

# ROLES AND CHALLENGES IN ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

*AIIILSG, in collaboration with CityNet, organised a webinar on 'Localising SDGs and Role of Local Governments: Opportunities and Challenges' on June 18, 2021*

The eminent panel of the event included Dr Pascaline Gaborit, Founder, Pilot4dev; Gaurang Rathi, Commissioner, Varanasi Nagar Nigam; Prerna Vijaykumar Mehta, Associate Director (Urban Development), World Resource Institute (WRI); Abhilash Khandekar, Senior Journalist; and Akanksha Laroiya, Programme Officer, CITIIS (City Investments to Innovate, Integrate and Sustain). The event was moderated by Abhishek Pandey, Editor, Urban Update, and the welcome address was given by Ravi Ranjan Guru, Deputy Director General, AIIILSG.

Guru began his part by introducing AIIILSG and its working in various sectors to strengthen the missions under SDGs and the contribution of the organisation in implementing Swachh Bharat Abhiyan across the country. He added that the organisation is working

with different ULBs and assisting them in implementing the Smart City Mission in almost all Indian states. He also mentioned about the Girl Power project, which the organisation is implementing in collaboration with European Union in Jharkhand. He added that Urban Update is also working on ground for capacity building of ULB officials through series of webinars and events.

Dr Pascaline Gaborit began the discussion by giving a brief introduction of the Pilot4Dev initiative, which is working to boost the SDGs, address climate change, and promote good governance and knowledge sharing. She added that cities have been hit severely by climate change issues and the problem will only increase as the urban regions will continue to suffer from increase in sea levels, landslides, air pollution, etc. Dr Gaborit addressed the issue of burst in urbanisation as increasing number of people are

shifting to cities in search of work and other facilities. She added that projects like CRIC (Climate Resilient and Inclusive Cities) are working with research centres in Europe, South Asia and Southeast Asia to augment sustainable development and mitigate the effects of climate change. She then quoted Dar es Salaam's example, a city in Tanzania, that tackled the problem of water, sanitation and SDGs in the city. She also cited the example of Banjarmasin, Indonesia, that presented a good example of water management between floods and clean water provision. One more city of Indonesia named Samarinda was suffering from three main issues of floods, environmental degradation and solid waste, she added.

Dr Pascaline added that localisation of SDGs is an important concept in this regard and there is a need for implementing the key strategies such as funding the SDGs at the local level and linking them with national plans. She emphasised that cooperation of multiple stakeholders is key and there is a need to work with the local population to achieve the SDG targets. She concluded by saying that an integrated adaptive design is important for cities and these needs are urgent and tremendous.

**SPEAKERS**

- Dr. Pascaline Gaborit, Founder, Pilot4dev
- Dr. Gaurang Rathi, Commissioner, Varanasi Nagar Nigam
- Dr. Prerna Vijaykumar Mehta, Associate Director (Urban Development), World Resource Institute (WRI)
- Dr. Abhilash Khandekar, Senior Journalist
- Dr. Akanksha Laroiya, Programme Officer, CITIIS

**MODERATOR**

- Dr. Abhishek Pandey, Editor, Urban Update

**ORGANISERS**

- CITYNET
- Urban Update

**PARTNERS**

- EMDA

Link for Registration: <https://bit.ly/3wrr9LP>



For video of the webinar, scan the QR Code

## TEAM URBAN UPDATE

Gaurang Rathi took the discussion forward by explaining the importance of SDGs, and said, “Sustainability is the most important part of SDGs, while the criteria of development consists of variable entities which shift from time to time.” He added that Varanasi, being an ancient city, has cultural significance as well and this aspect has to be integrated in the development of the region. Rathi cited the example of waste management challenges in the city and said that the city is blessed with two major water bodies of the country and the cultural aspect attached to it has to be kept in mind. The sewage treatment plants are not constructed near these water bodies, as was done during the British era. Things have changed substantially in the last 100 years, he added.

Rathi said that solid waste management is also a challenge in a city like Varanasi where religious and cultural activities are going on around

the clock. He said, “We have put localised measures in the city which contribute to the overall aim of waste management and segregation.”

Perna Vijaykumar Mehta took the floor next and began by talking about India’s contribution in integrating the SDGs inclusively. She said, “31 per cent of the population in India lives in urban areas and 17 per cent of them are living in slums. By 2030, India will be home to 7 mega cities with more than 10 million population.” She added that the Government of India has come up with various missions and schemes which are in line with SDGs to provide basic necessities to people. However, their success depends on the attitude of local governments and how they can tap the opportunity with support and cooperation of authorities.

Integrated planning is important to achieve the goals and its absence will harm the progress towards cooperative function between the authorities. Citing a report, she said, “90 per cent of the COVID-19 cases were from urban regions and were concentrated in areas with high population. Almost 42 per cent of households have no scope for social distancing.” She added that we have to look back to see where we are failing when we talk about slums and the informal urban population. Perna presented some examples of cooperation in working

towards the solution, which includes partnering with cities to facilitate peer to peer learning and cooperation with community organisation such as RWAs (Residents Welfare Association), local NGOs, etc.

Khandekar emphasized on some of the SDGs which are essential for the environment. He said that the ULBs in many states are not serious about the implementation of SDGs and AIILSG in this regard is handholding with cities so that these SDGs can be effectively implemented. He congratulated Gaurang Rathi for effective implementation of SDGs in an ancient city like Varanasi, where challenges are different. He added that implementation of SDGs is not effective and not percolating to the local level and the mayors are unaware of the SDG goals. He said, “It is time that we become aware of the SDGs and join hands to achieve their targets so that our society is resilient and futuristic.” The biggest challenges presently are how to make cities inclusive and how to make sustainable development a part of life. “People must now begin to take sustainable development seriously,” Khandekar added.

Akanksha Laroia started her presentation by speaking about the strategies cities are undertaking to achieve SDGs. She went on to talk about the CITIIS program, its strategies and main functions. She added that understanding the objective and design of the program is important in order to understand the basics of localising SDGs. She said, “There are four major themes under which the projects are selected and technical assistance is provided to the selected cities by a group of experts and global mentors to design, develop and implement the projects.” The projects are developed in two stages - maturation phase and implementation phase.

After the monitoring and evaluation plans are designed, they are integrated on the cities’ management platforms, where the reporting was done easily by the Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs). All the indicators are marked with SDG goals afterwards. ■

“Sustainability is the most important part of SDGs, while the criteria of development consists of variable entities which shift from time to time”

Gaurang Rathi  
Commissioner, Varanasi Nagar Nigam