



Indian cities can partner with foreign peers to get ahead

Indian cities should establish teams to tap the expertise contained within their global counterparts.

Rather than starting from scratch, they can jump ahead by connecting with counterparts that have already navigated the challenges they face. For example, they can learn how to brand themselves as prime locations for corporate ecosystems by partnering with global peers.

The home for these collaborations should be urban local bodies, known as ULBs, the organizations charged with planning and development for their cities. ULBs should focus some of their efforts on collaborating with their peers as a major tool to advance their goals. Prasad Thakur, a founding member of the War Room—City Transformation Unit at Pune Municipal Corporation, India, explains:

There is a need to create a dedicated team within major ULBs in India to establish, nurture, and expand international partnerships at the city-city level to proactively stimulate and scout for opportunities for the exchange of talent, experience, and financial resources.

The ULB for the city of Pune, the Pune Municipal Corporation, provides an example of what can be accomplished. It has entered into partnerships with several foreign peers that are already bearing fruit.

These collaborations have concentrated on issues of public finance, environmental sustainability, cybersecurity, public health, and knowledge exchange. Gains seen so far include the launch of India's first and largest listed municipal bonds program with advisory

support from the United States Department of the Treasury; master planning of the Aundh-Baner-Balewadi smart-city area with assistance from the United Kingdom's Foreign and Commonwealth Office; and the hiring of the city's first chief resilience officer under the 100 Resilient Cities program pioneered by the Rockefeller Foundation.

The crafting and adoption of the city of Pune's digital strategy 2020 is another example where learnings from present and former city officials of cities like Tel Aviv and Barcelona have been assimilated, and the resultant action-items are being deployed in the field. The major pillars of the strategy, namely, digital infrastructure, digital services and payments, digital engagement, and digital enterprise will help the Pune Municipal Corporation live up to the aspirations of its current and future citizens.

The ULBs of Indian cities can look to counterparts such as London & Partners, the New York City Economic Development Corporation, and the Office of the Lord Mayor of Melbourne.

Such entities facilitate the ease of doing business within areas under their jurisdiction and champion their cities' image as preferred destinations for living, traveling, and working. Such agencies can also facilitate the inbound and outbound interactions of their relevant stakeholders to help position their cities as places with the agility to adopt the best global practices.

This podcast was based on [*International Partnerships for Catalyzing the Growth of India's Smart Cities*](#), a post on Asia Pathways, the blog of the Asian Development Bank Institute, by KE Seetha Ram, senior consulting specialist for ADBI's capacity building and training projects, and Prasad Thakur, a founding member of the War Room—City Transformation Unit at Pune Municipal Corporation, India.

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