KNOWLEDGE NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND IMPROVING CITY-TO-CITY LEARNING WORKSHOP AT AHMEDABAD ON 8 APRIL, 2011

A Knowledge Needs Assessment and Improving City-To-City Learning Workshop under PEARL CA Project held on 8th April 2011 at Centre for Environment and Planning Technology (CEPT) Ahmedabad. The workshop was organised by National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) in collaboration with, CEPT, World Bank Institute (WBI) and Cities Alliance (CA). The workshop was attended by over 35 participants.

The basic objective of the workshop was to share strategies for achieving effective participation of cities to access and use the PEARL platform; share experiences and challenges in assessing knowledge needs of cities including international experiences; learn from pilot knowledge needs assessment (KNA) studies done for Ahmedabad and Rajkot; and develop a shared understanding of KNA and build up a broad framework/template for KNA that can best serve other JNNURM cities.

Prof. Shivanand Swamy, Associate Director, CEPT welcomed the delegates followed by introductory remarks of Prof. Chetan Vaidya, Director NIUA who outlined the vision of PEARL programme and

briefly highlighted the various activities being undertaken. He indicated that feedback received on PEARL has been very positive. Thereafter, he briefly outlined the objectives of the workshop. Mr. Sanjay Kumar Director, MoUD wished the programme great success.

Mr. Bruno La Porte, WBI Director identified CEPT University as a center of learning and congratulated the team for organising the workshop at the University. He stated that a paradigm shift is being observed wherein, (a) cities and urban growth are no longer being perceived as problems but a platform of opportunities with focus on growth and innovations; and (b) there is a change in the way capacity development is being approached now. The focus has shifted from an input-based approach hinged on training towards a output-based approach hinged on focusing on how changes are to be implemented achieved through effective knowledge management. Towards this, he indicated that the PEARL network was an innovative approach towards capacity development. He mentioned that the WBI now focusing on knowledge
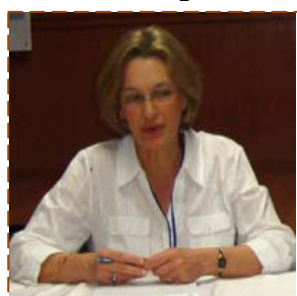
sharing and indicated that India, with its incredible experiences, has a lot to share. Wishing the deliberations a success, he urged participants to visualize the kind of change they wanted to see in their cities and then in reflect on the knowledge gaps to achieve this vision.

Mr. Keshav Verma, World Bank Institute stated that challenge in India is monumental and indicated that in urban local governments, daily administration is the biggest issue where fire-fighting approach to development is fostering. He urged on the need for setting up core groups on specific themes that can support ULBs on their development thinking. He also indicated the importance of having a 'champion'. Highlighting successes in China and Vietnam, he identified the need to set up a system of local governance that is able to integrate inputs from technical experts/professionals. Highlighting the four pillars of the World Bank Urban Strategy - liveability, competitiveness, bankability, and professionalism – he identified Ahmedabad as a centre that has all four pillars. He urged that professional institutes like CEPT, IIM, Gujarat Urban Development Institute, etc. to come and work together with local authorities. He also urged on the need to focus on action research and indicated that he was happy to know about PEARL and its achievements.

Prof. VK Dhar, NIUA made a presentation setting the context for the workshop. He detailed out objectives of the workshop and outlined the approach for KNA and activities undertaken so far. Prof. Dhar mentioned that post pilot-exercise presentations, a brainstorming followed by structured discussions would be undertake to carve a common template for KNA for use in other Mission cities.

The session on Reflecting on International Experiences and learning from cities in the network was opened by remarks of **Ms. Christine Kessides**, Urban Manager, WBI had two presentations by **Mr. Emil de Quiros**, Urban Expert, WBIUR and **Ms. Sheila Jagannathan**, Sr. Learning Specialist, WBIEL.

Mr. Emil de Quiros spoke about Extracting lessons from the experiences of the League of Cities, Philippines (LCP). The presentation covered the background of League of Cities, learning activities, and some reflections on lessons and challenges. His presentation focused on innovative approaches adopted by LCP including (a) *city-to-city cooperation* by providing example of Butuan City (South) and Marikina

City (NCR), (b) *technical assistance and advisory services to cities*, *and* **(c) training programs** *wherein* LCP was in charge of developing modules and delivering basic orientation to city mayors.

Mr. Emil de Quiros impressed on the effectiveness of peer learning but cautioned on the sustainability of activities. He indicated that the sustainability agenda should look at how to continue activities with minimal external support. Furthermore, he mentioned that there is a need to balance supply and demand-driven agendas - a thorough and accurate assessment of knowledge needs is important to respond to the demand. He also mentioned that KNA should be linked with the ULB mandate (as mandated by the concerned Act) to enable development of target learning exercise designed to support ULB fulfill its mandatory and obligatory responsibilities. In conclusion, he cautioned that simple knowledge exchanges and (South-South) cooperation exercises may not be sufficient for effective capacity development and indicated that they must be tied to a broader learning agenda. He also opined that while PEARL may not be keen on providing training programs, but it could support existing training institutions in supplementing their knowledge programs targted to ULB officials.

Ms. Sheila Jagannathan delivered a presentation on **Active Peer Learning Networks.** She outlined different stages of community development, and highlighted on the need to balance three critical roles that a knowledge institutions must play: knowledge sharing, knowledge management and knowledge broking.

The technical session on Knowledge Needs Assessment Studies – Findings and Roadblocks had three presentations: CEPT presenting on Rajkot, UMC presenting on Ahmedabad, and ASCI presenting on Trivandrum KNA findings. The Rajkot KNA study focused on property tax reforms and bus rapid transit system (BRTS) project, while the Ahmedabad KNA study looked at Rent Control Act, double entry accrual accounting, rainwater harvesting reforms and water supply and solid waste management projects.

This was followed by a brainstorming on developing a common framework for assessing cities' knowledge needs. The session was led by **Mr. Andre Herzog**, Sr. Urban Specialist, WBI, and included **Mr. D. Ajay Suri**, Regional Adviser Cities Alliance-SA and **Prof. VK Dhar**, NIUA in the panel. Based on the brainstorming it was agreed that (i) a series of KNA studies for 6-8 cities would be taken up

wherein the cities would be selected in terms of size, location, reform implementation, fund utilisation and other filters; (ii) multiple approaches would be used for undertaking the KNA; (iii) a range of stakeholders would be engaged (4 levels of administration, academics, political actors, NGOs/CBOs, private sector, cooperatives, state level nodal agencies, etc.); (iv) a common analytical framework would be used - focusing on the process management change cycle and how knowledge is utilised, identifying obstacles for accessing and using knowledge, identifying the enabling environment for change understanding the critical factors and actors. An overall timeline of 9 months was agreed as being reasonable to achieve this outcome.

Prof. Chetan Vaidya, NIUA presented the closing remarks broadly summarizing the deliberations and identifying the way forward. He also thanked all participants for attending and contributing in the workshop.