

Inclusive Heritage-based City Development in India

With migration-led fast urbanization, there has been unplanned expansion of Indian cities and chaotic construction to house the growing population, with little concern for significance of historic areas and heritage assets for the city's character formation and evolution. Stefania Abakerli, senior development planner at the World Bank and D. Ajay Suri, regional adviser - Asie, Cities Alliance, present the programme that their institutions are developing to put heritage at the heart of urban public action.

The rich heritage legacy of Indian cities is being vastly undervalued and underutilized for contemporary social, ecological and economic development. Yet because Indian cities are in an early stage of urbanization, they have the rare opportunity to reverse this paradigm to the ultimate benefit of their residents. Cities in India are endowed with heritage structures, cultural landscapes, practices and expressions which, over centuries, have not only defined collective identities but also provided critical services, such as housing and water supply, and served as livable economic hubs

Inclusive development based on heritage enhancement

The World Bank – Cities Alliance, at the request of Government of India in 2011, is implementing a phased Inclusive Heritage-based City Development Programme (IHCDP) in India. This is to contribute to filling the knowledge and application gap for integrating cultural heritage management with city development. The endeavor is to promote an integrated rather than sectoral approach for provision of critical infrastructure and services in historic cores and integration of these areas and the heritage in the broader city-wide socioeconomic and physical development. The approach is also to contribute to reduction in urban poverty since historic areas in many cities have large concentration of the urban poor.

The IHCDP applies a people-centric, area-based approach to heritage conservation and city development (“inclusive urban renewal”), which places heritage valuation and conservation at the core of city-wide development. The aim is to unlock the assets of the local communities for improved living standards and socio-economic opportunities for poor residents while promoting a culturally dynamic growth pattern at the city level and stewarding its unique heritage.

The objective of the IHCDP is to provide national policy makers, state governments, urban local bodies and sector professionals in India with good practices, institutional arrangements, and financial and management incentives to enable them to revisit their development strategies and manage their unique heritage as a vital element of inclusive city development and investments.

An iterative approach method

The IHCDP approach is expected to have the following outcomes: Enable cities to better manage urbanization and distribute its benefits by valuing and leveraging their existing heritage asset; Enhance the character, living standards and development effectiveness of cities; Unlock billions in funds earmarked for “urban renewal” investments, but not fully utilized due to low capacities at city level, and a lack of adequate approaches and tools.

A phased approach has been adopted for implementation of the IHCDP. Phase 1, the pilot phase (2012-2014) aimed to test and refine an inclusive heritage-based approach to city development planning in India's varying urban contexts, with a focus on learning from cities. The pilot phase was implemented in partnership with the national line ministries⁽¹⁾ select state governments⁽²⁾ and pilot cities – Ajmer-Pushkar, Varanasi and Hyderabad – representing cities across urban hierarchy.

Towards an extension of the programme

Phase 1 of the Demonstration Programme was a rich and inspiring learning experience. An institutional set-up, at the city-level, was designed and implanted for multi-stakeholder engagement and integration of cultural heritage management with city development and local economic development. The Programme facilitated the mobilization of the communities in the pilot cities and they were engaged with other stakeholders in valuation and profiling of city heritage assets, preparation of city heritage management plan and an investment plan for demonstration projects for management of prioritized heritage assets and local economic development. The learnings from the pilot cities were used to formulate urban revitalization guidelines which were shared with the national government for adoption in the national Heritage Cities Development and Augmentation Scheme (HRIDAY).

Phase 2 (2016-18) aims to scale up the approach successfully tested in Phase I by supporting the 12 heritage cities covered under HRIDAY, and select state governments to develop state programmes for development of heritage cities. The focus of the support to the state governments is to develop state urban revitalization guidelines, evolve institutional set up at state and city level to promote IHCDP approach, and urban heritage driven local economic development.

1 - Ministries of Urban Development, Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, Culture and Finance.

2 - Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh



La pression urbaine sur le patrimoine Abakerli