



Urban Lab 3 – ‘Fostering Engagements and Making Partnerships Sustainable’

Opening of the session:

The breakout session was held on September 25th 2019 at Indian Habitat Center, New Delhi with a purpose to involve representatives from cities comprising thought leaders, innovators, businesses focusing on social impact and corporates interested in resilience, and policymakers & investors from different regions and sectors and portfolio managers and other stakeholders, in a Focused Group Discussion to deliberate on what role they can play in co-development of the cities.

Ms. Shabnam Siddiqui, Director, Center of Excellence for Governance, Ethics and Transparency (CEGET) at Global Compact network India (GCNI) opened the discussion by giving a brief background about the Global Compact Network India. She reminisced about CEGET’s preliminary engagement with the cities through stakeholder consultations, after the launch of the Smart Cities Mission in 2015. She noted that cities are eager for acquiring knowledge and development. She observed and shared how there is a clear connection between the needs of the cities and the urban solutions that can be provided and scaled up by the corporates.

Idea of co-development of cities:

After the initial round of introductions of the discussants¹, a point in question cropped up: Do businesses working in the same geographic areas share their knowledge/ expertise and opt for co-development or preference is given to insights from multiple quarters? The discussion led to various challenges for not reaching out to each other – competition, lack of awareness/ information, lack of city-level engagements by the city itself, absence of a shared goal/ common platform/ collaborative approach, diversified interests that cannot be aligned and limited to the short-term perspective

¹ For the list of participants, see Annexure 1

towards the ultimate goal. However, it was largely agreed that business consortiums and collaborations are possible and has enough potential in cities.

Mr. Sanjay Srivastava of Mahindra Lifespaces talked about 'Integrated Cities and Industrial clusters' developed by Mahindra, which aim not just at the basics for a migrant population but also gives them a better standard of living by integrating the three aspects of an urban space: livelihood, living and life and create well-planned ecosystems that are sufficient in itself. He further added that there has to be a sustainability and ecosystem approach. The cities thus made must add value to the lives of its stakeholders. Technology is just an enabler that makes the city smart. He mentioned that Mahindra world city in Chennai is the first private SEZ in India by partnering with the best and co-creating a benchmark; A nimble city in this ever-changing world is the one that can easily and quickly adapt to the changes.

Mr. Deepak Goray, sharing about Siemens initiative of building consortium of stakeholders for Cities development, stated that there is a need to bring multiple stakeholders together at a platform and also explained the Siemens process of building a consortium for cities development. He shared that for this, state government agreed and appointed district collector as nodal representative of the government who brought a team together to consider every possible vertical in the city. He accepted that funding for the city is a challenge, but the gap can be bridged by the willingness of the State government and other statehooders.

The representatives from cities – Mr. Mahesh Harhare, Chief Resilience Officer, Pune and Mr. A. K. Gupta, Additional Director, Regional Centre for Urban & Environmental Studies (RCUES), Lucknow stressed on citizen engagement in the co-development of the cities. They said that every development and innovation in a city are either due to Government regulations or IT-driven models, the citizens of the city are excluded and remain largely neglected; The knowledge and understanding of the locals can be a game changer. Giving an example they shared that decentralised waste management in Chhattisgarh is running well because it is a public-driven model. They emphasized to make the cities resilient and said that city's needs to be decentralized and local representatives and citizens must be brought in every stage of city development through targeted IEC activities.

Cities and their needs:

Ms. Shabnam Siddiqui drew people's attention towards the need of capacity building of political representatives and government officials in the urban local bodies and discussed the impact of their engagement in city development and therefore workshops and consultative meetings must be facilitated to ensure this. Selection of activities in the cities should be based on - what brings maximum benefit to maximum number of people and prioritising activities based on need. Problems may directly or indirectly affect citizens and therefore the need to be handled by the collective endeavour of citizens and administration both.

The audiences mentioned that there are challenges of no provisioning for SDG activities in the municipal budget and work is often stalled or procrastinated due to competition of companies and consultancies working in the city. Therefore, identifying

city champions for specific SDGs might help promote the welfare nature of SDGs and eventually help in the development of the cities.

Smaller Cities and villages:

A common trend that was observed during the discussion was that most of the people were working in bigger cities and smart cities which have been performing well for quite some time now.

Smaller cities, explained by Mr. Tarun Sharma, Co-founder, Nagrika (Dehradun), often have to latch onto the capacity of local bodies to achieve results. Metrics for smaller cities may not align with standardised SDG metrics. Therefore, we need to look locally and use metrics they developed to measure performance of smaller cities. Also, there is an immense need to populate data in smaller cities.

Ms. Charu Malhotra, Associate Professor (e-Governance and ICT) at Indian Institute of Public Administration expressed the need to emulate the community perspective from villages. Sharing her experience, she asserted that though there were existing initiatives for the well-being of beneficiaries in rural areas, they often did not serve the purpose, this is because the initiatives were based on the perception of the government officials who conceive what villagers needed rather than what they actually needed. For ex: Bhoomi programme which intended to help people acquire land records did not serve people who were contractual farm labourers (without land). So, there needs to be an inclusive approach that is human-centric, citizen-centric and a consultative approach.

Data, Design and Frameworks for cities:

Mr. Vikas Kanungo, Consultant, World bank affirmed the idea for creating a repository for information, innovation and learning. He suggested a framework for Digital technology and sharing learnings from each other so that it can re-used, replicated which could benefit many others. Integrated control command needs to be designed well – for data sharing. This platform works on both supply (UN, WB, Siemens etc.) and demand side (cities).

On design and architecture side, Ms. Manu Goel, Director, Novach insisted on micro-evaluating the projects before implementation and bringing 3 core values to various projects: (1) Collaborative growth: bringing different stakeholders to understand their issues to address them through the projects as per Smart city mandate. (2) Joyful experiences: Making interventions to the city to create joyful experience. (3) Efficiency: of budget, of use. She said if the system of creation is robust then we get a fruitful experience. Mr. Sandeep Srivastava from Ambuja Cement stressed on using waste materials for construction as the resource-pressure on the cities will be immense in coming years.

Mr. Ranjan Kumar Mishra, CEO, VMC (Vision 360) Consulting, talked about the importance of frameworks and documents as a benchmark for smart cities. He suggested that Smart city collaborators must come with inclusive frameworks that need to be constantly updated. He said that breaking down projects into various pillars

and verticals can help bring in more collaborators and this collaboration can create lots of value.

Conclusion:

The key take-aways of the session:

- Enhancing institutional capacity through improving inter-departmental collaboration and capacity building of local/ municipal authorities.
- Emphasize on mainstreaming and managing cohesive disaggregated data in different sectors and contextualizing the urban governance frameworks to specific cities
- Prioritize the needs for the financing for resilience of cities and that too has to be affordable
- Co-development of cities has to be done through citizen engagement at every stage of development.
- Creating two-way street between the cities and service providers for the documentation of challenges, successes and available solutions,
- Awareness and IEC activities have to be given priority through open-sourced online platforms and social media
- Need to standardise policies and planning for the co-development of the cities
- Data should be prepared in a way so it could provide comprehensive information to foster partnerships

