

# Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES





### Sustainable Development Goal 11

### Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

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In the set of Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015,<sup>1</sup> Goal 11 (Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable) is the one that refers most directly to urban development issues. It is recognized that increasingly cities are becoming essential to national and regional development prospects, but that much needs to be done to harness their potential and address existing gaps.

Globally, common urban challenges include but are not limited to the availability of safe and affordable housing and basic services, access to land, issues related to urban inquality and livelihood, the management of congestion and sustainable transportation systems, the planning and management of cities, disaster risk reduction, municipal waste management, green public spaces and resilience<sup>2</sup>

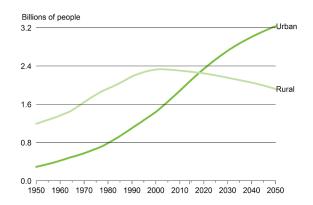
In Asia and the Pacific, the challenges are particularly acute given the region's pronounced urban transformation – and the numbers of people involved. By 2018 more than half of the population of Asia and the Pacific is expected to be living in urban agglomerations. By 2040, added to that huge population will be an additional 1 billion people living in the region's cities. It is expected that by 2050 the urban population in Asia and the Pacific will reach a total of 3.2 billion people, at which time cities will account for two thirds of the region's total population.

#### 11.1 Urbanization

Urbanization refers to the increase in the proportion of the population of a country living in urban areas, expressed as a percentage of the total population of that country. The rate of urbanization is the change in the level of urbanization, usually expressed as an average annual percentage over a particular period.

The rate and level of urbanization in Asia and the Pacific are increasing rapidly. For these reasons, ensuring inclusive and sustainable urbanization, including access for all people to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services, will be a major challenge for Governments. (Fig 1)

Figure 1
Urban and rural populations, Asia and the Pacific,



### By 2018, half of the population of Asia and the Pacific will live in towns or cities

The estimation that the population of Asia and the Pacific will be more than 50 per cent urban by 2018 represents a rapid and profound change since 1950, when four fifths (80 per cent) of people in the Asia-Pacific region lived in rural settlements.

Levels of urbanization vary greatly across the subregions of Asia and the Pacific. In 2014 more than two thirds (71 per cent) of the population lived in towns or cities in the Pacific subregion; in North and Central Asia the figure was 63 per cent and in East and North-East Asia 59 per cent. South and South-West Asia and South-East Asia remained mostly rural at that time, with levels of urbanization being 36 per cent and 47 per cent respectively. (Fig 2)

# Of every 10 people living in high income economies, 8 live in towns and cities; by comparison, of those living in low income economies, only 3 of every 10 people live in towns and cities

Levels and rates of urbanization in Asia and the Pacific are closely linked to levels of economic development. Of every 10 people living in high income economies, 8 live in towns and cities (83.9 per cent); by comparison, of those living in low income economies, only 3 of every 10 (31.7 per cent) live in towns and cities. (Fig 3)

While high income countries have been urbanized for several decades, upper middle-income countries have experienced the fastest pace of urbanization since 1950, particularly from 1980 onwards. From 1980 to 2014 the percentage of people in high income countries living in towns or cities increased by 12 percentage points, from 72 per cent to 84 per cent. In comparison, the percentage of people in upper middle-

Asia-Pacific **ENEA** 100 75 -50 -25 SEA SSWA 100 population 75 50 Pacific NCA 100 50 25 2050 1950 Urban Rural

Proportion of urban and rural population to total population, Asia-Pacific subregions, 1950-2050

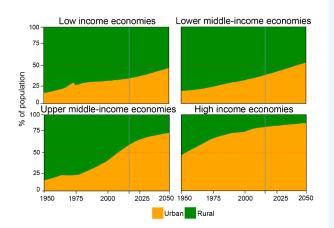


Figure 3
Proportion of urban and rural population to total population, Asia-Pacific income groups, 1950-2050

income countries living in towns and cities increased by 33 percentage points, from 23 per cent to 56 per cent.

### While more people than ever live in towns and cities in Asia and the Pacific, the overall rate of urbanization in the region is slowing

For the period 1990-2015, a total of 35 countries or areas experienced positive growth rates of both their urban and rural populations (Fig 4; upper-right quadrant).

Countries in which the pace of urban growth exceeded the pace of rural growth, in general experienced faster rates of urbanization (Fig 4; countries above the diagonal).

Figure 4
Average annual
change in
urban and rural
populations in
countries by
subregion, 19902015

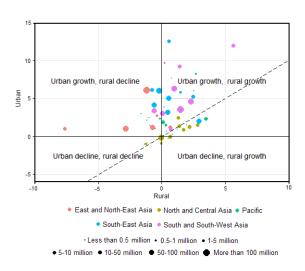
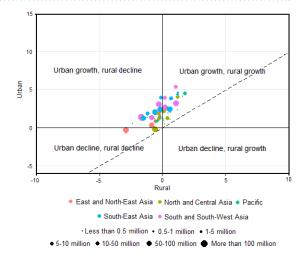


Figure 5

Average annual change in urban and rural populations in countries by subregion, 2015-2040



The Lao People's Democratic Republic, for example, is positioned well above the diagonal; from 1990 to 2015 it had the fastest urban population growth rate in Asia and the Pacific at 12.5 per cent per year. In contrast, several countries in the North and Central Asian subregion fall below the diagonal as rural growth outpaced urban growth.

Only two ESCAP member States experienced urban decline but rural growth over the period 1990-2015, namely Kazakhstan and the Federated States of Micronesia. Four other countries/areas, namely Armenia, Georgia, Niue and the Russian Federation, experienced both rural and urban decline.

Between 2015 and 2040 urban population growth in Asia and the Pacific is expected to be nearly universal, resulting in 3 billion people living in towns and cities in 2040, an increase

of 0.89 billion people since 2015 (Fig 5). Only in Japan and the Russian Federation are the urban populations predicted to decline along with their rural populations; the declines are expected to be -0.22 per cent and -0.20 per cent respectively. However, rates of urbanization typically are expected to be slower in the future than they had been during the period 1990-2015, (as indicated by the relative proximity of countries to the diagonal line in figure 5).

### Nearly half of urban dwellers live in cities of fewer than 500,000 inhabitants

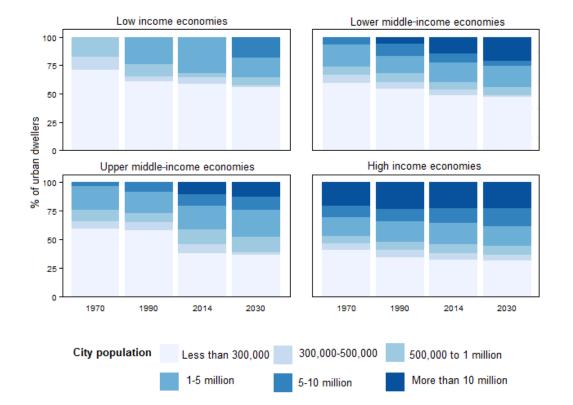
It is a popular perception that the region's megacities are home to a large proportion of the urban population, but the majority of the urban population in the region actually reside in cities with populations of fewer than 1 million (Fig 6). In fact, only 14 per cent of the urban population live in megacities; 48 per cent of the regional population live in cities and towns classified as having populations of fewer than 500,000 people.

Secondary cities are increasingly significant in national and subnational economies, providing critical links as provincial centres, tourist destinations, sites of emerging technological investment and transportation hubs.

Defining urban areas in the region is becoming more complex. For example, megacities are now giving way to the emergence of megaurban regions that encompass cities, towns, villages and rural areas, some of which even cross national boundaries in the form of planned or unplanned urban corridors.

Urban dwellers in countries with greater levels of economic development are more likely to live in larger cities than those in countries with lower levels of economic development, but economic development is not the only factor involved. For example, megacities dominate the urban population in both Bangladesh, a country in the low income group, and Japan, a country in the

Figure 6
Percentage of urban dwellers by city size



#### Box 1

### **Urban environment**

### Access to green and public spaces is necessary for inclusive and liveable cities

Increasing emphasis is being placed on making cities more inclusive and liveable, and the importance of this has been captured in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In making cities more liveable, the aim must be to increase walkability for pedestrians and to promote automobile-free development, for example; these aspects would be based on the compact city model rather than the current model that allows urban sprawl.<sup>a</sup> While many models exist showing how emerging "eco-city" or "green urbanism" planning principles could contribute to increasing the liveability of cities, relevant data are rare. One area where such data are needed concerns access to safe and green public spaces. Indicators for measuring safe and accessible green areas are necessary for monitoring the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. For example, areas of public space as a proportion of total city space and the proportion of residents within 0.5 km of an accessible green and public space are indicators that could be considered for monitoring Goal 11.7.

The extent of green space in Asian and Pacific cities varies greatly. According to the Asian Green Cities Index<sup>b</sup>, in 22 major Asian cities the average total of green space per capita is 38.6 m<sup>2</sup>, ranging from as low as 1.8 m<sup>2</sup> per capita in Kolkata, India, to 166.3 m<sup>2</sup> in Guangzhou, China. Interestingly, per capita income does not seem to influence the amount of available green space; Tokyo has a per capita income of \$70,800 per year and Hanoi \$1,700, but these capital cities have roughly the same amount of green space per capita,  $10.6 \text{ m}^2$  and  $11.2 \text{ m}^2$  respectively.

a ESCAP and Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), Low Carbon Green Growth Roadmap for Asia and the Pacific: Turning Resource Constraints and the Climate Crisis into Economic Growth Opportunities (Bangkok, 2012) ST/ESCAP/2631. Available from http://www.unescap.org/resources/low-carbon-green-growth-roadmap-asia-and-pacific.

b EIU (2011). Asian Green City Index, Assessing the environmental performance of Asia's major cities. Available from http://www.siemens.com/entry/cc/features/greencityindex\_international/all/en/pdf/report\_asia.pdf.

high income group. In contrast the megacity populations of China, a country in the upper middle-income group, and India, a country in the lower middle-income group, are relatively small.

### 11.2 Quality of housing

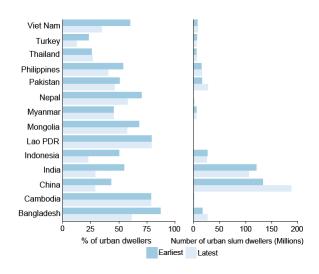
Slums or informal settlements are characterized by housing that is non-durable or overcrowded, offers limited access to improved water and sanitation, or lacks security against eviction of the residents.

Rapid and unplanned urban growth threatens sustainable development when the necessary infrastructure is not developed or when policies are not implemented to ensure that urban resources, including land, are equitably shared.

## While the proportion of urban dwellers living in slums is decreasing, more than half a billion people in Asia and the Pacific still live in slums

The challenges of rapid and unplanned urban growth are a particular problem for lower income countries. In 1990, of every 10 urban dwellers in Bangladesh nearly 9 (87 per cent) were living in slums or informal settlements; in Nepal, nearly 3 out of 4 urban dwellers (71 per cent) were living in such places.

Figure 7 Slum dwellers in Asia-Pacific countries, 1990-2009



Despite the rapid pace of urbanization across Asia and the Pacific, the proportion of urban dwellers living in slums has actually decreased by an average of 19 percentage points between 1990 and 2009 for each of the countries for which data are available. (Fig 7)

The highest numbers of urban dwellers living in slums are typically found in countries with a large population and/or in upper middle-income countries where a greater proportion of the population live in cities. In 2009, 190 million urban dwellers in China and 107 million urban dwellers in India were living in slums; the urban dwellers in just these two countries accounted for more than half (53 per cent) of the 558 million people living in slums in the entire Asian and Pacific region.

Furthermore, despite decreases in the percentage of urban dwellers living in slums in China from 1990 to 2009, the absolute number of such slum dwellers has increased. Similar but less pronounced increases can be observed in many of the countries in Asia and the Pacific; this is partly a result of rapid and unplanned urbanization. In addition, much of the increase in the numbers of urban poor is taking place in locations that are highly vulnerable to natural disasters and are expected to experience the greatest impact of climate change, such as lowelevation coastal zones and arid regions known as dry lands. Specifically, about 60 per cent of city and town dwellers in Asia and the Pacific, or 742 million people, are now at extreme to high disaster risk – often living in multi-hazard hotspots that are vulnerable to cyclones and typhoons, earthquakes and tsunamis, floods and landslides.3

### 11.3 Resilient cities and human settlements

The economic development of many of the region's urban economies is often accompanied by risks of new disasters. Unplanned urbanization leads to growth of settlements with unstable living conditions, while rapid expansion of industrial complexes in low-lying flood plains make them susceptible to the risks of flooding.

The region's cities are highly vulnerable to natural disasters and the impacts of climate change, with poor and disadvantaged communities being the most exposed.<sup>4</sup> Unplanned urbanization is an important risk factor as it can increase the susceptibility and exposure of people and economic assets to natural disasters. As rapid urbanization becomes an even greater concern in the coming decades, it will be crucial to give special consideration to urban disaster risk management. Urban vulnerabilities can be reduced by strengthening the capacity of cities to withstand and adapt in the face of shocks.

### Between 1970 and 2014, more than 2 million people died as a result of natural disasters in Asia and the Pacific; the region accounted for 57.4 per cent of the total deaths in the world due to disasters

Asia and the Pacific is the most disaster-prone region in the world. Between 1970 and 2014, the region has been affected by more than 5,223 natural disasters – 43.4 per cent of the globally reported events.

The solid lines in figure 9 show the estimated pattern or trend in deaths attributable to natural disasters. These show that, from 1970 to 2014, the number of deaths attributable to natural disasters in Asia and the Pacific was typically higher in any given year than in other regions of the world. Over the decade from 2005 to 2014, there were 1,660 reported disaster events in the region, accounting for more than 40 per cent of the world's reported disasters. During 2005-2014, 60 percent of all deaths due to natural disasters – approximately 500,000 people – occurred in Asia and the Pacific.

The high number of deaths in Asia and the Pacific was due to its large population and the high frequency of natural disasters in the region as compared with other regions of the world. Since 2005, of the 10 largest natural disasters in terms of the number of lives lost, 8 occurred in

Asia and the Pacific
Africa
Europe
North America and Carib.

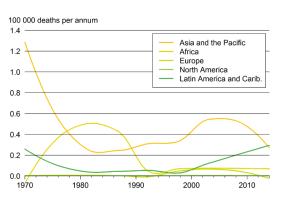


Figure 8 World wide deaths attributable to natural disasters, 1970-2014

### Figure 9 Trend in world wide deaths attributable to natural disasters, 1970-2014

Asia and the Pacific.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, while there are no clear long-term trends in the number of deaths attributable to natural disasters in the region, there has been a substantial reduction in the number of deaths since the 1970s and indications of a further reduction in the last five years or so. (Fig 8, 9)

### From 1970 to 2014, more than 6 billion people in Asia and the Pacific were affected by natural disasters, accounting for 88.8 per cent of the global total

The number of people affected by natural disasters in Asia and the Pacific between 1970 and 2014 was higher than in any other region of the world (Fig 10). The impact and susceptibility of Asian and Pacific countries and areas to disasters is also evident when allowing for its relatively large population compared with that of other regions of the world. From 1970 to 2014, the number of people affected

Figure 10 Number of people affected world wide by natural disasters, 1970-2014

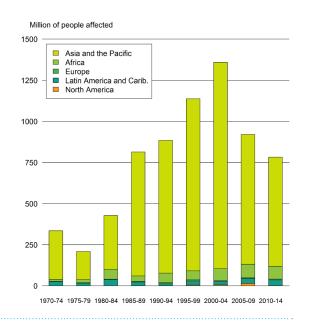
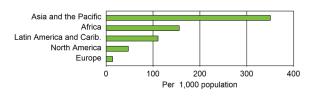


Figure 11
People affected
by natural disasters,
world regions,
2005-2014



by a natural disaster per 1,000 population was typically higher than in any other region, in particular during the 1990s and 2000s.

In the past decade alone, a person living in the Asia-Pacific region was more than twice as likely to be affected by a natural disaster as a person living in Africa; more than 3 times as likely as someone living in Latin America and the Caribbean, more than 7 times as likely as someone living in North America, and more than 25 times as likely as someone living in Europe. (Fig 11)

The overall trend since 2000 has been for fewer people in the region to be affected by natural disasters, in part due to improved early warning systems and the preparedeness of countries; in recent years the evacuation of potentially affected populations to safe areas in the event of pending large-scale hydrological and meteorological disasters has saved many lives. However, over the last decade, the number of people in Asia and the Pacific affected by such events remained the highest in the world. Of the global total, the region accounted for 85 per cent of those affected, or 1.4 billion people.

The impact of disasters on urban areas in the region can be devastating and far-reaching. High urbanization levels and urban poverty present increasing vulnerability patterns in developing countries of Asia and the Pacific. Urban agglomerations with high population densities are experiencing extreme and high mortality levels as a result.

# From 1970 to 2014, natural disasters in the Asian and Pacific region caused economic losses worth \$1.22 trillion, amounting to 44 per cent of the global total

Over the past decade, while improvements in disaster risk management have led to reductions in the average number of fatalities, the exposure of vulnerable populations and the value of economic losses have increased substantially. Between 1970 and 2014, internationally reported estimates of global economic losses from natural disasters exceeded \$2.8 trillion (in constant 2005 United States dollars). These estimates, however, may understate the true costs, which could be at least 50 per cent higher.<sup>6</sup>

Asia and the Pacific alone reported economic losses worth \$1.22 trillion for the period 1970-2014, or 44 per cent of the global total. Furthermore, as shown by the estimated pattern or trend in the cost attributable to natural disasters (Fig 12), economic losses in Asia and the Pacific appear to be increasing. Over the past decade, the economic damage – reaching a total value of \$523 billion – accounted for 45 per cent of the global damage. Earthquakes, tsunamis, floods and storms were the costliest hazards, accounting for damage valued at \$684 billion, or 97 per cent of the total damage from natural disasters in the region since 2005.<sup>7</sup>

Since 2005, of the 10 costliest natural disasters globally 4 occurred in Asia and the Pacific. The 2011 great east Japan earthquake and tsunami was the costliest natural disaster event ever recorded anywhere in the world – the total damage was \$165 billion, representing 3.8 per

cent of Japan's GDP.<sup>8</sup> The damage caused by the 2008 Sichuan earthquake in southwestern China was estimated at \$60 billion.

While the overall trend for the damage and losses resulting from natural disasters in the region as a whole is increasing, the economic loss experienced by individual countries is more likely to be sudden and more profound. When measured as a percentage of GDP, the economic losses in a country as a result of a single natural disaster can be devastating, particularly in small economies. (Fig 14, Box 2)

#### 11.4 Data and monitoring issues

### Diaggration of relevant statistics by urban and rural areas presents measurement and data availability challenges

Estimates of the number of people living in urban and rural environments are available for every country in Asia and the Pacific from 1950 to 2050. Those estimates can also be disaggregated by the size of urban settlements in categories ranging from less than 0.3 million to more than 10 million.

Internationally comparable data on the urban slum population are far less complete than those on the urban and rural populations; no urban slum data are presented in this chapter for countries and areas in the North and Central Asian and Pacific subregions. There are sufficient data points in the remaining subregions to estimate subregional totals in 2005, 2007 and 2009, but there are no available data from that year on. Those data that are available do not include characteristics about slum dwellers, such as their sex, age or disability status, or differentiate between levels of deprivation in slum environments, which can vary substantially.

Analysis of access to green spaces was severely limited due to the lack of internationally comparable data, and the information presented in this chapter should be considered as an indication of broader trends (Box 1). There

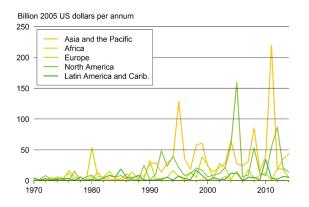


Figure 12 Global cost of natural disasters, 1970-2014

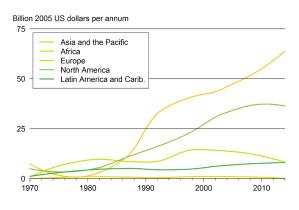


Figure 13 Global cost of natural disasters, 1970-2014

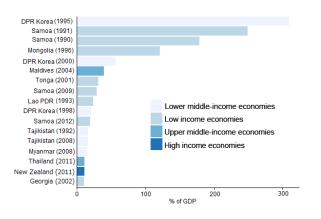


Figure 14
Countries where financial impact of natural disasters was greater than 10 per cent of GDP, 1990-2014

are, however, potentially rich sources of data available on access to green space, including those collected through high-resolution satellite imagery.

Estimates of the number of people affected by natural disasters in Asia and the Pacific between 1970 and 2014 are presented, including estimates of the number of people killed and the financial implications of disasters. However, data coverage varies by subregion and is typically lower in the Pacific. Moreover, Box 2

### Nepal earthquakes in 2015

In April and May 2015, severe earthquakes rocked parts of Nepal causing more than 9,000 deaths and 22,300 injuries. More than 8 million people, or one third of the country's population, were adversely affected by these natural disasters. The destruction was widespread, mostly in the central and western regions of Nepal. In the worst affected areas, entire settlements were swept away by landslides and avalanches triggered by the earthquakes and aftershocks. More than 500,000 houses were damaged and in excess of 250,000 of them were destroyed. Public infrastructure, including government buildings, schools and health-care facilities as well as cultural heritage sites, sustained heavy damage.

The total damage and losses were equivalent to about one third of Nepal's GDP for the year 2013/14. When the relevant statistics are assessed in the future, it is likely to be observed that the earthquakes caused the country to go into economic decline and impeded Nepal's bid to graduate from least developed country status to that of a developing country.<sup>a</sup>

a Nepal, National Planning Commission, Nepal Earthquake 2015: Post Disaster Needs Assessment.Vol. A:Key Findings (Kathmandu, 2015). Available from http://www.alnap.org/resource/20664.

the inter-country comparability of data is limited due to the absence of internally agreed statistical standards for disaster-related statistics. Data collected on losses from natural disasters typically include spatial information (urban and rural) and the age and sex of those killed. Further disaggregation with regard to the socioeconomic profile of those who suffered impacts would also be beneficial to gain a deeper understanding of those most vulnerable to natural disasters.

Issues relevant to Sustainable Development Goal 11 not presented in this chapter include the following: urban air pollution; access to public transport; and management of solid waste collection. In the cases of air pollution and solid waste collection, data are often collected by countries and subnational governments, but too often are incomplete or not comparable if they are available. For example, many countries collect information on the concentration of particles in large cities but not in smaller ones. Another factor restricting the availability of data relevant to these issues is the lack of internationally agreed methods and standards, including for measuring access and the quality of public transportation.

### Closing urban data gaps for better urban planning

The formulation of effective urban policies to manage urbanization and urban growth requires relevant, reliable and up-to-date data on urban trends and conditions and an in-depth understanding of urban dynamics; however, such coherent and comparable data currently are almost impossible to attain. This "data deficit" is adversely affecting the planning of city development, as well as the understanding of urban change, including complex social change. When public and private policymakers prepare urban policies and plans or compare urban trends and conditions, they are forced to use urban data that are often incomparable and incompatible.

Better data and information are needed to determine the numbers and types of people who move into various urban zones and commute between them, as well as move from rural to urban areas on a daily, weekly or seasonal basis. Such data would help in understanding needs related to urban infrastructure and services, as well as employment and mobility trends, and enable local governments to develop more focused and effective policies for the different

parts of urban areas. However, acquiring such data requires new methods, engagement and outreach, which many local governments lack the capacity or political will to pursue.

As the delineation of an urban area depends on the purpose of the analysis, it is necessary to move away from simple criteria, such as administrative status, size, density or occupation, and to apply functional criteria. A functional definition could identify an urban area as a relatively self-contained economic unit, characterized by high levels of labour linkages and other economic interactions. It would allow for spatial analyses of production and productivity growth, and the reach and the organization of labour markets, business linkages and urban-rural spillovers, and infrastructure and service needs.<sup>9</sup>

While cities are engines of economic growth, their contributions to national and global economies remain largely guesswork. Similarly, the needs of growing urban populations are poorly understood owing to the lack of data.

Data gaps could be partly addressed by making better use of existing data. Buses and trains, water-pipe and gas-line networks, hospitals, condominiums and office buildings all generate data which can be collected and analysed in real time. These data could provide insights into trends and conditions that make such phenomena easier to understand and enable more effective action.

Data on urban agglomerations could also help improve poverty reduction policies and environmental decisions. There is a clear need for data on intra-urban conditions, such as disparities in housing conditions, access to safe water and sanitation and solid waste collection, and on inter-urban conditions, including disparities between large and small cities. The lack of such data is particularly significant if the urban poor and other marginal groups live outside administratively defined urban boundaries or in unrecognized – and thus

ignored – informal settlements. However, disaggregated data on social and economic conditions are rarely available because the household surveys that are used to collect data in most countries are not representative at the level of any but large cities. Lack of hard evidence affects the formulation of policies aimed at achieving a range of development goals.

#### **Endnotes**

Due to differences in the dates data on natural disasters were extracted, figures presented in this report may differ from those presented in the United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific publication, "Overview of natural disasters and their impacts in Asia and the Pacific, 1970-2014", ESCAP Technical Paper (March 2015). A copy of this publication may be downloaded from a link at http://www.unescap.org/resources/overview-natural-disasters-and-their-impactsasia-and-pacific-1970-2014.

- 1 General Assembly resolution 70/1.
- 2 United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), The State of Asian and Pacific Cities 2015: Urban Transformations – shifting from quantity to quality (Nairobi, 2015). Available from http://www.unescap.org/resources/state-asianand-pacific-cities-2015-urban-transformations-shiftingquantity-quality.
- 3 Asia-Pacific Disaster Report 2015: Disasters without Borders — regional resilience for sustainable development (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.15.II.F13). Available from http://www.unescap.org/ resources/asia-pacific-disaster-report-2015.
- 4 Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and Rockefeller Foundation, *Quick Guide for Policy Makers: Pro-Poor Urban Climate Resilience in Asia and the Pacific* (Bangkok and Nairobi, 2014). Available from http://www.unescap.org/resources/quick-guide-policy-makers-pro-poor-urban-climate-resilience-asia-and-pacific-0.
- 5 Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Overview of Natural Disasters and their Impacts in Asia and the Pacific, 1970 – 2014 (Bangkok 2015). Avaialable from http://www.unescap.org/ resources/overview-natural-disasters-and-theirimpacts-asia-and-pacific-1970-2014.
- 6 The United Nations office for disaster risk reduction, UNISDR (2013), Annual report 2013, Final report on 2012-2013. Available from http://www.unisdr.org/ files/37302\_annualreport2013.pdf.
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