

**Dr. Alka Singh** is presently serving as Joint Director in the Regional Centre for Urban and Environmental Studies (RCUES), Lucknow under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India. She did Ph.D. in Public Administration from Lucknow University in 2004, Master's in Public Administration (MPA) from Lucknow University in 1999. She possesses experience of 20 years in Capacity Building, Project, Planning, Management, Monitoring, Research in Social Development and Urban Sector. She has vast experience in coordination and conducting of capacity building programmes, monitoring, implementation of programmes and policies and related activities. She also conducted and coordinated several research studies in the field of Social Development and Urban Management.

**Dr. Nasruddin** has been with the Regional Centre for Urban and Environmental Studies, Lucknow (RCUES) since 2013. Currently, he is working as Assistant Director in the Centre. He completed his Master Degree in Geography from Aligarh Muslim University and holds doctoral degree in Urban Geography from Department of Geography, Jamia Millia Islamia University, New Delhi. He has been associated as Member, Editorial Board, Urban Panorama, RCUES, Lucknow. He has rich experience of about 12 years in the field of development sector, academics and research field. He has credit of several scholarly papers, research reports and training modules on different themes viz. women empowerment, urban management, e-governance, Geographical Information System (GIS) etc. His areas of academic interest include research and training, Geographical Information System (GIS), urban poverty alleviation, urban management, social mobilization and development, social audit, urban governance, environment, climate change, gender issues etc.



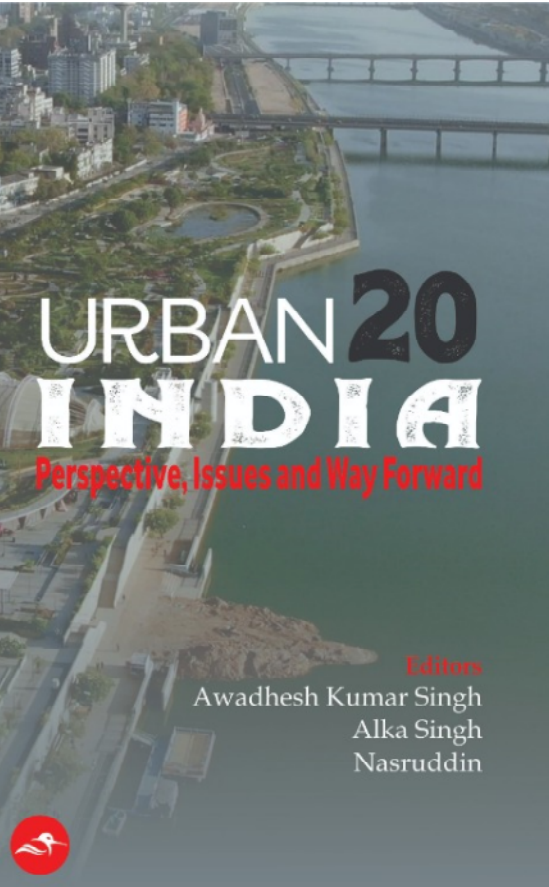
Cities have the potential to exert a considerable influence on the agenda for global development as they are the primary agents of economic development across the globe. There are millions of people living in densely populated areas, which makes cities more vulnerable to the effects of climate change, natural disasters, resource depletion, chaotic growth, and socio-economic disparities. Therefore, this is high time to make advantage of the potential that urbanisation has to act as a catalyst in order to promote growth that is equitable, inclusive, and sustainable. In the context of India's presidency of the G20, there is an opportunity to demonstrate that the policies and practices established by cities have a substantial impact on the accomplishment of global development priorities. U20 is a group of local governments from the G20 nations that got together for the very first time in Buenos Aires in 2018. By addressing policy and practice gaps at all levels of governance, U20 intends to move beyond the stage of intention and into the realm of action as well as to provide a blueprint for global transformation that will be led by cities. In order for cities to be able to strike the appropriate balance between economic success and environmental impact, expanding densities and sprawl, diversity and social cohesion, technological advancements and the digital divide and the myriad of other conflicts that urban centres face, it is imperative that adequate resources be made available to them. In keeping with the G20's vision of "One Earth, One Family, One Future," the Urban 20 engagement group emphasises on the ways in which reforms on a global scale may begin at the local level. The present volume is based on the proceedings of national seminar on "Urban 20 India: Emerging Perspective, Issues and Way Forward", organized by Regional Centre for Urban and Environmental Studies, Lucknow, under the auspices of Indian Council of Social Science Research, Ministry of Education, Government of India, New Delhi on February 27-28, 2024 at Lucknow. The volume comprises of 31 well written papers, brief seminar proceedings and policy recommendations. It is expected that the volume will be of paramount importance in understanding the dynamics of urban development, governance, management of civic affairs as well as emerging issues and challenges. The suggestive policy framework is likely to help the policy makers and administrators in evolving roadmap for addressing the emerging issues and coping up the challenges.



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**URBAN 20 INDIA**  
**Perspective, Issues and Way Forward**

**Editors**  
Awadhesh Kumar Singh  
Alka Singh  
Nasruddin



**Dr. Awadhesh Kumar Singh** is presently Honorary Prof., CESD, MAU, Baddi, Solan, Himachal Pradesh. He retired as Deputy Director, Regional Centre for Urban and Environmental Studies (RCUES), Lucknow in 2023. He is also Director, Ananya Institute for Development Research and Social Action, Lucknow and Member of Core Group, GFSRD besides, Head, Global Centre for Rural Urban Linkages Studies. He has about 34 years of experience in teaching, research and training in the field of social sciences, management and behavioural sciences. He was Member, Working Group on Child Rights for Twelfth Plan, Planning Commission, Government of India, New Delhi in 2012. He has contributed as Consultant and Project Director in various projects and programmes funded by DFID, UNICEF, World Bank, UNDP, UNESCO, UNAIDS and various Ministries and Departments of Central as well as State Governments. He is a prolific writer and has credit of an array of published books, scholarly papers and reports. He was felicitated by Bharat Jyoti Award as well as Rajiv Gandhi National Excellence Award by India International Friendship Society, Best Citizen of India Award by International Publishing House, New Delhi in 2012, Bhojpur Samman, 2014, U. P. Ratan Award in 2015, Outstanding Scientist Award in 2016 and Glory of India Award in 2017. Dr. Singh was felicitated with Life Time Achievement Award by AJIM, Mangalore, Karnataka in 2017 and Dr. S. N. Ghatak Memorial Life Time Achievement Award by Life Foundation and Sahyog Swavlamban Samiti, Lucknow in 2019 as well as Distinguished Scientist Award by VDGGOOD Professional Association, Trichy, Tamil Nadu in 2020. Dr. Singh is associated with a number of academic institutions, Corporate Houses, reputed Government and Non-government organizations.

## Global Urban Sustainability: Uniting Cities through the U20 Agenda

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Rafat Fatima<sup>1</sup>

Pragati Sonali Srivastava<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Afreen Fatima<sup>3</sup>

### Introduction

A strategic framework outlining important goals and initiatives for sustainable development is the U20 Agenda 2023. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which seeks to address global issues and advance everyone's well-being by 2030, is closely related to it. Major cities from all around the world meet as the U20 (Urban 20) to talk about shared urban problems and work together to find answers. City leaders use the U20 Summit as a forum to discuss ideas, best practices, and urban sustainability advocacy. The U20 Agenda 2023 is centered on several topics related to urban sustainable development. These objectives, which prioritize inclusive, resilient, and sustainable cities, are in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN. The cities join forces under the Urban 20 (U20) initiative to tackle important issues related to urban development. With cities playing an ever-more-important role in global affairs, the U20 provides a forum for mayors to contribute to G20 negotiations.

### Purpose of Urban20:

The U20 seeks to promote communication between the local and national government spheres. It acknowledges that cities must contribute for global action to be effective. In order to address issues like affordable housing, social inclusion, sustainable mobility, and finance for urban infrastructure, cities are essential. Given that cities house more than half of the world's people and use 75 percent of its energy, their opinions must be taken into consideration in global processes. The U20 Communiqué is the primary outcome document for the U20 project, which included the requests and recommendations from U20 cities to national governments.

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1. *Research Scholar, Department of Commerce and Business Management, Integral University, Lucknow*
  2. *Research Scholar, Department of Commerce and Business Management, Integral University, Lucknow*
  3. *Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce and Business Management, Integral University, Lucknow*

G20 theme of "One Earth - One Family -One Future," the U20 chair has chosen six key areas for motivating city-level efforts to address various global agenda such as promoting ecologically conscious behavior, guaranteeing water security, quickening climate financing, supporting local identity, reimagining urban governance frameworks, and organizing and igniting digital urban futures.

**Priority Areas of Urban 20:**

1. **Climate Action:** Mitigating emissions, improving urban resilience, and addressing climate change.
2. **Social Inclusion:** Encouraging fairness, communal unity, and all citizens' access to essential services.
3. **Economic Prosperity:** Promoting urban innovation, employment growth, and economic expansion.
4. **Urban Infrastructure:** Improving public areas, transit, and infrastructure.
5. **Governance and Collaboration:** Encouraging collaborations between cities and fortifying governance frameworks.
6. **Collaboration:** The U20 cities cooperate to exchange information, carry out initiatives, and promote laws that support sustainable urban growth. They hope to have a good influence on the local, national, and international levels by working together.

**Literature Review**

One of the G20's Engagement Groups, Urban-20 (U20), gives cities from the G20 member nations a forum to discuss and propose solutions for a number of critical urban development issues, such as affordable housing, social inclusion, sustainable mobility, climate change, and financing of infrastructure. The U20 works to raise the prominence of cities on the international scene, keeping in mind their significance as hubs of development and growth. Through the promotion of the significance of urban development, the G20 agenda serves to foster a fruitful conversation between the national and local governments. The G20's mission centers on addressing key economic challenges, coordinating policies, and promoting international financial stability (Gupta, et al., 2023). There is a strong connection between innovative technologies, governance, spatial-ecological planning, and community behavior (Kumar, et al., 2023). Bhowmick & Chatterjee (2023) demonstrated that rising energy intensity in G20 nations are positively

correlated and have a substantial impact on each other. The U20 focused on the following aspects:

### **1. Accelerating Climate Finance**

Significant environmental issues resulting from India's expanding economy include altered land use patterns, elevated carbon emissions, the production and disposal of solid waste, contamination of the air and water, and insufficient sanitary facilities. A significant portion of the urban population lives in informal settlements in India, such as slums and quarter settlements. These communities are typically found in low-lying areas and are subject to environmental degradation, including changing climatic patterns and the direct and indirect loss of essential urban services.

The impact of climate change and sustainable development makes it more likely that disasters will occur in cities, and local governments and their allies will assist corporations in managing an increasingly invasive and changing environment. Every city faces challenges in managing catastrophic risk. Therefore, climate finance is essential to enabling the large investment needed to implement policies that would drastically cut emissions and lessen the negative effects of climate change. Development banks prioritize their goals over portfolio management and create international financing facilities.

### **2. Economic Prosperity**

Long-term economic resilience can be significantly enhanced by local economies and cultures. Thinking locally also has the benefit of utilizing conventional, location-specific expertise on important building design topics, such as disaster management plans and resource conservation methods. Priority support for local economic growth must be provided to the creative and cultural industries. Government corporations must create policies that support regional traditions and the preservation of cultural assets. Moreover, nonprofit institutions

### **3. Urban Infrastructure**

Promoting national and local policies and initiatives for a “net-zero transitions” in a number of crucial areas of urban development is the main goal of the Urban-20 (U20) program. The U20 agenda's top priorities are as follows:

- **Rules for Net Zero Buildings:** Net zero energy consumption should be the standard for new construction, and existing structures should be adapted to meet this requirement.

- **Renewable Energy Maximization:** Promoting the use and production of renewable energy, with an emphasis on optimizing the output of renewable power.
- **Circular Economy and Nature-Based Solutions:** These practices impact in the areas of solid waste management, wastewater treatment, water management, and building. Making the switch from conventional "grey" infrastructure to more environmentally friendly "green" infrastructure.
- **Reducing Plastic Usage:** Cutting back on single-use plastics and reducing plastic consumption.
- **Prioritizing Sustainable Mobility:** Entails encouraging active transportation (bicycling and walking), zero-emission cars, and public transportation. Minimizing the use of personal vehicles that emit CO<sub>2</sub>.
- **Urban Food Security:** Using urban farming to provide access to food produced responsibly.
- **Responsible Supply Chains:** Promoting local, responsible supply chains for goods and services used in the urban sector in order to stop the loss of biodiversity and preserve green space.
- **Green and Blue Spaces:** Expanding the quantity and caliber of green and blue spaces in metropolitan areas to offer health advantages to all city dwellers.

These goals address the issues brought on by population expansion and climate change with the goal of building more resilient, sustainable, and ecologically friendly urban infrastructure.

#### **4. Governance and Collaboration**

Urban-20 (U20) is an initiative that is essential to the advancement of cities as global leaders. The following are some crucial elements of the U20 agenda's governance and cooperation:

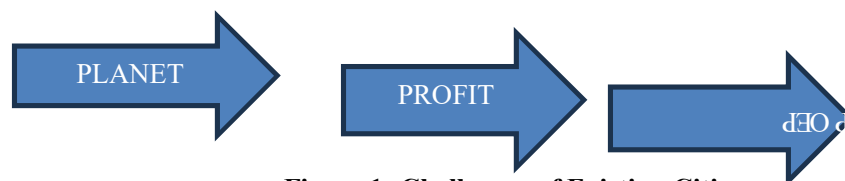
- **Collaborative Solutions and Suggestions:** The United Nations puts forth collaborative suggestions to improve climate action and sustainable economic development. These suggestions make use of global frameworks, city-specific guidelines, and current G20 policy recommendations.
- **Bringing Cities Together:** Under a shared framework, the U20 brings mayors from G20 cities together. These local leaders work

together and plan their initiatives to contribute to national conversations.

- **Participating Cities:** Major G20 C40 and UCLG member cities are among the Participating Cities that actively influence the U20 process. A 'City Sherpa' and the mayor of each participating city serve as their representatives. Observer cities (intermediary cities and capital cities, both G20 and non-G20) also make a contribution.
- **Governance Structure:** The U20 is a city-led effort that makes sure the G20 hears the voice of the urban community. Every year, the U20 Chair alternates and is often based in the nation hosting the G20 that year. Conveners like C40 Cities, offer research and knowledge-based contributions to support well-informed municipal perspectives on a range of U20 topics.
- **Area of Convergence:** The U20 works with other G20 engagement groups to find areas of mutual interest and synergy.

#### Challenges of Cities:

1. Limited Resources	2. Low Opportunity
3. Climate Change Impact	4. Crumbling Services
5. Poor Quality Of Life	6. Aging Infrastructure
7. Environmental Degradation	8. Brittle Human Interface
9. Poor Social Fabric	10. Urban Migration



**Figure 1: Challenges of Existing Cities**

Source: <https://wadhwanifoundation.org/>

**Other Challenges:**

1. **Environmental Threats:**

- A. **Rapid Urbanization:** As cities expand, their fundamental infrastructure is put under pressure. Environmental risks increase in tandem with more frequent and catastrophic weather occurrences brought on by global climate change. These include heat waves, diseases, flooding, and tropical storms, which particularly harm coastal cities. Cities need to strengthen their defenses against these dangers immediately.
- B. **Scarcity of Resource:** Food, Energy, and Water: Essential resources are needed for cities to prosper. Urban sprawl raises energy consumption while decreasing the amount of land that can be used for agriculture and water catchment. Even if technology can increase the output of agriculture and enhance the transmission of power, many cities find it difficult to keep up with the demands of their expanding populations. Additionally, haphazard growth reduces green areas, which affects livability in general. The poorest people may be disproportionately affected by rising food prices due to a lack of fresh water and fertile land.

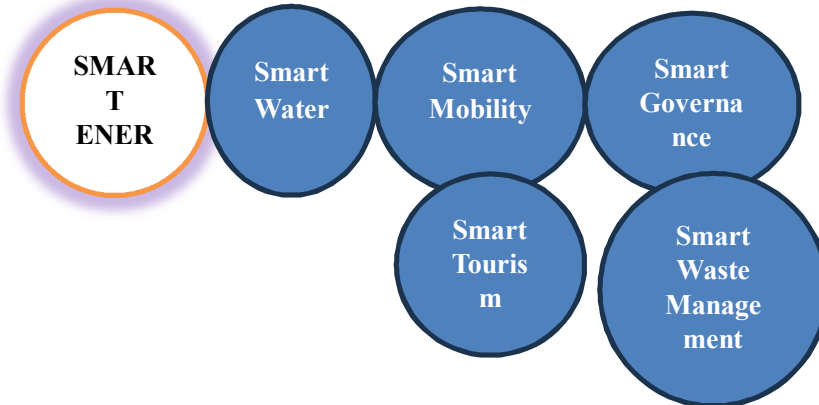
2. **Inequality:**

- A. **Inequitable Distribution of Resources:** Diverse urban communities experience differing levels of availability to essential resources and resilience to environmental hazards. Urban impoverished people are growing alongside super-rich urban populations. The growing divide between these groups has the potential to undermine social stability and override the advantages of urban growth. Equitable progress sharing must be given top priority by policymakers.
- B. **Urban Sprawl:** The unplanned growth of cities results in a reduction of green spaces. The general well-being and quality of life of the citizens are adversely affected by this. Maintaining the environment while promoting growth must go hand in hand.
- C. **Off-Reserve Areas Developing Countries:** Squatter or informal settlements are frequently formed because of the rapid urban expansion in developing nations. Urban administration is severely hampered in these places by a lack of fundamental services, sufficient infrastructure, and sanitary conditions.

**Recommendations for Various Challenges:**

<b>Problems Faces By People</b>	<b>Challenges Under Current System</b>	<b>Solution</b>
Ease of doing business	Being done in most of the cities	Online system for applying and providing information
Online property tax payment	Being done in most of the cities	Could be to use data analytics to find properties which are paying property tax.
Well maintained road	Manual inspection	Feed from dashboard cameras and mobile phones are being used to provide exact location in near real time with size.
Smart parking system	Parking is a big challenge in most of the cities	Should start online parking system
Good quality air	Indian cities are the most populated cities in the world	Monitoring sensors to prepare pollution hotspot to decide measure to reduce pollution.
Well maintained parks, garden, and other recreational facilities	In very few cities' municipal parks, gardenis well maintained.	Technology has limited role to play.
Better road, bridges, and public buildings	Most of the small city's lack of proper road, bridges, and public buildings.	Using sensors and it devices to monitor the condition of road, bridges, and public buildings.

**Solutions: Smart Energy**



**Figure 2: Solution of Smart Energy: Role Technology Can Play**

Source: <https://wadhwanifoundation.org/>

**Conclusion**

The Urban 20 (U20) initiative brings together major cities from around the world to address shared urban challenges. Cities play a crucial role in global affairs, and the U20 provides a platform for mayors to contribute to G20 negotiations. The U20 plays a critical role in advancing urban sustainability and ensuring that cities' voices are heard on the global stage. The U20 Agenda 2023 emphasizes collaboration, local empowerment, and global impact. Additionally, addressing climate finance is crucial, especially in India, where rapid urbanization poses environmental challenges, including waste management, air quality, and water scarcity. This paper highlights critical issues that require attention and strategic planning to ensure sustainable urban development and improved quality of life for all residents. India's proactive approach can serve as a model for other nations. By fostering collaboration, innovation, and inclusivity, U20 2023 can drive positive change in urban environments worldwide. The U20 in Ahmedabad promises to foster collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and a shift in mindset to establish better cities globally. By exploring urban planning issues, India can contribute to a renewed urban vigor and consensus for better cities worldwide. The problems that individuals confront, the shortcomings of the current system, and possible fixes that digitalization can bring about:

1. **Ease of Doing Business Digitalization-Based Solution:** Put in place a online system for licensing, business registration, and information sharing.
2. **Online Property Tax Payment:** To find properties that are not paying taxes on time, use data analytics in Online Property Tax Payment.
3. **Well-Maintained Roads:** Digitalization as a solution can use information from mobile phones and dashboard cameras to keep an eye on the state of the roads in near real-time, identifying maintenance needs promptly.
4. **Smart Parking System:** Install online parking system that allows for effective parking and real-time availability information in Smart Parking System.
5. **Good Quality Air:** Utilize pollution sensors to identify hotspots for pollution so that specific actions can be taken to lower pollution levels in good quality air.
6. **Excellent Parks and Recreational Areas:** Digitalization-related solution like community engagement and awareness campaigns can encourage greater park care in excellent parks and recreational areas.

Hence, by embracing digital solutions, cities can address these challenges more efficiently and enhance the overall quality of life for their residents.

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