Strengthening Singapore’s Resilience

Written by Lim Wei Da and Tan Guan Hong

Resilience is a concern amongst many cities today. For Singapore, it has been embedded in our pursuit of a competitive economy, a sustainable environment and a high quality of life for its citizens.

As part of Singapore’s participation in the 100 Resilient Cities (100RC) network, the Centre for Liveable Cities (CLC) is collaborating with 100RC and relevant stakeholders to develop a publication that examines how the city-state has approached and built its resilience over the years and how Singapore is strengthening its resilience against potential shocks and stresses in the future.

To aid this effort, a recent workshop brought together a diverse range of stakeholders to discuss the gaps, opportunities and actions on two identified challenges: Climate Change and Changing Demographics.

Several key themes emerged from this session:

(a) More effective engagement of stakeholders to foster a greater sense of shared responsibility

The layperson often finds it difficult to understand their role and involvement in building resilience, be it dealing with climate change or fostering a cohesive society. They may be aware of climate change, but
Ideas are consolidated in post-its and shared with other participants during the workshop.
Source: The Centre for Liveable Cities

Participants came together to brainstorm ideas at the 100 Resilient Cities workshop for Singapore.
Source: The Centre for Liveable Cities
Building resilience requires us to take a total systems approach and have a good understanding of the interactions between different systems within the city.

many do not see how it directly impacts them or how they can address the issue as individuals. Similarly, most also understand the need for a cohesive society but cannot relate it to their individual action or behaviour. There is a need for more effective communication of Singapore’s resilience risks, challenges and opportunities to different stakeholders, and also greater multi-stakeholder dialogue and engagement.

(b) More targeted efforts to foster impactful collaborations and actions among stakeholders
Workshop participants agreed that more could be done to empower a broader range of stakeholders to explore and co-create solutions that addresses Singapore’s resilience challenges. There could be more platforms to catalyse greater ground up action through better coordination and facilitation. A better flow of information and data for stakeholders will also allow them to engage in informed, constructive and impactful collaborations.

(c) Better understanding of the links and dependencies between challenges
Building resilience requires us to take a total systems approach and have a good understanding of the interactions between different systems within the city. We may have done well in addressing resilience gaps within specific systems — for instance, economy, environment and society — but these systems are inter-dependent. While much have been done on understanding and addressing the physical impacts of climate change, further considerations could include how climate change impacts issues such as an ageing population, a culturally diverse population, class divides, regional and local economies, etc.

(d) Move from a rules-based society to one based on values
Singapore is currently a very rules-based society where the government sets out many guidelines and regulations on what can or cannot be done. It also comes out with multiple strategies and narratives to guide society’s actions. A common set of values (e.g. Care, Respect, etc) can be developed to guide actions across stakeholders and sectors instead. This could be useful in the face of increasingly diverse and complex challenges.
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About the CLC  
The Centre for Liveable Cities was set up in 2008 by the Ministry of National Development and the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources, based on a strategic blueprint developed by Singapore’s Inter-Ministerial Committee on Sustainable Development. Guided by its mission to distil, create and share knowledge on liveable and sustainable cities, the Centre’s work spans four main areas - Research, Capability Development, Knowledge Platforms and Advisory. For more information, please visit us at http://www.clc.gov.sg