people have the right to make an informed decision on where they should migrate which requires “Understanding the quality of life differential”. Quality of life is fundamental to human prosperity, thus making a climate-resilient migrant-friendly city which provides people with amenities while ensuring livelihood as their way forward. Dr. Saleemul Huq remarked that “what we want to do, is to light a spark with people we meet here” through which he mentioned his desire to use this conference as an idea-generating hub in the years to come - while sharing his idea on quality education as a driver to ensure preference in migration and where our future generations *can* choose cities to migrate.



The first plenary session, hosted by Concern Worldwide focused on the “Building a Resilient, Inclusive and Sustainable Urban Health System:

Why the Leadership Role of Cities and Towns are the Key”. The session chair was **Mesbah Uddin**, Joint Secretary, Urban Development Wing, LGD and Project Director, EU Support to Health and Nutrition to the Poor in Urban Bangladesh, LGD, MOLGRD&C and keynote speaker was Md. Mosarouf Hossain, Programm Manager, Concern Worldwide. Sustainable health services are important components of SDG goal-3. People living in slums are suffering the most due to inadequate and unaffordable medical services. The point of highlight here was that the medical sector should focus on equity and further funding was needed to support the most vulnerable groups instead of only looking for profits.

In the parallel session of BRAC-UDP, emphasis was given on “Public-Private-Community Partnership (PPCP) in Building Migrant-Friendly Resilient Cities and Towns in Bangladesh”. As chief guest of this session, Professor Ainun Nishat mentioned that “Authority without responsibility is meaningless”, the point being that holistic measures plus accountability, are necessary for innovative and effective implications of research findings. Furthermore, data reliability is a major issue and all data must be cross-checked for validity before being used.



In the parallel session by BARCIK-ICCCAD “Urban Hazard and Housing for the Poor”, the lives of slum dwellers was the main focus – the issues they face on a daily basis; risks and vulnerabilities associated with living in densely populated urban slums which suffer from waterlogging, poor drainage and sanitation facilities, lack of access to safe water, fire hazard among others.

ICCCAD organized the parallel session on “Youth and Climate Change: Innovative Ideas for a Clean Urban Environment”. The session was presented by students and youth leaders who shared their experience and innovative ideas in leading the climate future of Bangladesh, especially how they are dealing with the Dhaka’s inadequate solid waste management.



The **second day** started with the plenary session on “Poverty-Mitigating Practices for Climate Migrants and Vulnerable Households at City Level”, hosted by GIZ, where the chief guest was Caren Blume, Deputy Head of Development Cooperation, German Embassy, keynote paper presented by Guntram Glasbrenner, Cluster Coordinator, Adaptation to Climate Change and Biodiversity, GIZ Bangladesh. The session was moderated by Mostafa Quaium Khan, Advisor at BUF. It discussed how rural to urban migrants end up as slum dwellers that create extreme poverty in urban areas. There is a lack of social safety nets for the urban poor which need proper attention to improve their livelihood.



WaterAid’s parallel session on the “Promotion of Urban Rainwater Harvesting and Recharge” was chaired by Professor Kazi Matin Ahmed, Department of Geology, University of Dhaka. Rainwater harvesting is one of the most sustainable and old systems although its practices are rarely seen in this country. There is the need to identify the roles of different stakeholders for promoting rainwater harvesting and recharge groundwater so as help reduce the pressure on its extraction.

The “Story of Urban Street Children” session was chaired by Dr. Saleemul Huq where several street children presented their risks and vulnerabilities and future plans to build their resilience activities. Senior personnel of APON Foundation, Smiling Rainbow Foundation Bangladesh and CARITAS Bangladesh shared their ideas on how to make a collaborative effort for ensuring better lives of street children through providing birth certificates, shelter, education, health-care and other basic facilities.



In the Municipal Associations of Bangladesh (MAB)’s session chaired by Mr. Dewan Kamal Ahmed, President of MAB and Mayor, Nilphamari Municipality. Advocate Azmat Ullah Khan, Founder President and Advisor of MAB was present as the chief guest. Dr. Tofail Ahmed, Vice Chancellor, Britannia University, Cumilla, Dr. Saleemul Huq, Mostafa Quaium Khan and Md Nurullah, Former Chief Engineer, DSCC were present as discussants while a number of mayors, councillors and secretaries of different municipalities took part in discussions on the “Role of the Municipalities in Bangladesh and Scope of Municipal Association of Bangladesh (MAB) in Achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)”.

The “Out of the Box” session discussed on “How Alternative Play Space Help Children for Proper Development”, “Climate Migrant Elderly Women Needs”, “Perspective of Upholding Human Rights”, “Diffusion of Electric Vehicles in Bangladesh” and “Perceived Cultural Ecosystem Services from Urban Green by Heterogenous Sociodemographic Groups of Dhaka City, Bangladesh”. This session was chaired by Mostafa Quaium Khan, Advisor at BUF and S.M. Mehedi Ahsan, Senior Urban Resilience Specialist, KfW and Dr. M. Shafiq-Ur Rahman, Professor and chairman, Department of URP, Jahangirnagar University were presented as discussants.



On the **third day**, the PROKAS’ session was on “Climate-Resilient, Migrant-Friendly Town: A Case Study of Mongla Port Municipality”. This session was chaired by Dr. Saleemul Huq, while the keynote paper was presented by Prof. Shawkat Alam of Macquarie University, Australia, and had Gerry Fox, team leader, PROKAS and Mr. Zulfikar Ali, Mayor, Mongla Port Municipality as discussants. It was mentioned that most climate induced migrants fail to consider their movement being caused by climate change and that regular “hidden” migration is contributing to the continuous pressure on urban area. There is a need to follow the current practices of the UNFCCC’s basic framework for addressing migrants.

The parallel session focusing on the “Urban Disaster Resilience in Urban Sector Policies” was hosted jointly by CARE Bangladesh and Christian Aid. In this session, the chief guest was Mr. Md. Abu Bakar Siddique, (Joint Secretary), Department of Disaster Management, and the keynote presenters were Mr. Md Jafar Iqbal, National Coordinator, Emergency Response, CARE Bangladesh and Ms. Shahana Hayat, Humanitarian Program Manager, Christian Aid. The emphasis was given on the fact that rather than turning to the government for everything, what we can do is take initiatives by and rely on ourselves.



The parallel session of Practical Action was focused on “Integrated and Sustainable Waste Management for Socioeconomic Empowerment of Informal Workers”. Md. Shafiqul Islam Akand, Additional Chief Engineer, Urban Management-LGED was the chief guest, and Dr. Tariq Bin Yousuf, Superintending Engineer-Environment at DNCC and Mahobul Islam from Practical Action were keynote presenters.



This session highlighted that carbon emission has increased drastically in Bangladesh due to poor management of solid waste—and it was brought into light how proper waste management can be a way forward towards achieving resilience.

Dr. Saleemul Huq chaired the last Plenary, summary session, Award giving ceremony and Concluding Session. Habibun Nahar, the Honourable Deputy Minister of Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) was the chief guest, and Professor Dr. Shamsul Alam, Senior Secretary, Planning Commission (GED) and Dr. Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad, Chairman, PKSF, spoke as special guests. The draft summary-findings of the conference was presented by Rukhsar Sultana, a researcher at ICCCAD.

The presentation was then followed by discussion among several designated discussants. Dr. Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad highlighted that there are a lot of plans and strategies in place to support urban development or needs of migrants, but implementation is still weak. He discussed the importance of skilled human resources and investments in human capital, as well as improvements in ICT services, raising awareness of youth and that, investments should largely be driven by national actors, both public and private, without overreliance on donor support.



Professor Dr. Shamsul Alam said that, while it is clear that substantial level of rural-urban migration will occur in the coming decade and that, urban population will exceed rural population, this should not be seen as something negative. It is better to look into the benefits and put them into action. Focus should be given on ensuring that rural-urban divide is minimized in a planned manner. Gender and youth empowerment will always need to be considered. The BCCSAP is still under review while the 8th Five Year Plan is being prepared – the issue of urban resilience and planned migration can be incorporated into these documents; this is a shining beacon of hope for creating climate resilient and migrant friendly cities. All in all, the goal should be making every city and town livable and gradually reduce the rural-urban divide that exists in Bangladesh.

Habibun Nahar, the chief guest focused on how urban development (infrastructure, human capital, service provision etc.) can be distributed suitably across the country and resource allocation should be done accordingly. In addition to service provisions and infrastructure development, social development should be prioritized just as much (like the empowerment of excluded groups and empowering youth with awareness, knowledge, skills and so on). Local government bodies need to be strengthened as well. Therefore, different sets of actors will need to work together, leveraging each other’s competitive strengths to achieve the goal of climate-resilient and migrant-friendly urban development throughout the nation.

This was followed by presentation of Urban Resilience Award 2019 amongst 5 selected organizational representatives. The awards and certificates were handed over by the Chief Guest, Special Guests and Chair of the Concluding Session.

The full proceeding of the conference will be published for wider dissemination.