



SERVICE AGENCY 
COMMUNITIES IN ONE WORLD

FOURTH PARTNERSHIP CONFERENCE BETWEEN GERMAN AND ASIAN MUNICIPALITIES

HILDESHEIM, 26 TO 28 SEPTEMBER 2023

Fit for the future? Urban-rural relations in times of climate change

Service Agency Communities in One World (SKEW)
in collaboration with the municipal partnership
Hildesheim – Padang



The participants of the Fourth Partnership Conference between German and Asian Municipalities on the Market Square in Hildesheim. Photo: AR



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Background

Every three years, the Service Agency Communities in One World (SKEW) holds a partnership conference for German and Asian municipalities which are involved in municipal partnerships. The conference gives these municipalities the chance to meet over the course of several days and discuss current issues. The latest in this line of events was the fourth regional conference focusing on Asia, held in collaboration with the Hildesheim-Padang partnership, which took place in Hildesheim in Lower Saxony from 26 to 28 September 2023. The conference centred around the question of how urban and rural municipalities make themselves fit for future challenges in a sustainable and resilient way in times of climate change. It also provided plenty of opportunities to address other questions relevant to the work of the partnerships, such as around issues of communication.

Over 80 participants from Germany, Armenia, India, Indonesia, Mongolia, the Philippines and Vietnam took up the invitation to come to Hildesheim. Some delegations arrived together, as many partnerships had met in German municipalities in advance of the conference.

The following partnerships were represented at the conference (German municipality – municipality in the partner country):

- Baruth/Mark – Murun (Mongolia)
- Berlin– Jakarta (Indonesia)
- Berlin-Lichtenberg – Hanoi-Hoan Kiem (Vietnam)
- Burgenlandkreis – Armavir Province (Armenia)
- Ebhausen – Lubang (Philippines)
- Essen – Ulaanbaatar (Mongolia)
- Esslingen – Coimbatore (India)
- Hildesheim – Padang (Indonesia)
- Ingolstadt – Aurangabad (India)
- Karlsruhe – Aurangabad (India)
- Leipzig – Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam)
- Regen (district) – Vanadzor/Tavush Region (Armenia)
- Schönefeld – Bayangol (Mongolia)
- Stuttgart – Mumbai (India)



Participants of the Partnership Conference
Photo: AR



Opening day – 26 September 2023

Walking tours and reception in the Butchers' Guild Hall

On the first day of the conference, participants arrived in Hildesheim and had the opportunity to get to know a little more about the host city. City tours were held in German and English, taking participants from their hotel near the railway station around a series of sites illustrating the city of Hildesheim's rich history, ending on the Market Square. The city suffered terrible destruction during the Second World War. Rebuilding, some of it faithful to pre-war originals, went on until the end of the 1980s. Nowadays visitors to Hildesheim are wowed by the unique architectural ensemble formed by the town hall, commercial buildings and town houses. One of the city's most beautiful half-timbered buildings is the Butchers' Guild Hall on the western side of the Market Square, which hosted a dinner to mark the opening of the Fourth Partnership Conference between German and Asian Municipalities.

The mayor of Hildesheim Beate König and **SKEW Project Manager Karoline Caesar** gave words of welcome to open the international event, setting the tone with the participants for the events of the coming days. Good food and thought-provoking conversations rounded off the evening.



The city tours ended on the Market Square in Hildesheim. Photo: AR

Mayor Beate König and Service Agency Project Manager Karoline Caesar welcomed the participants at the Butchers' Guild Hall. Photo: AR



Conference Day 1: 27 September 2023

Welcome

Beate König, Mayor of the City of Hildesheim, was joined by her counterpart **Vice Mayor of Padang Ekos Albar Munaf** in giving a few words of welcome in the Great Hall of the Town Hall, where they expressed their hope that all present would be inspired by the event. After this the **Conference Moderator Susanne Luithlen** posed introductory questions to the two mayors.

When asked about the relevance of a conference of this kind, Mayor Beate König emphasised the importance of looking at things from a different angle. The world was in crisis mode, she said, which made it particularly important to listen to one another and demonstrate cohesion. This was at least a way of bringing impetus and improvements to municipal partnerships, Mayor

König said. In the longer term, though, she acknowledged a responsibility to create a future worth living in for future generations. Vice Mayor of Padang Ekos Albar Munaf added that the partnership conference offered an important opportunity to share knowledge and experiences. In his view, when representatives of NGOs and experts from practice and research come together, you can learn a lot from one another.

Both mayors spoke about their shared project of the Hildesheim-Padang municipal partnership, in which the two cities are working together to improve water quality of the river Arau in Padang. The project continued even during the pandemic. As travel restrictions impossibil- itated in-person visits, Hildesheim organised a virtual

tour of its sewage facility at short notice. Beate König noted that polluted rivers in Asia are not solely the fault of local residents, as Germany and other industrial coun- tries were exporting their rubbish to Asia and generally refusing to take responsibility for it. We all share one world, she said.

After looking back on the three previous regional con- ferences with focus on Asia, the 14 partnerships in attendance briefly introduced themselves and expressed their expectations for the event. Those present then had a few minutes to get to know those seated nearby before the moderator moved the discussion on to the conference's priority topic and introduced the panel guests.



Mayor Beate König from Hildesheim and Vice Mayor Ekos Albar Munaf from Padang answered questions from the moderator. Photo: AR

The participants had a chance to talk in small groups. Photo: AR





Panel discussion: Climate resilience – Potentials and Challenges of Rural Areas

Dr Shritu Shrestha from the Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment and Energy and **Michael Schmitz, Deputy Head of the European Office of the German County Association in Brussels**, were invited to take part in a panel discussion. **Ulziijargal Tserenpurev, founder of Eco Mommy, a Mongolian NGO**, was the third member of the panel, representing the partnership between Baruth/Mark and her home town of Murun. The panel discussion aimed to shed light on the topic from three complementary perspectives: academia, politics and civil society. The conversation focussed on climate resilience in rural areas, an issue which currently presents numerous challenges to municipalities in Germany, Asia, and worldwide. International discussion, however, often continues to pay too little attention to municipalities in rural regions.

As the first speaker, **Ulziijargal Tserenpurev** introduced her grassroots organization which is aimed at mothers in a rural area. It raises awareness around the responsible use of resources and waste disposal and campaigns for a renewed appreciation to Mongolia's nomadic culture, one which consumes very few resources. In her view, focusing their work on mothers holds huge potential for expanding their impact: if women become role models of a sustainable lifestyle, this impacts future generations, as well as the male population, she argued. Her Eco Mommy movement has 4,000 members, and has reached 45,000 families so far. The movement makes mothers' perspectives an important point of contact to allow these female stakeholders in rural areas to manage for themselves how to deal with challenges.



Ulziijargal Tserenpurev from Murun in Mongolia presented the ideas and goals of her grassroots organisation Eco Mommy. Photo: AR



Roland and Mimi Schlüter have been involved in the Hildesheim-Padang partnership for over 30 years. Photo: AR



As the representative of German counties in the European Union, **Michael Schmitz** made reference to the title of the panel discussion and clarified how rural municipalities faced particularly significant and specific challenges. Rural areas are particularly affected by the shortage of skilled workers, he said, but a lack of financial resources also presented a problem which limited climate-resilient development in those areas. He explained how the German County Association represented the interests of rural municipalities in Brussels in order to accelerate the adaptations needed, such as infrastructure measures. With regard to Asia, German municipal administrations could learn a good deal from the pragmatic approach adopted by Asian municipalities, he said, adding that

this was by no means a minor factor in how the continent had developed such a powerful dynamic, be that in economic issues or questions of governance. He also stressed the need to investigate the long-term impact of the rapid introduction of technologies such as electric scooters. However, with regard to handling the climate crisis, Michael Schmitz stressed that pragmatism and speed were by no means merely a matter of perspective, but essential preconditions. Turning to the potential of small communities in Europe and in Asia, he stressed the importance of local people, who are generally part of strong networks and highly engaged. Referring back to the previous speaker, he made a plea for promoting the engagement of women in rural areas.

'In Asia, they approach many issues in a significantly more pragmatic fashion. We discuss too much, and still we do not come to any better conclusion. It is no longer a question of taking German expertise abroad, but rather, bringing it from other countries to us.'

Michael Schmitz, Deputy Head of the European Office of the German County Association in Brussels



Michael Schmitz from the European Office of the German County Association described the concerns of rural municipalities. Photo: AR



Dr Shritu Shrestha from the Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment, Energy illuminated the topic of climate resilience from an academic perspective. Photo: AR

In her talk **Dr Shritu Shrestha** offered an academic perspective on the issue. In her view, climate resilience for municipalities means becoming aware of vulnerabilities to the impacts of climate change and conducting risk assessments. The municipalities then need to formulate specific risk planning to prepare for the impacts of

extreme weather events. She stressed that collaborations with private businesses were essential to transition successfully into a circular economy, arguing that political strategy papers and business models should interconnect around these issues. However, she also noted that when it came to introducing and using new energy, infrastructure and income models, certain groups in urban and rural areas faced inequalities in terms of barriers and resources. For example, women are impacted more often and in different ways than men, such in the case of women who run small agricultural businesses who are more exposed to extreme weather events. Dr Shrestha stressed that the goal must be to feed energy and transport systems with energy from 100% renewable sources. In this she argued that researchers can contribute by advising policymakers in the form of analysis and papers which do justice to the complexity of local decisions in multi-level-governance systems, while also incorporating variables, influence factors and criteria for good policies. In her closing statement, she called for more local and international cooperation, arguing that the outcome of the climate crisis must be a polycentric conception of the world. Expertise and experience from all areas of society must be brought together, and municipalities should also have a greater voice on an international level.



Municipal partnership workshops

The afternoon of the first day of the conference was dedicated to sharing experiences on specific partnership projects. The Hildesheim-Padang, District Regen-Tavush Region, Ebhausen-Lubang, Baruth/Mark-Murun, and Karlsruhe-Aurangabad partnerships had all prepared workshops to this end. Later all conference participants gathered for a plenary session to report on their impressions and learning experiences. The workshops at a glance:

1. Environmental urban development: Improving water quality and waste management, based on the example of the Arau River in Padang/Indonesia
(Padang/Indonesia – Hildesheim/Germany partnership)
2. Regional development support: Measures and instruments to strengthen rural areas, based on the example of Tavush/Armenia
(Tavush Region/Armenia – District Regen/Germany partnership)
3. Sustainable partnerships: Synergies between climate protection and climate adaptation in the joint project of solar-powered drinking water plants in Lubang/Philippines
(Lubang/Philippines – Ebhausen/Germany partnership)
4. Women's initiatives for sustainable development in rural areas – experiences from Khuvsgul Aimag Province/Mongolia with a focus on the role of the NGO Eco Mommy
(Murun/Mongolia – Baruth/Mark/Germany partnership)
5. Smart City and Smart Village development in times of climate change through start-up incubation, innovation initiatives and internationalization
(Aurangabad/India – Karlsruhe/Germany partnership)



Workshop presentations

Padang/Indonesia – Hildesheim/Germany partnership

Torsten Balck summed up what Hildesheim had learned through its collaboration in the “Padang saves the Arau river” project and the experiences that were presented at the workshop. Hildesheim started by asking what their municipal partner actually needed and looked for a project which would deliver a long-term impact but without high levels of funding. Working with partners from Padang, they developed the Padang saves the Arau river project which aimed to improve water quality in the river by handling waste more effectively. The overarching philosophy for the project was one city, one

management, one responsibility. Hildesheim contributed technical advice and support to the project. During the pandemic the partners had learned how to make the best possible use of virtual channels of communication and instigated two virtual inspections of municipal facilities. Nevertheless, Torsten Black stressed the importance of meeting in person. He also argued that the partnership could collaborate even more successfully if voluntary work could be remunerated and if additional funding opportunities were available to initiate further projects.

“I was staggered at the level of interest in sharing information through the Asian and German partnerships!”

Torsten Balck, City of Hildesheim, Germany



Torsten Balck moderated the workshop run by the Hildesheim–Padang partnership on a joint project to save the Arau river in Padang.
Photo: AR



Workshop focus: Women's initiatives for sustainable development in rural areas – experiences from Khuvsgul Aimag Province in Mongolia and the role of the NGO Eco Mommy

The NGO Eco Mommy is working with its municipal partner Baruth/Mark to deliver a project on women's initiatives for sustainable household management in Murun. They aim to make waste management in Murun more effective and environmentally-friendly while raising awareness in society around recycling and avoiding waste. This is Eco Mommy's first official collaboration. In the workshop Ulziijargal Tserenpurev gave a detailed account of the origins and objectives of her initiative, which started life in a Facebook group in 2018 where mothers wanted to discuss social developments, bringing up children and healthy eating. In no time at all the group grew into a movement and an influential NGO. Eco Mommy has taken on the job of making sustainability issues an integral part of families' daily lives by providing resources and knowledge on how to make environmentally-friendly decisions. Eco Mommy mainly focuses on women and mothers as these groups have a considerable influence on environmental decisions in the home.

For Eco Mommy, what matters in the partnership project and its wider mission:

- Raising awareness and sharing knowledge. The organisation holds events to share information and provide training so mothers and their families understand the importance of avoiding waste, separating rubbish and recycling.
- Participation and promoting a sense of community. Eco Mommy encourages mothers, their families and neighbours to actively participate in the project. This creates a strong potential that they will identify with the project, their neighbourhoods and the city, while creating an active awareness of how to contribute to creating a sustainable environment.
- Improving urban infrastructure. Providing recycling centres and collection points has modernised waste management in the city.
- Development and raising incomes. Eco Mommy works on innovative solutions to re-use waste and create income opportunities through recycling and developing sustainable products for day-to-day use.

“It's fantastic for me to get to know so many projects from Asia and to be able to contribute something from the work of our own partnership. What has again become clear to me is how important grassroots movements are in development policy – especially those which take women into account.”

Karsten Wittke, Baruth/Mark, Germany



Ulzijargal Tserenpurev gave a report on her Eco Mommy organisation and a joint project with partners from Baruth/Mark in Germany.
Photo: AR

By targeting its messaging at women and mothers, Eco Mommy aims to bring about far-reaching positive changes in society in the long term, whose impact extends well beyond individual households. This helps create a more sustainable and environmentally conscious society which is up to the environmental challenges of our age. At the same time, the project gives women a stronger voice in social decision-making process. Eco Mommy encourages and empowers women to stand up for their issues in politics and society.



"I want to draw attention to the outstanding collaboration with our partner city of Baruth/Mark. Here in Hildesheim and in our project I am experiencing what collaboration means. What I particularly like about our project is that we solve problems together. Even though we live in two completely different parts of the world, we're not alone, for we can rely on our partners."

Ulzijargal Tserenpurev, founder of Eco Mommy, Murun, Mongolia



Lubang/Philippines – Ebhausen/Germany partnership

The municipalities of Lubang and Ebhausen have maintained a climate partnership since 2016. Despite restrictions due to the pandemic, both municipalities managed to stick to the action plan they developed together, delivering their projects aimed at using renewable energy and raising awareness around sustainability in civil society. In their workshop, Ray Morales from Lubang and Daniela Schweikardt from Ebhausen drew on their experiences to present both the factors which had contributed to the project's success and the challenges it faced. Their work focused on securing drinking water supplies for local people by using solar power and drinking water treatment systems. The plans included monitoring public health data and constant monitoring of equipment maintenance. In addition to this, the project prioritised sustainability by including important stakeholders,

setting up a cooperative and promoting organic farming. Ebhausen only has a population of 5,000 but it has already experienced having to adapt drinking water supplies to climate-related shortages and wanted to share what it learned with its municipal partner. After forming a climate partnership to initiate the project, the partners applied for a three-year project funded by SKEW, which was concluded in 2023. Challenges included the pandemic, linguistic and bureaucratic barriers and staffing capacity, but the partners were able to overcome these together. In future the partners hope to bring in local schools, churches and civil society as climate change is making itself felt in the Global South and North. The aim is to put the partnership on a broader footing so it can grow and to allow the two municipalities to continue to address the challenges in future.

“I’m here with my Filipino colleague Ray from Lubang. We’ve known each other for a number of years now and are proud that we’ve been able to deliver a fairly large project.”

Daniela Schweikardt, Ebhausen, Germany



Daniela Schweikardt and Ray Morales presented the successful climate partnership between Ebhausen and Lubang. Photo: AR



Tavush Region/Armenia – Regen District/Germany partnership

The partnership between Regen district and the Tavush region dates back to 2011 and is an example of collaboration between areas of a rural character, despite the fact that the city of Vanadzor, Armenia's third-largest city, is also involved. Dr Sona Kotsinyan and Herbert Unnasch summed up the outcomes of their workshop. For over ten years the two have been connecting issues around local economic development, tourism and marketing to promote sustainable development in the Tavush region.

Sub-projects have included employing a local tourism expert, reciprocal visits and workplace observations in the energy and food processing sectors. One outcome has been the creation of a business promotion hub in Vanadzor. Both sides intend to take their engagement further and develop a joint strategy. In the short term, they aim to sign a memorandum of understanding to secure ongoing cooperation. In future sustainable tourism might become the priority area as a means of

further maximising the potential of rural areas. German members of the partnership stressed how important it was to maintain long-term efforts to convince policy-makers of the value of the partnership, while always remaining flexible. The Armenian partners said they were open to adding new pillars to their collaboration and were very interested in knowledge transfer.



The Tavush region in Armenia and the Regen district plan to continue expanding their activities in rural areas. Photo: AR



Aurangabad/India – Karlsruhe/Germany partnership

Ralf Eichhorn from the Karlsruhe Business Promotion Team spoke about the Aurangabad – Karlsruhe partnership. The workshop also included colleagues from Ingolstadt, which is also setting up a partnership with Aurangabad. They used the opportunity to brainstorm and share their experiences with workshop participants from other partnerships. A future project is to be developed around the idea of smart cities. The workshop

collated ideas under the headings of “Smart Change”, “Smart Production” and “Smart industries”. But it was not just about technology transfer: local participation, upskilling for specialists and support from administrators were also issues. There had been a fruitful exchange of ideas and experiences with the Berlin – Jakarta partnership, which is working on similar topics.

“I was at the workshop which Karlsruhe and Aurangabad held on the topic of smart cities. The topics we discussed there are the same as those which we are working on in the Berlin–Jakarta partnership, so sharing ideas and experience was really worthwhile.”

Thomas Keil, Senate Chancellery of the State of Berlin, Germany



An intense brainstorming session on the topic of smart cities, with partners from Aurangabad and Karlsruhe and other participants. Photo: AR



Indonesian-German cultural evening

A number of extra guests attended the evening reception in the Town Hall, including Indonesia's Deputy Ambassador Fajar Wirawan Harijo, who had only taken up his post a few days before, and the Indonesian cultural attaché in Germany Devdy Risa, along with members of the public who were engaged in the Hildesheim – Padang municipal partnership and other friends. All present enjoyed a performance of traditional Indonesian music and dance. After the performance, guests were presented with a buffet of Indonesian delicacies which had been

provided by volunteers. Deserving of particular mention at this point are Mimi and Roland Schlüter, whose personal commitment to the Hildesheim – Padang partnership has helped it thrive for more than 30 years. We would like to thank them both, their families and friends, and employees of the City of Hildesheim, who laid on an unforgettable evening for all present, ending with conversations and piano music performed by Anja Dieringer, a pianist from Hildesheim.

“At the conference I was particularly impressed by the Indonesian dances. They were an unexpected gift.”

Susanne Luithlen, moderator



Vice Mayor Ekos Albar Munaf from Padang, Deputy Chief of Mission Fajar Wirawan Harijo and Cultural Attaché at the Indonesian-German cultural evening. Photo: AR



The audience was impressed by a performance of traditional Indonesian dance. Photo: AR



The Hildesheim-Padang partnership prepared the evening for the international guests. The audience was delighted. Photo: AR



Conference Day 2: 28 September 2023

At the start of the second day of the conference everyone once again assembled in the hall of Town Hall. Ahead of the conference the partnerships had been asked to bring an object with them which symbolised their partnership. The objects prompted a discussion of the distinctive features of the various municipalities and the diversity of the countries and regions represented at the conference.



All the delegations had brought objects from their municipalities to Hildesheim which symbolise their partnerships. Photo: NM



Exchange of ideas in Open Spaces

After this, the participants were introduced all the Open Spaces by their respective creators. Many colleagues were inspired to report on their own projects and learning experiences, or to seek advice on specific questions in a positive and professional atmosphere. The ten final Open Spaces reflected the wide diversity of the topics and partnerships and the huge body of expertise held by participants in the conference. In the end the following Spaces were on offer:

- Delivering climate-resilient infrastructure projects after the example of Mumbai, India
- Intercultural communication
- Barriers in the way of changing attitudes and behaviours towards a sustainable way of life / How can children positively impact their parents' behaviour?
- Funding opportunities for expanding partnership activities / How the Berlin-Jakarta partnership was advanced with EU funding
- Using technology to end gender-based violence based on the example of the Safecity app
- School exchanges in the field of vocational education
- Environmental democracy
- Opportunities for collaboration in the area of health tourism
- Communication between producers and consumers
- Changing the urban environment through institutional collaboration and expanding the skills and capacities required



The groups behind the ideas for the Open Spaces presented their concepts to the plenary meeting. Photo: NM



An Open Space on financing options for partnership projects brought together many ideas. Photo: NM

Many participants took the opportunity to connect with more than one Open Space as a way of taking new ideas and learnings home with them.

“What was particularly valuable for me was that everyone could express their opinions, share their expertise and swap experiences and successes. I particularly enjoyed the Open Spaces and the freedom to move around and listen in wherever I wanted.”

Arpita Sharad, Aurangabad, India

“I was struck by how many partnerships there are which are going through similar processes as we are in our Berlin–Jakarta partnership. It’s just good to know you’re not alone and that there are many colleagues who are working on the same issues. I enjoyed being able to cultivate existing contacts and make new connections with other municipalities. Colleagues from Armenia joined us for my Open Space on smart cities, for example. They are just starting out from the place where I was four-and-a-half years ago, and it was interesting to see how much knowledge already exists. Looking back on how I started out in Jakarta, I did not have that knowledge yet. I’d say they are in a great place.”

Kariem El-Ali, specialist in the Berlin–Jakarta partnership



Open Space focus: Intercultural communication

Interview with Christina Diederichs, head of the City of Ingolstadt office for cultural administration

Frau Diederichs, your municipality is planning on entering into a municipal partnership with Aurangabad in India. Why is the issue of intercultural communication such an important matter to you?

A quick glance at our history: in 2019 the mayor of Ingolstadt came to us with a request to start a municipal partnership with Aurangabad in India. The VW group has a facility in Aurangabad, so the first connection existed already. We also have a lot of Indian students at our technical university. We signed a letter of intent in April 2022 – while the pandemic was still going on – and laid the first foundations for our municipal partnership.

In the run-up to the partner conference we hosted a delegation from Aurangabad for the first time. It was a fascinating and very informative visit, not only for us but also for our guests from Aurangabad, for some of whom this was their first trip outside India. Getting to know one another personally is central to intercultural discussions and learning from one another. Our goal is always to create an understanding of the “foreign culture”, to be welcoming and to be open to new things.

What went less well during the Indian delegation’s visit to Ingolstadt?

I’d like to start by saying that we had excellent conversations which were very well received by all involved. I would point to the example of the smart cities topic, which our guests from Aurangabad presented to us very clearly and in great detail – that made a great impression on us. But we didn’t just talk about specialist matters and had some intensive and open conversations about our respective cultures. By doing that I think we have laid a strong foundation based on which we can continue to expand the work of our partnership.

What I would take away for future visits is the need for both sides to agree more clearly in advance on the shape of the visiting programme, f.i. which of the planned events are fixed elements of the schedule and so on. I’m sure we can work together to plan and finalise these.

Was it helpful to be able to chat to colleagues in the Open Spaces?

The conversations were extremely interesting and helpful. It was so exciting to hear about other municipalities’

experiences, some of which were very similar to our own. Our common conclusion was that open communication is essential and the key to a good relationship within a partnership.

Of course it was also a chance to do some good networking with German municipalities – I’m sure we’ll continue to share ideas and experiences in future.



An intensive and inspiring discussion in the Open Space on the topic of intercultural communication. Photo: NM

**What happens next?**

In our working conversations we have agreed on some initial priorities for our municipal partnership, and these are to be included in the memorandum of understanding. In this we particularly requested a focus on youth encounters. For our part, we will select a secondary school and initiate an exchange programme to take place in virtual spaces, with the hope that it could happen in person at some point. I believe that in our partnership we need to start with something very simple and lay the foundations. Young people are exactly the group we need to focus on as they will lead into a shared future. They will help form the basis for developing future projects.

The topic of this year's partner conference is climate resilience in urban and rural areas. Was that still of interest to your future collaboration?

Absolutely, as our partner city Aurangabad is already linked with the city of Karlsruhe through a technology partnership, which was presented in a workshop yesterday. That was fascinating and I learned a lot about our municipal partner and their standing in the partnership with Karlsruhe. Amongst other things it became clear to me that our Indian partners are a long way ahead of us in making use of opportunities from technology in the field of climate resilience and in general.

What is your personal takeaway from the Partnership Conference?

All in all the partnership conference here in Hildesheim has been a big win for us, as we've been able to get to know our colleagues from Aurangabad and Karlsruhe in person. Ultimately we've made a long-term commitment to our partners from Aurangabad, and yes, I think we're going to remain in close contact now.

'In my view, the true value of events like these lies in meeting other like-minded people who are determined to do something to make this planet sustainable, contented and peaceful. The only problem is that we don't talk to each other enough – and today in the Open Spaces, I also realised that we don't ask enough questions. We are too shy. We should all begin to fully utilise the opportunities that a conference like this offers.'

Supreet K Singh, co-founder and CEO of the Red Dot Foundation, Mumbai, India



Market Place

The last big item on the programme was a Market Place, which was formally opened by Mayor Beate König and Vice Mayor Ekos Albar Munaf when they symbolically cut the red ribbon. Held in the grand lobby of the Town Hall of Hildesheim, the fair was an opportunity for those who were looking for project funding to find out more about the various funding opportunities from the Service Agency and Engagement Global. In addition to this, many initiatives from Hildesheim were present, such as the Hildesheim University of Applied Sciences and Arts (HAWK), which maintains a lively dialogue with the University of Bung Hatta in Padang, the Hildesheim Fair-trade Initiative, and the Waste Disposal Special Purpose Association.

Funding offered by Service Agency Communities in One World (SKEW)

The municipal partnerships were interested in the range of funding options from small project finance to funding for climate partnerships and even major projects through the Partnership Projects for Sustainable Local Development programme (Nakopa). In addition to this, they were also keen to find out about how to employ experts in their municipal partnership or a coordinator for municipal development policy in the German municipality. The Service Agency provides information about

- the Experts Fund for Municipal Partnerships Worldwide, and
- the Coordinator for Municipal Development Policy programme

and all other financial support services on a dedicated page on its website at <https://skew.engagement-global.de/funding-opportunities.html>



Participants had the chance to visit information stalls to find out about development policy initiatives from Hildesheim and opportunities to access support, as well as chatting to exhibitors. Photo: AR

Mayor Beate König and her Indonesian counterpart Vice Mayor Ekos Albar opened the Market Place. Photo: AR



Strengthening partnerships with experts funded by the Experts Fund for Municipal Partnerships Worldwide! Photo: AR



Summary and conclusions



Susanne Luithlen was thanked for her professional and assured moderation of the conference. Photo: AR

The conference concluded with a plenary meeting for all partnerships where they had the chance to reflect on the topics of the conference. Amongst other things, several municipalities expressed their interest in taking up the Safecity app from India, which had been presented in an Open Space and aims to improve safety for women in cities. Before the conference had even ended, two municipalities were so inspired by the examples of activists from Mongolia and measures from Ho Chi Minh City that they decided to take up the topic of the circular economy as a new project topic. Automated waste management solutions caught the attention of Aurangabad

and Karlsruhe. Panel speaker Ulzijargal Tserenpurev from Mongolia who mentioned that she had learned about state funding for organic products in Germany, and realised the need to expand the expertise within her organisation and develop the sales market for their own organic products. Conversations between municipalities from the Global South such as Armenia and India were described as enriching. One partnership was particularly inspired to restart project activities, while another noted that they could report on lessons learned after successfully delivering a project and thereby move a step further forward than they had been a few years ago.

“My luggage is packed with experiences and encounters.”

Ulzijargal Tserenpurev, founder of Eco Mommy, Murun, Mongolia



The closing remarks of the conference were given by **Kurt-Michael Baudach**, Head of Department **at the Service Agency Communities in One World**, as he addressed the representatives of all the municipalities and partnerships. He referred back to the conference topic of the interaction between urban and rural areas as a means of promoting climate resilience, the rich diversity of the municipalities participating in the conference from seven different countries, ranging from major metropolitan centres like Mumbai and Berlin, to smaller German municipalities and rural areas in the Philippines and Mongolia. Mr Baudach stressed how impressed he was at their willingness to work on areas of shared interest, despite widely different social, political and financial contexts and a world which is shaken by crises. He also praised the spontaneous provision of Open Spaces as one example of the great interest in sharing experiences. On behalf of the Service Agency he thanked the City of Hildesheim for being great hosts. He also thanked the Hildesheim–Padang partnership organisation for their impressive programme, Susanne Luithlen for her excellent moderation, and all involved in the background for their efforts.



Kurt-Michael Baudach, Department Head at the Service Agency Communities in One World, was delighted with the Partnership Conference, which was marked by diversity and great engagement. Photo AR



Voices from the Partnership Conference

"I was impressed by the diversity of the participants and their interest in learning from one another and getting to know one another. I know that's what I will take away with me and what makes me so happy. I hope that the conference was a chance for everyone to take away positive learnings and that it has brought the projects and partnerships closer together."

Beate König, Mayor of the City of Hildesheim, Germany

"For me the most important thing is networking. People from Asian and European municipalities meet one another and talk about the good ideas which are being put into practice in completely different places. Through this we get to know good examples and can also share our projects. It's a win-win situation and the main objective of this conference for me."

Prathap Murugavanam, Coimbatore, India

"A partnership isn't two cities joined by a piece of paper: it's joined by people. A partnership needs at least a handful of people who are really passionate about fulfilling it. If interest wanes – even only on one side – that's pretty much it for the partnership. You must therefore maintain a friendly interest on both sides. In my view, that's what events like this are for. They are a chance to meet one another and get to know one another in person. For me the highlight of the conference has been the many encounters and meetings."

Roland Schlüter, Hildesheim–Padang municipal partnership

"I'm impressed by how active everyone is. It's not something you see often. Everyone has brought their enthusiasm and are fired up about their issues. That's what makes this conference special for me."

Conrad Masius, Berlin-Lichtenberg, Germany



“For me it was especially important to have time to speak in person with our partners, as in the context of official delegations and receptions there is neither the time nor the opportunity.”

Sebastian Kratsch, City of Leipzig, Germany

‘I would say the motto of this conference is ‘Unity in Diversity’. Even though we come from different countries, cultures and time zones, we have a common goal. On the issue of climate change, each of us is committed to the well-being of the people in our own community. We are here with a common vision, and ready to use the knowledge and experience of other municipalities and countries. The biggest highlight of this partnership conference for me is the friendship that we have forged with each other despite our cultural differences.’

Ray Morales, Lubang, Philippines

I come from the town of Esslingen, from the Department for City-to-city Partnerships and International Relations, and we’re here today with our Indian partner city Coimbatore. Above all I enjoyed sharing ideas. How do other partnerships go about projects? How do they share ideas and experiences? How do they communicate? In our partnership the two municipalities couldn’t be more different. Coimbatore is a rapidly growing metropolis of 3.5 million people, while Esslingen has a population of 94,000. How can we support a city which is so much larger than ours? But at the same time we enjoy talking to our Indian partners, as the great cultural differences foster rich and fruitful encounters. We feel that every time we meet we can learn from one another on every level. I particularly value the open-heartedness of our colleagues and their ‘can do’ attitude.”

Jasmine Thorn, Esslingen, Germany



The Service Agency Communities in One World (SKEW)

The Service Agency Communities in One World has been Germany's contact point for local development cooperation since 2002. It supports local government entities in promoting global sustainability and a fairer world in line with the United Nations' 2030 Agenda – both in Germany and in the Global South. To this end, it supports national and international dialogue and mutual learning between municipalities.

The Service Agency offers an all-inclusive package comprising professional expertise, networking, one-on-one consultation, and funding for projects and human resources. It is a division of Engagement Global, and operates on behalf of Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

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