

Disaster Mitigation and Preparedness in India

The devastating tsunami of December 26, 2004, brought together two cities in southern India and three hurricane-prone Florida cities to focus on strengthening disaster mitigation and preparedness in India. Through ICMA's CityLinks cooperative agreement with USAID, a team of experts provided the local governments in Cuddalore and Nagapattinam with disaster management assistance and guidance on improving municipal service delivery. A key component of the program was the CityLinks partnership between Cuddalore and Nagapattinam, India, and Palm Bay, Oldsmar, and Port Orange, Florida.

Mapping and Flood Mitigation

The CityLinks team made up of ICMA staff, officials from the three Florida cities, and representatives of the India-based Urban Management Centre provided hands-on technical assistance, capacity building, and focused exchanges. The CityLinks team focused particularly on computer-aided mapping and flood mitigation projects to improve local capacity to respond to natural disasters, plan for seasonal weather, and mitigate recurring flooding in low-lying areas.

ICMA International helped two tsunami-ravaged cities mitigate and prepare for potential future disasters.

Because mapping is a crucial element in disaster preparedness and urban planning, the team successfully completed computer-aided design (CAD) base maps for Cuddalore and Nagapattinam. The maps' detailed data layers identify geographic features, low-lying areas vulnerable to flooding, public infrastructure systems and facilities, land uses, and important structures. The team trained municipal staff in how to update the maps for continued usage. Finally, the Tamil Nadu state government purchased CAD mapping software and distributed it to Cuddalore and Nagapattinam, as well as other cities in the state, to sustain the commitment to mapping as a vital disaster preparedness and urban planning tool.

To help the two cities deal with chronic flooding from heavy rains, storm surges, and tsunamis, the CityLinks team focused on capacity building and specific projects to manage seasonal flooding. The work included successfully widening and cleaning seven ponds in Nagapattinam to allow for free flow of water during storm surges and provide a natural system for draining accumulated water.

A Dynamic Partnership

The CityLinks program created a dynamic international partnership between local government professionals in Florida and India that will continue for years to come. The work in the two cities was highly successful because it was demand-driven, responsive to municipal needs, and focused on both helping to rebuild the community and increasing local capacity for future service delivery.

ABOUT ICMA

ICMA (International City/County Management Association) is the premier local government leadership and management organization worldwide. Its mission is to create excellence in local governance by developing and advancing the professional management of local government. ICMA has been doing this since 1914 by providing technical and management assistance, training, and information resources to its members and the local government community. ICMA International was created in 1989 to further the ICMA mission worldwide. Since then it has successfully designed, implemented, and evaluated hundreds of international projects, establishing a solid reputation for its practical, hands-on approach to meeting global challenges.