PRESS RELEASE

**Is the international community ready to respond to disasters in cities?**

The global humanitarian network, ALNAP, is warning of the danger of sticking with rural models to deal with the growing reality of urban disasters.

Over 130 representatives from the United Nations, aid agencies, Red cross/crescent, academia and governments met in India last week to stress the importance of sharing lessons learnt from urban disasters such as the Haiti earthquake that devastated Port-au-Prince in 2010.

ALNAP Director, John Mitchell, stated: ‘The time to act on this is now. The number of people likely to be living in cities by 2030 is equivalent to the planet’s entire population in 1970. This gives us an idea of why looking at the safety of our cities is important. Traditionally, aid has focused on rural disaster response. At ALNAP, we want to shift to focus on how the disaster and humanitarian sectors can improve standards, share information and work in better ways with national and local actors in complex urban settings, as well as rural.’

Urban population continues to grow massively – China is just the latest country to announce this week that it has, for the first time, more people living in cities that rural areas. More cities are springing up to meet demand and existing cities expand.. But what happens when these new and existing metropolises sit in areas exposed to earthquakes, floods, cyclones and other disasters?

Cities face different threats from disasters, largely due to the higher number of people and buildings present, but increased telecommunications coverage and more accessible infrastructure could also mean cities have good opportunities to prepare well and recover fast.

**Note to editors**

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The Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance (ALNAP) is the independent international forum for humanitarian aid workers to share good practice and sector learning. Members include the International Red Cross/Red Crescent, national governments, academics and NGOs. It is based in the UK, in the Overseas Development Institute. www.alnap.org