



WORLD SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT 2023

MAINSTREAMING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION

February 22-24, 2023
New Delhi



Towards People-Centric Smart City Development

THEMATIC TRACK SUMMARY

Venue: Tamarind Hall, India Habitat Centre

Date: 23rd February

Time: 11:30 AM – 13:00 PM (IST)

Suggested Citation

World Sustainable Development Summit (2023), Towards People-Centric Smart City Development, Thematic Track Summary (Rapporteur/s: Kumar Kunal and Himanshi Sharma), New Delhi: The Energy and Resources Institute.

Actionable Messages

Message 1: You cannot have a behavioural change just because you want a bicycle-friendly city; the behavioural change has to be instrument integrated.

Message 2: Equity should mean equity and that means a community should get an ownership stake. Technology is the key opportunity, but people are the actual imperatives. (Mahatma) Gandhi said that greatness of humanity isn't being *human*, it's about being *humane*.

Message 3: Smart cities have become an effective way to address urban challenges and ensure service delivery to citizens — using technologies enabled by advances in information and communication technologies (ICTs).

Message 4: Whatever is said in the digital world is complex; whether it is about digital terminology on the blockchain or something else, the struggle is not understood well. The digital language must be simplified to reach the masses.

Message 5: Smartphones can have very different types of approaches and at the same time can be effective in improving the quality of life and empowering people. Access to technology can play an important role in disaster management and resilience for the vulnerable groups living in a city.

Message 6: A people-centric smart city calls for a socially just, participatory approach, where people — especially the vulnerable and marginalized groups of society — are empowered to shape and co-create urban interventions in collaboration with the government.

Narrative

The thematic track session titled “Towards People-Centric Smart City Development” was conducted as part of the World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS) - the annual flagship initiative of The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI). The aim of the session was to provide a platform to diverse stakeholders working toward an 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 esteemed panel discussed innovative ways to tackle climate-related challenges.

The moderator for the session was **Ms. Kamilla Kristensen Rai, Counsellor, Delegation of the European Union to India**. Discussions were focused over a single question that the moderator presented each speaker with: “What should a people-centric smart city look like?”

The session began with the keynote address by **Mr. Sanjay Seth, Senior Director, Sustainable Habitat, The Energy and Resources Institute**, who highlighted that the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, GoI, has taken a leadership position in initiating several efforts to make cities smart and liveable which include the Smart City Mission, that emphasizes the importance of people-centric smart city development. The Living Lab approach involves collaborating with citizens to create solutions that address the specific needs and challenges of different cities, and this approach is critical to creating liveable, sustainable, and resilient cities. He further stated how India hosting the G20 is a pivotal moment to reshape global governance and decision-making. The G20 presidency gives a chance to India to showcase its leadership on the international platform and play a role in finding practical solutions to worldwide issues, particularly the Urban 20 (U20), with an aim to promote sustainable development, inclusive economic growth, and inclusive smart cities.

Following the keynote address, **Mr. Hitesh Vaidya, Director, National Institute of Urban Affairs** delivered a special address. He initiated the discussion by talking about his experiences as a key stakeholder in the Smart City Mission and Master Plan of Delhi 2041. The most important details relayed by the speaker were the five-pronged approach to having a people-centric planning process in smart cities; to engage cities in the process of developing master plans, which must be driven by thinking at the corridors of power. There is a need to go back to the people in order to understand and involve them in converting the intention to action and to have a task-driven master plan. Mr. Vaidya also emphasized how a master plan is the only legal instrument for any change in the city, and that to make it more people-oriented, structural changes must be made. Additionally, the focus group discussions for the scale of Delhi with about 70 to 80 groups revealed that having a master plan is a big challenge, and it’s about time to redefine the process. A master planning exercise or marketing exercise should not be looked at as a creation of infrastructure, but as a way to empower citizens to define the outcomes. The speaker also focused that behavioural change and infrastructure development must be integrated to create a bicycle-friendly city. This includes institutional changes that should be implemented. Mr. Vaidya concluded by highlighting the five key elements he’d like to be integrated whenever there is a plan for a city: planning process, participation, provisioning of services, empowering people with technology, bringing in the sustainability aspects.

Following Mr. Hitesh Vaidya’s address, the discussion steered toward understanding the challenges in how to make the technology humane so that it enhances the mobility of people at every step. **Ms. Kathleen McGinty, Vice President and Chief Sustainability Government and Regulatory Affairs Officer, Johnsons Controls**, said how the key question for the session is really about both the challenge and the opportunity we have as human beings today. She expressed concern that we’re failing in our sustainability goal since 40% of the global GHG emissions are produced by buildings. To make them net zero, the equation is to drive hyper efficiency, rip out old operating equipment, and put in the new for better efficiency, in addition to getting rid of the fossil fuels inside the building. Digital comes in to bring the building alive and take it from being just a burden on the grid to acting as a battery. She also emphasized on community equity, which according to her, means equity and ownership, and sustainable marketable skills are essential for a successful project. The skilled sector in India is growing rapidly, and these

communities need more people with skills to do work on energy efficiency. To achieve this, the community should share the dollars and cents needed to fund the project, and there should be on-site skills transfer and development. This will help ensure that people have an ownership stake over their communities and try to create a more sustainable future.

Ms. Vaishali Nandan, Project Head, GIZ India talked about how she thinks the citizens should play a role in the design and implementation of smart cities, and also to ensure that their voices are heard, and needs are met. It is important to engage in a bilateral cooperation to support the Smart Cities Mission. They have worked in three cities in India to run coaching and support the mission and are trying to make the command-and-control sectors move beyond the transport sector methods. The team also went back to Coimbra to create a green park, a community within the community, and implemented a master plan to ensure citizens' participation. Additionally, it is important to consult the people who are making the master plan, and to simplify the digital world to reach the masses. Voices of the people working on the ground must reach the policymakers.

The next speaker on the panel was **Ms. Shruti Narayan, Regional Director, South and West Asia, C40 Cities**. She brought up the issue that people are moving to cities, with 65% of people in India being below the age of 35. Access to technology has become the most important factor in development, with a major section of the population not having access to it (before the pandemic in 2019). Climate action is an important issue that needs to be addressed to ensure a better future. To this end, the present government is committed to climate action and acceleration, and it is a must to vote the right people to power. Data-driven climate action plans are also being implemented in Indian cities to manage emissions. She further elaborated on the quality of data, and how it should be made available and accessible. Incentives and regulations must be in place to help people move forward. She further explained the context by giving the example of Jordan, Amman, which is working on a bus rapid transit system and how women can be given a free ride in most cities. It is important to take all these factors into consideration to create a long-term economic planning. Cities are engines of growth, and it is critical for people to be engaged in a dialogue concerning development and sustainability.

The final speaker was **Mr. Panagiotis Karamanos, EU International Urban and Regional Cooperation (IURC)**. Mr. Panagiotis has been working in India since 2011, and he shared his experiences in the context of the session's theme. His key point for the audience was that it is important to know what *smartness* is. According to him, smartness is the ability to understand the needs of people and to plan a project accordingly. An example of this is the Porbandar project, which focuses on recycling. Another example is the Water Plaza in Sudan, which is a square in the middle of a residential area and serves many purposes. Smartness is an important concept in the monsoon season, as it can be used to control water flow and protect the environment. To ensure this, two cities, Kochi and Messina, are working together to identify areas of flooding and provide sensors to warn citizens about potential flooding and related risks. Smartphones can be effective tools in improving the quality of life and empowering people.

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“	<p>To achieve the SDGs, the intentions have to be converted into action, and the only way is to go back to the people. We have to start thinking and cities are going to be the prime focus of converting this intention to action. We need to look at what institutional changes are required to work on a behavioural change. A smart city is, when I go to my city, and I see good roads, I see a better working environment; I see a green box and that is with a sense of smartness.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Mr. Hitesh Vaidya Director, National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA)</p>
“	<p>Technology is the key opportunity but people are our imperatives. Gandhi said that greatness of humanity isn't being <i>human</i>, it's about being <i>humane</i>. So, for all of us, it is important to know how we can make that technology humane so that it enhances the mobility of people. Digital converts a building that right now is totally analogue and brings it alive which takes it from being just a burden on the grid to where the building can act as a battery.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Ms. Katie McGinty Vice President and Chief Sustainability, Government and Regulatory Affairs Officer, Johnson Controls</p>
“	<p>We're very complex in whatever we say in the digital world, which people struggle to understand. So, if we don't simplify it, we don't really reach the masses. If we had to go further and reach each and every citizen of the country, then whatever be the language, it must be simplified.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Ms. Vaishali Nandan Project Head, GIZ India</p>
“	<p>Access to technology plays the most important role in disaster management and resilience for the vulnerable groups of people living in a city. The pandemic really accelerated the urgency because technology became the only way people could access basic services like health and education.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Ms. Shruti Narayan Regional Director, South and West Asia, C40 Cities</p>
“	<p>We need to understand the needs of the people and by understanding the needs, we should plan the project accordingly. Smartphones can be effective tools in improving the quality of life and at the same time can empower people.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Dr. Panagiotis Karamanos Country Coordinator India, EU International Urban and Regional Cooperation (IURC) Project</p>