



UrbanShift India 1st National-Local Dialogue

Summarized by Pratibha Caleb

Topic of First National-Local Dialogue: Indian perspective of sustainable and smart infrastructure development

Level of Representation:

- National government representatives – Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs(MoHUA), National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA)
- Local government representatives from five cities: Surat, Pune, Chennai, Puducherry and Agra
- Other representatives from UN agencies, NGOs, research institutes, eminent urban planning practitioners etc.

Overview:

The national dialogue highlighted both challenges and opportunities for achieving sustainable development in Indian cities.

1. **Transit-Oriented Development (ToD) and Metro Rail:** Focused on planning cities for people, not cars, and the importance of feeder systems and pedestrianisation.
2. **Green Bonds:** Discussed their application for natural infrastructure restoration and the potential for revenue-generating projects.

How the National-Local Dialogue Contributed to Existing Policy:

- **National Level:**

The National-Local Dialogue advanced national urban policies by emphasizing the urgent need for substantial investment in urban infrastructure, projecting a requirement of \$6 trillion over the next 50 years. It highlighted the necessity for increased private sector participation in urban financing, addressing the current heavy reliance on government funds, and promoting innovative financial mechanisms like green and municipal bonds. The dialogue introduced a multilevel governance roadmap to enhance coordination between national and local actions, fostering better alignment of urban development efforts. It also advocated for institutional reforms, including the establishment of nodal bodies and improved access to climate financing. Furthermore, the dialogue reinforced India's commitment to global climate goals by promoting projects like UrbanShift, which contribute to achieving net-zero targets, and introduced the Urban Sustainability Assessment Framework to guide the development of sustainable local strategies.

- **Local Level:**



At the local level, the National-Local Dialogue provided city officials with practical insights into urban planning and innovative financing methods, including examples of successful green bonds in Ghaziabad and Indore, supporting local infrastructure financing plans. It showcased replicable UrbanShift projects and transit-oriented development (ToD) strategies from cities like Pune, Surat, and Chennai, providing valuable models for sustainable urban development. The dialogue facilitated knowledge sharing and peer learning among cities, allowing them to exchange effective strategies and solutions for managing urban growth. Additionally, the discussion offered actionable strategies for addressing immediate infrastructure needs, such as ToD, pedestrianization, and effective use of metro systems, while encouraging cities to engage in revenue-generating projects and adopt practical solutions to their infrastructure challenges.

Outlook for the Second National-Local Dialogue:

Based on the success of the 1st National-Local Dialogue, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) is eager to ensure continuity in the dialogues and has offered to host two Multi-Level Governance (MLG) dialogues between the National-Local Dialogues (NLD). So far one NLD and MLG have been conducted in collaboration with MoHUA, NIUA, UNEP and ADB. ICLEI South Asia will conduct one more NLD before the project ends.

Furthermore, the fruitful discussions on ToD, were a key driving factor in the development of a RFP for ToD planning in Pune, which was later awarded and is currently halfway through completion.

Reflections on National-Local Dialogue: Key Challenges and Opportunities

The first NLD for the UrbanShift India Project highlighted both significant challenges and promising opportunities in the realm of sustainable and smart infrastructure development. The event revealed that urbanization in India is accelerating, posing critical challenges like inadequate infrastructure, environmental degradation, and inefficient urban planning. However, it also underscored the potential for transformative change through innovative policies and collaborative efforts.

One major challenge identified was the substantial investment gap in urban infrastructure. Some of the discussions with the senior representatives of the National Government, emphasized the need for a massive increase in investments to meet the projected demands. The dialogue also highlighted the fragmented nature of governance, the lack of private sector engagement, and the urgent need for scalable pilot projects.

Opportunities arose from the potential of leveraging innovative financial instruments like green bonds, and the integration of nature-based solutions. Furthermore, the Urban Sustainability Assessment Framework and the experiences of cities like Pune and Chennai in applying transit-oriented development and flood risk management, respectively, showcased actionable pathways for sustainable urban transformation.

The next steps involve fostering a more integrated planning approach, enhancing multilevel governance, and developing context-specific infrastructure solutions. Focused efforts on



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capacity building, exploring new financing avenues, and promoting peer-to-peer learning will be crucial. The roadmap for multilevel governance proposed by ICLEI, coupled with the initiatives from the UrbanShift project, aims to facilitate a coordinated effort among national, state, and local governments.

In conclusion, while the challenges of urbanization in India are immense, the collaborative insights from the dialogue provide a solid foundation for addressing these issues. By harnessing the identified opportunities and committing to the next steps, the UrbanShift India Project can drive significant progress towards sustainable and resilient urban development.