

Regional Advocacy - Global Goal on Adaptation & New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance
ASIA PACIFIC
 [Webinar Outcome]

INTEGRATED DESIGN

No. 9/1 (89), 34 B cross, 14 main, 4th T block,
 Jayanagar, Bangalore 560 041 India

ONLINE WEBINAR: MUNICIPAL VOICES IN CLIMATE ADAPTATION

In the global discourse on climate adaptation, the spotlight often falls on rising sea levels, melting glaciers, and large-scale national climate finance commitments. But what about the places and people on the margins of these narratives—small towns, sub-million cities, and urban settlements that are both expanding and straining under pressure?

To understand this, in collaboration with BORDA – South Asia, an online webinar was organized to amplify the voices of municipalities at the intersection of climate adaptation and basic infrastructure provision. This engagement significantly enriched the advocacy effort, especially by emphasizing the often-overlooked role of municipal services as a critical component of climate change adaptation.

The idea for this focused discussion emerged through interactions with the BORDA South Asia team, who work closely with municipalities on infrastructure development, particularly in the WaSH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) sector. Insights from the earlier workshop held in Sri Lanka had already highlighted the need to link local adaptation priorities with the global climate adaptation agenda. Including the perspectives of municipal government representatives was seen as essential to advancing this agenda meaningfully.

To facilitate this, the webinar titled "Regional Advocacy on GGA and NCQG: Recognizing Basic Infrastructure as a Pillar of Climate Change Adaptation" was co-designed with BORDA. The session centered on sharing real-world experiences and strategies from two municipalities: Leh (India) and Sylhet (Bangladesh).

Key components of the webinar included:

- Presentations by BORDA – South Asia on local climate adaptation through WaSH strengthening.
- Insights from INDE on regional advocacy efforts on NCQG and GGA
- A panel discussion featuring:
 - Mr. Tanveer Rahman, Urban Planner, Sylhet Municipal corporation
 - Mr. Tenzin, Executive Officer, Leh Municipal committee
 - Mr. Tikender Singh Panwar, Senior Advisor to BORDA and former Deputy Mayor of Shimla

The webinar was open to the public and promoted across networks. Approximately 20 participants joined from various parts of the Asia-Pacific region, bringing diverse regional insights into the conversation.

Figures 17 and 18 show the promotional materials, including the webinar poster and agenda, which were shared widely for registration and outreach.



Figure 17 Webinar Poster

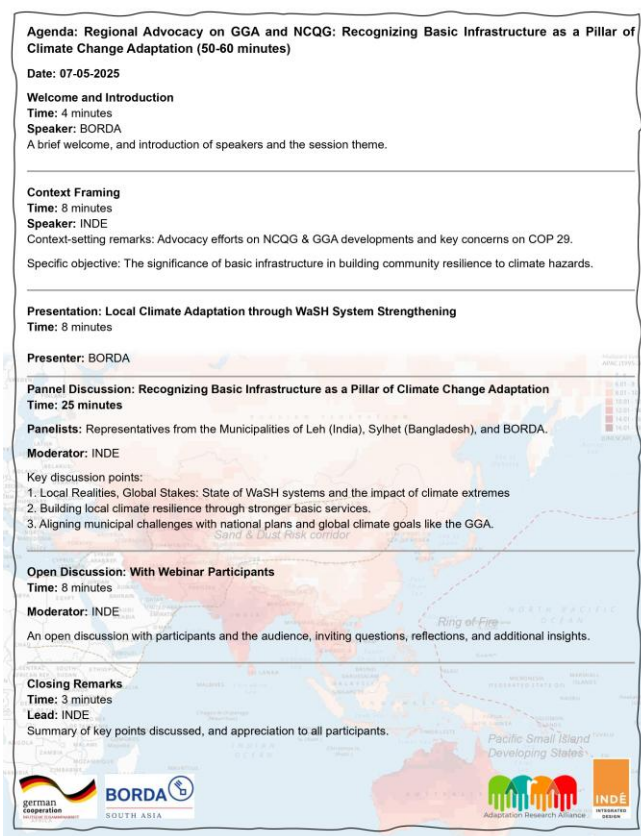


Figure 18 Webinar Agenda

6.2 SPEAKER HIGHLIGHTS

Anjali Karol Mohan (Urban and Regional Planner, Partner at Indé)

National policies on climate adaptation have made progress, but local governments and institutions continue to face critical gaps in financing, capacity, and recognition. There is a need to strengthen the connection between global adaptation goals and local implementation to ensure effective outcomes on the ground.

Jeevan Roy (Senior Urban Planner, BORDA South Asia)

Ground-level insights from multiple municipalities reveal acute and location-specific climate challenges:

- Water scarcity in Chintamani, Karnataka
- Storm-induced damage to waste management facilities in Someshwara

- Flooding at sewage treatment facilities in Chigpelapura
- Flash floods in Leh

There are stark disparities in both media attention and financial support between metropolitan and non-metropolitan cities. For instance, while Bengaluru received considerable resources during the 2023–2024 drought, Chintamani—facing similar conditions—received little attention or assistance.

Tanveer Rahman (Urban Planner, Sylhet Municipal corporation, Bangladesh)

Sylhet experienced severe flooding in April 2022, with 2,457 mm of rainfall recorded in three days—surpassing its annual average of 2,020 mm—and impacting over 7 million people. Current mitigation and adaptation initiatives include:

- A Material Recovery Facility that processes 430 of a planned 1,000 metric tonnes, reducing methane and CO₂ emissions
- A shift toward surface water treatment to reduce reliance on unsustainable groundwater extraction, though technical expertise remains a limiting factor

Tenzin (Executive Officer, Leh Municipality, India)

Leh is increasingly vulnerable to cloudbursts and flash floods, which disproportionately affect migrant workers and informal settlement residents. Ongoing initiatives include:

- Implementation of a decentralized wastewater management system
- Community awareness campaigns focused on preparedness for extreme weather events

These efforts are constrained by limited financial and institutional resources, affecting the municipality’s capacity to meet adaptation objectives.

Tikender Singh Panwar (Senior Advisor, BORDA; Former Deputy Mayor of Shimla)

National adaptation strategies, such as the Smart Cities Mission, fall short in addressing the needs of smaller cities. The belief that climate finance will "trickle down" to the local level is ineffective. An estimated \$86 trillion is needed globally for adaptation by 2030 (World Bank), yet funding remains inaccessible to most cities. Key proposals include:

- Creation of intergovernmental financial transfer mechanisms
- Establishment of City Business Councils and Citizen Councils, as successfully piloted in Kerala
- Development of a White Paper on small cities to document their climate vulnerabilities and infrastructure needs, positioning them as essential actors in national adaptation planning

6.1 KEY TAKEAWAYS

Despite notable progress in the development of National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and climate policies in South Asia—particularly in countries such as Bangladesh and India (ongoing)—the implementation of these frameworks remains inconsistent across governance levels. Municipal institutions, particularly in non-metropolitan and smaller urban centres, seems to not be the forward runners of adaptation planning due to limitations in urban governance structures, technical expertise, and financial devolution.

A recurring theme throughout the discussions was the shared vulnerability of small towns and large cities to climate impacts. However, small towns remain underfunded, institutionally overlooked, and largely absent from mainstream adaptation discourse and national climate policy instruments. These urban areas are commonly excluded from flagship initiatives such as India’s Smart Cities Mission and JNNURM, and they face persistent challenges related to limited media visibility, inadequate financial flows, and insufficient technical capacities, despite experiencing similar intensities of climate-related hazards.

The condition of basic infrastructure systems—particularly in the water, sanitation, and solid waste sectors (WaSH)—was identified as a critical point of concern. In many cases, these systems are either severely compromised or non-existent. The absence of targeted and adequate financing for these essential services within national adaptation and urban development programs was a shared concern across participating municipalities. The existing reliance on limited domestic funds and fragmented, donor-led pilot projects has proven insufficient to address the scale and longevity of climate risks affecting small towns.

The cases of Leh (India) and Sylhet (Bangladesh) illustrate the disproportionate challenges faced by small municipalities in addressing increasing climate extremes such as flash floods, cloudbursts, and water scarcity. These municipalities often operate with high service delivery expectations, yet are constrained by minimal budgets, limited human resources, and weak institutional leverage within national climate programs. The consequences of such disparities are significant—extreme climate events not only damage physical infrastructure but also erode public trust, disrupt governance systems, and threaten the social and economic stability of affected communities.

To address these gaps, there is an urgent need to broaden the scope of adaptation interventions to include small and medium urban centres more deliberately. This requires improvements in financing mechanisms, enhanced institutional capacities, and stronger intergovernmental (Local – Sub National – National – International) coordination to ensure that adaptation planning and execution is inclusive, locally relevant, and effectively resourced.