

# Bangladesh Urban Forum 2011

30 October to 1 November 2011  
Bangabandhu International Conference Center, Dhaka



P R E L I M I N A R Y   A N N O U N C E M E N T

## **Bangladesh's Urban Future: Making cities and towns work for all**

The Bangladesh Urban Forum (BUF) will be one of the most important national development events in recent times, and arguably the most important for the Country's urban future. Given Bangladesh's rapid and unrelenting rate of urbanization, stakeholders felt the need to host a national urban forum that is relevant and responds to the specific impediments and emerging challenges.

A national urban forum provides a platform for policymakers, urban communities and others to engage with each other in developing a common vision for Bangladesh's urban future.

### **The Purpose**

The purpose of BUF is to build consensus on the problems of and possible responses to rapid urbanization, with a particular focus on urban poverty and urban governance. The event will bring together a broad range of stakeholders – Government, civil society, academia, NGOs, urban workers and residents, and development partners – and will leverage the knowledge, ideas, experiences and solutions of these groups. Networks and coalitions will be strengthened. Innovation, collaborative solutions and new directions will emerge out of the sharing of knowledge within, and across, the different stakeholder groups. The event will enable participants to generate new ideas for improved urban policies, programmes and projects.

## Key Objectives

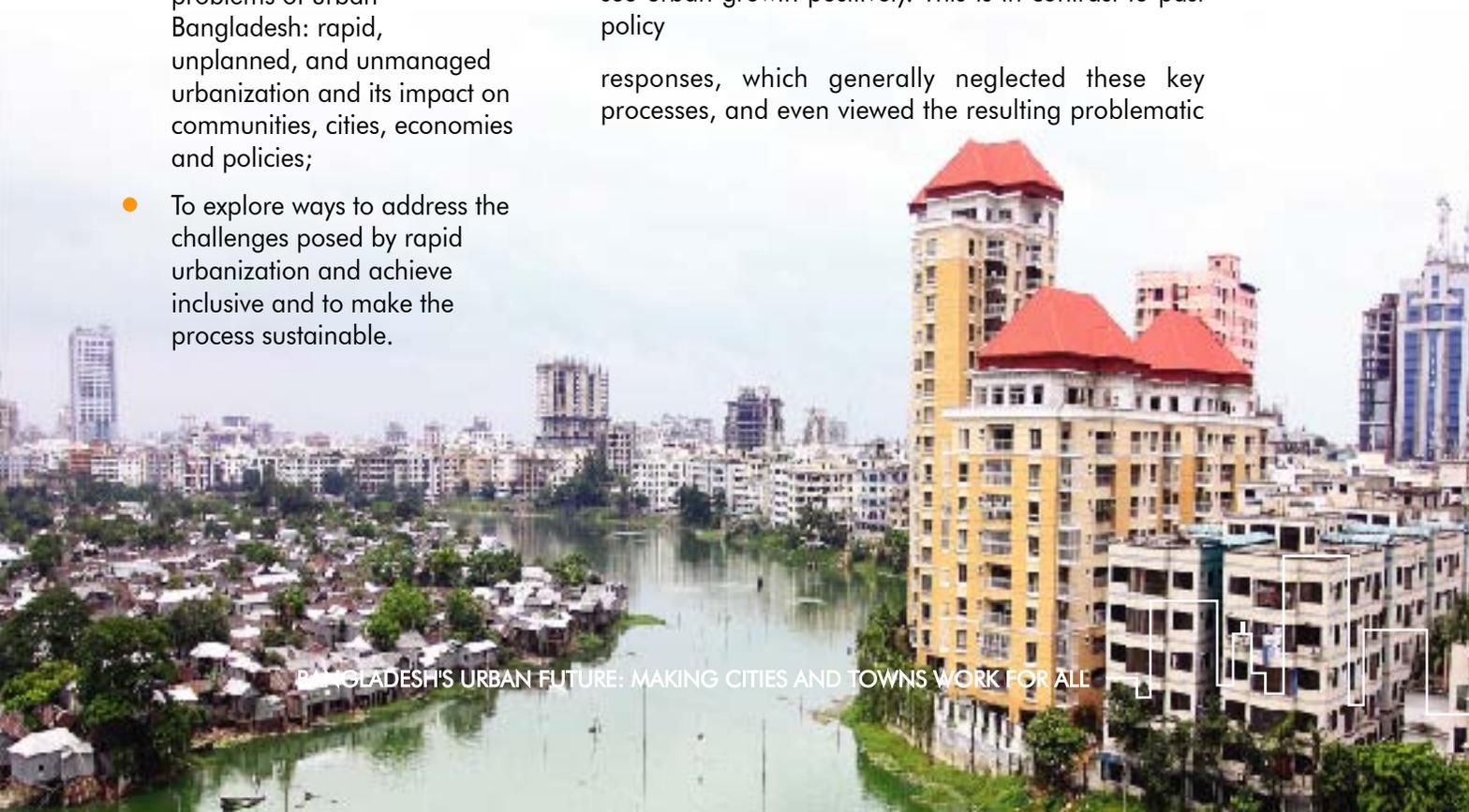
- To bring together and promote experience and knowledge-sharing among urban sector stakeholders so as to contribute to the formulation and implementation of policies on, and improving practice in, urban sector management with a primary focus on reducing urban poverty;
- To create a common understanding on policy and institutional capacity development issues for Government of Bangladesh (GOB), international and national development partners, and urban communities;
- To raise public awareness about the growing importance of the urban sector and urbanization in Bangladesh and the need for improved policies, plans, and actions;
- To examine the most pressing problems of urban Bangladesh: rapid, unplanned, and unmanaged urbanization and its impact on communities, cities, economies and policies;
- To explore ways to address the challenges posed by rapid urbanization and achieve inclusive and to make the process sustainable.

## Context

Bangladesh is urbanizing rapidly. The urban population is growing at approximately four per cent per year, and this is more than 2.5 times faster than that in rural areas. The majority of the urban population is concentrated in a few large cities. By 2030, it is estimated that 80 million people will be living in Bangladesh's towns and cities (CUS 2011). While rapid urban growth will affect all city dwellers, living conditions and the livelihoods of the urban poor are likely to be the most affected. The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics' Household Income and Expenditure survey (HIES) for 2005 found that, of an urban population of about 34 million people, 28.4 per cent (9.7 million) are poor while a further 14.6 per cent (5.0 million) are extreme poor.

Importantly, stakeholders have to come to agree that it is vital that the emerging urban challenges can and must be addressed. Urbanization is both a driver and consequence of national economic growth and, if managed well, can bring significant benefits to the nation. Effective and positive urbanization requires a comprehensive understanding, the tackling of misconceptions and the development of new partnerships, policies and approaches. It is encouraging that the Government's Outline Perspective Plan and the proposed Sixth Five Year Plan see urban growth positively. This is in contrast to past policy

responses, which generally neglected these key processes, and even viewed the resulting problematic





social conditions as a de facto check on further in-migration.

Recognizing this shift, a stakeholder consultation was organised in January 2011 in partnership with the Secretaries of the Local Government Division and the Ministry of Housing and Public Works, with support from UNDP and GIZ. Some 85 participants took part – from the Government of Bangladesh, civil society, private sector, academia, other development partners and representatives of the urban poor. This was a vibrant and productive session, which generated a wealth

of new ideas and proposals for action. Stakeholders jointly called for the urban forum to be held before the end of 2011.

This even also marked the first step in an open, consultative process towards planning of the BUF. As a second step, a leading urban planner launched a call for proposals and feedback on the newly-founded online Urban-Poverty-Reduction-Community (a service of the UNDP-sponsored) Solution Exchange.. Almost 30 community members responded and their comments will inform the vision, design and principles of the Forum.



## Themes

The proposed theme of the Forum is "Bangladesh Urban Future: Making cities and towns work for all. Under this theme participants of the Forum will review and discuss innovative approaches and strategies for achieving inclusive and sustainable development in urban areas. The Forum will focus on three sub-themes: (i) Urban Governance; (ii) Urban Poverty; and (iii) Urbanization and Growth. Each day of the Forum will be devoted to one of these themes and events will be arranged and focused accordingly.



## Principles

It is proposed that the Forum and its preparation be driven by three core principles: (i) ownership and participation of all national stakeholders, with strong government leadership; (ii) a focus on the most critical issues of urbanization in Bangladesh; and (iii) partnership between stakeholders.



# Programme Outline

The Bangladesh Urban Forum 2011 will be a three-day event. Though all components will be designed to support the key objectives and reflect the overarching theme, they will be specifically based on the daily sub-themes. To accommodate the interests of a diverse group of participants, several topics will be covered in a variety of events, including:

## Opening ceremony

BUF 2011 will commence with an event to mark its official inauguration, expected to be attended by the top authority of the Government or GOB spokesperson of similar standing. This will signpost the objectives of the Forum and signal the Government's renewed commitment to the urban sector.

## Closing Ceremony

This event will sum up lessons learnt, recommendations and issues raised during the BUF. In addition, a declaration reflecting a consensus among participants will be announced.

## Roundtables

Roundtables will be organized for various groups e.g. Mayors, Urban Planners, MPs, urban researchers, to express their views and discuss coordination and collaboration during the event.

## Networking events

Networking events provide platforms in an informal setting for stakeholders to discuss specific aspects of the urban agenda. Ad hoc groups will be formed for each networking event.

## Regional Sessions

These sessions will draw people from around the country to share their particular expertise and experiences - the challenges they face and the potential solutions. **Private sector events:** The private sector is a key driver of urbanization and it has potential to address many of the challenges faced - such as unemployment, pollution, poor housing, transport and ill-health.

## Dialogues & Thematic Debates

These will be open to all and will focus on specific issues relevant to the goals of the Forum and link to the daily sub-themes.

## Seminars

BUF 2011 will provide a platform for researchers to share their knowledge and findings on urban issues. Both individual researchers and organizations will be invited to present papers.

## Side Events

Side events will include book launches, presentations, cultural shows etc. and will relate to the main themes.

## Training

Training programmes at the BUF will encourage participants to learn more about current urban issues from leading experts in housing, policy, climate change, urban planning and other areas.

## Concluding Sessions

Concluding sessions will be held at the end of each day and will bring together the key speakers and participants to summarize lessons, conclusions and recommendations.

## Urban Art/Photo Competition

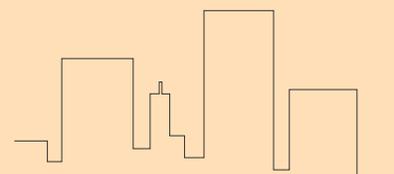
With a view to drawing attention to the urban life and urbanization, urban Bangladesh will be portrayed through a photo competition and exhibition during the Forum.

## e-Debate

A series of e-Debates on the issues addressed at the dialogue sessions will be arranged via the BUF website. Interested persons from anywhere in the world can participate in these virtual events.

## Exhibition

The BUF 2011 Exhibition is a significant component, which will showcase innovative solutions and practices in urban development. All exhibits will relate to the main theme of the Forum.





## Participants

Participants will include policy makers and representatives from national and local governments, representatives from civil society, non-government organizations, community-based organizations, national and international experts, slum dwellers, private sector, and academics. A special effort will be made to involve women; youth and stakeholders from outside Dhaka and participation in the Forum will be open to all.

## Management Arrangements

### National Steering Committee

A National Steering Committee will be the highest level decision-making body for the BUF. This body will provide the Forum's governance structure and mandate for preparation and organization, as well as the mechanism through which policy guidelines will be developed.

### Technical Committee

A Technical Committee will guide the consultative process and ensure the principles of the forum are carried forward to planning and execution. The Committee will meet regularly to review planning and progress of the forum Secretariat and report to the National Steering Committee against the results stipulated in the Forum's action plan.

### Secretariat

The Secretariat will play the main implementation role, focusing delivery of the wide range of activities. The secretariat will provide full-time support to the Technical Committee for day-to-day implementation of the BUF's planning process. The Secretariat will be run by numbers

of dedicated administrative and logistical support staff, with support staff recruited as necessary.

### Venue and Time

The Forum will run over three days from 30 October 1 November 2011 and take place at Bangabandhu International Conference Center (BICC). Languages of the Forum will be both Bangla and English.

### Registration

Participants will be required to register to participate. Registration is free but participants are expected to meet their own travel and accommodation expenses. Online registration will open soon.

## Organizers

BUF 2011 will be organized by the GoB in collaboration with UN organizations, Development Partners and many national organizations. International and national organizations and networks will join as sponsors and strategic partners. A secretariat of agencies involved will extend the preparatory and financial assistance to the Forum.

## Scope for Collaboration

Interested individuals, groups, organizations and networks are welcome to participate and contribute to BUF and its preparations financially and substantively, take part in the exhibition, co-organize and conduct break-out sessions, field visits, side events and associated meetings, promote the forum through their networks, and incorporate BUF outcomes in their work.



## Contact

*For details on becoming a BUF partner organization, please contact the following persons:*

Mr. Abdul Malek, Joint Secretary (Development), Local Government Division, Ministry of Local Government Rural Development and Cooperatives, Bangladeshabdulmalekdb@yahoo.com

Professor Nazrul Islam, Founder Chairperson, the Center for Urban Studies (CUS), cus@dhaka.net

Mr. Ashekur Rahman, Urban Programme Analyst, UNDP Bangladesh, ashekur.rahman@undp.org