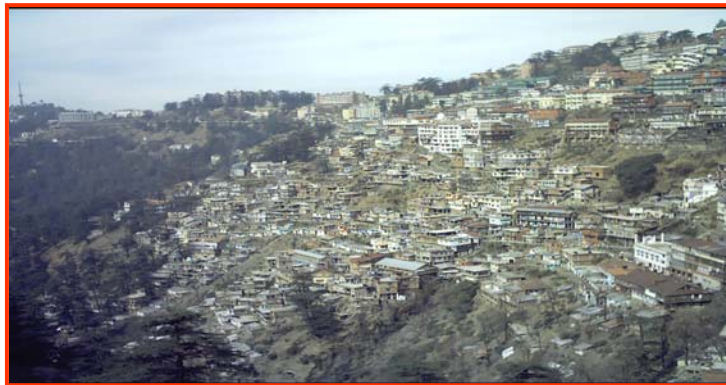


Report from the Field: Shimla City, India

Located in the northwestern Himalayas surrounded by oaks and pines, Shimla City is perched along a ridge that faces terraced hillsides. A naturally beautiful city, it's a popular destination for skiers, trekkers, and those looking for adventure.

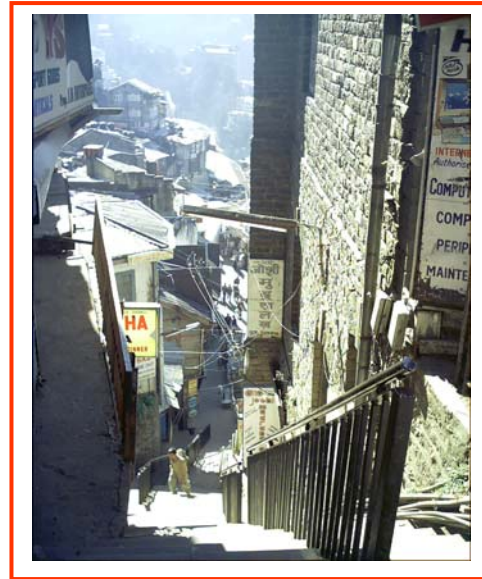
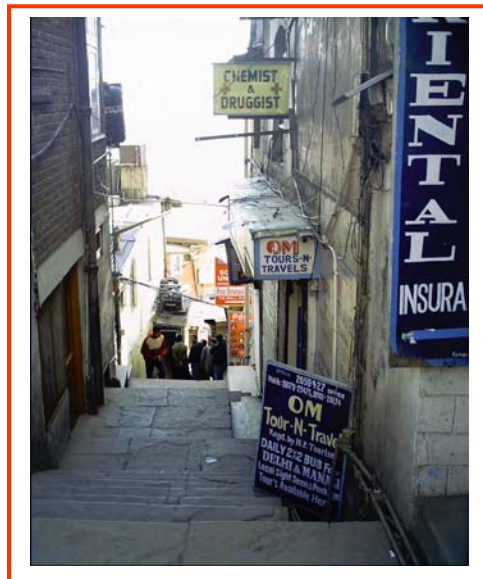


Shimla sits on the edge of hillsides

However, Shimla's precarious location on a steep ridge in this earthquake-prone region, combined with its weak construction techniques and its burgeoning population, make it a city that is at serious risk of an earthquake disaster. GeoHazards International (GHI) is working in Shimla as part of a

three-year grant from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to reduce earthquake risk in seven cities in India.

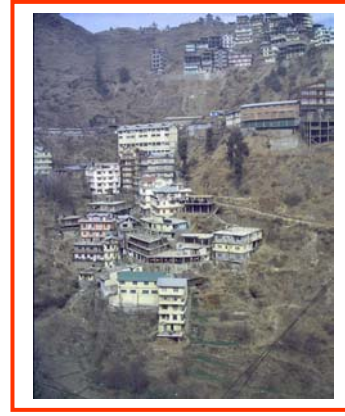
Buildings and roads in Shimla have been constructed on slopes as steep as 70-80% and sidewalks are also on steep slopes.



Narrow access passages and stairs



New construction underway



Old problems continue

Shimla's population has grown from 770 in 1901 to over 700,000 in 2001. New construction for the ever-increasing population exhibits the same structural problems as existing weak buildings. The lack of urban planning only adds to the chaotic nature of the city.

The Shimla community will draft an earthquake risk mitigation plan with GHI's help and in collaboration with Sustainable Environment and Ecological Development Society (SEEDS), an NGO based in Delhi. GHI is also working in other Indian cities to reduce earthquake risk. Our ultimate goal is to promote a culture of earthquake safety, not only in India, but around the globe.



Shimla girls hoping for a safer city

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