

In response to the increase in damages caused by climate change and large-scale natural disasters cities across Asia are increasingly focusing on resiliency. The session focused on research conducted by IGES in collaboration with the Universities of Nagoya, Hosei and Osaka on city efforts to not only maintain city functions supporting social and economic systems during a disaster but also on measures to maintain an energy supply and ways to transition urban structure. Actions to accelerate national and local implementation of the resilient policy measures and promote resiliency cities were discussed alongside efforts undertaken by international organisations and programmes such as UNISDR, ICLEI and APAN.

Resiliency is becoming a more important component of city planning, however implementation within Asian cities remains mixed, with funding, technology, institutional and capacity gaps as well as low political commitment being visible. Such gaps can be offset to a certain degree through community based work and efforts to raise awareness and build links within and between communities. Although climate change adaptation is a theme within Japan, much of the focus on resiliency is on disaster risk reduction following the Hanshin and Tohoku Earthquakes (1995 and 2011 respectively). Japanese research themes assessed policy frameworks, energy resiliency and risk-based resiliency management which has highlighted gaps in the current approach and identify some good practices and lessons learned. Whilst local governments have been engaged to some extent, there is still a lack of integration between the work undertaken by local government, academia, international organisations and city networks with work often being in parallel rather than fully integrated. With almost two further years of the project to run there are further opportunities for expansion of the scope of the project.

Key messages of the session

- Various methodologies for resiliency are being developed in a scientific manner. However how these methodologies can be effectively shared is still under consideration
- Resiliency work is happening in parallel in cities, city networks, international organisations and academia. It is necessary to further integrate these insights to maximise resources and raise capacity and awareness.
- Target setting and post-disaster visions of regions need to be considered to enable communities to fully recover from disaster.
- The role of eco-systems in resiliency is only now starting to be more fully considered, this aspect needs a greater role
- Following the Tohoku Earthquake, the role of communities and relations was acknowledged within Japan as vital for the recovery of the area, where voluntary action as had a large impact. Community-based work is a vital component of resiliency and cannot be ignored.
- Resiliency is starting to find its roots in cities, but needs further support and development to flourish.
- Japanese cities have good examples in developing national/local policies, visions and planning, tools and guidelines for risk assessment, education/awareness programmes, and technologies in line with building resilient cities
- These experiences and lessons learned can be shared with needy cities in Asia through city-to-city exchange and coordination among international platforms (UNISDR, ICLEI, APAN).
- How to define the concept of resilient cities needs more discussion
- Making short-term and long-term goals, implementation plans and ensuring regular monitoring are essential for building resilient cities
- In achieving this, not only is the hardware and software approach applicable, but also heart-ware (friendship, voluntarism) is important according to the Japanese experience in Tohoku revitalisation programmes.
- All these can be achieved, if cities have good leadership and political commitment.