
Looming Urban Sprawl and its Implications: An Overview of South Asian Urbanization



Regional Studies
Vol XXX, Issue 4
pp.53-68
© Author(s)

<http://irs.org.pk>

P-ISSN: 0254-7988

E-ISSN: 2959-5459

Date of Acceptance: 1 August 2012

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Introduction

South Asian economies are at a crossroads today; rapidly transforming into manufacturing and services economies. Such transition is leading to the rise of urban population with every passing day. Population statistics reveal that the level of urbanization in South Asia has risen from 15.6 per cent of the total population in 1951 to 30.1 per cent in 2010. In line with this perturbing pace, South Asian urban population would cross 800 million by 2030 and nearly half of Asia's total population would reside in urban areas before the dawn of the new century.⁽¹⁾ Cities with larger population undoubtedly have larger contribution in the overall development of the country. In fact, the level of urbanization and the level of development are closely related. As the proportion of population increases, so does the GDP per capita. However, such a huge population also poses overwhelming management and financial challenges.

The developed countries have been able to stem the tide of challenges emanated from urban sprawl. However, South Asia's response to this fastest urbanization is deplorable; squalor, slums, traffic congestion, crimes, pollution, deficient infrastructure, shortage of water and power issues are haunting South Asia. Moreover, environmental infrastructure of cities, including solid waste disposal system, drainage and sewerage is not keeping up with the fast urbanization and posing serious environmental hazards. The subject of urban development both in theory and practice has been neglected in this region. As a result an individualistic and haphazard development is taking place which is even more life-threatening. The region is lagging behind in reaping full economic benefits of urbanization and has to go a long way. The situation demands comprehensive development plans to address the onslaught of problems to make the cities serve as the engine of growth of national economy. The study argues that if the rapid urbanization is not managed properly, it will certainly accelerate urban poverty, spawning slums. Thus, meeting the millennium goals by 2015 would be a pipedream.

The paper is divided into three sections. The first, "State of Urbanization in South Asia: Population Growth" presents urban population

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growth trends in South Asia. The second section, “An overview of urban issues,” provides a brief analysis of issues and the final section, “The way forward” offers some suggestions vis-à-vis urban development.

State of urbanization in South Asia: Population growth

We begin with portraying the whole Asian urban population growth scenario. In this regard, a study by Brian Roberts and Trevor Kanaley on urbanization is worth mentioning. It highlights an unprecedented rise of urban population in Asia. It shows that in 1950, some 232 million people, or 17 per cent of the population, lived in urban areas. In 2005, the figure was estimated at 1,562 million, or 40 per cent of the population. By 2030, it is estimated 2,664 million people, or almost 55 per cent of the population in the Asia region will be urban. In the next 25 years the population of Asian cities will increase by over 70 per cent or 1,100 million. These trends are dominated by the impact of the two most populous countries — China and India — that account for 31 per cent and 25 per cent respectively of estimated urban population growth in Asia over the next 25 years. In terms of annual urban growth rates, the Asian city populations are growing an average 2.5 per cent. However, growth of suburban areas is ahead of city populations running at around 5.5 per cent. According to a UN estimates, the process of urbanization will lead to the conversion of more than 10 sq. km of fertile land to non-agricultural use every day in Asia.⁽²⁾ Over the next 25 years, the land area for cities in Asia will be doubled or maybe tripled, posing huge environmental, economic and social challenges.⁽³⁾

As far as South Asia is concerned, its countries were predominantly rural, particularly India, Pakistan and Bangladesh at the time of independence. By and large it is still a rural region, yet it is passing through a phase of rapid transition, where more and more people are migrating daily to the urban areas in pursuit of life-changing opportunities. This fast migration trend can be observed from the urban population statistics that reveal a steady rise. In terms of percentage, the South Asian urban population has increased to 30.1 per cent in 2010 from 15.6 per cent in 1950 of the total population.⁽⁴⁾

The annual rise in urban population has been 9-10 million and is expected to increase to 14-15 million in the next decade. South Asia's share in world's population has also increased to 14 per cent from about 10 per cent in 1950 and is likely to touch 18-19 per cent by 2050.⁽⁵⁾ A closer look at the data on population trends shows that Dhaka's population which stands at 13.5 million today is projected to increase by 31 per cent by 2020, and that of Karachi by 29 per cent. Mumbai's population, which currently stands at 19.7 million, will increase by 32 per cent till 2005.⁽⁶⁾ According to UN population estimates, Ahmadabad, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Poona, Surat of India, Dhaka of Bangladesh, and Karachi and Lahore of Pakistan are rapidly expanding. These cities have become centres of new wealth generation through improved knowledge and technology. Apart from megacities, a number of cities with large populations are emerging. (See table 2). In 2000, 38 per cent of South Asia's urban population was living in cities with over one million population which has

increased to 42 per cent in 2010 and the number of cities (over a million population category) has also increased to 58 as compared to 42 in 2000 and expected to cross 73 cities by 2020.

The urban population of India alone in the entire region is expected to touch 627 million by 2031, equivalent to 40 per cent of the Indian population. Megacities — with population above 5 million — will also double in size over the same period, from 61 million to 133 million people. Indian cities with population between 1 and 5 million will register the highest absolute increase in urban population, from 46 to 126 million, equivalent to an increase from 15 to 20 per cent in their share of India's urban population. The average annual population growth rate for urban India is expected to stabilize at 2.5 per cent per annum, in line with the population growth rate recorded over the period 1995-2000, although below the record growth of 3-4 per cent registered in the previous decades.⁽⁷⁾ According to Indian Census authorities, the urban population of India will exceed 300 million by the year 2016.

Pakistan, too, is urbanizing rapidly. It is considered the most urbanized country in the region. In 1981, around 24 million people were living in urban areas, constituting 28 per cent of the total population. Now, the total population has reached 173.5 million in which urban population share has risen to around 36.3 per cent with 63.1 million. If that continues, it would surpass 121 million by 2030 and the level of urbanization would be 45.6 per cent — highest among South-East Asian countries.⁽⁸⁾ The situation in Bangladesh is not much different. The country has a very large urban population, estimated at 38 million in 2005. The urban growth rate is around double the overall population growth. If it continues with this pace, half the population — around 90 million — will be living in urban areas by 2030.⁽⁹⁾

According to Om Mathur,⁽¹⁰⁾ over the next year, over 345 million people are expected to be added to the already 486 million living in South Asia. It constitutes 25 per cent expected increase in world's urban population. Such a massive demographic challenge and its implications have not been realized by the South Asian governments.

The cost of ungoverned urbanization is even higher for the South Asian region. The urbanization process is posing dual impact on South Asian economies. Firstly, through a growing 'rural-push' factor in which large numbers of rural people are being forced out to seek employment opportunities in mega cities. Such a rural-push can largely be attributed to the fact that people in rural areas are not being fully integrated into the village economy. Consequently, rural unemployment and poverty is on the rise. Secondly, it generates unprecedented urban financial and management challenges.⁽¹¹⁾ Owing to this rural-development failure, the share of urban population is inexorably growing and will continue to grow until rural-governance improves. Bert Hoselitz, principal proponent of the rural-push idea, observed that "urbanization in South Asia has probably run ahead of industrialization, and the development of administrative and other service occupations which are characteristically concentrated in cities." This pattern of development emphasizes the disproportion between the cost of urban growth and the maintenance of required

facilities for urban dwellers and the earning of the people living in urban areas. He also maintained that in developed countries, cities have developed because of the 'pull' of urban facilities, however, in Asia (south) urban growth has resulted from the 'push' of poverty-stricken rural population.⁽¹²⁾ Although Hoselitz made these arguments in the late 50s, yet today's situation is, to a large extent, not different particularly with reference to the 'push' factor. According to the United Nations estimates, this rural-to-urban migration and reclassification of areas are responsible of about 50 per cent rise in the urban population, particularly in the case of Pakistan. Apart from this 'push' and 'pull' phenomenon, there are numerous challenges the region is facing today. The next section deals briefly with urban issues such as governance, urban poverty and slums, traffic congestion, pollution and climate change.

Table 1

Comparative Urban Demographic Transition (South Asia and the World)

Year	Urban Population (million)		Level of Urbanization %		Annual Exponential Change %	
	South Asia	World	South Asia	World	South Asia	World
1950	73.95	729.32	15.63	28.83	-	-
1980	200.85	1727.24	22.41	38.92	3.33	2.94
2010	485.79	3486.33	30.08	50.46	2.87	2.34

Source: World Urbanization Prospects, 2009, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UN.

Table 2**Emergence of Mega Cities in South Asia**

City	Country	2009	2025	World Ranking 2009-2025
Agra	India	1.7	2.3	232-219
Ahmadabad	-	5.6	7.6	47-45
Allahabad	-	1.3	1.7	336-301
Amritsar	-	1.3	1.8	331-297
Asansol	-	1.4	1.9	298-266
Aurangabad	-	1.2	1.6	352-320
Bangalore	-	7.1	9.5	36-34
Bhopal	-	1.8	2.5	212-199
Chandigarh	-	1.0	1.4	411-360
Delhi	-	21.7	28.6	2-2
Dhaka	Bangladesh	14.3	20.9	9-5
Dhanbad	India	1.3	1.8	323-289
Durg-Bhilainagar	-	1.1	1.6	360-328
Faisalabad	Pakistan	2.8	4.2	129-101
Gujranwala	-	1.6	2.5	243-206
Gauhati	India	1.0	1.4	407-358
Gwalior	-	1.0	1.4	415-362
Hyderabad	-	6.6	8.9	40-37
Hyderabad	Pakistan	1.5	2.4	258-215
Indore	India	2.1	2.9	180-165
Jabalpur	-	1.3	1.9	314-279
Jaipur	-	3.1	4.2	114-100
Jamshedpur	-	1.4	1.9	307-274
Jodhpur	-	1.0	1.5	402-356
Kanpur	-	3.3	4.5	101-86
Karachi	Pakistan	12.8	18.7	11-10
Khulna	Bangladesh	1.6	2.5	237-198
Kochi	India	1.6	2.2	251-230
Kolkata	-	15.3	20.1	8-8
Lahore	Pakistan	70	10.3	38-29
Lucknow	India	2.8	3.9	124-115
Ludhiana	-	1.7	2.4	225-214
Madurai	-	1.3	1.9	313-281
Meerut	-	1.5	2.0	282-254
Multan	Pakistan	1.6	2.5	242-204
Nagpur	India	2.6	3.5	147-125
Nashik	-	1.6	2.2	256-233
Patna	-	2.3	3.1	166-148
Peshawar	Pakistan	1.4	2.1	300-238
Pune (Poona)	India	4.9	6.6	55-49
Rajkot	-	1.3	1.9	318-282
Ranchi	-	1.1	1.5	378-342
Rawalpindi	Pakistan -	2.0	3.0	192-158
Solapur	India -	1.1	1.6	373-340
Surat	-	4.1	5.6	75-67
Vadodara	-	1.8	2.5	208-196
Varanasi (Benares)	-	1.4	1.9	293-265
Visakhapatnum	-	1.6	2.2	247-229

Source: Adapted from UN Population Estimates

An overview of urban development issues

Urban Management is all about delivery of public goods and services at its best. In relation to South Asia, the concept of urban management both in theory and practice has been neglected. The culture of power politics in this region has gradually undermined the legitimacy of governments which is considered a fundamental aspect of urban development. Discontinuity of development projects is a serious concern. The governments in power, whether they come through the democratic way or a military coup, discontinue or slow down the implementation of policies and projects of previous government. This practice has gravely hampered the progress of institutions; resultantly, it takes a very long time for the institutions to become mature.

Good governance is a key to urban development. Unfortunately, South Asia's progress in managing urban problems and delivering goods and services to its people has been disappointing. The region's progress can be seen from a report on Humane Governance Index (HGI), published by Dr Mahbub ul Haq Human Development Centre, Islamabad, in 1999. The Centre worked out governance assessment of 58 countries using the HGI later published in its annual report. According to the report, South Asia was one of the most poorly governed regions in the world with lowest HGI values. Out of 58 countries, India was ranked 42, while Pakistan 52, Sri Lanka 53 and Bangladesh 54. In 2002, a pilot testing of 16 countries was conducted under the new governance indicators by the World Governance Assessment (WGA) Project. Only two countries, India and Pakistan, were taken from South Asia. On a scale of 7 points, India scored 3.27 and Pakistan got only 2.17. There was no sharp difference observed in these two findings, from 1999 and 2002. The progress remained poor.

The recent World Bank Governance Indicators (WGI) is a more refined form of assessment criteria. It measures the governance of any country on the basis of voice and accountability, political stability and absence of violence, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law and control of corruption. The WGI analyses voice and accountability by capturing the perception of the extent to which a country's citizens are able to participate in electing governments, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association and freedom of the media. Political stability and absence of violence is measured through the perception of the likelihood that government will be destabilized or overthrown by unconstitutional or violent means. The third indicator, government effectiveness, analyses through perceptions of the quality of public services, the quality of civil service, and the degree of its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation and the credibility of government. Regulatory quality is measured from perceptions of the quality of the government to formulate and implement sound policies and regulations that permit and promote private sector development. The rule of law in any country is measured by capturing perceptions of the extent to which agents have confidence in and abide by the rules of society, and in particular the quality of contract enforcement, property rights, the police, and the courts, as well as the likelihood of crime and violence. The last indicator,

control of corruption, is judged by capturing the perceptions of the extent to which public power is exercised for private gain, including both petty and grand forms of corruption, as well as capture of the state by elites and private interests. In all of the abovementioned indicators, the region of South Asia is lagging behind. The following table adapted from the WGI shows rankings for the year 2009.

Table 3

South Asia Governance Indicators

Country	Ranking Voice and Accountability	Political Stability & Absence of Violence	Government Effectiveness	Regulatory Quality	Rule of law	Control of Corruption	Average
Bangladesh	35.1	75	167	233	278	167	21.1
Bhutan	294	712	648	138	594	752	523
India	602	132	543	443	557	467	457
Maldives	44.1	392	424	37.1	528	295	408
Nepal	308	52	181	238	179	252	201
Pakistan	209	05	19	333	193	133	177
Sri Lanka	322	118	49	433	533	448	39

Source: *World Governance Indicators (WGI)*, 2009.

Any country's progress in delivering good governance can also be judged by its ability to reduce poverty. Unfortunately, misgovernance in the region has resulted in failure to alleviate poverty, which is widely considered a breeding ground for terrorism and extremism. South Asia's share in the global income is only 7 per cent while its share of global poverty is about 43 per cent and the share in the world population is 22 per cent. Per capita income is \$594, which is the lowest in comparison with any other region in the world — even Sub-Saharan Africa has a bit higher figure (\$ 601) than South Asia. South Asian countries, which have the largest concentration of the poor in the world, have little to no safety net. Human development balance sheet for this region, 1993-95 to 2004, shows that South Asia's share in world population remains the same 22 per cent as it was in 1993-1995, but its share in world's absolute poor has increased from 40 per cent in 1993-95 to 47 per cent in the year 2004. In education, South Asia has shown a little progress though; the literacy rate has increased from 47 per cent to 58 per cent. However, the pace is slower compared to other developing countries including Sub-Saharan Africa. Currently, 212 million people are without access to safe water and the number of people without access to basic sanitation has even increased from 830 million to 897 million. And though the percentage of malnourished children has declined to 46 from 52 per cent, South Asia still has the highest proportion of malnourished children in the world. Maternal mortality ratio rose to 510 per 100,000 in 2004 from 430 per 100,000 in 1993-94.

The urban societies are much more difficult to govern than the rural ones. The fast urbanization, coupled with inadequate investment and management, is multiplying the enduring urban problems. A recent study by

Johannes F. Linn of the Brookings Institute highlights the urban issues confronted by the developing countries including those of South Asia. Linn compared the current situation with the year 1979. He presented his findings in a matrix format which categorized the new issues, the old issues rediscovered, and the old issues that seem to have forgotten. (see Annex). He argues that today’s situation has become much more complex as large numbers of urban challenges have cropped up over the last 32 years. They range from a greater focus on the spatial dimensions of urban poverty, particularly on slums, to new definitions of urban poverty and inequality; to problems faced by specific demographic groups to crime and insecurity; to the impact of global challenges; and to governance and political economy.⁽¹³⁾

Above all is the issue of rising urban poverty and underserved settlements. The ungoverned migration is the primary factor contributing to the rise of urban poverty and slums. According to International Housing Coalition IHC⁽¹⁴⁾ estimate, there are about one billion people living in slums in the developing world including South Asia and their numbers are constantly on the rise. The slum population is projected to increase to 2085 million by 2030; this huge population will multiply the housing as well as basic infrastructure and services needs. The magnitude of this slum challenge is even higher than other challenges. According to Asian Cities Report, 2010-2011, about 40 to 60 per cent of the region’s population living in cities and towns do not have access to tap water and nearly 60 per cent urban households lack sanitary facilities. The report also reveals that slums account for nearly half (42.9 per cent) of urban population in South Asia; Nepal 69 per cent, Bangladesh 69 per cent, Pakistan 47 per cent and India nearly 50 per cent.

Table 4
Comparative Urban Poverty Estimates (South Asia and the World)

Region World Bank definition	Urban Population (%) Below Poverty Line \$2 a day	Poor living in Urban Areas (%)
East Asia-Pacific	18	15
Europe- Central Asia	11	10
Latin America	28	66
Middle East- North Africa	12	29
South Asia	76	25
Sub-Saharan Africa	68	31
Total	34	26

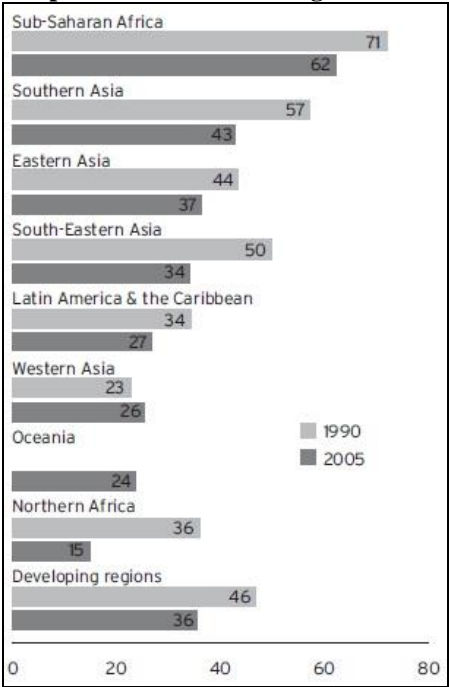
Source: “The Challenge for an Urban World”, IHC Report

The emergence of slums in mega cities shows the incompetence and poor governance on behalf of the South Asian countries. In this region, the proportion of urban people living with shelter deprivation is highest in the world excepting Sub-Saharan Africa. (See figure 1). Slums are the most visible manifestation of urban poverty and reveal the failure of urban development and housing policies. In Colombo, Sri Lank’s capital, home to 30 per cent of entire country’s population, one in every two people is a slum dweller. Dhaka,

Bangladesh’ capital, home to 34 per cent of the total population, around 40 per cent are slum dwellers. In India, 93 million people are estimated to be living in slums. In Delhi, around 50 per cent of the population lives in slums. The situation in Mumbai is even worse where around 60 per cent of the total city population is slum dweller.⁽¹⁵⁾ These overcrowded, highly vulnerable and self-regulated slums are faced with acute problems of sanitation and drainage, safe drinking water and health. The majority of migrated people, particularly from the poor and low-income class, is living in informal settlements in cities. These informal settlements are often built in high risky areas such as steep hill slopes, deep gullies and flood-prone areas and completely unable to withstand the effects of extreme weather conditions. For instance, in Mumbai alone, home to some 20 million people, around 7 million people live in 3000 slums across the city, having grabbed public lands. These slums often thwart vital infrastructure construction such as roads, railway tracks, airports, storm-water drains, and markets.⁽¹⁶⁾ Besides these slums, progress in managing urban water and sanitation in the region is highly unsatisfactory.

Figure 1

Proportion of Urban Living with Shelter Deprivation: A comparative View



Source: United Nations, 2009

No city in India has round-the-clock supply of water, which is limited to some hours of access per day and, in some cases, alternate day access. In the case of sanitation, the national average for sewerage network coverage is only

33 per cent with some states receiving virtually no service.⁽¹⁷⁾ Although 300 urban centres have sewerage systems, most of these only partially cover their estimates based on UN population forecasts. More than one third of the urban population relies on unhygienic tanks as a form of sanitation. Additionally, sewage treatment facilities exist in only 70 cities and the services are rudimentary at best. The existing level of solid waste management is similarly dismal. There is no public system of waste collection from the source in Indian cities. Consequently, street sweeping of waste has become the primary de facto method of waste collection. Furthermore, barring a few exceptions, there are no sanitary landfills in India, posing serious public health and environmental concerns. Uncovered solid waste is instead dumped haphazardly within or outside cities.⁽¹⁸⁾

In Pakistan, owing to inadequate investment and management, the quality of urban infrastructure has deteriorated. Less than one per cent of wastewater is being treated; the rest is thrown into streams and rivers turning them into sewers and seriously affecting downstream users. The city governments remain unable to recover and dispose of all the solid waste. Less than 50 per cent of the solid waste generated in the cities is being recovered. The rest is dumped mostly in open fields, polluting the groundwater and creating air pollution.⁽¹⁹⁾ In Bangladesh, over six million of the urban population have no access to drinking water from an improved source. Urban sanitation too has remained a serious problem in all cities and towns. Local flooding occurs frequently and is a constant threat. Drainage works are insufficient, which leads to waterlogging and water pollution. Raw sewage and industrial pollutants continue to be discharged into the rivers and contaminate groundwater and ponds. A serious garbage pollution is also a serious problem, with garbage collection just beginning to be organized. Urban solid waste management is mostly absent.⁽²⁰⁾

Another problem plaguing South Asian cities is the overcrowded network of public transport. The growing vehicle utilization has resulted in increasing traffic congestion, CO₂ emissions and deteriorating air quality, particularly damaging at street level where people live and work, including the poor and vulnerable groups such as the young and the elderly who have limited mobility. Ranjan Kumar's paper on urban transport vis-à-vis South Asia says that the fast urbanization and even faster growth in motor vehicle ownership and utilization have exerted heavy pressure on the urban transport system in South Asian cities. One noticeable feature about the growth of vehicles in virtually all cities in the region is the explosion in the number of two-wheelers (motorcycles and scooters), cars, and three-wheeled auto-rickshaws. Admittedly, the motorization revolution has brought immense benefits; it has remarkably enhanced mobility of people, goods, and services and consequently helped boost economic progress. However, such revolution has not been without deleterious effects. The switch from two-wheelers to cars and multi-utility vehicles has triggered a sharp increase in energy consumption, pollution, road space demand, and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Even though the local impacts are serious, there are significant implications for global issues such as energy

security and climate change.⁽²¹⁾ The study also projects that motor vehicle use particularly in Bangalore, Colombo and Dhaka would roughly be doubled by the year 2020, carbon emissions would triple and pollution loading would increase exponentially.⁽²²⁾ In global terms, the whole region accounts for nearly 7 per cent of the world total CO₂ emission and the level of emissions is constantly on the rise. Beside carbon dioxide, pollutants of main concerns are particulate matter, nitrogen oxides and hydrocarbons. The climate change, on the other hand, is serious concern in urban development discourse.

The intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is apprehensive that climate change would affect the urban population more through rising sea levels, increased hazards from tropical cyclones, flooding, landslides, heat and cold waves, as well as challenges of urban water quality and storage.⁽²³⁾ Cities around the coastlines are more under threat from extreme weather events. If the sea levels rises a bit, say just one metre, many large cities such as Karachi, Mumbai and Dhaka will be threatened.⁽²⁴⁾ As for Sri Lanka, many of its cities are highly vulnerable to natural disasters. Floods, landslides, coastal erosion, drought, and cyclones are the main hazards in which flooding is the most recurrent one. In 2010–11, Sri Lanka had four major floods in less than a year. In May 2010, flooding hit 672,000 people in southern and western Sri Lanka, leaving 22 killed and about 900 homes damaged. In November the same year, the densely populated western plains had their second flood in less than six months, affecting more than 315,000 people. In January and February 2011, low-lying areas on the eastern coast saw the worst flooding yet, as torrential rain forced more than 1.2 million people from their homes.⁽²⁵⁾ Besides addressing the challenge of poor water and sanitation and basic infrastructures in slums, the South Asian governments require to deal with the long-term risks arising out of climate change.

The way forward

The South Asian governments direly need to invest in basic infrastructure otherwise the goal of integrated economic growth can never be achieved. Moreover, if urban slums are left ungoverned, they would become more and more threatening to national and international security, health and environmental sustainability. Governments must learn from other countries' experiences. For instance, the Foshan city of China successfully implemented a development strategy for urban infrastructure; the Kaantabay sa Kauswagan, a result-oriented Urban Poor Programme in Naga city, and Cebu Urban Basic Services Programme of Philippines; and effective waste reduction strategy of Inchon, Korea. The international community's assistance in both financial and technical terms is highly appreciable. Numerous foreign-supported projects are underway for addressing overwhelming urban development challenges. However, the ultimate responsibility lies upon the South Asian governments to provide their best.

In a framework of good governance, the maximum participation by the people needs to be ensured. In this regard, decentralization of power is one tool among others. It can shift real power, legislative, financial and administrative,

from the bureaucracy and narrow interest groups to the people.⁽²⁶⁾ Quality of governance could be improved if governance is brought closer to the governed. In South Asia, despite advances both in terms of devolution and delegation, the local government system is generally weak. Its effectiveness right down from district to the village level is compromised owing to its dependence on the province, even the centre, for resources. The local government system lacks managerial expertise, appropriate knowledge and information and resources to perform within their domain. Approaches to decentralization usually come only in the delegation of some administrative functions, and often tend to be declaratory in nature or are implemented with no great determination. Apart from reluctance over power delegation, governments of South Asia, given the nature of ethnic, religious and regional variety of their countries, seem to fear that decentralization may smooth the path for centrifugal forces or secessionist movements.⁽²⁷⁾ The problem lies in dealing with these forces not in the system at all. Moreover, the system of good governance cannot be completed without the accountability of elected representative. Government institutions, private sectors and civil society organizations, all must be accountable to the public and their respective institutional stakeholders.⁽²⁸⁾ Unfortunately, South Asia continues to carry its imperial legacy where the government was not answerable to the people but to the colonial power.⁽²⁹⁾

Urban development is a multi-dimensional phenomenon, and hence requires a multi-dimensional approach. The following are some key suggestions that should be taken into account in policy formulation vis-à-vis urban development.

- The primary focus should be on improving infrastructures to stop the rise of urban slums.
- Improving slums must be a part of city development plans.
- Improving the already weak infrastructure instead of just focusing on building new mega structures. This is a great South Asian dilemma. City planners tend to ignore proper management of the already built infrastructure; often there is a heap of wastage and drainage mess adjacent to the new buildings.
- There must be proper land and housing development to ensure improved urban conditions.
- Ensuring social safety nets.
- Decentralization, if it gets implemented in its true sense, can serve as one of the chief instruments of people's participation for advancing development and inclusive growth. For effective management, it is essential to grant adequate powers and responsibilities to the local governments
- Improving the law and order situation and ensuring justice on equitable basis.
- Making sure easy access to safe drinking water, health, sanitation and education facilities.

- Ensuring safety measures for the highly vulnerable urban areas.
- Altering city development planning in the context of climate change.

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Annexure

	Challenges
New Issues	Slums and MDG Target 11 (urban poverty related)
	Poverty and Inequality
	Gender perspective/Women (urban poverty related)
	Early Child Development/Youth/Old Age (urban poverty related)
	Crime and insecurity
	HIV/AIDS
	Climate Change (CC) mitigation and adaptation
	Compound global crisis (financial, food, energy)
	Cultural heritage preservation
	Governance (supply and demand driven)
	Political economy of urban policy
Old Issues Revised	
	Urbanization as an opportunity (as well as problem)
	Scaling up
	Urban land management
	Urban housing finance
	Investment climate
	Employment and labour market
Old Issues Forgotten	
	Managing urban transport/automobiles
	Small and medium city development

Source: Adapted from Linn's paper "Urban Poverty in Developing Countries"