

Asia's mega-cities 'more vulnerable to disasters'

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Men push a car through floodwater in Jilin, northeast China's Jilin province in August. Asia's cities are becoming increasingly vulnerable to natural disasters as they struggle with poor planning, population explosions and climate change, the Asian Development Bank warned on Tuesday.

Asia's cities are becoming increasingly vulnerable to natural disasters as they struggle with poor planning, population explosions and climate change, the Asian Development Bank warned on Tuesday.

Floods, earthquakes and other disasters claim tens of thousands of lives a year and cost billions of dollars in the region's cities and urban areas, but not nearly enough is being done to improve their defences, the bank said.

"The region has borne the brunt of the physical and [economic damage](#) of the sharp rise in natural disasters (globally) since the 1980s," the ADB said in a statement accompanying the release of a new study.



Residents use a boat to make their way along a flooded street in Chongqing, China. Flooding costs billions of dollars in Asia's region's cities and urban areas, but not nearly enough is being done to improve their defences, the Asian Development Bank said.

"Its people are four times more likely to be affected by natural disasters than in Africa, and 25 times more likely than in Europe or North America," it added.

Floods are the most common peril and have become three times more frequent across the Asia-Pacific in the past 30 years, the report said.

It found that the impact of storms on cities and urban areas has worsened due to chaotic [urban planning](#) and [environmental degradation](#), as well as poorly-managed urbanisation and deforestation.

Meanwhile, millions of people are leaving safer rural areas for low-lying [coastal cities](#), often driven to the economic hubs by poverty.



Children watch a flooded street after a sudden heavy downpour in Manila in September. Floods have become three times more frequent across the Asia-Pacific in the past 30 years, the Asian development Bank says.

More than 152 million people in the Asia-Pacific are now vulnerable to natural disasters every year, up from 24 million in the 1980s, the study

found.

Deaths from natural disasters across the region increased to more than 651,000 between 2000 and 2009, compared with fewer than 100,000 in the 1980s, it said.

Vinod Thomas, director-general for independent evaluation at the Philippines-based ADB, said governments in the region spent two thirds of disaster funds on restoring damaged infrastructure.

But only a third was spent on making these areas more disaster-proof.



Residents waded through a flooded street after a sudden heavy downpour in Manila in September. More than 152 million people in the Asia-Pacific are now vulnerable to natural disasters every year, up from 24 million in the 1980s, the Asian Development Bank says.

"We have thought for too long that natural disasters come and go, that they are just an interruption to development, and that they can simply be dealt with after they strike," Thomas said.

"However, there is growing international recognition that the incidence and impact of [natural disasters](#) are increasing for a variety of reasons: persistent poverty, population growth, and [climate change](#).

"Policymakers need to recognise that investments in disaster risk management are an essential means to sustain growth."

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