

# **“Mega cities And Climate Change Sustainable Cities in a Changing World”**

**By: Huma Batool**

Walking in the brimming lights of a city can be a dream of anyone living in the countryside. The UN reports that the urbanization is booming all over the world, and at much greater pace in Asia and Africa. According to it, “36.5% population of Asia lives particularly in cities and Mega cities are the consequence of urbanization”. UN defines a mega city as “An urban area with a population of more than 10 million people”. Cities in Asia like Bangkok, Beijing, Tokyo, Mumbai, Karachi etc fulfill the definition of a mega city. One can estimate the number of problems created by such thickly populated cities. Serious health hazards are faced by the people living in urban areas due to air pollution, solid waste management, and many other pressures that are posed on the people and governing bodies of such urban areas. The failure of management results in poor services thus exacerbating the situation further.

All this in a changing world! Around the globe people have started taking CLIMATE CHANGE seriously. Climate change is a bitter truth and can not be denied. It forecasts heat waves, storms, floods, drought, prevalence of pathogens/insect pests, reduction in availability of fresh water, and rise in sea level in coastal areas. Many coastal areas face the threat of drowning in sea. Climate change is linked with the global warming. The average temperature of the earth is rising due to the release of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. This global warming in return changes the climate of different regions, for example some may cool down or some would be heated up. This is definitely going to affect on the biodiversity of all the life forms.

The writer as an Associate in one of the flagship training program of Leadership for Environment and Development (LEAD) Pakistan, LEAD is an International non-profit organization with a fast growing network of 2000 leaders in more than 90 countries. All the 13 member programs of LEAD including Pakistan office are working towards a shared mission to inspire leadership for sustainable world. As an associate, attended an International Training Session (ITS) titled “Mega-cities and Climate Change” in Mexico last year. The session was held in Mexico City which is the worlds’ third largest Mega city. Topics under discussion were adaptation in the scenario of climate change and boosting urbanization. The important problems of Mexico City like water and sanitation, energy production and consumption, land use and urban development, transport and urban mobility and managing these problems in a changing climate were on the agenda of discussion, by considering the idea of “SUSTAINABLE URBAN LIVING” in a Changing World.

Climate change is a common threat to the world the impacts of which we are experiencing in our own home country and cities. The change is slow though an abrupt change can affect both the rich and poor nations of the world. In developing countries that will suffer and pay high prices like in Pakistan the city of Karachi is already present

in the list of a mega-city. There are many other cities in Pakistan that are potential to become mega city in future. As an example, Quetta the capital city of Balochistan and sooner or later the Gawadar that can also grow as a mega city in a near future.

An important drawback of the growing cities is the informal settlements or slums. May it be Mexico City, Karachi or Quetta, all the growing cities have many slums (semi urban areas) in and around the city centers. In Quetta areas like hazara town, pushtoon abad, nawa killi, kharot abad and many other informal settlements exist. The common slum attributes are congested and crowded housing areas with large number of houses and much greater population than any other area of a city. The slums mostly have poor or no infrastructure and serve as an extra burden on a city. The lifestyle and accessibility to resources is far beyond the standards that could ensure sustainable living mentioned in Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which talks about reducing poverty and child mortality rate, education for all, access to clean drinking water, fighting disease epidemics etc.. Slums are also thought of as centre of criminal activities.

Living in a city like Quetta we can not afford to grow any larger. We already experience shortage of potable water. Growth of the city population would also increase the amount of sewage and solid waste produced by the city. Management of these wastes can be responsible for the contamination of water bodies making the water supply services even more difficult. Providing clean water and sanitation in growing cities become even more challenging due to the impact of climate change which can markedly increase the duration of drought than normal. The growing population of Quetta city is also accelerating the average number of transport in the city. The small and narrow roads of Quetta are inadequate for the large number of vehicles in the city.

Here we have to focus on climate change as well which can be the reason behind long drought period of ten years in Balochistan. Climate change is diagnosed as a consequence of global warming and the growing number of vehicles in Quetta city must be adding to the emission of green house gases (GHG) to the atmosphere. Quetta city is a valley surrounded by the mountains from all sides. The proportion of gases emitted by Quetta city may be very minute as compared to the any other mega city or global emissions of green house gases, but due to its geographical terrain even a small proportion of gas emissions is responsible for the avalanche.

We should accept and understand the relevance of Climate change with our's or els's city problems. Strategies are required for building resilience to the impact of climate change. We must engage the public, business and other stakeholder groups for combating the impacts of Climate change. Incorporation of climate change adaptation in the urban planning are inevitable for tackling these problems. In Quetta or anyother city of Pakistan or maybe somewhere else in the world we need scientists to analyse and forecast how the climate is changing locally and this analysis can be practically helpful in identifying our city's vulnerabilities against climate change. Local initiatives to develop and implement climate change adaptation strategies are essentially required. Comprehensive approach is needed that could involve stakeholder's form across the government, private sector, students and the general public to ensure incorporation of climate change considerations

into the urban planning for existing and future programmes. Climate change is a local problem in every part of the world and the local government as and local leaders around the world must recognise this and they should seriously consider climate change while making decisions about urban development and land use. Government must take serious steps to improve the adaptive capacity of the low income populations. Such groups are likely to be affected more from the threats of climate change. we as responsible must realize the intensity of the issue and try to curb the upcoming problems and let our world be as beautiful as it ever used to be.

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