Cities on the Front Line for Climate Action

A billion people living in slums at greater risk from climate change, says new World Bank report

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SAO PAULO, May 31, 2011 – A global summit of Mayors heard today that 1 billion urban poor in developing countries are at greater risk from climate change because they live on land in the most vulnerable areas of cities, exposed to landslides, sea-level rises, and flooding.

According to a new study from the World Bank, "Climate Change, Disaster Risk and the Urban Poor," exposure to risk is often exacerbated by several factors common to urban slums including lack of adequate infrastructure and services, unsafe housing, inadequate nutrition, and poor health.

"For too many poor people living in cities, frequent floods and landslides are already a fact of life. Climate change will make this worse. We must put cities on the front line of the struggle to adapt to climate change and reduce the risk of natural disasters," said **World Bank Group President Robert B. Zoellick**, who will address the Sao Paulo Summit on June 1.

"Many cities are already building climate change risks into urban planning and city management," **Zoellick** added. *"But this is a mammoth task that is going to take local, national and international cooperation as well as strong financial support for local governments around the world."*

The study, which was presented today at the C40 Large Cities Climate Summit in Sao Paulo, recommends planning for risks at the community level, building institutional capacity to deliver basic services, integrating disaster risk reduction policies for the poor into urban planning, linking communities and local governments to work together, and opening new finance opportunities for cities.

The study was prepared for The Mayor's Task Force on Climate Change, Disaster Risk and the Urban Poor, an initiative launched by Zoellick and the mayors of Dar es Salaam, Jakarta, Mexico City, and Sao Paulo at the 2009 UN Climate Summit in Copenhagen.

The Task Force presented its findings today during the Sao Paulo Summit.

"Cities are often already overwhelmed by the number and complexity of services they need to provide. On top of this, tens of thousands of new residents arrive every day requiring housing, basic services, and straining urban infrastructure. Adding climate change to the challenges cities are already facing is an enormous burden," said **Judy Baker, World Bank lead author of the study**.

"This new study demonstrates how smart mayors are leading their cities to prepare for the inevitable impacts of climate change, ranging from sea level rise to more severe and unpredictable weather systems," said **Baker**. *"The poor will suffer first and worst from these impacts, which is why we have no time to lose in preparing communities for the future."*

The C40 Climate Summit is a biennial conference that brings together, mayors from all over the world to discuss actions and practices in combating climate change. http://www.c40saopaulosummit.com/

The C40 is a group of large cities committed to tackling climate change. The current chair of the C40 is Mayor Michael R Bloomberg of New York City. http://www.c40cities.org/