

URBAN GOVERNANCE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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INTRODUCTION

The importance of sustainability in the urban setting cannot be over emphasized, as it concerns the very survival of a city. Healthy cities contribute to a healthy nation. Clean environment and economic growth are complimentary to each other and result in a vibrant community who see themselves as "stakeholders" in all aspects of daily life and helps in creating sustainable environment. Other characteristics to sustainable urban development include (as seen by Development Alternatives, India):

- **Controlled population** for whom adequate, meaningful employment is available.
- **Efficient basic civic amenities** and their management for a reasonable comfortable existence. For example, due to the shortage of power **more than 50% [of power] is illegally consumed** without payment to the municipal corporation leading to corruption, unacceptable financial losses and inadequate supply to those who pay for the consumption of power. A similar situation has evolved where an inadequate water supply has led to similar financial losses and an inadequate supply of water for the population.
- Planned housing colonies with **adequate infrastructure** like schools, parks, drainage system, and local Medicare establishments.

- Transportation affects the environment. **Efficient transportation planning** has to take into consideration a wide range of options and choices like adequate roads, parking lots, alternate system of transportation, and mass transit facilities. The aim should be to reduce total vehicle miles driven in congested areas thus reducing pollution and emission of green house gases.
- **Effective environmental infrastructure** to address issues of untreated sewage and polluted rivers, lakes and coastal zones thus threatening **the quality of aquatic systems**.
- Development of **an efficient urban private sector**, both formally and non-formally, which reduces poverty by generating jobs and facilitates economic growth.
- An **efficient health-care system** would address issues of nutrition, family planning and sanitation.
- Citizens are **law-abiding**, conscious of their role and contribute to all aspects of growth of the city.
- **Adequate governance services** which can meet the needs of the population and takes care of a sense of civic duty, community participation, a sense of identity, responsibilities, transparency and equity in local institutions.

THE INDIAN SCENARIO

The entire developing world is witness to an unprecedented shift of human settlement to the cities i.e. morphology of settlements from hamlets to metropolis. While India's population remains substantially rural, it is emerging as one of the fastest urbanizing countries in the world and has already a staggering large urban population of around 285 million. It is estimated that by the middle of this century or probably earlier, it would reach the same milestone that the world has reached at the beginning of the century – of becoming more urban than rural.

The economic base of the nation through expanding industries, trade commerce and services has already shifted to the urban centers.

India is at a critical juncture in the process of urbanisation. At the moment, India is among the countries at low level of urbanisation. Only 26% of population was living in urban areas in 1991. In 2001, only one third of the country's population was living in the urban areas. The projections put urban population's share in the country's population to be at 40% by 2021. Nonetheless, even at such a low level of urbanisation, the total urban population is very large. If urban India was to be considered a separate country then it would be the fourth largest country in the world.

In 1991, of the 20 largest cities in the world, three (Mumbai, Calcutta and Delhi) were from India. In 2001, six of the 20 largest metropolises in the world were from India. In 1991, there were 23 million plus cities in India and their number increased from 40 in 2001 and 70 in 2021. Hence the task of urban development is daunting and requires special attention.

Urbanization rate of India has usually remained between 3% to 4%. The rate was 3.5% per annum (p.a.) in 1940s, 2.3% p.a. in 1950s, 3.3% p.a. in 1960s, 3.8% p.a. in 1970s and 3.1% p.a. in 1980s. The natural growth of population has remained stable during the past three census decades at about 2.1% p.a. The deceleration in urban growth has, therefore, been attributed to the decline of rural-urban migration (Kundu 1999). The distribution of population in different size class of settlements has become highly skewed over the years. Population share of Class I cities (population above 100,000) has increased from 26% in 1901 to 65% in 1991. The larger urban centers have experienced faster demographic growth as compared to smaller order settlements. The Class I cities, for example, have registered an average growth rate of 3.0% p.a. during 1981-91, which is higher than that of lower order towns. In the smaller towns that are mostly rooted in their regional economy, population growth is low and fluctuating over time and space. Thus, there exists a dual urban structure in

India wherein the larger cities are integrated with higher order system and are part of a growth dynamics, which is, by and large, absent in smaller towns.

Cities have strongly emerged as the prime engines of Indian economy and generators of national wealth. It is evident from looking at the past fifty years of India, and the empirical evidence around the world that the future of India is inescapably urban. As the National Commission on urbanization stated, urbanization is inevitable concomitant of economic change. It is time for us to treat urbanization as positive, historical force and care for our urban centers. It is time that the nation perforce invests in the destined social and economic functions of cities should ensures that city delivers a quality of life that would enable them to become national assets and engines of economic growth.

The cities are considered as backbone of the national economy. Some projections state that the contribution of the urban sector to national economy has increased from 29% in 1951 to 55% in 1991 and will be 60% in 2001 (Suresh 2000). Thus, even though the level of urbanisation is relatively low in India, the contribution of urban economy to national economy is significantly high. Mumbai has international relevance and is expected to be part of the chain of 'Global Cities' where the international business locate and link the national economies with the global economy (Friedman 1993). The urban planners and policy makers have therefore been focusing on the development of such large urban centers that would link Indian economy with the global economy in the period of economic globalisation and liberalisation, a path that India has embarked upon after 1991. Policies have been initiated to improve the quality of life and infrastructure in these cities so that these become attractive to the global business.

While the need of the national and urban planners to focus policy efforts on the metropolitan cities to support and accelerate the process of economic reforms is understandable, there are two major issues that have to be kept in mind. One is that there are 3,697 urban centers in India as per 1991 census and their number will go up to about 5,000 in 2021 (Suresh 2000). Of these only 23 urban centers

have population million plus while more than 92% are small and medium towns. That is, there are large number of cities and significant population lives in small and medium towns. The other issue is, in terms of number, large population in the urban areas is below the official poverty line. In 1993-94, 76 million people in the urban areas (forming a country of the size of Mexico) were below the poverty line. The magnitude of urban poverty is quite large.

It is found that handling of urban development is a very delicate issue and has to be strategically handled, so that urban fabric and its users get utmost benefits, convenience and comfortable life.

ISSUES OF GOOD URBAN GOVERNANCE:

Thus it can be seen that urban India faces a daunting challenge. Cities must cope with great numbers of people, plan to provide them services, find resources to meet needs of maintaining and augmenting infrastructure, respond to the urbanization and poverty, preserve their environment and retain their competitive edge. Enmeshed in the web of rigid, inflexible working cultures and erosion of all round capacity they must re-engineer themselves to face these enormously complex challenges.

This re-engineering is precisely the goal of good urban governance. It envisages improving the quality of life in cities through improved local governance by reinventing a city as an inclusive city. Such a city provides space and voice to all its stakeholders through inclusive decision-making, since decision-making is the heart of good governance. The strategy for achieving the goals of good urban environment is to advocate the norms and country specific issues of good urban governance and promote inclusive decision-making process.

IMPORTANT NATIONAL INITIATIVES: DECENTRALISATION TRENDS IN INDIA

This is a very important national initiative. The 74th Constitution Amendment Act, to implement the idea of decentralized governance, amended the

Constitution of India in 1994. This legislation would be of immense importance in implementing Local Agenda 21. This legislation provides Constitutional status to the urban local bodies as third tier of the government, enables participation of weaker sections and women through reservation of seats, ensures the political existence of local bodies by making it mandatory to hold elections in case of suspension or supersession within 6 months time frame and set up State Finance Commission to recommend guidelines for strengthening finances of the municipalities. It also provides for formation of local level committees, namely ward committees, to take up local issues. This legislation was enacted in 1995.

SYSTEM OF WORKING OF PLANNING GOVERNANCE

Urban development **planning** (including physical Infrastructure), housing and slum up gradation are in the list of State acts and actions whereas urban social Infrastructure and protection of the natural and Manmade environment are in the concurrent list and where Issues of national relevance are addressed through central acts and issues of state and local relevance receive credence through supplemental state acts.

In 1947 AD, the organizational canvas envisaged a central-state-local continuum leading to a planned change in the use of scarce land through community participation. However, nearly 5 decades of actions have revealed an escalating Top-down central-state nexus giving in the process short shift to local government and community participation.

Therefore THE 1993 AD. CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS GAVE A FILLIP TO PLANNED CHANGE ON DWINDLING LAND RESOURCES THROUGH a henceforth down-top process. This implied COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION VIA A STRONG LOCAL GOVERNMENT AS AN EFFECTIVE THIRD TIER SYSTEM. As stated earlier, the 73 Amendment is for rural **India** through a revamped 'Panchayat Raj' and the 74th Amendment is for urban **India** through Municipal Corporations, and their Revamped ward committees for large settlements of 0.30

million population and above, while municipalities for small cities and large towns and nagar panchayats for Small towns.

Sustainable planned development actions in the new millennium would have to give credence to the constitutional amendments and which pointedly state that the Third tier cannot be superseded and that at least one-third of elected persons should be Women. The amendments also require that:

- (a) Exchequer grants be earmarked for Development and maintenance tasks by a specially created State level Finance Commission and which is also to recommend resource mobilisation by and for the Third tier.
- (b) They function within the framework of a state formulated 20 to 25 Year perspective plan with 5-year programmes and annual plans and
- (c) They prepare, implement and control development plans for areas within their Jurisdiction. This last requirement implies that the first two **tiers** and their Parastatals are required to follow statutory plans prepared by the third tier and which is the only tier which is organised for a community participatory approach.

This is going to take time for the first two **tiers** of government to come to terms with, even if State perspective spatial Plans, district structure plans and metropolitan region structure plans are in their Domain directly or through their parastatals (typically through the Urban Development Authorities). PRIMARILY, THE ISSUE IS ONE OF TRANSPARENCY AND OTHER OF PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION AND THEN FIND WHICH WORKS BEST FROM NEIGHBOURHOOD LEVEL TO UPWARDS.

The emerging ORGANISATIONAL INTERFACE FOR URBAN PLANNED GROWTH IN INDIA so as to conform to the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution is explained below. This interface IS TO ENSURE THAT SOCIO-ECONOMIC INVESTMENT IS WITHIN A SPATIAL FRAMEWORK. **Neighborhood Committees (3rdTier + Local Communities) Ward Committees, Neighborhood Committees (3rdTier + Local Communities)**

Detailed public participation action plans/town **planning** schemes/ layouts/ plans with implementation schedule and financial commitments.

City / Town / Village 20/25year Perspective plans, 5-year Programme plans and annual Programmes.

Municipal Committees, Urban Panchayats, Rural Panchayats (3rdTier)

Municipal Corporations, Municipal Committees, Urban Panchayats (3rd Tier)

Metropolitan areas, city, town-20/25 year perspective plans, 5 year programmes plans and annual programmes. District (regional) Structure Plan and Development Plans for Talukas; 20/25 year perspective Plans, 5 year programme plans and annual programmes.

District Planning Authority (2nd Tier) Metropolitan, Region Planning Authority (2nd Tier)

Metropolitan Region

Structure Plan-20/25year perspective plan, 5-year programme plans and annual programmes. A State Spatial Strategy Document (perspective Plan), for 20/25 years, to be updated as and when required and comprehensively every five years, indicating national policies, programmes and funds affecting the state industrial, land, housing, transport, tourism, conservation and other policies; population assignments; regional networks, major thrust areas etc. National Policies: allocation of plan funds; bilateral and multilateral aid; inter-state co-ordination etc.

Federal Government

(1stTier)

State Government (2ndTier)

ACTION AREAS

1. DECENTRALISATION

- Review the performance of states in the implementation of the constitution 74th amendment act, particularly in the areas of devolution of functional and financial powers to urban local bodies.
- Prepare and publish a comparative analysis of the levels reached in the empowerment of women in urban local bodies.
- Devolution of powers, functions and funds should expedite.
- Control of elected representatives over employees of local bodies, and clearly defining the roles and powers of local bodies.
- The disparities regarding the tenure and functions of mayor to be made similar for different states.
- Making flow of funds easier and quick to the local bodies.
- Development of proper indicators for evaluating performance of local bodies.
- Develop proper systems for information, collection, dissemination, and make community participation in civic engagement.

2. MUNICIPAL FINANCE

- Prepare guidelines for states for facilitating cities in levying taxes, fees and user charges, borrowing funds and incurring expenditures.
- Document and disseminate best practices in innovative mechanisms used by cities to raise resources, and in the commercialization of infrastructure.

- Create a network of cities that have already succeeded in way of municipal financial mechanisms and facilitate them to metros.
- Facilitate necessary municipal reforms to allow municipal bodies to raise requisite funds.
- Allow proper capacity building for which suitable training programmes, training manuals and networking with other stakeholders to be promoted.
- Application of e governance for municipal finance. Development of appropriate software for financial management at appropriate levels.

3. URBAN ENVIRONMENT

- Exhort cities to prepare annual environmental status report through a multi stakeholder consultation process. Set annual targets of environment improvement for local bodies and evaluation of the same at the end of the year.
- Identify local authorities who have produced practices at city levels that work.
- Prioritize issues and formulate strategies through city consultation process for effective implementation.
- Create awareness for all segments of community and officials for changing their mindscape prior to instituting changes.
- Appropriate techniques like local folk and traditional plays; musicals etc should be used for awareness generation among stakeholders.
- Laws / rules / regulations specific to local issues should be tried to facilitate effective implementation. These should be lucid and easily understood.

- Proper collection and disposal for sold waste.
- Promote segregation of compost able waste at household levels.

4. INTEGRATION OF POOR AND MARGINALIZED

- Since all the national states in the UN have agreed on reducing urban poverty and supported campaign of cities without slums by 2020, each city must draw a city level plan to target informal population.
- Development plans to ensure growth by immigration by allocating land with infrastructure to house city growth through migration.
- Spaces for housing economic activities of the informal sector to be earmarked to avoid encroachment later.
- Improve access to affordable land and low cost housing finance to achieve goals of shelter for all and slum free cities.
- Locate successful initiatives, which have undertaken such partnerships should become learning laboratories and encouraged to champion this process.
- Promote public private partnerships, as any single agency or government alone cannot effectively address issue of poor.
- Development of proper indicators of poverty so as to challenge commonly held misconceptions.

5. TRANSPARENCY AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

- Simplify laws, rules and procedures to make easily intelligible to an average person.
- Assist cities in development of transparent public procurement and hold wide consultations on city budgeting.

- Identifying major bottlenecks at the local governance level through consultative processes like group discussions, public hearings and developing similar participatory tools.
- Improve efficiency of local bodies through enhanced technical, administrative and financial capacities.
- Networking and regular interactions between municipalities.
- Closer networking with media and their engagement in creating public awareness and creating demand for good governance.

6. MUNICIPAL MANAGEMENT

- Prepare a model municipal act that provides local bodies the space to deal with challenges of growth, poverty, infrastructure and demands of growth, poverty, infrastructure and demands of good governance.
- Develop an appropriate municipal information system.
- Computerizations of various department of local bodies and if possible use Geographic Information Systems for better decision making.
- Creation of web site and city civic center in partnership with private sector.

7. CAPACITY BUILDING

- Strengthen the capacity of national level institute and other existing national and regional level institutes to promote teaching, training, research, consultancy and information dissemination in urban affairs.

- Prepare capacity building programmes for small, medium and large towns for specific subjects.
- Promote the creation of interactive platforms for sharing municipal innovations, experiences among municipal managers.
- Assessment of training needs of personnel involved in urban administration.
- Assessment of funds, and more importantly of resource persons for carrying out training of all these personnel.
- Develop training material in local language.
- Impact and evaluation studies of the training programmes.

By taking into consideration above aspects, it is understood, that by decentralizing powers and giving importance to working on action areas, we will be able to get proper urban governance and hence will get more organized and eventually a sustainable fabric.

Conclusion:

As we know the problems and challenges faced by the mankind are global, but they have to be dealt with at local level. To fight with the problems of environmental degradation and to meet the challenges of sustainable development, it is suggested that the stakeholders may be involved at the grass root levels and GOVERNANCE may be given due importance. Involving community in the decision-making process produces a Management Set Up that is more responsible and answerable to the people and leads a way to SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT of that area.

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