Towards People-Centric Smart City Development

23rd February 2023 | 11:30 – 13:00 IST | Tamarind Hall, India Habitat Centre

Background

Cities are the fulcrum of economic, social, physical and cultural development. Rapid urbanization and globalization have led to a paradigm shift in the operation, management and governance of cities, bringing the concept of 'smart cities' to the forefront. Smart cities have become an effective way of in addressing urban challenges and ensuring service delivery to citizens using technologies enabled by advances in information and communication technologies (ICT). This interest in smart cities is expected to continue to grow in the coming decades as the world battles with pressing global challenges, such as climate change, pandemic, rising inequalities etc., which manifest at the local level. Smart city initiatives have already proven useful in managing municipal operations, mobilizing resources and informed decision-making. However, the technological dynamism that comes with smart cities often do not consider the aspects of inclusion and participation in planning and decision-making processes. Therefore, there is an urgent need to move away from the traditional smart city approaches, and integrate a people-centric approach to smart city development.

Citizens have a central role to play in city development as end users of the innovative smart technologies. It is important for cities to engage them and understand their needs in order to be able to address them. A people-centric smart city calls for a socially just, participatory approach, where people – especially the vulnerable and marginalised groups of society – are empowered to shape and co-create urban interventions in collaboration with the government, and technology acts as a vehicle to achieve the same. Involving citizens also allows decision-makers to leverage local knowledge for a context-specific planning and resilience building.

In order to adopt the people-centric approach, two elements are imperative to consider: building efficient and secure data management systems as well as regulatory mechanisms that would protect citizens' privacy; and enhancing people's digital literacy skills so they could tackle digital/technological issues for wider integration and reduced digital divide. Emerging smart cities specifically have the advantage of leapfrogging previous and existing stages of development and drive systemic inclusion. The Urban 20 (U20) engagement group under India's G20 Presidency, also presents the opportunity to present that equitable and inclusive approaches at the local level have powerful implications in achieving global agendas, such as that of the Sustainable Development Goals. As India has worked intensively on digitalization and digital innovations through various initiatives, the country has also shortlisted 'Catalyzing Digital Urban Futures' as one of the priority areas of U20 in an effort to facilitate lasting engagement between the national and local government on inclusive, people-centric smart city development.

Against this background, and towards the objective of highlighting the importance of participation in smart city initiatives, this session aims to provide a platform for diverse stakeholders leading the inclusive city development to share their experiences and best practices in integrating participatory approaches in smart city solutions, as well as showcase their ongoing initiatives. The session will also discuss the various challenges faced and provide an opportunity to discuss innovative ways to tackle them as a potential way forward.

Key questions

- How should people-centric smart city development look like?
- What are the challenges in the integration of marginalized and vulnerable groups in smart city development policies and initiatives?
- How can governments use the available technologies, data and methods to better inform their policies to people?

Draft Agenda

Time	Agenda Item
11:30 - 11:35	Welcome Address by Mr. Sanjay Seth, Senior Director, TERI
11:35 – 11:40	Keynote Address by the EU*
11:40 – 11:50	Context Setting by Ms. Rhea Srivastava, Research Associate, TERI
11:50 – 12:40	**Panel Discussion** **Chair:** Representative from EU **Panellists:** Mr. Hitesh Vaidya, Director, National Institute of Urban Affairs Ms. Kathleen McGinty, Vice President and Chief Sustainability Government and Regulatory Affairs Officer, Johnsons Controls Ms. Vaishali Nandan, Project Head, GIZ India Mr. Panagiotis Karamanos, International Urban and Regional Cooperation (IURC) Representative from EU Representative from EU
12:40 – 12:55	Q&A Session
12:55 – 13:00	Vote of Thanks by Mr. Sharif Qamar, Fellow and Area Convener, TERI

About the World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS)

The World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS) is the annual flagship Track II initiative organized by The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI). Instituted in 2001, the Summit series has a legacy of over two decades for making 'sustainable development' a globally shared goal. The only independently convened international Summit on sustainable development and environment, based in the Global South, WSDS strives to provide long-term solutions for the benefit of global communities by assembling the world's most enlightened leaders and thinkers on a single platform. The 22nd edition of the annual flagship event is being held from 22-24 February 2023 in New Delhi. The Summit deliberations will focus on the umbrella theme: Mainstreaming Sustainable Development and Climate Resilience for Collective Action.