Networks for Climate Adaptation in South Asia

The NAPSNet Policy Forum provides expert analysis of contemporary peace and security issues in Northeast Asia. As always, we invite your responses to this report and hope you will take the opportunity to participate in discussion of the analysis.

Recommended Citation

Saleem Janjua, "Networks for Climate Adaptation in South Asia", NAPSNet Policy Forum, October 01, 2013, https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-policy-forum/networks-for-climate-adaptat-on-in-south-asia/

by Saleem Janjua

October 1, 2013

I. Introduction

Saleem Janjua stresses the need for creation of some innovative climate adaptation networks amongst South Asian countries working on climate adaptation. Practitioners, researchers, and policy-makers from across the South Asian region will be able to collaboratively use such networks to share evidence-based understandings from which they can design solutions to the many problems that will face people and places in coping with climate change.

Saleem Janjua is a Nautilus Institute Associate, the editor of the Climate Change Adaptation bi-weekly report (ADAPTNet) and a contributor to Nautilus' Weekly Report.

The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Nautilus Institute. Readers should note that Nautilus seeks a diversity of views and opinions on significant topics in order to identify common ground.

II. Policy Forum by Saleem Janjua

Networks for Climate Adaptation in South Asia

Climate change presents a distinctive adaptation challenge to Asian cities and infrastructure, whether coastal or inland, both in terms of their requirement to mitigate their emissions and to adapt to further escalated impacts of climate change.

The data indicate that, as of 2010, more than half of the world's population now resides in cities (WHO, 2013). Cities and other adjoining infrastructure (directly and through their ecological footprints) both generate and experience the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation. In South Asia, an estimated 60% of GDP is generated in cities, 65% of total population resides in capital cities, and infrastructure-related operations consume a significant proportion of all energy, while the construction and demolition of infrastructure generates about 40% of waste going to landfill (UN-Habitat, 2010).

The direct impacts of climate change potentially include serious reductions in rainfall, increases in storm intensity, rises in sea levels and surge, increasing numbers of hot days. Other impacts include changes in biodiversity, increase in pollution levels, and spread of diseases and pests in urban environments. These impacts and associated uncertainties must be quantified. Cities and settlements must be shaped to perform resiliently in the face of these impacts and provide security in meeting the needs of their communities. This adjustment process will need to be developed within the context of strategies to reduce carbon intensity, decrease other Greenhouse gases, and a regional and global context in which trade, energy, food, commodities, transport will shift in their technical and economic profiles. Adaptive South Asian cities and infrastructure will find opportunities in this change to develop economic strengths at the same time they provide security and resilience for their community requirements.

In the South Asian context, I find that there is a need to bring together researchers with relevant expertise across the social sciences (economics, psychology, sociology, political science, urban geography), physical and life sciences (epidemiology, biology and ecology, climatology, geomorphology), technological sciences (engineering, IT, building and construction), and design and architecture (environmental and urban design and planning, architecture and landscape architecture). In collaboration, and in consultation with stakeholders from government, community and industry, they will find solutions for adapting settlements and public and private infrastructure in the face of climate change within the context of dynamic and uncertain realities and changing understandings of the situation.

Inventive efforts, coupled with strong political will, will be required by South Asian countries to shift the structure of today's institutions involved in regulating development and investing in infrastructure. Obsolete assumptions, based on stable climate and cheap oil, will need to be replaced leading to new solutions. South Asian-wide best practice methods will have to be identified and nurtured. New trainings will be required to supply needed expertise. Such an unprecedented political change is urgently needed. So some consolidated efforts to identify necessary changes and frame them in its outcomes in an effective and useable form need to begin now in South Asia.

Because South Asian cities form complex social, economic and physical systems, the efforts required will be inherently interdisciplinary. The challenge will be to identify relevant leaders, practitioners, researchers, policy-makers, and streamline their capacity to focus in interdisciplinary working contexts to tackle priority issues faced by climate change in the area. Also, we would have to enhance their capacity to conduct innovative, cross-disciplinary and policy-relevant research and

produce design ideas for adapting infrastructure that will protect and insure the future safety and well-being of its inhabitants. Therefore, some innovative climate adaptation networks need to be created amongst South Asian countries working on climate adaptation. Practitioners, researchers, and policy-makers from across the South Asian region will be able to collaboratively use such networks to share evidence-based understandings from which they can design solutions to the many problems that will face people and places in coping with climate change.

III. References

[1] Urban Population Growth, Global Health Observatory ,WHO 2013, World Health Organization at: http://www.who.int/gho/urban_health/situation_trends/urban_population_growth_text/en/

[2] The State of Asian Cities 2010/11, UN-Habitat, 2010, United Nations Human Settlement Programme at: http://www.unhabitat.org/pmss/listItemDetails.aspx?publicationID=3078

IV. NAUTILUS INVITES YOUR RESPONSES

The Nautilus Peace and Security Network invites your responses to this report. Please leave a comment below or send your response to: nautilus@nautilus.org. Comments will only be posted if they include the author's name and affiliation.

View this online at: https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-policy-forum/networks-for-climate-adaptation-in-south-asia/

Nautilus Institute
608 San Miguel Ave., Berkeley, CA 94707-1535 | Phone: (510) 423-0372 | Email: nautilus@nautilus.org