

Rapid Urbanization Increases Disaster Risk

Cities are growing fast...

- ▶ By the year 2000, half the world's population will live in urban areas, crowded into 3% of the earth's land area.¹
- ▶ In 1995, 2.4 billion were living in cities, out of the world's total population of 5.7 billion. The number of urban dwellers will double by 2025 to nearly 5 billion.²
- ▶ At least 80% of population growth in the 1990s occurs in urban areas.³
- ▶ Most of the future urban growth take place in small and medium-sized urban centres.⁴

... and even faster in the developing world

- ▶ In the developing world, cities with over 1 million people jumped sixfold between 1950 and 1995 (from 34 to 213). By comparison, in the developed world, the number of cities with over 1 million people only doubled (from 49 to 112).⁵
- ▶ 17 of the 20 largest cities in the world will be in developing countries by 2000 (compared to 7 of 20 in 1950). Most of these cities are in areas where earthquakes, floods, landslides and other disasters are likely to happen.⁶
- ▶ 80% of the world's urban residents will be in developing countries by the year 2025.⁷

This growth threatens to make cities unsustainable...

- ▶ City authorities in many developing countries have difficulty providing basic infrastructure and services. As a result, 30-60% of people in the largest cities of the developing world live in densely populated squatter settlements.⁸
- ▶ Demand for land in cities has led to use of unsuitable terrain (floodplains, unstable slopes, reclaimed land) prone to natural hazards.
- ▶ Urban development increases the flood risk by disrupting natural drainage channels.
- ▶ Fast-growing cities contain increasing numbers of poorly constructed or badly maintained buildings, leading to unnecessary deaths.
- ▶ Increasing numbers of industrial complexes and hazardous materials concentrated in urban areas put cities at risk: In the event of a natural hazard they may cause considerable secondary disasters, such as fires, explosions, radioactive radiation, etc.

