

CHANGING ROLE OF PLANNING AGENCIES AND LOCAL BODIES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR GOOD URBAN GOVERNANCE

Jamal H. Ansari

School of Planning and Architecture, India

Introduction

Massive urbanization in India during the past few decades has led to rapid urban growth, in terms of both population and area. But development of complimentary infrastructure has not taken place. Thus urban settlements generally suffer from serious shortfalls in housing, water supply, and road network. Facilities for drainage, sewerage and solid waste management are almost non-existent in many areas. Urban problems such as traffic congestion, lack of amenities and high levels of land, water, air and noise pollution characterize the urban environment today. In addition, due to dilapidated condition of buildings and lack of maintenance of roads, open spaces and other public premises, cities generally suffer from environmental degradation. Planners, policy makers and people now realize that cities are in such a bad shape mainly because planning agencies and urban local bodies, which are chiefly responsible for development and administration of urban areas, are not able to perform their functions efficiently. As such it has become necessary to identify the impediments that prevent the existing organizations from performing effectively, and think afresh about innovations that would

prepare them for playing a potent instrumental role in mitigating the problems that inflict contemporary cities.

While thinking about innovative measures, the emerging concept of urban governance is highly relevant. It is gradually replacing the traditional concepts of urban administration and urban management, the former leaning heavily on bureaucratic procedures with penchant for technicalities of rules and regulations, and the latter emphasizing informed decision-making and use of flexible means for achieving success (Krishan, 2000). Both of these traditional concepts, however, have the limitation that they measure success in terms of operational efficiency alone. On the contrary, urban governance is a wider concept which besides aiming at administering and managing the city, also seeks to promote its economy, ensure equity, enhance ecology, and achieve all that by essentially involving people in a variety of ways. Moreover, without in any way lowering the importance of the public sector agencies, it also recognizes the roles of the private sector, the non-governmental organizations, and the households in urban development. Its most noteworthy feature is that, inter alia, it encourages decentralized decision-making besides promoting responsive and responsible local government (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992). The epoch-making reform in the Indian Constitution in the shape of the Constitution (Seventy-fourth Amendment) Act, 1992 relating to municipalities is a step in this direction. The various provisions of this Act are expected to strengthen the role of planning agencies and urban local bodies in urban governance, and also improve the quality of urban governance through increased participation of people in the urban development process.

In the following sections of this paper, the existing institutional framework for urban planning and development in India has been critically examined. The kind of changes that would make it framework more pertinent to the contemporary needs of urban planning and development have been pinpointed. In this context, the changing role of planning agencies and urban local bodies has been highlighted. An attempt has also been made to analyze the impact of the recent constitutional amendments on empowerment of urban local bodies in terms of their decision-making powers, financial

resources and capacity building. In the final section of the paper, the elements of good urban governance are stated. The implications that organizational reform of planning agencies, empowerment of municipalities and promotion of participatory processes would have for good urban governance have been stated as concluding remarks.

Institutional Framework for Urban Planning and Development in India

In the Indian federal structure, all matters relating to land fall under the jurisdiction of the state government (Box 1). Since urban planning and development essentially deals with land, it is primarily a State subject wherein the role of the Central Government is only of advisory and catalytic nature. But the above does not preclude the Central Government from evolving policy guidelines or developing suitable legislation pertaining to urban planning or development, which the States would find beneficial to adopt.

Box 1. Centre-State Relationships and Responsibilities

In the Article 40 of the Indian Constitution, Center-State relationships and responsibilities are listed. There are three lists. The first enumerates, under ninety-seven heads, the subjects over which the Union Parliament has exclusive control. The second lists under sixty-six heads, those under the exclusive control of the States and the third, under forty-seven heads, the subjects upon which both, Union and State Legislatures can make laws. The residuary powers/ subjects, which are not covered by any of the three lists, are vested in the Center.

Over the years, a fairly elaborate multi-level institutional framework has been developed for urban planning and development in India. At the national level, policies and strategies are basically formalized in the five-year plans. Planning Commission is the central agency, which has been entrusted with the task of preparing these plans. Though the main focus of the five-year plans is on economic and social issues, the plan documents also specify all such urban development related issues and objectives that the Central Government would like the States to address to during the plan period. Through this practice the Central Government has assumed a good deal of authority over the States in guiding and shaping urban planning and development programs. The Center has acquired additional leverage in these matters because the States being short of resources, are unable to support major programs in urban development and are thus dependent on central financial assistance. However, it is another matter that the States keep on complaining that the funds made available to them through central assistance schemes are hopelessly inadequate for pursuing meaningful urban development programs.

At the State level, the system of planning is similar to the one at the national level. District level planning is still not formalized. Spatial or physical planning is generally limited to a few selected urban settlements. The physical planning system includes preparation of master plans that are further detailed out in the form of zonal and layout plans. Town Planning Departments/ Directorates have been set-up at the State level, with zonal offices in prominent cities. These departments are responsible for preparing master/ development plans for urban settlements under the respective Town Planning Acts enforced in the States. In some States enabling powers have been given to municipalities to prepare town planning schemes, whereas in a few cases the State Government can direct local bodies to prepare town planning schemes.

Weaknesses in the Planning Framework

Basic lacuna of the urban planning framework is that it suffers from a centralized administrative structure and characterized by polarized emphasis on sector wise economic planning at the national level and physical planning at the urban settlement level. At no stage of the multilevel planning spectrum comprising the nation, state, district and settlement, an attempt is made to translate sectoral objectives in spatial terms. The result is that national economic planning lacks spatial dimensions and settlement level planning is done in a piece-meal manner without any spatio-economic policy framework at the regional (district/ state) level.

Likewise, though in reality urban and rural areas have close functional linkages with each other, the institutional set up for planning and policy formulation is such that urban and rural areas are treated as separate entities. As per the existing set up, rural bodies such as *panchayats*, *panchayat samitis*, and *zilla parishads* (three-tiered system of elective institutions operating at village, sub-district and district levels respectively) have upward links with the ministries of rural development in the States and the Center. Similarly, the urban local bodies (municipalities) function within the framework of the State and Central ministries of urban development. At no stage any institutional provision has been made for evolving concerted policies for integrated planning of rural and urban areas. These distortions in the existing institutional framework for planning lead to policies, which are shortsighted, deal with individual problems as they arise, lack comprehensiveness, are often contradictory between themselves, and are by and large ineffective.

Weaknesses in the Urban Development Framework

A system of dual management has been fostered in urban areas under which development functions have been entrusted to urban development authorities or improvement trusts, while municipalities engage mainly in the task of maintaining essential public services. For functional administration a host of special purpose agencies such as housing boards, slum improvement

boards, water supply and sewerage undertakings, infrastructure development corporations, pollution control boards, special area development authorities, and similar other agencies have been established at the State, region or city level. A large number of government departments are also engaged in the task of urban development. They deal with specific sectors of development such as public works department for construction of buildings and roads, horticulture department for development of parks and gardens, education department for educational buildings, department of health for healthcare infrastructure, local-self engineering department for water-supply, sewerage and drainage networks and many others. But municipalities, unfortunately, constitute the weakest link amongst these special purpose agencies, which have proliferated during the last fifty years after independence.

Neglect of Municipal Institutions: Under the Indian Constitution, local government is a State subject. State government has exclusive powers to create municipalities, alter their jurisdiction, merge one with another or abolish them. But, though the municipalities constitute the most nodal local government institutions in urban areas, in the post-independence India, they have received scant attention from State governments. Ironically, this attitude of the States toward municipal institutions actually meant perpetuating the policies that the erstwhile colonial regime had adopted to serve their own political ends. Essentially, the British had created the improvement trust as special purpose authority for carrying out capital development works in the belief that such works could not be entrusted to local self-government bodies which they had handed over to the Indian politicians. By doing so, they not only distanced the major capital improvement works from people's scrutiny; but also rendered the municipal institutions financially insolvent, organisationally weak and politically incompetent.

Weak Financial Base of Local Governments: Another weakness of the local government institutions in India is that they have been outside the statutory devolution of funds and are wholly dependent on the state government's support for their activities. The consequent deterioration in the

revenue base at the local level made local governments more dependent on the state government's largesse (conspicuous by its absence). Particularly deplorable is the state of the municipalities, which do not get enough funds even to pay the salary of their employees. According to one estimate, municipalities get only 0.6 per cent of the National Gross Domestic Product (NGDP) in spite of the fact that cities contribute 90 per cent of the government revenue and 60 per cent of the NGDP (Jagmohan, 2000). The basic fact that the amount, which devolves to municipalities, is no where near their requirement is obvious from the estimates made by the Eleventh Finance Commission. According to their estimate, a total of Rupees 4,200 crores (US \$ 900 million) for the five year period 2000~2005 is needed for devolution to the urban local bodies. As against this the States have recommended only Rupees 400 crores (US \$ 85 million) for the year 2000~2001 (Jagmohan, 2000). Municipalities have very little scope for augmenting these resources through their own initiatives. This is so because, in view of the past record of inefficient debt servicing by local governments and in the light of the paucity of public and private savings, the state governments rigidly control the extent of market borrowing to be indulged in by local governments.

Weak Management Expertise of Local Governments: The local governments are not only saddled with the weakest revenue instruments but also a management expertise that is inadequate even for routine maintenance work, what to speak of urban development tasks which are getting increasingly complicated. The poor income base of local governments results in their low prestige, which in turn leads to lack of enthusiasm among the staff. Due to poor pay scales and service conditions, municipalities have consistently failed to attract talented and qualified staff. Municipal administration has become a synonym for acute inefficiency and corruption.

Multiplicity of Authorities: The host of agencies that were created to deal with specific components of urban development resulted in multiplicity of authorities. This phenomenon exacerbated the problems relating to urban development and management. The division of responsibilities amongst the

agencies was not clearly defined and a number of issues relating to overlapping areas of interest cropped up. The situation was made worse by fragmentation of urban governments, particularly in metropolitan areas. For example, Calcutta Metropolitan District covering an area of about 1000 sq. km contains about 70 local bodies. Such a system has resulted in an uncoordinated mess. Each function and each local body is administered in an insular fashion without regard to its repercussions on the allied services and neighboring communities. There is no single authority to look into totality of services and functions of a community. The agencies whose functional responsibilities overlap begin to work at cross-purposes with each other. This lack of coordination amongst agencies results in considerable wastage of resources and delay in execution of projects.

Highly Centralized Administrative Setup: The highly centralized administrative setup adopted by the Government of India after independence also militated against the interest of urban local bodies. Since the existing planning and development system in India emphasizes a top down model of decision making without any in-built feed back mechanism, the local bodies find themselves at the receiving end of the directives originating at the upper levels. At the same time, local bodies are not able to exercise their own decision-making power because the Indian Constitution, though it defined the powers and functional responsibilities of the Center and the States, did not do so in respect of the local governments. Thus the local bodies became subservient to the interests of the States. Since no feedback mechanism existed, local bodies could not even function as grass-roots organizations. At the same time, in the absence of citizens' participation in the planning and development process, local government agencies merely depend upon plans and programs chalked out by the officials of the central and state governments.

Lack of People's Involvement in Planning and Development Process: The continued neglect of municipal bodies and emphasis on the role of special purpose agencies has thus resulted in a technocratic and bureaucratic approach to urban development and has tended to insulate urban planning

from local popular will. Devoid of people's involvement, urban development agencies often pursue objectives that are at variance with people's aspirations. Till very recently, the most local bodies were superseded and put under bureaucratic control. Even today, in the cities where the elected urban governments are in place, the power of administration is generally concentrated in the hands of state appointed commissioners - administrators from India's administrative services. The commissioner also has the power to finally approve the deliberative wing's decisions. Mayors hold a ceremonial position. They don't even have a uniform tenure - it varies from one to five years. It is obvious that if a Mayor's term is for one year only, little time is there for him to understand the job and achieve results.

Due to this continued disregard, municipal institutions have languished. The municipalities as the principal agencies of local government would thus require strengthening and building up of their capacities in the context of the emerging challenges posed by dynamic urban growth.

Suggestions by the Various Task Forces, Committees and Commissions for Reorganizing the Role of Planning Committees and Local Bodies

The Government, on various occasions after independence, appointed task forces, committees and commissions to crystallize ideas for overcoming the lacunae in the planning and development system in the country and formulating policy approaches for sustainable urban development. The report of the Rural Urban Relationship Committee (RURC) marked the first official attempt at the national level to consider the issue of institutional development to grapple with the urban question (Government of India, 1966). The RURC advocated general strengthening of municipal institutions to increase their administrative capacities for more efficient management of local government functions. The Committee also suggested that for integrating the development of rural and urban areas, a district level statutory planning and development authority should be created with representations from both rural and urban

local bodies. It was expected that within the broad framework of development guidelines prepared by the statutory authority, individual local bodies would undertake respective local development activities. For less urbanized districts, the *Zila Parishad* (existing local-self government institution for rural development at district level) was to assume the coordinating role. In regard to metropolitan complexes the RURC suggested two alternatives:

- Placing the entire region under a single municipal authority; or
- Creating a special statutory authority with representation from various local, regional and national interests to undertake strategic planning for the entire region leaving detailed local level action to local bodies.

The Report of the Task Force on 'Planning and Development of Small and Medium Towns' had also deliberated the issue of institutional support for pursuing a policy of urban dispersal, away from metro cities (Government of India, 1977).

The Task Force recommended setting up:

- At the State level, a Town and Country Planning Board as the physical planning wing of the State Planning Commission;
- At the District level, a suitable statutory authority that would work for integrating the plans and programs for development of rural and urban areas.

The Task Force on Management of Urban Development set up by the Planning Commission reiterated the view that administrative and managerial capacities of municipal institutions should be strengthened (Government of India, 1983).

The National Commission on Urbanization made a bold attempt at addressing the various issues and problems related to India's urbanization. The Commission suggested a comprehensive set of policy guidelines for modifying the course of future urbanization so that it becomes a positive force

in the development process. Towards his objective, the Commission made recommendations for supportive institutional reforms. The Commission had observed that in order to evolve effective policies for planning and development of cities and towns, regional approach is very much essential. It suggested a spatial planning system as a link between national and local planning. This system entailed a process whereby national and state policies would be disaggregated to the grass roots level while detailing out policies at each level in a top down manner. At the same time, through this approach, settlement and district plans would be aggregated at the state level which when further aggregated would give, at any given point of time, a national spatial pattern. The proposed system thus aimed at introducing the bottom up feedback mechanism. Through the process of disaggregating and aggregating, the commission also attempted to outline an approach that would enable integration of inter sector policies and programs with particular reference to spatial planning and development (Government of India, 1988).

The regional spatial planning approach as suggested by the Urbanization Commission required a regionalization exercise to be carried out whereby the nation would be divided into a hierarchy of regions comprising macro regions (inter state), regions (state), sub regions (inter district), and micro regions (districts). The system followed the multi level planning approach that would function at three levels - National, State, and District (see Fig. 1). According to the proposed model, at the national level, the approach to spatial planning would be limited to policy and strategy formulation, while most effective spatial planning would be at state and district levels through preparation and implementation of spatial plans.

Constitutional Amendments for Strengthening Local Governments

The elaborate system proposed by the urbanization commission, however, never saw the light of the day. But revolutionary institutional changes were enacted in 1992 in the form of 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments. Whereas the 73rd Amendment Act pertained to *panchayats* (Government of

India 1992-a), the 74th Amendment Act related to municipalities (Government of India 1992-b). These enactments came into force in 1993 with the central objectives of: a) establishing institutional mechanism for integrated urban-rural development and b) promoting political, administrative and financial empowerment of local bodies. Incidentally, the committees and commissions mentioned above had also made recommendations favouring these objectives. With the enactment of these amendments to the Constitution of India, local bodies in the country acquired a constitutional status to function truly as the third tier of government, State and Center being the other two. The Constitution (74th Amendment), popularly known as municipal act is more pertinent to urban areas and its provisions are covered in detail below.

Protecting Representative Character of Municipalities: The Act broadly aims at ensuring that elections for urban local bodies are held regularly so that people's representatives are in place and take part in policy making at the level of municipality. As per the provisions of the Act, if for some reason a local body is superseded, it cannot remain so for more than six months. It is now the constitutional obligation of the state governments to see that elections are held within this period and a new set of representatives put in place. The new system ensures increased participation of women and weaker sections of the society in the decision making process. Most of the States have amended their respective municipal acts to include the provision of the Constitution Amendment Act. Accordingly, municipal elections have now been held in all the States (with very few exceptions) and about 60,000 elected representatives have come into the urban political stream. Municipalities have thus become the principal representative platform for the urban population.

Devolution of Funds to Local Bodies: A provision has also been made for a rational devolution of funds from the state to the local bodies. For this purpose, on the pattern of Central Finance Commissions for devolution of funds from the Center to the States, the Constitution (74th Amendment) Act has provided for State Finance Commissions. In fact, State Finance Commissions have been set up in almost all the States. These Commissions

have recommended specific grants to municipal bodies at the same time raising the per capita level of the grants. In some States, the State Finance Commission has suggested criteria for devolution of funds giving weightages for population, area within municipal boundaries and the area occupied by slums. The State Finance Commissions have also suggested new avenues for raising financial resources, and have advocated for share of the municipalities in certain taxes presently collected by the States. The Constitution (74th Amendment Act) has also enhanced the decision-making powers of municipalities. They have now begun to think about raising finances from the capital market and using these funds for improving infrastructure in the towns. Municipal Corporations of Ahmedabad and Bangalore, two principal industrial cities of India have already succeeded in issuing such bonds. Other cities propose to follow soon (Singh, 2000)

Rational Basis for Assigning Responsibilities to Local Government

Institutions: The 12th schedule added to the 74th Amendment provides the basis for state legislatures to assign functions to the municipalities. Through this amendment the local bodies have also been provided flexibility to devise their own modes for raising resources and not be at the mercy of state governments either for defining their functional responsibilities or generating funds for investment. Under the provisions of 74th Amendment Act, activities such as urban planning including town planning, regulation of land use, slum improvement and up-gradation and provision of basic services have been included in the list of municipal functions (see Box 2). Though the list is not mandatory and the States are not bound to delegate these functions to municipalities, it is noteworthy that policy makers now think that local bodies should be entrusted with the responsibility of preparing development plans and exercising development control within their jurisdiction.

**Box 2. Functional Responsibilities of Municipalities Listed in the 12th Schedule
Constitution (74th Amendment) Act**

1. Urban Planning including town planning.
2. Regulation of land use and construction of buildings.
3. Planning for economic and social development.
4. Roads and bridges.
5. Water supply for domestic, industrial and commercial purposes.
6. Public health, sanitation, conservancy and solid waste management
7. Fire services.
8. Urban forestry, protection of environment and promotion of ecological aspects.
9. Safeguarding the interests of the weaker sections of the society, including the handicapped and mentally retarded.
10. Slum improvement and upgradation.
11. Urban poverty alleviation.
12. Provision for urban amenities and facilities such as parks, gardens and playgrounds.
13. Promotion of cultural, educational aesthetic aspects.
14. Burials and burial grounds, cremations and cremation grounds.
15. Cattle ponds: prevention of cruelty to animals.
16. Vital statistics including registration of births and deaths.
17. Public amenities including street lighting, parking lots, bus stops and public conveniences.
18. Regulation of slaughterhouses and tanneries.

Integrated Rural-Urban Development: The amendments initiated the process for introducing institutional arrangements for seeking integrated development of settlements, areas and regions. For this purpose the Act also provides for two types of Committees namely District Planning Committee

and Metropolitan Area Committee. These would ensure that plans prepared by local bodies at village and town levels are integrated and accommodated within the framework of 20~25 year perspective plan and 5-year development plan prepared at National and State levels. The District Planning Committee would also ensure that spatial development plans are prepared for each district. In situations where metropolitan cities exist, and since their areal spread is such that they usually transcended boundaries of more than one district, Metropolitan Planning Committee would be constituted to oversee preparation of the development plan for the entire metropolitan area. The Metropolitan Area Committee would thus coordinate planning and development activities in the concerned districts.

Setting up of Ward Committees: The Constitution (74th Amendment) Act provides for constitution of Wards Committees consisting of one or more wards, within the territorial area of a municipality having a population of 300,000 or more. The essence of this provision is to bring about proximity between the people and local governments so that the Committees can play an effective role at the neighbourhood level in the delivery of services. Some cities have already begun to constitute ward Committees. For example, Bangalore Mahanagar *Palika* (Municipal Corporation) has been organised by the State Government into 28 Ward Committees, each consisting of 3~4 Wards of the 100 wards of the *Mahanagar Palika*. Each Ward Committee comprises elected councilors of the corporation representing wards, seven nominated members including two nominees of the State Government and two members nominated by the Government from amongst the NGOs and CBOs working within the area of the Ward Committee. These Committees, once fully instituted will be highly instrumental in bringing about increased participation of people in delivery of services, at the same time providing useful feedback for urban planning and development efforts.

However, some scholars feel that local governments need to be reformed further by removing the loopholes in the fabric of 74th Amendment (Jha, 1993). These loopholes arise since:

- The constitutional amendment did not clearly demarcate the functions of the local bodies. The 12th Schedule list of functions is discretionary not mandatory. Hence States can, if they so wish, completely disregard it while assigning functions and responsibilities to the municipalities.
- It did not define the resources the municipalities could tap.
- It did not define the parameters of administrative or managerial autonomy to be given to urban local bodies.

There is a general consensus at seminars and gatherings of scholars that the Mayor-in-Council System - as a responsive form of city management should be adopted (Nagarpalika Network et. al., 1999:1). Such form of government will have a collective responsibility and continuity and will be accountable to the elected council in the first instance, and ultimately to the public. The system is comparable in spirit and substance to the parliamentary form of government. If responsibilities as well as executive powers are vested in the Mayor, then it will be more reasonable to hold the Mayor accountable to the public. Under the present system, Mayor is merely a figurehead. Under the Mayor-in-Council system, Mayor would select the members of the Council and its composition should not exceed 10 per cent of the elected councilors excluding the Mayor.

The term of the Mayor and Mayor-in Council should be co-terminus with the Corporation. Municipal Commissioner will be the Principal Executive Officer of the Corporation and should be accountable to the Mayor. Under the new system, Municipal Commissioner will be the principal executive Officer of the Corporation and should be accountable to the Mayor. His role should be similar to that of a Chief Secretary in State heading the executive but answerable to the Chief Minister. All municipal staff should be under the control and supervision of the Municipal Commissioner. Powers and responsibilities to be discharged by the Commission should be specifically described. Departmental Standing Committees should be constituted out of the elected members of the corporation but should be of advisory nature. The

State Government should have minimal interference in day to day working of the municipal corporations.

In this regard, it is pertinent to note that the Municipal Corporation of Delhi has unanimously passed a resolution seeking an amendment to the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act for constituting a Mayor-in Council. According to the existing Delhi Municipal Corporation Act (Amendment) 1993, the Mayor is appointed on a rotational basis for a year. The Act empowers Commissioner to exercise all executive powers over the functioning of the civic body. The role of elected representatives is limited to formulating policies and approving business items listed on the agenda by the Commissioner.

The Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India is also considering a proposal for a model Municipal Corporation Act that should serve as a general guide to the State Governments.

Need for Good Urban Governance

The issues discussed above lead to several observations and conclusions that may be helpful in suggesting suitable changes in the existing administrative and financial framework of urban local bodies so that they get better equipped for achieving the goal of good urban governance. However, it needs to be emphasized, that institutional reforms apart, one measure that would go long way in achieving this goal would be the one which would minimize the need for such governance. Presently, it is due to the massive increase in population and physical spread of major urban agglomerations, that the institutions involved in urban governance are under so much of stress for delivering results. The urban problems have acquired such large dimensions that they are becoming almost unmanageable. Hence, one obvious policy approach is to initiate measure for not letting population to concentrate in the form of large urban agglomerations.

Though it is not so that planners in India, as in other parts of the world, have not tried to deflect population and economic activities away from large

cities and towards small and medium towns as part of a policy of decentralization. Indeed, in India, policy of decentralization has been pursued to check rapid growth of large cities such as Calcutta, Bombay and Delhi; each of which have crossed the population threshold of ten million persons. Simultaneously, the Government of India has been promoting the growth of small and medium towns for which the 'Scheme for Integrated Development of Small and Medium Towns' was formulated and is being implemented for the last twenty years. But both these policies have yielded limited result. This is partly because the Scheme has not been implemented, as vigorously as required under the existing circumstances, and more so because there are factors, which make urbanization inevitable. Moreover, rapidly growing cities all over the world have depicted an intrinsic tendency for rapid growth due to the comparative advantage they enjoy as engines of economic growth. They invite investment and trade; become centers of production and consumption, and also a market place; provide various services, facilities and amenities for people, trade, business and industry; ultimately become great centers of culture and learning; and promote civic spirit and social togetherness. Due to this reason, employment opportunities concentrate there and people are attracted towards them in hordes in spite of the many urban problems that people have to face while living and working in them.

Thus perhaps the best policy option would be to develop cities in such a manner that their positive dimensions are enhanced and the urban problems are minimized. The first step in this direction would perhaps be to aim at integrated development of rural and urban areas, and a relatively even spread of population among urban settlements of different sizes so that sustainable development of cities, towns and villages can become a realizable objective. To achieve this objective it is necessary reform the existing institutional and administrative framework for urban planning and development and institutionalize the norms of good urban governance for delivering services which the people may demand for improving their quality of life.

Elements of Good Urban Governance

The UMP Asia News (FALL~WINTER 1999/2000:1) has described the elements of good governance. It is stated that governance is traditionally defined as the action or manner of governing. But no longer it means just that. In fact it extends beyond the conventional law enforcing, service providing domain of the state to imply process of development which is participatory and takes into consideration the interest of all stakeholder groups in society specially of the most excluded and disadvantaged sections. Good governance is seen as a process that promotes and encourages sustainable socio-economic, human and cultural development of societies and people. The 1999 Human Development Report for South Asia goes one step further to introduce the concept of human governance, conceptualized as governance that is dedicated to securing human development. It is described as being composed of three dimensions of good governance - good political governance, good economic governance, and good civic governance. The UNCHS (Habitat) has also launched a global campaign on urban governance with the objective of promoting good governance, focusing on, among other things, urban management, urban environment and urban safety. The campaign will support consensus building process between local governments and civil society, seen as an essential component of good governance.

With the purpose of promoting interface between local governments and the people, the Ministry of Urban Affairs and Employment in the Government of India has issued guidelines for preparing "Citizens' Charter for Municipal Services by Municipal Bodies". Citizens' Charter reflects the demand for citizens right to adequate basic services such as drinking water, sanitation and healthcare services etc. It is statement from local government about what people can expect from the service providers. Since local conditions in the provision of municipal services and facilities vary from one municipality to another, it is expected that each municipal body should formulate and publish its own citizens' charter for municipal services. These charters should be prepared through interaction with users/ citizens' association and not only by experts. The charter must start with a statement of services offered. It should

include a brief statement regarding the entitlement of the users, service standards and remedies available to the user for non-performance. It must also include information about procedure, stages of decision-making, time frame, and location of the offices of the concerned services and its timings, names and designations of dealing officials for the provision and maintenance of each service. If a complaint is not resolved within the time limit prescribed or the consumer is not satisfied with the dealing staff, then whom to contact, where are they stationed, and what are the timings for meeting with them should be clearly stated in the charter. Wide publicity should be given to the Charter through the media, to increase people's awareness.

The citizen's charter is a useful practice, which once in vogue, would create necessary condition for responsive and effective municipal administration. It would become a medium for interacting regularly with the people. In order to facilitate these interactions, formation of consumers' forums may be encouraged. Suitable training programs will need to be devised for the municipal officers to equip them with the necessary expertise for engaging in purposeful dialogue with the people and articulating ideas for improving the quality of municipal services. A structure for obtaining feedback and performance audit by an independent third party and schedule for reviewing the charter at regular interval should be prepared. It would be an added measure for obtaining feedback from the people regarding the quality of services rendered by municipal bodies (Nagarpalika Network Newsletter, 1999:2). It is encouraging to note that New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) and Mumbai Municipal Corporation have already taken a lead and published Citizens' Charters. The Municipal Corporations of Delhi, Surat, Ahmedabad, and Vadodra have set-up Public Grievances Cells on redressing public grievances.

Number of tools and methodologies are being developed in different parts of the world to evaluate performance of governments at macro and micro levels. Micro level tools assess the performance of local government and provide public feedback on aspects of service delivery through user surveys and public hearings. Indices, such as responsiveness, participation, transparency and accountability feature in almost all-prevalent techniques of

measuring good governance. A number of techniques are being utilized to empirically measure governments' performance. The examples are Community Based Indicators, Corruption Perception Index, Social Development Audits and most popular of them all "Citizen Report Card". The Citizen Report Card methodology has been used in India in Bangalore and several other cities. It is a tool for measuring the performance of public agencies, getting user feed back and initiating reforms. It evaluates local government's performance as seen by citizens, it obtains public feedback on efficiency and efficacy of service delivery mechanism and in making substantive systemic improvement. The utility of Citizen Report Card is perceived at four levels:

- Creating public awareness,
- Stimulating agency reforms,
- Strengthening the civil society initiative, and
- Capacity building for public interest groups, NGOs and advocacy organizations.

Lately, the City Consultations technique popularized by the Urban Management Program of the United Nations has emerged as a useful tool for eliciting citizen's participation. The first step in the practice of this technique is to engage all the stakeholders involved in urban developments in a continuing dialogue for formulation of action plans to address the most critical problems of the city. The use of this technique has resulted in several success stories of good urban governance in Asian cities. Thus participatory approaches like these should be pursued in a vigorous manner and replicated. .

Conclusions

The above discussion clearly suggests that the quality of urban governance will improve once decentralized decision-making models and feedback mechanisms are firmly in place.

Various steps need to be taken to increase participatory component in planning and development management system in India. In this context the first step would be to increase participation of people through their elected representatives in the local and upper tiers of government. The other is through the direct participation of the people in the decision making process. The recent experience of empowering both rural and urban local bodies through the 73rd and 74th Amendment Acts, 1992 would certainly be helpful as regards the first step towards increased participatory process. These statutes would also ensure that democratically elected local governments are not disturbed by executive order. Through this continuity in the democratic process it can be ensured that the future development process would reflect priorities of the people, especially the poor and the other less privileged sections of the population.

The Ward Committees, Metropolitan and District Planning Committees, the three tiers of Panchayats, and Municipalities would surely provide avenues for people to participate in the decision making process through their elected representatives. The supportive measures for strengthening the Municipalities by ensuring devolution of power, financial resources and functions would also go a long way in institutionalizing an efficient urban management system through the medium of grass roots governance.

Once fully implemented the new measures would lessen bureaucratic dominance of central and state governments over local government affairs, and local bodies would become more vibrant units for ensuring people's welfare. The existing top-down approach would be supplemented by a feedback mechanism with the strengthening of grass-roots organizations and a truly multi-level planning methodology would evolve.

Simultaneously efforts are needed to activate people to directly participate in planning and plan implementation processes. Various channels are open for the people to do so. One is of course that of the people's organizations such a neighborhood committees, NGOs and CBOs. The other avenues lie in engaging people in consultations at various stages of planning and development process and vigorous campaigns in media to inform people about development alternatives. Participatory approaches such as action

planning need to be popularized to evolve interventions that have the backing of the people. A careful assessment of these possibilities should be carried out and a suitable framework should be evolved to involve all the potential people's organizations and participatory practices to achieve sustainable urban development.

References

- All India Institute of Local Self Government (1999), *Nagar Palika Network, Newsletter*, Vol. 1 No.6
- Government of India (1966), *Report of the Committee on Rural Urban Relationship Vol. I*, New Delhi.
- Government of India (1977), *Report of the Task Force on Planning and Development of Small and Medium Towns and Cities*, Vol. I, Ministry of Works and Housing, New Delhi.
- Government of India (1988), *Report of the National Commission on Urbanization*.
- Government of India (1992-a), *Constitution (73rd Amendment)*, Gazette of India, New Delhi.
- Government of India (1992-b), *Constitution (74th Amendment)*, Gazette of India, New Delhi.
- Government of India (1996), *India National Report: Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements- Habitat II*, Ministry of Urban Affairs and Employment, New Delhi.
- Jagmohan (2000) as quoted in the *Times of India*, p. 10, May 1.
- Jha, Gangadhar (1993), 'The Seventy-Fourth Constitution Amendment and the Empowerment of Municipal Government: A Critique' in *Urban India*, Vol. XIII No. 2, pp. 68~78
- Krishna, Gopal (2000), "Issues in Governance of Planned Cities: A Case Study of Chandigarh", paper presented at the Seminar on '*Emerging Perspective on Urban Governance*' organized by the Institute of Human Development, New Delhi and the Faculty of Management Studies, University of Delhi, New Delhi.

Osborne, David and Ted Gaebler (1992), *Reinventing Government*, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs.

Singh, Kulwant (200), 'Trends in Decentralization and Urban Governance', paper presented at the Seminar on '*Emerging Perspective on Urban Governance*' organized by the Institute of Human Development, New Delhi and the Faculty of Management Studies, University of Delhi, New Delhi.

Urban Management Program (1999/ 2000), *UMP Asia News* Vol. II, No.3