

# BANGLADESH URBAN RESILIENCE PROJECT

Building partnerships, saving lives

## AT A GLANCE

**Country** Bangladesh

**Risks** Seismic and hydrometeorological hazards exacerbated by climate change and rapid urbanization

**Area of Engagement** Scaling up the Resilience of Cities

In the megacities of Bangladesh, GFDRR and the World Bank work with local stakeholders to address the challenges of seismic and climate risk in a rapidly-urbanizing environment.

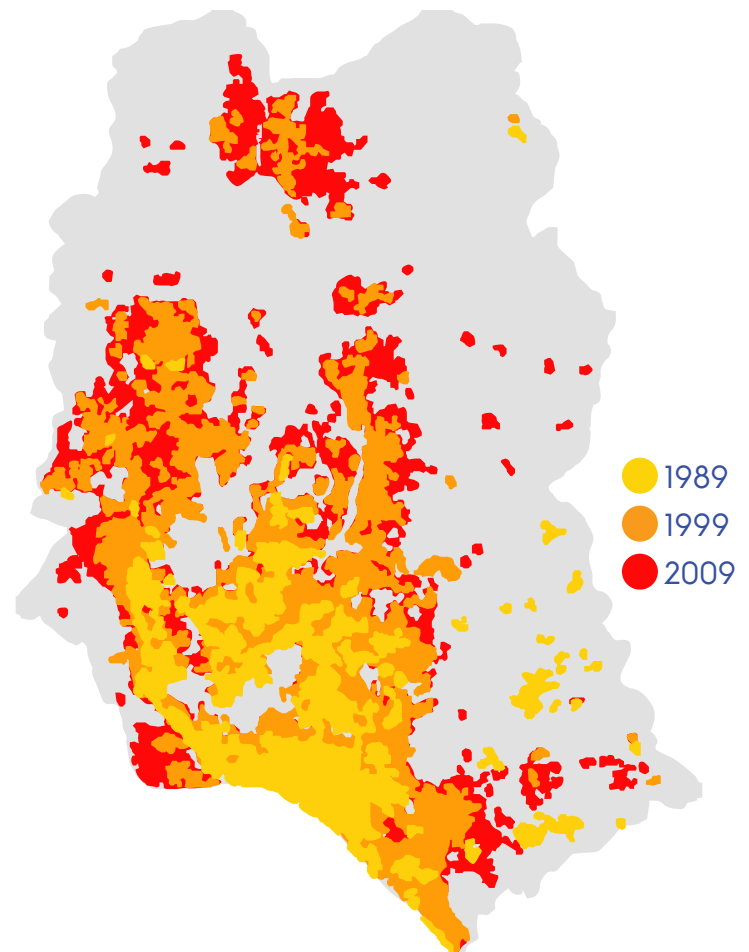
## THE RISKS OF RAPID URBANIZATION

Strong and sustained economic growth in Bangladesh continues to fuel massive population growth in the country's cities: about 350,000 migrants arrive annually in the capital, Dhaka, making it one of the fast-growing megacities in the world. Of the 7 million people living in Dhaka and the 15 million in the wider metro area, 28% are classified as poor.

In addition to overcrowding, pollution, and increasing demand for energy, Dhaka is located near a major fault line, and vulnerable to seismic risk. These challenges are not exclusive to the capital: Sylhet, one of the country's other large cities, is also at risk from a significant earthquake.

For the millions of people living there, these stresses and risks are everyday realities. Moreover, land use planning regulations and emergency service delivery systems have been unable to keep up with the rapid pace of growth. These surging cities also lack a proactive approach to urban management and economic asset protection.

Dhaka City built-up areas, 1989-2009



## A DYNAMIC, COORDINATED APPROACH TO URBAN RESILIENCE

To address this complex range of issues head-on, the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) and the World Bank worked over three years with a group of national government authorities and technical experts to develop a comprehensive, multi-sectoral disaster risk reduction program.

The Urban Resilience Program (URP) is a ground-breaking project that:

- ▶ Assessed the vulnerability of essential infrastructure, public facilities, and lifelines to better guide future investments in retrofitting
- ▶ Equipped national and local disaster risk management agencies with relevant response resources, including emergency operations centers, communication systems, and related training
- ▶ Improved construction practices by integrating disaster risk into development planning and zone processing

A broad cross-section of stakeholders – including senior government officials, civil society, and technical experts – provided inputs into the outcomes of the project. This broad, collaborative process allowed all participants to share knowledge and best practices, and – equally important – connected technical experts to decision-makers. The program also established a coordination strategy with the Japanese International Cooperation Agency to ensure the financing of activities that complemented the URP, such as supporting public and private construction by strengthening different agencies.

## LESSONS LEARNED

**The active engagement of a wide variety of experts is key in implementing urban resilience projects.**

GFDRR's convening power brought together a broad array of specialists from the government, academia, trade associations, and other organizations to collaborate across sectors and build consensus. The result was resilience interventions that are not only technically robust, but also take into account the requirements of a broad range of stakeholders, including agencies involved in disaster response and urban development.

**Multi-stakeholder consensus-building is a long-term process that enables open communication and greater clarity of roles and responsibilities.**

Given the diversity of actors involved in the project, regular discussions were critical to ensure successful consensus building. GFDRR organized 11 visits of international experts to Bangladesh and organized 60 focus group meetings with senior government officials and civil society representatives.



**15  
MILLION  
PEOPLE**  
benefited through improved  
emergency response capacity

### LIVES PROTECTED

The project provided government agencies with facilities and equipment to significantly improve emergency response capacity and coordination in the event of a sudden-onset disaster. These agencies also received institutional resources to incorporate disaster risk management into their development planning.

By the end of the project, decentralized emergency response capacity will be established in 88 wards across Dhaka and Sylhet, benefiting approximately 15 million people with faster, more coordinated service and better communication.

### BUILDINGS MADE SAFER

The project includes the design, development, and implementation of an electronic permitting system for construction applications. The e-permitting system will help increase transparency and compliance, expediting construction and improving safety in the process.

*"The country's main challenge is essentially to improve the emergency response and preparedness, develop strong capacity to manage risks, and build the country's resilience to natural disasters."*

—Brig Gen Ahmed Khan, Director General,  
Bangladesh Fire Service and Civil Defense