

Strategic Conversation

NO TIME TO WASTE!

BUILDING RESILIENT URBAN COMMUNITIES AND CITIES THROUGH LOCALLY LED CLIMATE ADAPTATION

8 December (Wednesday) from 4.00 pm to 6.00 pm (Indian Time)

Background Note

The jury is still out whether the global leaders, present in the COP 26 UN Climate Change Conference held in Glasgow from 31 October to 12 November 2021, did enough to find a much-needed balance between adaptation, mitigation, and finance in reducing the global warming. There is now an unprecedented consensus among scientists, political leaders, business leaders, climate activists, and civil society groups, among others that climate change and global warming is a reality caused by the indiscriminate emission of greenhouse gases (GHGs) largely by the industrialised countries. Increasing frequency and intensity of floods, storms, droughts, heat waves, melting glaciers, sea level rise, forest fires are irrefutable evidence of climate change consequence. These weather events wreak havoc on people's lives and livelihood but its effects on the poor and vulnerable are the gravest. The COP 26 achieved several agreements between richer nations (higher emitters of GHGs) and poorer nations (lower emitters). Significant among these include achieving a 'net-zero' emission-target goal, 'phasing down' dependence on fossil fuel (focusing on coal), reducing emission of GHGs (particularly methane), ending deforestation (thereby increasing carbon dioxide absorption and slowing down global warming). Unfortunately, however, the commitment from the developed nations for financing to accelerate adaptation and mitigation measure in developing countries fell short expectations. This will have far reaching consequences for the island nations and least developed countries which have limited means to adapt, mitigate, and compensate 'loss and damage' caused by the extreme events.

The cities are at the frontline of climate change and global warming. However, haphazard and unplanned urban growth in most part of the developing world has added to the woes. Millions of urban poor and informal settlement dwellers who live in the low lying, overcrowded, and hazardous locations often bear the brunt of flooding, fire, and other climate perils. As most adaptation and mitigation plans and efforts are being led by the national governments, the role of city authorities and urban communities has remained under-defined.

In recent years, the idea and practice of Locally Led Adaptation is getting more attention from the governments, donors and climate and social scientists as well as civil society groups. The importance of locally led adaptation action was highlighted in a 2019 flagship report Adapt Now by the Global Commission on Adaptation. The report argues that adaptation actions bring multiple benefits which they called triple dividend. The first dividend is avoided losses, that is, the ability of the investment to reduce future losses. The second is positive economic benefits through reducing risk, increasing productivity, and driving innovation through the need for adaptation; the third is social and environmental benefits.

The Indian cities which will host half of the Indian population by end of this decade are extremely vulnerable to climate vagaries. However, if Adaptation efforts are designed well locally and led by local community, it can take advantage of the transformative energy and generate triple dividends. This will require developing a sound understanding of the effects of climate changes on cities and communities, a radical shift to make urban planning pro-resilience and adequate investment in evidence-based climate actions at the lowest level where communities take the lead. *There is very little or no time to waste!*

The central issue, therefore, is the **governance of resilience** policies and interventions. What roles will elected municipal bodies have to play? What roles communities, especially the informal settlements, have to play? In order to perform these critical roles, what **knowledge** solutions need to be generated where communities and municipalities take ownership? How can civil society, investors and state/national governments support such locally designed and implemented efforts at **governance of urban resilience**?

As Participatory Research in Asia completes 40 years in February 2021, building on its decades of participatory approaches to city development keeping the urban informal communities at the centre of its work, it recommits to contribute to building resilience in these communities and cities.

It is in this context, PRIA in partnership with Building Resilient Urban Communities (BREUCOM), plans to organise a Strategic Conversation on “**No Time to Waste! Building Resilient Urban Communities and Cities through Locally Led Climate Adaptation**” on **8 December (Wednesday) from 4.00 pm to 6.00 pm (Indian time)**. This Strategic Conversation will bring together 15-20 expert practitioners and thought leaders to specifically discuss the following key questions:

- *What are the good practices adopted by cities and communities to promote locally led climate adaptation?*
- *What strategies should be adopted for promoting local knowledge solutions through active ownership of municipal authorities and communities?*
- *What roles civil society and other stakeholders play to strengthen locally led governance of city governance?*

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PROGRAMME AGENDA

Moderators:

- Ms Sheela Patel, Executive Director, SPARC, India
- Dr Kaustuv Kanti Bandyopadhyay, Director, Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), India

4.00 pm to 4.10 pm

Welcome and Introduction to PRIA@40 Conversations

4.10 pm to 4.30 pm

Setting the Stage

- Dr Aditya Bahadur, Principal Researcher, Human Settlements, International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), UK
- Umamaheshwaran Rajasekar, Chair, Urban Resilience Unit, National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA), India

4.30 pm to 5.50 pm

Strategic Conversations

Each discussant will reflect on the following questions in 3-4 minutes

- *What are the good practices adopted by cities and communities to promote locally led climate adaptation?*
- *What strategies should be adopted for promoting local knowledge solutions through active ownership of municipal authorities and communities?*
- *What roles civil society and other stakeholders play to strengthen locally led governance of city governance?*

5.50 pm to 6.00 pm

Key Takeaways, Vote of Thanks and Closure

- Dr Rajesh Tandon, Founder-President, Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), India
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