

Minutes of the Roundtable on “Peer Experience and Reflective Learning (PEARL)” Programme under JnNURM at NIUA, New Delhi on 4th December 2008

The Ministry of Urban Development (MoUD) nominated the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) as the National Coordinator of the “Peer Experience and Reflective Learning” (PEARL) Programme under Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JnNURM). The focus of PEARL is on disseminating informations and knowledge gaps on projects, best practices and reforms under JNNURM.

A roundtable on the PEARL Programme was organized at NIUA with the support of MOUD on 4th December 2008.

The roundtable witnessed participation from Mega Cities Association, Kolkata, Bhopal Municipal Corporation, CEPT- Ahmedabad, All India Institute of Local Self Government – Mumbai, Agra Nagar Nigam, UNDP, UNESCO, WSP-SA, ADB, JnNURM- technical cell, IIPA and various other non – governmental stakeholders. All the four Knowledge Managers were present except for the Knowledge Manager of the Hill Cities. Mr. P.K.Srivastava, Joint Secretary and Mission Director, JnNURM, chaired the roundtable. List of participants is attached as Annexure.

Prof. Chetan Vaidya, Director, NIUA greeted all the participants and briefed on the objective of PEARL, which is a knowledge-sharing platform focusing mainly on projects, reforms and partnerships. Presently, this would cover all the 63 JNNURM Cities in India. He said that knowledge managers would act like a "catalyst" in helping the JNNURM cities to learn from each other. He emphasized that the focus is on urban officials, researchers and NGOs who will benefit from it and mentioned that the Institute has received tremendous response in support for PEARL.

Mr. P.K.Srivastava, Joint Secretary and Mission Director, JnNURM, highlighted the background and components of the JNNURM, launched in 2005 that also supports the PEARL Project, which had started a year and a half ago. Taking cognizance of the capacity building needs of the Municipalities, he said that PEARL is the platform, which would focus on improving the capacity and knowledge gaps of the municipal staffs in the cities. He stated that the major objectives of the programme are to identify knowledge gaps and therefore, information sharing among key stakeholders. The knowledge managers are to play the part of a catalyst in the whole affair. He also highlighted some key points for the programme. They are:

- PEARL would enhance knowledge gaps through sharing of best practices and experience amongst municipalities.
- Interactions of Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) at regional workshops would also help in exchanging experience, lessons learnt and best practices over a period of time from successful municipalities. For example Community Participation at Faridabad.
- Implementing these practices at other places or rather replication of best practices is the actual task that needs to be done, and
- Partnership of Research Organisations like NGOs and Training Institutions should also be involved in the process.

Prof. V.K.Dhar, NIUA, on the purpose, objective and introduction to the PEARL website, made a brief presentation. All 63 cities have been divided into five groups – heritage cities, Mega Cities Group, Mixed Economy Cities Group, Industrial Cities Group and Hill Cities Group. Each group has a Knowledge Managers (KMs) like Mega Cities Association (MCA), Kolkata; CEPT- Ahmedabad; CMA - Bhopal and AILLSG – Mumbai. The activities that would be carried out by the Institute to facilitate the KMs under the programme are to:

- Help the Knowledge Managers (KMs) / partners to document various best practices related with project development, financing and construction as well as reforms under JNNURM.
- Set up a website and publish periodic newsletters for exchange of information, innovation and initiatives.
- Help KMs/partners organise three group workshops of participating ULBs and Knowledge Managers to exchange experiences and lessons learned.
- Organise a national workshop on the status and experience of PEARL network.

Ms. Nilanjana Dasgupta Sur and Ms. Indu Senan, NIUA gave the demonstration of the PEARL website. The main objective of the roundtable was to discuss contents of the proposed PEARL website – India Urban Portal (www.indiaurbanportal.in), which is the gateway to the 63 cities under JnNURM and shall be linked to the main website of JnNURM. The portal is envisaged as a ready reference to best practices in planning, projects, reforms, accessible data/ resources and other innovations. The goal is to create an information network, community and resource that will provide qualified, trusted and variable information. It will also provide the stakeholders, a knowledge-sharing platform for interaction and discussion. Few suggestions on networking system, dissemination of informations and interactive learning were given.

Short presentations were also made by Mega Cities Association (MCA), Kolkata; CEPT- Ahmedabad; CMA - Bhopal and AILLSG - Mumbai on the work being done by the mega cities, heritage cities, mixed economy cities and industrial city groups under the PEARL Programme.

1. MCA, Kolkata – (Knowledge Manager: Mega Cities Group)

Mr. Md. Sahidul Islam, Jt. Municipal Commissioner, KMC, gave a brief background on the formation of the MCA. He highlighted about the activities and workshops conducted by the Association like 1) First Leading Practice Symposium held in Kolkata, 2) Workshop on Solid Waste Management held in Bangalore and 3) Workshop on Municipal Finance with focus on Property Tax Assessment and Collection System. He expressed his interest in organizing a Group Workshop focusing on Reforms and Disaster Management.

2. CEPT- Ahmedabad – (Knowledge Manager: Heritage Cities Group)

Prof. Saswat Bandyopadhyay from CEPT, Ahmedabad gave a brief presentation on the background, purpose, components, city network of the heritage cities and also briefed on:

- Key issues at the ULBs level that included lack of linkage between urban planning and heritage development; lack of comprehensive guidelines and clear road map for action to protect the heritage cities; absence of experience sharing platforms or on-

line supports; model urban plans with building by-laws, sensitive to heritage issues and so on.

- Thematic areas that have been identified are heritage and conservation, religion and water front cities, tourism, social amenities and urban infrastructure; existing and possible guidelines.
- The expected outcomes expressed in organizing a Group Workshop in February 2009.

3. CMA, MP – Bhopal – (Knowledge Manager: Mixed Economy Cities Group)

Ms. Renu Handa, on behalf of CMA – Bhopal as knowledge manager for the group for mixed economy cities, briefed about the background of their initiatives in this direction. She stated that there is lack of bondages between the group cities and it was very hard for them to develop this. Therefore, she requested NIUA to send a letter to each 63 cities stating about the PEARL Programme and also requesting each city to identify a respective person to take care of the affairs under the project.

4. AILSG – Mumbai- (Knowledge Manager: Industrial Cities Group)

Dr. Mukesh Kanaskar, AILSG, briefed on the background, network of cities and status of activities carried out by AILSG as a convener to the Industrial cities network. He also stated that focus is to strengthen capabilities for solid waste management and environment planning; to build an effective process of environment planning and urban management, which is integrated and institutionalized, and also to promote good urban governance. Key outcomes of the inception workshop were also discussed.

Extensive discussions took place among the participants regarding lack of interest in PEARL, municipal officials not using online systems for communication, frequent transfers of officials, etc.

Following suggestions were given in the roundtable:

- Identifying the knowledge gaps and information sharing should be the main focus.
- To identify best practices and crosscutting issues.
- Mechanism to be developed for identifying best practices.
- Associate Training Institutes (ATIs) should be identified and involved to build the network.
- Mechanism to evolve the PEARL Urban Portal by NIUA needs to be decided.
- Proper tools and guidelines to be developed and need to converge Heritage Cities as well.
- Mechanism to converge all ULBs and to develop proper network between them through connectivity of E-Governance system.
- To institutionalize knowledge sharing among ULBs.
- To develop a mechanism for the website where queries shall be posted, on the ways to respond and interact.

The programme ended with vote of thanks from Prof. V.K.Dhar, NIUA.

Annexure

List of Participants

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