

Problem Statement

The Government of India recently launched the National Sustainable Habitat and Smart City Mission (NSHSCM). The main objective of the Mission is to create competitive, sustainable cities with good quality of life.

The current urbanisation pattern in many Indian states is skewed with growth concentrating in and around the primate city. This has sharpened disparities in economic growth and opportunities, availability of infrastructure, and services and overall quality of life indicators.

How can India leverage the smart cities initiatives to achieve balanced regional development, ensuring spatial inclusiveness and equality?

Issues

The NSHSCM is an opportunity to set India's urbanisation on a long term sustainable trajectory. The following issues need to be considered while working towards smart city development in India:

Lack of alignment of Development Objectives:

The urban development programmes/strategies are not integrated with national/state development targets.

Absence of a holistic

framework for city development supported by an evaluation and monitoring framework to assess the alignment of development projects with sector/city objectives, highlighting intersectoral trade-offs.

Gap in hierarchy between cities: For example, there are no large (>1 million) cities in Karnataka except Bangalore which is 8 million plus.

Capacity constraints in cities in terms of knowledge and resources in both Urban Local Bodies and development authorities to prepare, enforce and monitor- plans and programmes

Lack of contextualising smart city concept for India: There is need to clearly elaborate what smart cities would aspire to achieve for India, how it plans to address above issues and how the new programme will make a shift from previous urban development programmes.

Proposed Solutions

The Government of India's notes on NSHSCM released so far have brought some clarity on aspects such as suitable population size and number of cities under each category to be covered. The following

actions are recommended to further crystallise smart city development focus.

Recommended Actions

- **Build strategic guidelines for smart cities in India-** to arrive at definition and objectives for smart city development. These should be informed by the baseline situation of Indian cities and how strategically they can be linked to overall national / state development priorities.

- **Create cross-sectoral institutional structure for smart city development programme-**

The institutional structure for planning, managing and monitoring smart city development needs a cross-departmental representation at each state/ city level. This could be done by constituting a working group representative of political appointees, government officials (from different departments), experts, academia, private sector, citizen representatives and NGOs. Continuous capacity enhancement of this group is vital.

- **Develop a process for selection of cities in each state-** guided by a set of transparent and overarching principles such as:

- a) **Larger national/state/regional development agenda-** addressing regional disparity and backwardness, minimising conflict with other sector plans

- b) **Vulnerability concerns-** in line with climate change action plans, resilient development strategies

- c) **Replicability and scalability-** selecting a mixed bag of cities of different size, location and different types of economic anchorage

- d) **Probability of success-** cities with relatively high growth potential
Indicators informing the above need to be developed.

- **Develop Smart City Maturity Framework to identify, monitor and evaluate pilot projects -**

A smart Decision Support System to provide a generic framework of smart city targets linked to objectives in a phased manner, which can be customised for specific city. This needs to be supported by robust knowledge bank of options for best practices and model guidelines.

PROBLEM HIGHLIGHTS

- *Lack of clarity on smart city concept in the Indian context*
- *Increasing intra and inter-regional disparity despite increasing urbanisation*
- *Urban development strategies not effectively integrated with overall national/ state development agenda*

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

- *Constitute smart city working group at state and city level including all stakeholder representatives*
- *Select pilot cities to achieve spatial inclusiveness and create exemplars for best practices*
- *Develop decision support system for identification of projects under smart city programme at city-region level*

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