



Fostering Strategic Partnerships for Cities: Integrating SDG 11&17

CONTEXT:

The urban population of India registered the highest ever growth of 91 million in the last decade. According to the census of 2011, almost one-third of the country (377 million people) resided in urban areas. Further, the numbers are expected to shoot to 600 million (40%) by 2031 and 850 million (50%) by 2051 (MoUD, 2016). The growing urban population has been perpetually dealing with a range of challenges such as traffic congestion, environmental pollution, sewerage, solid waste management, housing, depletion of green areas, urban sprawl and overall degradation in the quality of urban living. Further, as growth trends show an increasing demand for infrastructure and services, climate risks further compounds the urbanization challenges. Even though the objective of India's urban missions was towards making urban areas, livable, sustainable, smart and inclusive, the focus has been largely on developing physical infrastructure. In order to expand the scope beyond developing physical infrastructure, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) launched the 'Ease of Living Index' in 2018 and since then the agenda of making livable cities gained momentum in the urban discourse at the national level. Concurrently, at the international level, the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11, the New Urban Agenda (NUA) and the Kuala Lumpur Declaration of the 9th World Urban Forum brought 'sustainability', 'resilience', 'inclusion' and 'cities for all' at the forefront of the urban discourse.

Against this background, TERI, in support with the Royal Embassy of Denmark in India and the networks of the International Urban Cooperation Program of the European Union, spearheaded Regional Policy Dialogues to build discourse on mainstreaming sustainability issues and improving the quality of living in various Indian cities. The Regional Policy Dialogues were hosted in partnership with the State Governments of Andhra Pradesh, Goa and Sikkim. The dialogues highlighted the need for a national level framework that provides a long-term holistic and integrated approach to urban policy and planning and to empower urban local bodies and governance structures and institutional capacities. Further the key takeaways of dialogues also recommended promoting private sector innovation and social entrepreneurship, strengthening partnerships between cities as an effective way to enhance learning for cities and improve the capacities of ULBs.

City-to-city partnerships can provide an effective platform that enables exchange of knowledge and ideas, provision of technical assistance and capacity building and other relevant activities required for sustainable urban development. Such partnerships have immense potential towards mobilizing resources, enhancing capacities of cities worldwide, and promoting cross-cultural learning. SDG 17 emphasizes on strengthening global partnerships by bringing together national governments, the international community, civil society, the private sector and other actors for sustainable development. In the context of cities, SDG 11 has catalyzed collaborations and partnerships; however fostering such partnerships would require robust mechanisms of engagement with well-defined roles, responsibilities and accountability of all concerned stakeholders for effective outcomes. To this end, this session will explore the inter-linkages between SDG 11 and SDG 17 and how can it be leveraged for sustainable urbanization. It will focus on deliberating on existing mechanisms and framework of city-to-city alliances and how such strategic collaborations and partnerships can be propelled.

The session aims to address the following questions:

- What are the existing city-to-city strategic partnerships?
- What have been the lessons and experiences with respect to such partnerships?
- How can such partnerships be leveraged to advance the agenda of livable and sustainable cities?