Institutional Innovations for Linking Heritage and Culture: Empowering Urban Local Governments in the Global South

Urban Local Governments (ULGs) in the global South, faced with gaps in technical capacities and inadequate resources, continue to grapple with the complex challenges of balancing rapid and unplanned urbanization with the preservation of their natural, cultural and built heritage. The city of Kochi in 2002 attempted to address this issue, by establishing a technical support unit for the ULG, called the Centre for Heritage, Environment and Development (C-HED); a semi-autonomous institution that operates as the Research & Development wing of the Kochi Municipal Corporation. C-HED is mandated to promote and mainstream environmental aspects in the preservation and renewed interpretation of Kochi’s culture and heritage. It is dedicated to promoting collaboration between a diverse set of urban stakeholders in Kochi (public, private and non-governmental) and enable convergence of technical and financial resources, thus empowering the ULG to effectively undertake activities beyond its capacity in the Indian context. The side event is organized with the support of GIZ India’s Sustainable Urban Development - Smart Cities (SUD-SC) project to share key learnings, impacts and potential for replicability of this case, based on the experience of this model.

Introduction to C-HED

The Centre for Heritage, Environment and Development (C-HED) is a semi-autonomous organization established by the Kochi Municipal Corporation (KMC) in Kerala State, India in 2002, to serve as its dedicated technical support agency in the areas of urban heritage, environment and development. The Centre has been successfully extending dedicated technical support to the city of Kochi for nearly two decades, in order to align the city’s unique identity and vision for sustainable development with the overall development of the “citizen and the city”.

Mission and Governance

C-HED is an independent legal entity headed by a Director who is also the Secretary of the organization. The governance of C-HED is vested in an Executive Committee and a General Council chaired by the Mayor of Kochi city. The mandate of the Centre is to promote heritage and environmental conservation and sustainable urban development.

Approach and Strategy

The Centre provides proactive technical, managerial and administrative support to the ULG. These include support in the following arenas:

- Support to Academics and Research
- Support to City Budget preparation
- Support in Knowledge Management across sectors
- Management of a platform for domain experts and volunteers
- Cooperation management for partnerships and networks
- Support for Event Management and Public Relations
- Management of Cultural Institutions, Parks and Memorials

**Impact**

- Facilitated resource mobilization – human, technical and financial - to further sustainable urban development
- Provided technical and monitoring support over 40 infrastructure and service delivery projects and established a robust model for facilities management
- Nurtured a range of partnerships with local, national and global institutes, both governmental and non-governmental and networks and alliances converging resources for the development of Kochi city
- The Centre has helped mainstream climate-sensitive and sustainable urban development through interventions in environmental and biodiversity protection, redevelopment of public spaces and heritage zones and urban infrastructure development and services

Kochi Municipal Corporation, with the support of the Centre, is locally contributing to India’s progress under SDG 11 as well as SDGs 6, 7 and 13.

**Replicability**

Urban Local Governments can attend this event to learn more about the C-HED model and consider replicating this innovative model comprising of four key elements:

1. **Role**
   - Institutionalization

2. **Resource Mobilization**

3. **Outreach & Communication**

4. **Knowledge Management**