

Environment Support Group

invites your participation in a workshop on

Fundamentals of Reducing Risk and Managing Urban Disasters

A Workshop for Schools, Colleges, Voluntary organizations, Hospitals, Resident Welfare Associations and Corporate organisations

On Saturday, 19th December 2009, Time: 2.00 pm -6.00 pm

Venue: Regional Institute of Cooperative Management, No.6, Padmanabhanagar, Banashankari 2nd Stage, Bangalore 560070



Rapid urbanisation and unplanned growth is increasing the risk of disasters in our cities. The competition for building mega infrastructure, whether required or not, in a rush to showcase urban areas raises serious questions about how secure these new projects are in meeting a disaster event.

As old neighbourhoods crumble under increased pressure of land use and rise in population densities, the risk to lives and livelihoods of residents has to be revisited. Poor solid waste management, poor underground drainage, violation in building byelaws, lack of proper implementation of the land use norms per the Town and Country Planning Act standards, come together in creating high risk neighbourhoods. A lackadaisical attitude amongst regulatory authorities has compounded the risk factors and turned our cities into high impact disaster zones.

Urban settlements are prone to all sorts of disasters. Frequently occurring types are floods (Bangalore, despite having no major river within 100 kms.!, not to forget Mumbai), fire (Explosion of refineries in Jaipur and Vizag), earthquakes (Ahmedabad), landslides (Guwahati), cyclones (Chennai), heat and cold waves (Delhi) and a variety of human induced environmental disasters (Plague in Surat). In addition the weighing down of land in urban areas through high rise constructions is increasing seismic risk, while concretization of urban open spaces is reducing ground water recharge, besides increasing flooding. In addition, climate change induced impacts will increase the risk of disasters, especially in coastal cities.

Cities are clearly becoming increasingly vulnerable to disasters, both natural and human induced. Simply stated, we are not prepared to meet such eventualities. This is in a period when we have moved into a demographic profile where most humans on this planet live in cities. Not being prepared can enhance risk. This means increased loss of life, property and an irreversible impact on society and our economy. Recovery from such events takes a very long time, especially for resource deprived societies such as ours. Needless to state the worst affected would be poor and depressed communities.

There is hope however, for the greatest potential in planning and responding to a disaster exists amongst local communities. Disaster after disaster has proven that local communities respond first and most effectively when disaster strikes. A recent example is how local residents mobilized search operations to join fire forces in looking for two small children who got washed into our drains due to totally avoidable urban flooding.

How to Plan and Prevent Disasters is the first big step – and this is within everyone's reach. All it requires is a strong sense of community ownership and some smart thinking. It is time we work together as a community to identify risks around us, strategically prepare and plan actions to reduce the impacts and come together in the eventuality of a disaster.

This workshop will help participants address risks related to urban flooding, fires, epidemics, earthquakes and environmental disasters and will focus on how we can identify risks, share creative methods to build local action networks, and work with authorities in planning forward and responding to disasters. The workshop will include speakers from Fire Forces, Public Health Practitioners with experience of work in disaster prone areas, Lawyers, Police, Voluntary Organizations who have involved in relief and rehabilitation in disaster zones and Urban Planners.

Registration fees Rs.150/- (To be paid by cash or Cheque drawn in favour of Environment Support Group)

For registration and more details please contact Bhargavi S. Rao, Coordinator (Education), Environment Support Group.

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