

KEY INSIGHTS FROM THE ACCCRN LEARNING FORUM

SEMARANG, INDONESIA MAY 23RD – MAY 25TH 2016





The
ROCKEFELLER
FOUNDATION

ACCCRN LEARN

SHARING KNOWLEDGE AND SUSTAINING PARTNERS

SEMARANG, MAY 23^R





Mercy Corps Indonesia

LEARNING FORUM

SHARING KNOWLEDGE AND SUSTAINING PARTNERSHIPS FOR A MORE RESILIENT URBAN FUTURE

25-26 MAY 2016



Marking nearly nine years of work to build urban climate change resilience (UCCR) in Asia, the ACCCRN Learning Forum brought 100 resilience practitioners together to the city of Semarang, Indonesia. The event drew many participants that have been active in ACCCRN as well as others involved in resilience building efforts in Asia and worldwide. The Forum's theme, "Sharing Knowledge and Sustaining Partnerships for a More Resilient Urban Future," created an opportunity to take stock of what has been learned through ACCCRN while also reflecting on how UCCR has evolved over the duration of the initiative. It also provided an opportunity to explore other ongoing and emerging resilience initiatives led by the Rockefeller Foundation and other actors in the field of resilience.

The discussions drew on a range of perspectives and expertise from city governments, non-governmental organizations, community led organizations, training and technical institutions, climate change networks and international donors. This document highlights some key insights and conversation threads that emerged over the course of the Forum.

Process 20:20 hindsight
for sharing/exchange

5 min Presentation

3 min Pairs - discuss

'What did the presenter say that resonated with your experience?'

5 min Pairs combine into 4s
share main points

10 min All together - 4s share
1-2 main points

5 min Wrap up

In spite of significant progress, there is a need for more models that can bridge top down and bottom-up efforts to advance UCCR. And there is a need for new financing options to enable this.

01

An inherent tension of scales exists in building urban resilience. To adequately prepare for a range of shocks and stresses that may affect a city, there is a need to implement measures that directly strengthen the resilience of poor and vulnerable populations, which may mean actions taken at the community or neighbourhood level. However, given the potential for risk transfer, particularly within the context of climate change (e.g. with impacts like floods), maintaining a city-wide perspective is also critical to ensure that micro-level actions are not overwhelmed by failures in other scales of infrastructure and systems.

Some strong positive examples exist that demonstrate effective community based resilience building efforts. By and large, these have tended to focus on a small geographic area and a relatively small population group and are more likely to be “bottom-up” in nature. Likewise, initiatives like ACCCRN have built a base of practice around advancing city-scale resilience building actions, which connects to poor and vulnerable people, though for some efforts the logic chain is long, meaning the benefits are less directly experienced by poor populations.

It is from this context that conversations in the Forum, including in the “Resilience for Whom?”



plenary session, explored how to bridge scales. Finance is an obvious necessity to advance resilience building. However, as highlighted in the 20/20 Hindsight session, “Accessing Finance,” a mismatch exists between the availability of finance for urban climate change resilience and a range of resilience building needs. The funding that does exist is typically allocated in “top-down” manner. Cities often lack the agency to access – or direct—funds to identified priorities. And poor people within the city have even less say over the identification and selection of projects. There is also the challenge that measures to strengthen resilience do not readily fit into existing financing silos around which development banks and other funding sources organize.

UCCR needs to continue to find ways to push for wide-scale uptake of community-oriented resilience building measures – and to at the same time ensure that steps are taken to shore up the resilience of the broader urban system. One idea discussed at the Forum was to better equip cities and target groups to understand investment-funding criteria. Participants also discussed the need to build stronger alignment between the upstream resilience planning process, which can be an effective way to identify possibly funding opportunities, and downstream financing options. This may require building in more analysis of the city’s financial systems as well as framing baskets of resilience building options to address sector needs within the city. Dharmista Chaudan from Mahila Housing and SEWA Trust suggested that from the perspective of community resilience, UCCR’s participatory learning approaches have played a key role in demystifying the processes of various levels of government, and given organized urban poor communities an avenue to interact with government.

Many participants hinted that a re-think of the project design process within development banks could better synch up the inherent clash of attempting to fit systems-problems into linear bank mechanisms. An Asian Development Bank consultant working with the Urban Climate Change Resilience Trust Fund, Sasank Vemuri, noted that for financing to be suited to UCCR, there needs to be dialogue with beneficiaries at all stages of project development to ensure that “top down” and “bottom up” approaches are aligned throughout—not only during funding application phases.

Cities are challenging spaces to govern and common ground between different interest groups is often elusive. New institutions, such as Climate Change Coordination Offices (CCCOs), or new roles like that of the Chief Resilience Officer (CRO), have helped to break down barriers and make room for shared understanding across departments and sectors. These measures represent a key effort at “de-siloing” city departments, enhancing the possibility that systemic resilience can take root across city departments and bridging with other important stakeholders, like community groups, business and industry, and other scales of government.

Representatives from the CCCOs of three Vietnamese cities that were set up during ACCCRN highlighted how these new bodies innovate and respond to a changing context. Ky Quang Vinh, the

02

New institutional and human resources innovations can enable UCCR to take hold.



director from the Can Tho CCCO shared how his office was able to support a set of resilience building projects. The office played a role in using both scientific as well as community data collection for several projects, including the creation of a water salinity monitoring system, an effort to strengthen river banks against erosion, and a new scheme to monitor dengue fever. For Vinh, local knowledge is a source of information that must be integrated into local decision-making processes and CCCOs are able to formalise the role of this knowledge within cities.

Bryna Lipper, Senior Vice President of 100 Resilient Cities discussed how the role of a CRO, including the newly appointed Purnomo Dwi Sasongko from the city of Semarang, are embedded in the host administration and can cut across departments, giving the best chance to embed resilient policies. Dr. Supachai Tantikom, the Bangkok CRO suggested that his role was to build interest in resilience among diverse groups – from communities to business executives.

To significantly scale-up resilience building, there is a need to better understand and contend with the fundamental drivers of the decision-making processes in cities.

03

As noted at the Forum by Jim Jarvie, advisor to the ACCCRN Network, cities are conflicted spaces in which competition among a range of priorities play out daily. The interests driving investments in a city will not naturally promote inclusive urban resilience. In a short TED-style talk, Vu Canh Toan who has been involved with ACCCRN both as a practitioner and now as a PhD student, wondered if we are asking the right questions when it comes to scaling up resilience building efforts. He noted that lacks of finance, capacity or information are often cited as constraints to achieving progress in advancing UCCR. He argued that key city-making drivers are excluded from UCCR discussions. Asia continues to see large-scale urban investments, many of which take place without any consideration of how such projects might contribute to or weaken resilience. One way to engage with and influence these and future investments is to devote more time to understanding the factors and forces that lead to these decisions. Toan and others challenged the group to much more frontally contend with the politics and interests of urban development to better guide the vast volume of investments – already in the pipeline—to contribute positively to the resilience of a city.



04

Shared Learning as the backbone to urban climate change resilience

The sheer number of interests, needs, and sources of information in a city make it difficult to plot a path toward resilience without an approach that can bring these strands together to understand the implications of urbanization, poverty and climate change. This is especially the case since the impacts won't be the same for all populations and sectors of the city. Throughout the Forum, participants pointed to the importance of shared dialogue and learning for building a joined-up understanding of resilience.



During the session led by ISET Vietnam's Phong Tran on the theme of designing resilience-building projects, participants suggested that "Shared Learning Dialogues" (SLD) not only helped in the project design, but these workshops - key moments in the resilience building process - serve as a tool to embed understanding of resilience concepts and generate ownership among stakeholders.



In the “Engaging the right city stakeholders” session led by Aniessa Delima Sari from Mercy Corps Indonesia, participants deliberated how SLDs created an arena for bringing together technical and scientific inputs with local knowledge and wisdom. In several other sessions throughout the Forum, participants suggested how SLDs have helped ensure that complex concepts – including resilience itself – and scientific findings related to climate change are interpreted and translated in a manner that make them relevant and understandable to diverse stakeholders.

Shared learning also means looking at what resilience means to various actors. In the session entitled “From city to global – communicating resilience and building interest”, UCCR practitioners honed in on the importance of grounding conversations in cities with a joined-up understanding of what resilience is, since in many languages the concepts does not immediately or effectively translate.





Effective communication of resilience is critical to generating buy-in for action.

A cross-cutting theme of the Forum was the challenge of effectively communicating what resilience is and what value it offers. Resilience can be complex and conceptual, but it's also challenging because strengthening resilience requires engagement with diverse stakeholders. Participants shared insights around what has worked well – and what more is needed to continue to build interest and commitment to resilience building actions. In the “From city to global – communicating resilience and building interest” 20/20 Hindsight session, practitioners talked about the importance of identifying a compelling entry point to open a conversation around resilience. For example, it has often proven more effective to use *current urban challenges* (e.g. problems with drainage, poor water quality) as the entry point to discuss how climate change and other forces can introduce new shocks and stresses to these systems. The use of clear case examples can help illuminate and clarify more abstract aspects, such as the characteristics of resilience. Additionally, regular points of engagement with stakeholders are important for building a joined-up understanding of resilience as is investing the time in translating concepts into local languages.

Through intensive practice and trial, practitioners have developed approaches that help communicate resilience effectively to different audiences. Many attendees suggested that more is needed, however, to advance the field so that a stronger argument can be made to invest in resilience. Greater strides in the ability to quantify the economic and financial benefits of resilience will be important to building the case for urban resilience. And continued work is needed to harness the power of the media – traditional and social – to build interest in and commitment to resilience. In particular, participants agreed that the use of stories and specific examples could help illustrate concepts and make resilience more accessible to new audiences.

The field of resilience is at a key juncture and there is a need to ensure rigor and coherence.

06

Since ACCCRN launched in 2008, the term, “resilience,” has become more widely used, including in the context of global agendas and development. During a presentation made by Ashvin Dayal, Associate Vice President and Managing Director of The Rockefeller Foundation Asia Office, he underlined that resilience *“as a field of practice continues to evolve in a strong and positive way”*. Despite this he cautioned against the overuse of the term when applied to unrelated contexts, saying that this risks diluting its meaning. During one group brainstorming session some participants echoed Dayal’s sentiment. One group leader expressed, *“Lots of people are talking about it, but it means different things to different people”*. Other voices at the Forum suggested however that the field needs to be built by applying resilience to new contexts. Luca Alinovi, Director of the Global Resilience Partnership (GRP), encouraged participants to *“spread the word”* about resilience in order for it to become used, tested, and developed – and therefore mainstreamed through use by a greater variety of practitioners.

Dayal concluded that more “connective tissue” among the different bodies of resilience thought and practice is still needed. That is, there is a need to bring together those working on urban climate change resilience, such as the ACCCRN pioneers, with others focused on resilience applications to sectors like agriculture and disaster risk reduction. In this context, the Rockefeller Foundation shared early thinking on a new online platform under development, which aims to connect disparate resilience communities. Through this platform, users are able to gain access to curated content, enabled through “back-end” systems including algorithms that can make recommendations on particular pieces of content that a specific user might find valuable. The content will draw from diverse domains and will also provide a basis for connecting other existing networks, like ACCCRN.net, GRP and 100 RC.



