

ACCCRN Learning Event Key Note

Introduction

Good afternoon! It is a real pleasure to be here with you all, particularly to see so many new faces, as well as old friends. I assume that I have been invited to kick off the proceedings this evening as the longest serving member of the ACCCRN community - along with Anna. In fact, I first met Anna 9 years ago at a meeting on **cities and climate** that preceded ACCCRN.

I've been asked to talk about why UCCR is relevant. The simple answer is that brings together two issues that are likely to determine the future of the world's a population. My father was 84 when he died 14 years ago. I'll be 84 in 2050 which is as far into the future I can contemplate, and have little doubt that Urban Climate Change Resilience will become an increasingly important agenda over the coming decades.

'Why is UCCR important – and importantly different'?

To answer this question its worth reflecting on what's changed over the last 8 years, in terms of the wider context in which ACCCRN has operated. There have been significant **global shifts** in how we think about both climate change and urban development.

a. Climate Change is accepted as a critical issue

- 2007 Bellagio – climate sceptics.
- The voices of climate change sceptics globally – notably in the US and Australia – have finally been drowned out by the growing body of scientific and empirical evidence.
- At COP21 last year, a consensus was finally reached amongst the world's leaders about the significance of climate change and the necessity for action; both to contain the degree of global warming to less than 2 degrees and the need for significant investment to combat the potential impacts.
- Asian cities, perhaps more so than in any other part of the world, are taking the threat of CC seriously. Very many cities are coastal, exposed to sea level rise and typhoons; urban

flooding and heatwaves that are increasingly frequent, and water and food security an increasing concern.

b. Focus on both adaptation and mitigation

- Prior to 2008, CC action focussed on climate change mitigation – fulfilling the commitments in the Kyoto protocol and solving the problem by reducing GHG emissions.
- This became very apparent during the scoping phase of ACCCRN, which took place in 2008 shortly after the Bali conference, to gauge interest in climate change, and potential for deeper engagement. At that time, even though the impacts of changing temperatures and rainfall patterns were self-evident, both national and city government linked CC with mitigation.
- Programmes such as PAKLIM in Indonesia were being supported by the international community, but funding and action to address the impacts of climate change was not recognised as a priority until the Bali conference in 2008.

c. The world is urban, and cities are fundamental to our future

- Eight years ago, the world was waking up to the fact that half the world's population lived in cities or urban areas and wondering what this means in terms of urban living and rural-urban linkages. Today, it's accepted that the future is urban. By 2050 it's anticipated that 75% of the world's population will live in cities, and it's accepted that the way in which cities develop will define our future. This particularly true in Asia, and Africa, where the most significant urbanisation will occur over the next 10-20 years.

d. Centres of opportunity to places where stresses accumulate

- The World Disasters Report in 2010 focused on cities, pointing out that whilst cities are attractive as centres of opportunity, they are also places where risks accumulated and extreme events can result in very significant losses. Since then we've seen major cities brought to a standstill New York by Superstorm Sandy, the floods that affected 2million people in Bangkok, and last year Mumbai.

e. An unquestionable role in tackling CC

- COP21 was the first time that cities had their voices fully recognized in a global UN conference on climate change. The 'unquestionable role cities play in tackling CC as well as their willingness to be part of the solution' is illustrated by initiatives including C40 100RC, the Compact of Mayors, ICLEI and of course ACCCRN. Collectively cities represent a new voice in the debate, and a powerful force for change

What is UCCR? why is it different?

- Last time I was in Indonesia was February 2011 for the first ACCCRN Knowledge Forum in Bali. 5 years ago, the term UCCR did not exist. At that time many of us were struggling to think about cities as systems, to move beyond disaster risk reduction, to understand what resilience meant and how to translate it into our own language.
- 5 years on, UCCR is being increasingly used to describe 'the ability of cities to persist in the face of the multiple threats posed by climate change'. Conceptually, it recognises that we cannot accurately predict how these threats will unfold – both due to the **complexity** of cities, the pace of urbanisation and the **uncertainty** as to how fast mitigation efforts will prove effective.
- Over the last few years there has been an **emerging consensus on how resilience is understood at various scales**. Embracing:
 - a) the capacity to **prepare for and withstand** sudden shocks familiar from DRR;
 - b) the need to **adapt progressively** as stresses accumulate; and
 - c) the **opportunity pressures provide** to think differently, adopt new strategies and transform.

It is the opportunity for transformation that is exciting

UCCR is **not an isolated agenda** – it's an **opportunity to tackle failures of urban development** to date. Approaches that have resulted in increasing urban poverty, environmental degradation and unsustainable development which is characterised by waste, pollution, congestion. These same issues that are **compounding the impact of climate change**.

- We know that **within a city climate impacts are experienced unequally** - poor, elderly, women, migrant workers with limited access to basic services are more prone to disease, and more likely to be living on marginalised land exposed to flooding.
- Likewise that contamination of natural water sources, the concreting over of green spaces and destruction of coastal ecosystems has progressively **eroded our natural capital** compounding the risk of flooding, water scarcity, poor air quality.

The need for new approaches to urban development that are **integrated and inclusive** is reflected in the SDGs. Whereas the MDGs recognised there was a problem and assumed it could be fixed, the SDGs sets out an agenda for the future - where no one is left behind, and where cities play a critical role.

Goal 11: cities to be **safe, resilient, sustainable and inclusive** provides a goal that every city can strive for. This will be further elaborated on in the New Urban Agenda being promoted at Habitat III and is closely aligned with some of the critical aspects of UCCR that I'll discuss shortly.

[New approaches to urban planning and governance are needed to realise Goal 11.](#) UCCR is part of a **paradigm shift** that moves beyond 'development as usual'. This has typically focussed on economic growth and prosperity, at the expense of social inclusion or sustainable development. Where as **a city that is resilience to CC is inherently more inclusive and more sustainable.**

This is because UCCR recognises:

1. [The importance of ecosystems and the quality of infrastructure](#)

Strategies ranging from spatial planning, the integration of green-blue infrastructure, climate-proofing critical infrastructure, environmental management are critical.

ACCCRN has highlighted the need to revert to historical planning approaches to settlements founded on an understanding of the hydrology – catchment areas, water sources, storage and attenuation - rather than around transport systems and buildings: 'roads and nodes'.

UCCR recognises the importance of integrated – rather than siloed sectoral planning. Likewise the cumulative impact of smaller scale interventions – rainwater harvesting, green roofs, cool roofs – to enable people to live with nature, rather than keep nature out.

2. [Multiple scales and actors](#)

UCCR also recognises the need for **collective action** by all those with a vested interest in the future. From residents to government, businesses to service providers; at household, community and city scale; within both formal and informal settlements and sectors. Central to this is access to information and knowledge and inclusive governance that meaningfully engages with a range of actors, understanding their perspective of risk, and capacity to act.

ACCCRN has repeatedly demonstrated the value of shared learning and 'learning by doing' in breaking down barriers and offering new insights and possibilities. In Hat Yai and Surat where the Chambers of Commerce had led multi-stakeholder groups, in Chiang Rai where NGO, government and academic institutions joined forces on sector studies.

The advantage of this approach - which IIED are referring to as 'adaptive governance' in their forthcoming book based on ACCCRN – is that it offers flexibility and capacity to be resourceful and responsive – off-setting some of the resource and capacity challenges many municipalities face and brokering the dynamics of 'people, politics and power'.

3. Evidence and knowledge

UCCRN recognises the importance of evidence and knowledge to inform learning and action.

The papers published by IIED that many of you have written, some of which feature in their forthcoming book, provide an empirically rich analysis of the diversity of approaches taken to building resilience in Asian cities. Importantly they provide **evidence**, factual and anecdotal, of the myriad of factors affecting vulnerability and barriers to action E.g. lack of data, integrated planning.

ACCCRN has adopted an approach to building UCCCR that is founded on the pillars of **shared learning** through multi-stakeholder processes, and **scientific knowledge** based on climate modelling and sector studies. Secondly, on articulating an **integrated urban resilience strategy** as a stepping stone to **defining and prioritising action**. An approach echoed in 100RC's methodology globally, also in Ho Chi Minh's Triple A approach to Climate Adaptation – assessment, adaption strategy, action.

The key themes that have emerged from the experiences of ACCCRN cities, were echoed in the research we carried out for the City Resilience Index in 22 cities. Even though climate change was not the specific focus, and rather than understanding how to build UCCR, our aim was to be able to diagnose to what extent a city is or isn't resilient we found the same things to be important, notably, the health and well-being of everyone; infrastructure that protect us, enables access to essential services and goods, service, and people and information to flow; and governance characterised by inclusion, integration and iterative learning.

Looking ahead

I began by looking back at what has changed over the last eight years, as a context for the reflecting on what ACCCRN has achieved over this period and what I believe is the considerable influence ACCCRN has had on the Rockefeller Foundations investments, and numerous others including USAID, the World Bank, DFID, and my own organisation - Arup.

I would like to end by looking eight years ahead to 2024 – or 2025, when more than 100 million more people will live in cities in Asia.

The pace of urbanisation in Asia is a one-off opportunity to tackle CC

ACCCRN has focussed on 2nd tier cities which is where the majority of urbanisation over the next decade will take place. It has reached over 50 cities but there are very many more whose populations will double in the next 15 years with growth rates of 5-6% (compared to 2-3% for larger cities).

These cities present a unique opportunity as they face common challenges. In addition to the real or potential impacts of climate change.

- Informal growth spatially and economically;
- new infrastructure requiring significant investment; and,
- often decentralisation of authority to municipalities with limited resources.

The definition of UCCR that has emerged as a result of ACCCRN, not only helps address climate-risk but also contributes to tackling these development challenges - to realise what the Rockefeller Foundation refer to as the '**resilience dividend**'.

The pace of urbanisation in Asian cities, the need for significant investment in infrastructure, as well as the increasing availability of climate finance – through DFID's international climate fund, the Green Climate Fund, the UCCCRTF, offer **a unique opportunity** to tackle today's challenges and be better prepared for what is to come.

The relevance of UCCR is that it recognises that the quality of urban development and governance is the **key not only to prosperity and well-being, but the ability to survive and thrive** – leaving no one behind.

Thank you