Global Agenda of Urbanization: Developing Societies

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Abstract: *Urbanization process is characterized by growth of towns and cities with expansion of functional base and a continuous shift of rural population to these areas. The present study is an analysis of the growth of cities in the context of developing countries where modern economic activities have led to the growing status of urban areas as centers of secondary and tertiary activities. It calls for a highly complex situation with profound impact on socio-cultural, economic and politico-administrative aspects of the developing world. The paper attempts to reveal the urban scenario in the context of the role of the United Nations.*
Key words: *urbanization, population ,development ,governance , economy*

I. Introduction:

The urbanization process of the developing countries represents a unique situation. High population growth and low per capita income in these countries create conditions of urbanization different from that of European urbanization. The United Nation Department of International Economic and Social Affair projected that the developing countries of the present world will have 80% of their population in the towns and cities in the year 2025. An alarming situation for the policy makers in the developing countries has been created by population explosion at the national growth rates between 2.5 to 3.0 percent a year in contrast with the rate of 0.5 percent a year when Europe was urbanizing. Cities provide many opportunities of education, employment, efficient use of available capital, expansion of tertiary activities, richness of experience, specialization. Hence the positive role of cities has been recognized as a part of speedy economic development process and expansion of welfare activities. Growth of urban population at the rate of 3.4 percent per year creates a high scale of urbanization. As the industrial growth is not high enough to absorb the ever-growing urban population, the rising trend of growth of informal sector emerges. This creates a situation of urban poverty, as growing population cannot afford formal housing and basic urban services. 25 percent of urban population in these countries lives below absolute poverty line. Hence, the high rate of population growth and concentration of agricultural labour force give a unique feature of urbanization in the developing countries. The small industrial base with 4 to 5% economic growth in the low and middle income economies per annum, creates a crisis situation.

II. Demographic Dimension

In 1990 the world's total population was estimated as 5.3 billion persons. The population distribution was uneven as 1.2 billion lived in developed regions, while 4.1 billion lived in developing countries. According to the assessment made by the United Nations 45% of the total population of the world lived in urban places with 1.5 billion in developing countries and 0.9 billion in developed countries. The proportion of urban population in developing region was however only 37%, where as in developed countries it was 73%. But the urban population of LDR surpassed that of MDR by a considerable margin. The projection made by the U.N. Department of International Economic and Social Affairs (UNDIESA) revealed that by the year 2025 the level of urbanization in LDR will rise to 61% and it will account for about 80% of the total urban population at that time[1]. Continued urbanization over the last 50 years has resulted in a situation whereby almost half of the world's population lives in urban areas. As United Nations reveals, the total urban population of the world in 2011 is 3.6 billion, which is expected to increase to 6.3 billion by 2050. Total urban population of the More Developed Countries is about 1 billion in 2011, which is expected to rise modestly to 1.1 billion in 2050. The total urban population of the Less Developed countries is 2.7 billion in 2011 which is projected to be 5.1 billion in 2050. However the rural population is expected to decline from 3.1 billion to 2.9 billion respectively[2] Today, the majority of urban migrants are moving from smaller towns and cities to larger ones, or moving between cities. Cities are not burgeoning any longer with rural in-migrants. Rural-to-urban migration is a major urban growth factor. Natural population increases are also becoming a more significant contributor to urban growth, and reclassification of rural areas into urban areas is speeding the rate of urbanization. More than half of the world's urban population lives in cities of fewer than 500,000 inhabitants, and almost one-fifth lives in cities of 1 to 5 million inhabitants. These intermediate cities are predicted to grow at a faster rate than any other city. The relative absence of infrastructure, such as roads, water supply and communication facilities, in many small and

intermediate-sized cities makes these cities less competitive locally, nationally and regionally and leads to a lower quality of life for their citizens. Coastal zones tend to be disproportionately urban: 65 per cent of the population of coastal areas is concentrated in cities. They have higher densities and are experiencing higher urban growth. "Metacities" – massive conurbations of more than 20 million people, above and beyond the scale of megacities – are now gaining ground in Asia, Latin America and Africa. Metacities are home only 4 per cent of the world's population and most have grown at the relatively slow rate of about 1.5 per cent annually. However, one metacity such as Greater Mumbai in India has a larger population than the total population of Norway and Sweden combined. These cities call for new, innovative and more decentralized forms of governance with better and stronger inter-municipal relations. The scale of environmental impact of metacities and megacities on their hinterlands is also significant and is likely to be a cause for concern in coming decades. However, lack of "manageability" is more related to failures of governance and urban planning, rather than to city size *per se.* For the first time ever, the elderly population in developed countries has surpassed the number of children aged 14 and younger, owing to increased life expectancy and, more significantly, low fertility. Many countries in Europe will be forced to import labour to make up for the shortfall. This may increase social and political tensions. By 2050, when nearly one in three people in the developed world is elderly, half of the people in 11 of the world's least-developed countries will be younger than 23.

Table : 1   Total, Urban and Rural, population by Development Group, Selected periods, 1950-2050.

Development Group	Population (billion)					Average annual rate of change (percentage)			
	1950	1970	2011	2030	2050	1950-1970	1970-2011	2011-2030	2030-2050
Total Population									
World	2.53	3.70	6.97	8.32	9.31	1.89	1.55	0.93	0.56
More Developed Regions	0.81	1.01	1.24	1.30	1.31	1.08	0.51	0.23	0.06
Less Developed Regions	1.72	2.69	5.73	7.03	7.99	2.23	1.85	1.07	0.65
Urban Population									
World	0.75	1.35	3.63	4.98	6.25	2.98	2.41	1.66	1.13
More Developed Regions	0.44	0.67	0.96	1.06	1.13	2.09	0.89	0.52	0.29
Less Developed regions	0.30	0.68	2.67	3.92	5.12	4.04	3.33	2.02	1.34
RuralPopulation									
World	1.79	2.34	3.34	3.34	3.05	1.36	0.87	-0.01	-0.44
More Developed Regions	0.37	0.34	0.28	0.23	0.18	-0.48	-0.48	-0.92	-1.14
Less Developed Regions	1.42	2.01	3.07	3.11	2.87	1.74	1.03	0.07	-0.40

Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs/Population Division; World Urbanization Prospects: The 2011 Revision, Highlights

There is wide disparity in urbanization level among the countries of LDR. Latin America already attained a high level of urbanization in 1990 and in 2011 it has reached 79 %, higher than that of Europe. In Africa and Asia it was much lower – 47.4 and 49.7 respectively which has further lowered to 40 % and 45% respectively in 2011. Among the countries of Asia only Japan has accomplished a successful urban transition. The nature of urban explosion also shows that in comparison to developed countries, Developing countries have experienced growth of both rural and urban population. In 2011, the majority of the rural dwellers live in Asia (69%) and Africa (19%) and the concentration of the world rural population in these two major areas combined is expected to increase so that, by 2050, 60% of all rural inhabitants are projected to live in Asia and 30% in Africa [3]. However, as there is a steady decline of rural population in industrialized countries, the rate of its growth is decreasing in LDR also. It indicates the share of migration as a component of urban growth in the developing countries.

Reclassification of urban places also account for growth of urban population and the governments of the countries select different criteria to define urban places, governmental decision to recognize new areas as urban areas influence urban growth [4] In Asia, net rural – urban migration and reclassification still accounts for over half of urban growth[5]. The natural increase is a major component of urban growth in Africa and Latin America. High rural growth rate in Africa and Asia leads to out-migration and urbanization. Rural areas lack opportunities of occupation.

III.   Growth of large Cities

Rapid urbanization in developing countries has been characterized by the phenomenal growth in the number and size of very large cities. Urbanization and city growth are caused by a number of different factors including rural-urban migration, natural population increase and annexation etc [6]. There are enormous difficulties in obtaining reliable data on urban populations and quite major errors have been made in the past

with respect to projections of some of the world's largest cities [7]. In 1950 there were only 8 cities in the world that had a population of over 5 million, among which only Shanghai and Buenos Aires belonged to the Developing countries. By 2000 there were forty-two 5 million plus cities, thirty of which were in the developing world. A comparative assessment will show the continuity of this trend. The United Nation publication by Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis revealed that by the year 2000, almost half of the total urban population of the world would live in urban agglomerations of 1 million inhabitants or more. It was estimated that 24 world cities would have population over 10 million by the year 2000 and the developing countries would have 18 out of such world cities. The number of 1 million population cities in the LDR was only 31 in1950, the number has increased to 95 in 1970 and it was projected as 171 in 2000. The growth rate of population in cities of 1 million or more was 5.1 percent a year and it was faster than the average annual rate for the urban population of the rest of the LDR. The number of Mega Cities in Asia containing 8 million or more population was 3 in 1970, which has increased to 17 by the end of the 1990's. According to the World Urbanization Prospects, in 2011, 23 megacities have been recorded with more than 10 million populations, that accounted for about 10 percent of the world's urban population. The number of megacities is projected to increase to 37 by 2025 when they are estimated to account for about 13.6 percent of the urban population of the world.

IV. United Nation and Global Urbanization

The global attention on urbanization in the current context began with the International conference on Human Settlements in Vancouver in 1977 resulting in creation of UNCHS (United Nations Centre for Human Settlements) followed by intensive activities of two decades covering inter-country research, discussions and exchange of information and knowledge on the subject. This was accompanied by similar initiatives from other partners such as UNESCAP, UNDP, and UNEP, bi-lateral and multilateral agencies. This led to Habitat Agenda in 1996 and Habitat II in 2001 focusing on global urban assessment on social and economic development, governance, environmental protection, service delivery and mutual cooperation along with development of urban indicators, documentation of best practices under Dubai International award etc. At the same time couple of other initiatives such as WSSD (1992 and 2002) and MDGs (2001) and Economic Liberalization Policies across the countries also gave due cognizance to the role of urbanization in the overall context of economic development and equity. These stakeholders, by mid-nineties, came to the conclusion that

(i) Urbanization is inevitable
(ii) Cities and towns are engines of economic growth
(iii) National issues on environment, productivity, quality of life and poverty alleviation have local solutions, and
(iv) Decentralization is essential to empower urban local governments for that reason. (UN Habitat 2007)

This consensus had special relevance for developing economies undergoing a rapid pace of urbanization associated with economic development. Accordingly last two decades have witnessed special focus of national governments on urbanization and related issues. It is in this context that administration of urban development assumes special connotation with the objective to achieve decentralization, equitable and affordable access to infrastructure and services, poverty alleviation and capacity building of stakeholders at different levels of governance. The challenges of governance had been very considerably recognized by the report on "Unleashing the Potential of Urban Growth" released by the United Nations Population Fund, 2007[8]

Meeting the Millennium Development Goals denotes addressing development issues in cities, especially because current trends predict the number of urban dwellers will keep rising, reaching almost 5 billion by 2030. Between 2005 and 2030, the world's urban population is expected to grow at an average annual rate of 1.78 per cent, almost twice the growth rate of the world's total population. Rural population growth will shrink after 2015. Any agenda for development has to be embedded and influenced by the dynamics of urban development. Here lies the need to determine the institutions and settings at the city level to welcome the pervasive social changes. Indeed in the next decade of the 21st century city has to be the locus for change and development. Here lies the importance of city development within the development of MDG [9]

The role cities play in the realization of a global development agenda as the fight against poverty, encapsulated in the Millennium Development Goals. The link between urbanization and socio-economic development cannot be disputed. Cities make countries more prosperous. Countries that are highly urbanized have higher incomes, more stable economies, stronger institutions and are better able to withstand the volatility of the global economy than those with less urban populations. The experiences of the developed and developing countries also indicate that urbanization levels are closely related to levels of income and performance on human development indicators.

Following on the outcome of the 2010 High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals, the United Nations Secretary-General established the UN System Task Team

in September 2011 to support UN system-wide preparations for the post-2015 UN development agenda, in consultation with all stakeholders. The Task Team is led by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Development Program me and brings together senior experts from over 50 UN entities and international organizations to provide system-wide support to the post-2015 consultation process, including analytical input, expertise and outreach. According to this report, the agenda proposed includes;

- Sustainable urbanization - A post 2015 UN development agenda should go beyond the demographic dimension and should address the main challenges and opportunities that are shaping twenty-first century cities and towns, including how these affect and contribute to sustainable development.
- The City; An axis for the new global agenda - Cities, in as far as they are crucibles containing human agents, critical movements and spaces of change, are an appropriate platform for driving a new agenda. Cities are the places where new ideas crystallize, technological and artistic innovation happen, and creative solutions to problems emerge. Cities have shown to be settings for social and political change and where new forms of participatory decision-making can be experimented. Cities are therefore places where prosperity can be claimed for.
- Prominence of the local in the context of inclusive and multi level governance - Key to the success of the new partnership in governance is therefore the role of the city. When taken beyond demographics, the city is the local space at which all the above forces crystallize themselves and exert their impact on the citizenry. And in terms of change, the city is almost the immediate milieu of action on the ground – where the economic, political, social and environmental impact can be acted upon. It is the main platform for transformation[10].

In the understanding of the concept a simple observation is sufficient to understand that individual development of cities show a strong specificity. We notice a wide range of different urban forms and constellations leaving practical implication for urban development management. Our contention is that more differentiated urban strategies are required to cope with complex varied processes of urbanization. Dynamic approach is needed to detect and describe the urban norms. Hence it is multifaceted, global but also individual process. It demands synchronic as well as diachronic analysis.In its transformative dynamics, the process of urbanization is increasingly revealing its pervasive impact. Thus a new agenda cannot afford to ignore it.

The State of the World Population Report 2007 came out with a comprehensive study of urbanization and its related problems in the developing world. According to this report, in 2008, the world will reach an 'invisible' milestone when half of its population, about 3.3 billion, will live in urban areas, with China and India having a substantial share of such population. Beginning from the 1990s various International organizations, particularly the United Nations have called for allocation of resources to improve the quality of life in the mushrooming towns and cities. Recently, the United Nations Millennium Declaration also highlighted its growing concerns on urban poverty in many countries.

V.   Global Agenda

There are significant studies undertaken by the UN-Habitat on the trend of Urbanization and Economic Growth of the cities of the world regularly. The report presented by them in 2011, titled, 'State of the World Cities 2010/2011: Bridging the Urban Divide' states that, no matter the path of economic development a country have chosen, urbanization remains an inevitable outcome of this effort across the world. It plays a key milestone that marks the halfway point towards the deadline for the "slum target" of the Millennium Development Goals. It examines the social, economic, cultural and political drivers of urban poverty and deprivation and argues that much inequality and injustice stems from inadequate policy-making and planning by local authorities and central governments alike. Typical remedies include removing barriers that prevent access to land, housing, infrastructure and basic services, and facilitating rather than inhibiting participation and citizenship. The report also emphasizes that lasting gains are best achieved through a combination of local action and national enabling policies. Thus the report underlines the choices available to policymakers across the range of economic, social, cultural and political challenges that are needed to bridge the urban divide. It charts a new course of action, with the steps and levers needed to achieve a more inclusive city, emphasizing the need for comprehensive and integrated responses that go beyond a compartmentalized, short-term perspective. The UN-Habitat policy analysis has identified a series of practical strategic steps and catalysts for change that make it easier for municipal authorities to bridge the urban divide. The practical strategic steps that contribute to the promotion of an inclusive city are the following:
i)   Assessing the past and measuring progress.
ii)   Establishing new, more effective institutions, or strengthening existing ones as needed.
iii) Building new linkages and alliances among various tiers of government
iv)   Developing a sustained, comprehensive vision to promote inclusiveness.
v)   Ensuring an equitable redistribution of opportunities.

The latest edition of the report forwarded by the UN-Habitat, 'State of the World Cities 2012/2013: Prosperity of Cities'; presents, with compelling evidence, some of the underlying factors behind the crises that have strongly impacted on cities. It shows that a lopsided focus on purely financial prosperity has led to growing inequalities between rich and poor, generated serious distortions in the form and functionality of cities, also causing serious damage to the environment – not to mention the unleashing of precarious financial systems that could not be sustained in the long run. The Report proposes a fresh approach to prosperity, one that is holistic and integrated and which is essential for the promotion of a collective well-being and fulfillment of all. This new approach does not only respond to the crises by providing safeguards against new risks, but it also helps cities to steer the world towards economically, socially, politically and environmentally prosperous urban futures. In order to measure present and future progress of cities towards the prosperity path, the Report introduces a new tool – the City Prosperity Index – together with a conceptual matrix, the Wheel of Prosperity, both of which are meant to assist decision makers to design clear policy interventions. This Report comes at a transitional juncture in the international agenda: in the wake of the 'Rio + 20' conference on the environment and development, and ahead of a fresh, updated Habitat Agenda due in 2016 (Habitat III). Against this background, this UN-Habitat Report calls on countries and cities to engage with a fresher notion of prosperity in their respective agendas. Prosperity involves a degree of confidence in the foreseeable future. As the world recovers from one of its worst-ever economic crises and a variety of interrelated predicaments, we must find a new sense of balance and safeguard against risks of further turmoil. With dominant roles in economic, political and social life cities remain critical to setting our nations on a more inclusive, productive, creative and sustainable course.

UN-HABITAT analyses have shown that the incidence of disease and mortality is much higher in slums than in non-slum areas, and in some cases, such as HIV prevalence and other health indicators, is even higher than in rural areas. These disparities are often not reflected in national statistics, which mask the deprivation experienced in poor urban neighborhoods.

Inequality in access to services, housing, land, education, health and employment opportunities within cities have socio-economic, environmental and political repercussions, including rising violence, urban unrest, environmental degradation, and underemployment, which threaten to diminish any gains in income and poverty reduction.

Income-based statistics should be viewed with caution as the true extent of urban poverty is likely higher than they suggest. The high cost of non-food items, such as transport, health, education, and water in cities – and poor living conditions, including inadequate housing and poor access to water and sanitation – impact the ability of the urban poor to rise out of poverty. When these items are included to measure poverty, estimates for urban areas are likely to rise significantly.

These are serious concerns for urban management in developing countries. Here a large proportion of the national population lives in the largest city, which in many cases is also the capital[11]. It becomes necessary to create laws that influence education, transportation, housing, and the job market. Newcomers to the cities cannot find work or a suitable place to live and resort to living in slums. This process is happening now in parts of Africa, Southeast Asia, and South America.

Rapid urbanization in African cities today can be compared in some ways to the Industrial Revolution that the Western world experienced in the 18th and 19th centuries. Urbanization starts with an influx of people to cities, people who had previously lived in rural areas. The rush of movement raises the population of cities, who need to provide for the new increase in population with housing, employment, food, clothes, transportation, etc. This is where the cons of urbanization begin. Without proper regulation, the new city-dwellers will not be able to find work, because the job market will not stable enough for them to join. Inability to find work then leads to a decrease of an already low income, which in turn leads to life in the slums because people can't afford housing as they cannot find sufficient work. Thus, half of the city's population lives in poverty on one or two dollars a day. In Africa, 60% to 70% of all urban dwellers live in slums.[12]

VI. Conclusion

Globalization has added a serious focus to the importance of city level efficiency. Those countries that are not able to make their cities efficient and productive lag behind. In Asia, a key feature of the rapid gain in economic efficiency is that, this efficiency has been achieved mainly through the efficiency of its leading cities. The rapid economic growth of Asia in the last half century must be among the most spectacular periods of development in recorded human history. Through the strategy of concentration, contrary to popular wisdom, it is probably the case that the Asian countries achieved great economies of scale in the provision of urban infrastructure and services. Great economic efficiency was achieved through the proximity of many activities: agglomeration economies and scale economies. Distance got killed – both within the respective countries with regard to economic activity and across borders. Thus the great manufacturing engines of South East Asia got intertwined with each other and across the Pacific with America. This contributed to flattening of the world. The

world is inextricably entangled through this concentrated urbanization: a good deal of off shoring of production is concentrated in Asia. India has carried this concept further through concentration of its service activities in a few inland cities: it has turned the concept on its head by killing distance through satellites and jumping inland. One consequence of this emerging urban pattern is that the traditional notions of a city deriving from and servicing its hinterland have become obsolete. Now, with low transportation and communication costs, cities are more likely to be linked with their counterparts across borders, than with their own hinterlands. The source of their comparative advantage is to be found within, and not resources or materials in their hinterlands. This is not dissimilar to the thriving city states around the Mediterranean in medieval times

The paradox is that cities have also become a locus of excruciating poverty and deprivation. This is particularly the case in developing countries. With the growth of the cities, there management becomes increasingly complicated. The intensity and velocity of the urban makeover in the developing countries displays alarming challenges. Each year the cities attract new migrants who together with the increasing native population, expand the number of squatter settlements and shanty towns, exacerbating the problems of urban congestion and sprawl and hampering local authorities. Rapid and chaotic urbanization is being accompanied by increasing inequalities, which pose enormous challenges to human security and safety. Our first concern is the plight of the urban dwellers all over the world that eke out an existence in slums. While cities command an increasing dominant role in the global economy as centers of production and consumption, rapid urban growth throughout the developing world is seriously outstripping the capacity of most cities o provide adequate services for their citizens. One out of every six humans is currently deprived of the most basic amenities such as water, sanitation, security of tenure, durable housing and sufficient living space. The deprivation suffered by these people constitutes a major threat not only to their welfare, but also to the overall security and stability of their respective societies. If present trends continue, their numbers are likely to increase to two billion by 2030. Many international agencies have yet to adequately recognize either the anticipated rapid growth of small and medium cities or the deteriorating conditions of the urban poor. Our second concern is the impact of rapid and chaotic urbanization on our environment and the ability of our planet to sustain the diversity of life as we know it. As human activity concentrates in cities, irreversible changes occur in our production and consumption patterns. We change the way we use land, forests, water, energy and other natural resources. Although only half of humanity is living in cities, cities are already consuming 75% of the world's energy and generate an equally significant proportion of the world's waste, including greenhouse gas emissions. The ecological footprint of mega cities and large metropolises is ever growing. Another problem identified is that we have failed in the area of planning. We have ignored the spatial dimension of rapid urbanization and the morphology of social change. We have assumed, for the better part of two decades that people living in cities are better served than their rural counterparts by virtue of their proximity to infrastructure and services

References

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[4].   UNESA, 1998. Global Urbanization; Towards Twenty First Century, op. cit. p. 56.
[5].   Urban places are identified in the countries of the world on the basis of population size, population decision, occupational pattern, functional characteristics. Discrepancies in definition are taken into account by the UN, while estimating the process. Indian Census Authorities have adopted a strict definition of what may be called, 'Urban'. Under this definition, fulfillment of the following criteria is necessary for a place to be designated as 'Urban'
[6].   All places with a municipality corporation etc.
[7].   All other places with (i) a minimum population of 5000, (b) atleast 75 percent of male working population engaged in non-agricultural pursuits, (c) a density of population of atleast 400 persons per square kilometer.
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