Urbanization and Urban Risks in the Arab Region

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Katja Schäfer – UN-Habitat Regional Office for Arab States (ROAS)
Outline

- Trends of urbanization in the Arab Region
- Governance issues and challenges
- Urban Planning in the context of promoting resilience

Source:
State of Arab Cities Report 2012
State of the World Cities Report 2010/11
State of African Cities Report 2008 and 2010

Source: http://www.unhabitat.org/pmss/listItemDetails.aspx?publicationID=3320
Urbanization Trends

- Arab region one of the most urbanized regions in the world:
  - 1970 – 2010: 400% urban growth, next 40 years: 200%;
  - 2010: 357 million residents – 56% live in cities;
  - By 2050: 646 million residents – 68% will live in cities;
- Majority of urban growth in secondary cities;
- Urbanization driven by economic development, migration to oil-rich countries, drought and conflict (importance varying by sub-region);
  - 2010: 7.4 million refugees, 9.8 million IDPs, 15 million international (economic) migrants;
- Several primary cities have become extended metropolitan regions, some are actual or emerging mega-urban regions with complex issues of regional-wide urban governance, authority conflicts and governance voids;
- Highly-centralized government modalities:
  - Undermine local authority efficiency;
  - Obstruct local participation in decision making processes;
  - Weaken relationships between citizens and local government.
Urbanization Trends

- Disparities across regions (GCC & Southern Tier countries) urban poverty;
- Affordable housing shortage (speculatively escalating land prices, cumbersome and expensive property registration and limited access to housing finance);
- Urban informal settlements in some part of the Arab Region;
- Security of urban water and food insecurity are key defining social problems;
- Youth bulge (60% of population below 25 years) and unemployment rates;
- Marginalisation and poverty induced by lack of mobility have fuelled recent political polarisation in the region;
- Internal trade and economic complementarity underutilized, regional physical and policy infrastructures remain uncoordinated - need for greater intra-Arab cooperation.
Arab sub-regions

- **Mashreq:** Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria
- **Maghreb:** Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, Mauretania
- **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC):** Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates
- **Southern Tier countries:** Comoros, Djibouti, Somalia, Sudan, Yemen
Mashreq

- Moderately to highly urbanized (43% Egypt, 87% Lebanon);
- Limited options for expansion in larger cities – emphasis on secondary cities and satellite locations;
- Informal settlements lacking improved sanitation, but generally offering structurally sound housing affordable to limited income families;
- As a result of wars and ongoing conflicts, the Mashreq countries shelter 50% of the world’s registered refugees, adding to the pressure on larger cities;
- With the exception of Iraq, limited or no oil revenues to increase national revenue;
- Need to limit scope of subsidies and control targeting to avoid increasing the budget deficit and eroding reserves.
Typically more than 50% urbanized, urban growth rate slowed;

Current urban policy focuses on:
  - Economic diversification,
  - Creating development corridors linking major urban areas and growth nodes;
  - Planning to redirect growth to secondary cities and to opening up new development in the interior;

Young people under 25 years comprise 48% of total population;

Unemployment rate reaches 70% among men 15-25 with only a primary education, and represents the bulk of total unemployment;

Most countries have made significant gains in reducing # of urban households living with shelter deprivations through:
  ✓ Political commitment to urbanization and upgrading;
  ✓ Integration into a comprehensive urban development policy;
  ✓ Ability to generate funding to support service provision;
  ✓ Participation of affected communities.
GCC countries are among the richest and most urbanized in the world:
- Several of the emirates function as city-states;
- 80% urban population - 40% foreigners;

Achieved MDG targets and reached major development thresholds in infrastructure, health and education;

Ambitious projects in public transportation and urbanization are underway;

- All government major projects and large, private real estate developments must be integrated in forward-looking urban strategies at the national and city level;
- Need to engage youth in national development and provide opportunities to participate in urban projects;
- Development policies now focus on:
  - economic diversification;
  - absorption of nationals into the private sector labour force;
  - affordable housing;
  - environmental sustainability.
• Experienced prolonged periods of conflict, which have adversely affected their economic development and ability to address basic needs;
• With the exception of Djibouti, they now have to cope with the highest rates of urbanization (76%) in the region entailing the necessity to develop an urban economic base and new urban settlement patterns;
• Rapid urbanization is based on conflict, environmental degradation, severe droughts, rural poverty;
• Climate change is expected to worsen droughts in the Horn of Africa, increasing the danger of conflicts over water and other resources;
• Urgency of initiating adaptive measures at all levels of government:
  o Comprehensive national and urban spatial strategies;
  o Promotion of economic growth;
  o Improved governance.

Source: World Urbanization Prospects 2009
Population Growth in Cities over 750,000

Source: UN World Urbanization Prospects, 2009 Revision

Photo: Damascus, Syria. UN-Habitat, State of Arab Cities, ©Dudarev Mikhail/Shutterstock
Downtown Dubai

Source: Flickr/JoaquinMadrid
Population in Slums (% of urban population, North Africa and the Middle East)

Source: UN-Habitat, Urban Info 2008
Emerging Trends

- Climate change induced temperature increases, frequency of droughts > further poverty induced rural-urban migration;
- Desertification, water and food insecurity;
- Regions major cities, economic centres and transportation hubs located in low-laying coastal areas;
- Most governments have embarked on spatial interventions – cities are developing Strategic Development Plans linking development and urban renewal plans under a broader vision;
- To implement these plans successfully and manage increasingly large and complex urban systems:
  - Need for better coordination between central and local level;
  - Increase participation of private sector in urban development;
- Devolution of responsibilities to local authorities and local budgets for implementation.
Egypt: Informal Growth

encroachment on agricultural land

Boulak Al Dakrour: one of the largest informal areas in Greater Cairo Region

Photo: Mona Serageldin
Nouakchott - Mauretania: Environmental migrants

Photo: Mona Serageldin
Urban Governance Systems

• Faced with these pressures, most of the region’s governments have embarked on spatial interventions to guide new urban developments.

• Many cities are drafting strategic plans, linking various development projects and renewal programs under the umbrella of a broader vision.

• New cities are being created as centres of excellence, innovation, technology and research.

• Cities are also marketing themselves as international tourism destinations, putting more emphasis on marketing their historic and cultural assets than ever before.

• Whether through culture, education and research, or financial niches, cities in the Arab world are putting their mark on the map.
In Egypt, the government is channeling growth along corridors and cities in the valley to towns on the Red Sea and Oases on the Western desert, in order to prevent loss of agricultural land.

Source: General Organization for Physical Planning (GOPP)
With 46% of the population in the Greater Beirut Region, the plan focuses on balancing national development by concentrating on secondary cities.

**Gateway Cities:** Tripoli, Saida, Jbail

**Development Nodes:** Zahle-Chtaura and Nabatiyeh

**Heritage Cities:** Sour, Tyre, Baalbek

Morocco’s 1st National Spatial Strategy emphasizes:
1. Cities as engines of economic growth;
2. Urban social cohesion;
3. Housing & development to increase affordability;
4. New towns to reduce congestion in larger cities;
5. Better defined central/local government responsibilities.

Source: Morocco National Urban Strategy
Urban Risks

- Multi-sectoral nature of urban risk compounds vulnerability;
- Urban risks are complex:
  - interplay of urban development process (social, economic, environment);
  - decision making processes and outcomes;
  - product of deterioration over time....
- Lack of focus on preparedness & DRR in cities;
- Strategic urban planning expertise, especially the implementation of plans (operationalized through GIS, risk maps);
- Settlements in high risk zones (flooding, earthquakes, landslides) and quality of building construction (poor conditions, poor standard housing, infrastructure);
- Lack of building codes and disaster resilient construction (mitigation measures for housing, infrastructure and basic services);
- Often weak and varying capacities of different cities.
Urban Environ. Challenges & Risks

- The challenge of **water scarcity**:
  - water security;
  - management of aquifer resources.

- The challenge of **rapid urbanization**:
  - Rapid urbanization (various causes: growth, conflict, environmental degradation, drought, rural poverty);
  - Scarcity of land, high density and poor planning;
  - Urban sprawl versus unplanned/ informal growth;
  - Poor land use and development pattern/ zoning – emergence of ‘unsafe areas’;
  - Health challenges – mortality from injury and disease;
  - Urban areas - concentration of urban services, infrastructure, economy, housing, informal settlements, institutions;
  - Urban planning and development of new cities - how resilient and safe are they.

- The challenge of **climate change**:
  - increase in temperatures, shorter wet seasons, more erratic rain and rising sea levels (severe droughts/ flooding/ flash floods);
  - food security and rural-urban migration.

- Seismic activities.
Institutional Gaps and Challenges

- Lack of technical skills, expertise, capacity (human, financial, logistical resources, decentralization for DRR);
- Gaps in urban planning (zoning), housing and infrastructure in cities;
- More attention often to emergency response and preparedness for response (emergency drills, equipment for life saving, etc);
- Weak and incomplete Institutional Frameworks (policies without operationalization);
- Inadequate technical capacity to implement DRR in cities;
- Weak coordination regional/national, national/national, national/local.
Urban Risk Reduction – How?

Assessing risks in different sized cities:
- Indicate vulnerability of location, housing, services and people;
- Hazard mapping;
- Assets and coping strategies in cities;
- Engage diverse stakeholders: place communities at the centre;
- Identify “high risk urban areas”.

Risk Reduction/ Mitigation
Develop comprehensive urban development plans as part of regional/national plan, incorporating climate change adaptation, urban spatial plans and decision making processes:
- Restriction/ zoning;
- Future city development initiatives (e.g. map disaster resilience infrastructure and services);
- Urban Planning, construction, designs: inclusive urban development schemes considering human centered approach.
Regional Response

- Supporting capacity of national and urban authorities to manage and implement the urban risk reduction process;
- Reducing climate change and disaster risks through inclusive and multi-dimensional settlements approach at national, local and community level;
- Supporting operationalization of national policy framework development;
- Strengthening regional cooperation among countries/cities, small medium sized cities (knowledge sharing, best practice/lessons learnt, early warning systems);
- Building capacities for slow and sudden onset of climate change and urban risks, DRR and preparedness for response;
- Identify innovative partnerships at country level and role of private sector (infrastructure projects, SWM, partnerships for crisis prevention and response);
- Making built environment, cities, housing, infrastructure more resilient.
Specialized urban expertise:
shelter, urban policy, basic services and infrastructure, HLP and IDP return and recovery, and institutional support to national and local governments in post crisis.

Assist member states in shelter for all and sustainable urban development:
technical expertise in disaster prevention, mitigation and preparedness;
post-disaster/ post-crisis response sustainable relief to reconstruction and rehabilitation.
Global movement…
• to share and spread individual, corporate and public initiatives that improve our cities;
• aims to sensitize and create awareness among citizens on urban issues to achieve better cities.

**Good Cities for All**
• works to achieve better cities and better life fostering proper sustainable urban development through key core components:
  - A Resilient City
  - A Green City
  - A Safe and Healthy City
  - An Inclusive City
  - A Planned City
  - A Productive City
A Resilient City

• Prepare cities for change, managing adversity, resilience and take action to reduce risk;
• Urbanization and development can only be sustainable if it is adaptable to future demands and risks, and is resilient to the consequences of climate change or natural disasters;
• Empowering cities and communities to plan for and effectively manage adversity is fundamental to the urban agenda;

Source: GoSource: http://www.unhabitat.org/downloads/docs/11638_1_594651.pdf
Overall goal:
“cities are safer places to live and work as urban managers are able to implement strategic development planning and programmes that target specific indicators of resilience to multi-hazard catastrophic events”

Expected accomplishments:
1. An adaptable urban systems model suitable to all human settlements (physical, organizational, spatial, functional);
2. A set of indicators, standards, profiles to support cities for calibrating urban systems ability to withstand and recover from crisis (urban resilience scores as base for urban development and planning);
3. City resilience profiles and tools development;
4. Global standard sets for urban resilience (building codes, regulations, planning standards, infrastructure and development regulations; balance risk reduction and cost);
5. A new normative framework for monitoring urban systems gradually.