



Sri Lanka hosts major international conference on building resilience to disasters

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Last month, Heritance Ahungalla, near the southern city of Galle, Sri Lanka, was the setting for a major international conference on the development of societal resilience to disasters organised by the University of Salford.

The 3rd International Conference on Building Resilience was attended by 142 delegates, including 87 academics, practitioners, professionals and policy makers, and 55 technical officers from the Southern Provincial Council. Alongside local delegates, the conference attracted 40 leading scientists from Europe, Asia, North America and Australasia. The conference also incorporated the National Launch of the United Nations Global Assessment Report and a Capacity Building Workshop for the Sri Lankan Southern Provincial Council.

This event built upon the successful 2011 International Conference on Building Resilience, which was held in Dambulla, Sri Lanka. The 2011 Conference was held in association with the launch of the United Nations Making Cities Resilient: 'My City is Getting Ready!' campaign, which addresses issues of local governance and urban risk. The 2013 Conference further supported the campaign focus areas up to 2015, including city-to-city learning and capacity building, and an emphasis on partnerships.

The conference encouraged debate on individual, institutional and societal coping strategies to address the challenges associated with disaster risk. As a country subject to several large-scale disasters in recent years, including the 2004 Tsunami and a civil war spanning several decades, Sri Lanka provided an ideal setting to explore the challenge of creating resilient communities and cities.

The conference programme incorporated keynote addresses by respected government officials, leading industrialists and implementers, and distinguished local and international academics.

Mrs Marina Mohamed, Secretary at the Ministry of Disaster Management Sri Lanka, and Hemanthi Goonasekera, Chief Executive Officer of the Federation of Sri Lankan Local Government Authorities welcomed delegates and provided an important policy context for the subsequent debate, highlighting national and local priorities and action plans. They also established an expectation that the conference will provide impetus for further action in helping Sri Lanka to tackle the challenge of disaster risk.

The conference included the publication and presentation of 87 research articles and practice notes that had been subject to double blind peer review by a distinguished international scientific committee. All accepted papers were published in the conference proceedings. Selected papers will also be published in a special issue of the International Journal of Disaster Resilience in the Built Environment, by Emerald Publishing.

The conference outcomes are being used to support the United Nations World Disaster Reduction campaign 'Making Cities Resilient', which addresses issues of local governance and urban risk while drawing upon previous ISDR Campaigns on safer schools and hospitals, as well as on the sustainable urbanisations principles developed in the UN-Habitat World Urban campaign 2009-2013.

The conference was organised by Salford's [Centre for Disaster Resilience](http://www.disaster-resilience.salford.ac.uk/) (<http://www.disaster-resilience.salford.ac.uk/>), the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology

and the Queensland University of Technology in conjunction with local hosts the University of Colombo, the University of Moratuwa, and the University of Peradeniya. The conference was also held in association with the **ANDROID Disaster Resilience Network** (<http://www.disaster-resilience.net/>), a major EU funded global network of 67 organisations across 31 countries that promotes collaboration among Higher Education Institutes to address disaster risk.

The Conference was chaired by Professors Martin Hall, Dilanthi Amaratunga and Richard Haigh, from the University of Salford.

Contact:

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