



Recommendations

discussed and drafted in

Roundtable on Urban Policy

Urban Water Security and Water Governance

SUMMER SESSION
2026



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Background

On 8th May 2026, Researchers, activists, thought leaders and urban planners from Maharashtra came together on engaging roundtable on water security and water governance of cities. As part of PRO's Urban Policy Roundtable Series, this summer session was organized in collaboration with Blue Pulse Foundation and Centre for Sustainable Development-Gokhale Institute.

More than 15 stakeholders from different areas attended the conference.

The deliberations highlighted that urban water challenges are not only technical but also administrative, financial, and social in nature. Participants stressed the need for better governance systems, stronger citizen engagement, data-driven planning, and coordination between local bodies and higher levels of government. The discussion generated several actionable recommendations, which are categorized below according to the level of government responsible for implementation.



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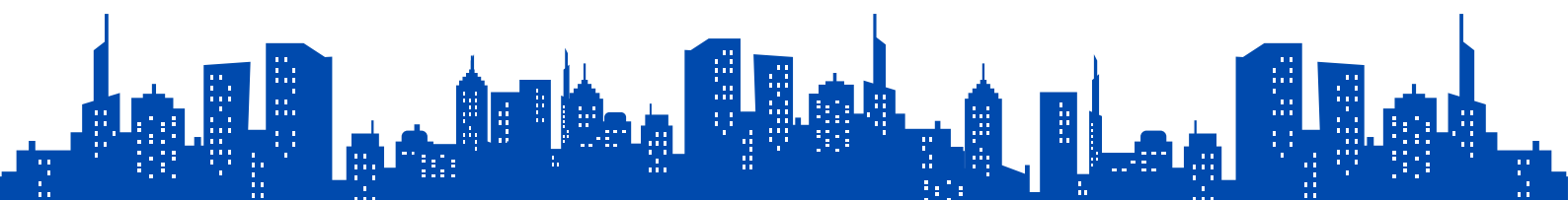
Recommendations for The Municipal Corporations

1. **Ensure Full Utilisation of Existing Water Infrastructure**

Participants highlighted concerns regarding underutilisation of existing water infrastructure projects, including schemes such as the Purandar Upsa project. Municipal corporations should prioritise improving operational efficiency and ensure that the available water supply capacity is fully utilised before investing in additional projects.

2. **Improve Political and Social Communication on Water Governance**

A major concern raised during the discussion was the communication gap between urban local bodies and citizens regarding water-related decisions, projects, and constraints. Municipal corporations should institutionalize regular public consultations, ward-level discussions, and awareness campaigns related to water management, reuse, groundwater conservation, and equitable distribution.



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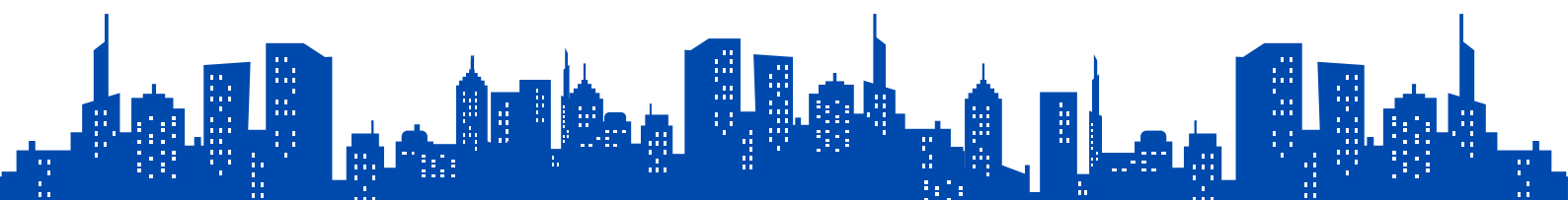
Recommendations for The Municipal Corporations

3. **Conduct Water Audits for Housing Societies and Government Buildings**

Water audits can help identify leakages, inefficient consumption patterns, and opportunities for reuse and conservation. Municipal corporations should develop guidelines and reporting frameworks for periodic audits, especially for high-consumption users. This can significantly reduce non-revenue water losses and encourage efficient urban water management practices.

4. **Implement 100% Metering and Performance-Based Monitoring**

Universal water metering across cities was strongly emphasised. Lack of metering creates inefficiencies in billing, distribution, and demand assessment. Without accurate consumption data, urban local bodies struggle to manage water equitably and sustainably. Participants also recommended moving toward performance-based metering systems that can monitor usage patterns, leakages, and supply efficiency in real time. Smart metering systems can improve revenue recovery, reduce wastage, and support data-driven decision-making.



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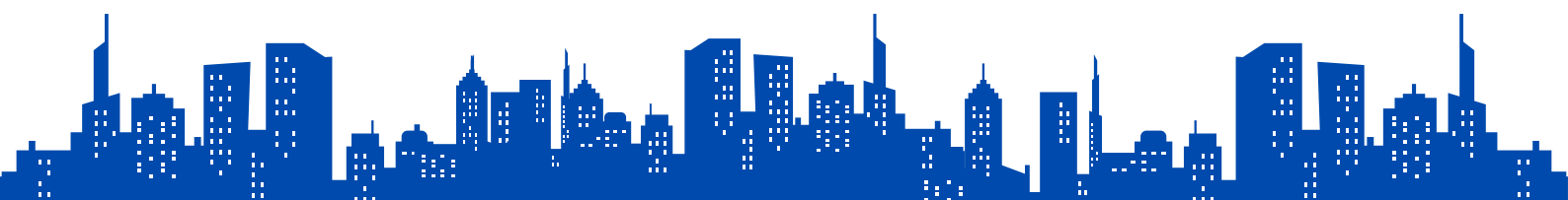
Recommendations for The Municipal Corporations

5. **Focus Water Reuse Policies on Bulk Consumers**

Reuse and recycling policies should primarily target bulk water users such as industries, large institutions, construction activities, and agricultural users rather than focusing only on individual residential buildings. Treated wastewater can be effectively repurposed for non-potable uses including landscaping, industrial processes, and peri-urban agriculture. Municipal corporations should therefore strengthen sewage treatment infrastructure and create distribution systems for treated water reuse at scale. 100% utilisation of the Mundhva jackwell project treated water for agriculture.

6. **Develop Comprehensive GIS-Based Water Mapping Systems**

Participants stressed the urgent need for 100% GIS mapping of urban water systems. Many cities still lack integrated digital maps of pipelines, reservoirs, groundwater systems, treatment plants, and distribution networks. Comprehensive GIS mapping can help cities identify leakages, illegal connections, pressure imbalances, and infrastructure gaps. Municipal corporations should priorities creation and regular updating of GIS-based urban water databases.



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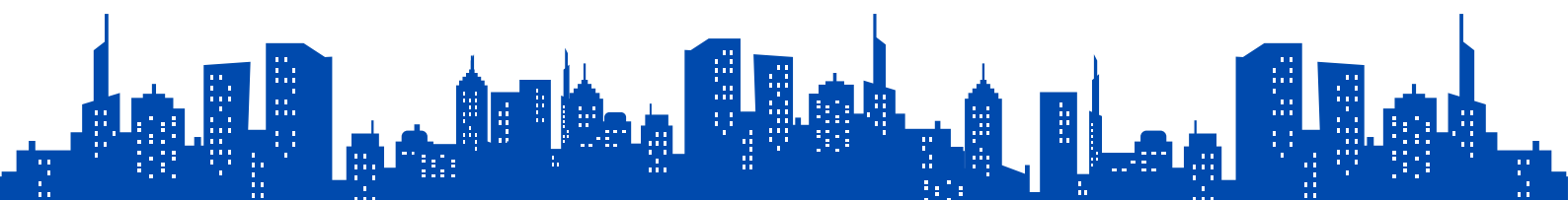
Recommendations for The State Government

1. **Urban water bodies must be recognised as critical ecological assets within urban planning and water governance frameworks.**

Their protection and restoration align with national and state-level frameworks, including the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017; National Water Policy, 2012; AMRUT 2.0; Swachh Bharat Mission; Jal Shakti Abhiyan; National Plan for Conservation of Aquatic Ecosystems (NPCA); and various state wetland and river conservation initiatives. Implementation should involve integrated watershed-based planning, strict regulation of encroachments and untreated wastewater discharge, ecological restoration using nature-based solutions, continuous monitoring, and community participation.

2. **Strengthen Institutional Coordination Across Urban Water Agencies**

State governments play a central role in coordinating multiple agencies involved in urban water supply, irrigation, groundwater management, and urban planning. State governments should establish integrated water governance frameworks that improve coordination between municipal corporations, water resource departments, urban development departments, and regional planning authorities.



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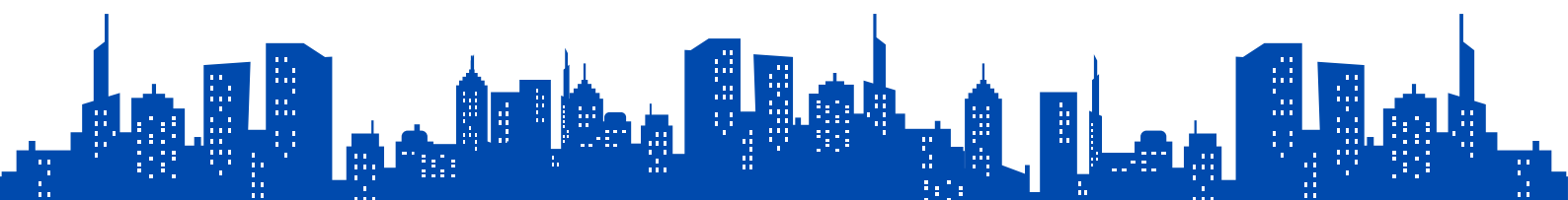
Recommendations for The State Government

3. **Develop State-Level Frameworks for Water Audits and Reuse**

Participants recommended that state governments create standardised guidelines for urban water audits, wastewater reuse, and treated water distribution systems. Uniform state-level policies can help cities adopt common benchmarks and improve implementation efficiency. States should also incentivise industries and large consumers to adopt recycled water systems through policy support and financial incentives.

4. **Review and Replicate Successful State Models**

The roundtable specifically referred to the need to review successful governance practices from states such as Odisha. Participants suggested that comparative studies of innovative state-level water governance models can provide useful lessons for Maharashtra and other urban regions. State governments should document best practices and facilitate knowledge-sharing between cities and states through policy exchanges and pilot projects.



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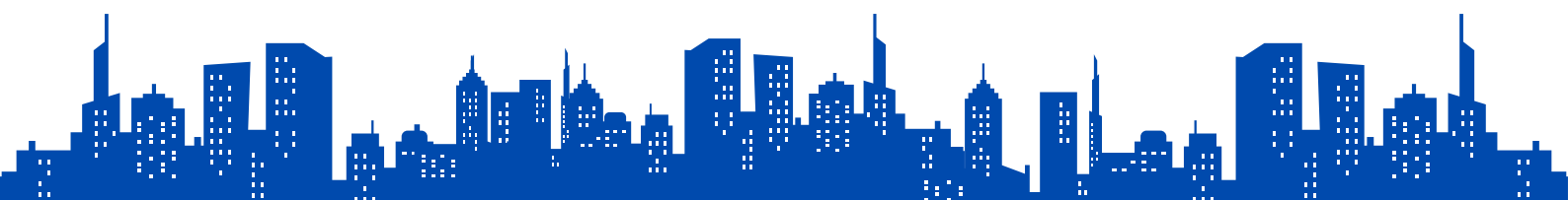
Recommendations for The Government of India

1. **Promote National Standards for Smart Water Governance**

There is a need for stronger national frameworks on smart water governance, including standards for metering, GIS mapping, water accounting, and non-revenue water management. The central government can play an important role in supporting urban local bodies through technical assistance, model guidelines, and digital infrastructure funding under national urban missions.

2. **Increase Financial Support for Urban Water Resilience**

Urban water security requires significant long-term investments in infrastructure modernisation, wastewater treatment, reuse systems, and climate adaptation measures. Participants recommended enhanced central support for cities undertaking reforms in sustainable water governance. Dedicated funding windows for smart metering, treated water reuse, groundwater management, and urban resilience can accelerate implementation at the local level.



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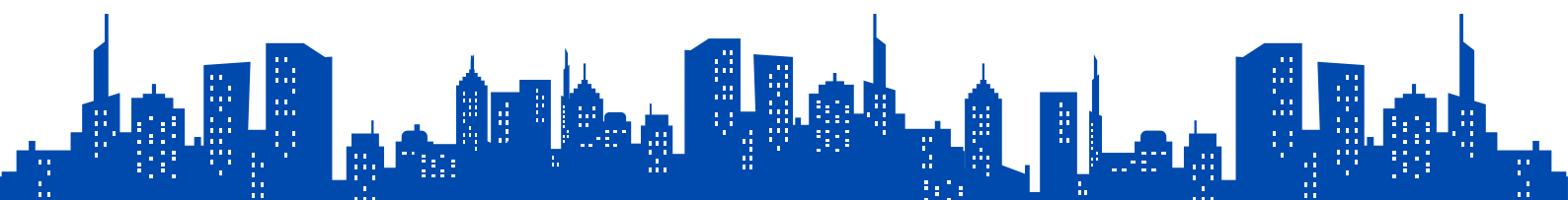
Credits

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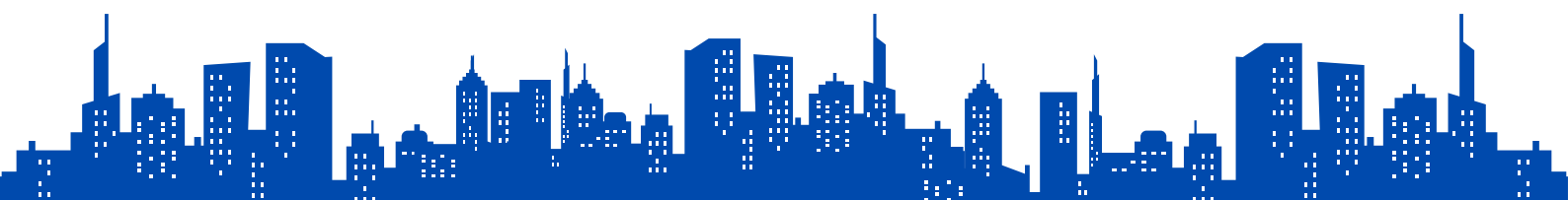
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The Esteemed Participants of the Roundtable



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