National Workshop on PEARL, JNNURM, Hyderabad, November 6, 2009

Organised by MoUD, NIUA & ASCI

A National Workshop on PEARL was held in Hyderabad on November 6, 2009 under JNNURM. It was jointly organised by the Ministry of Urban Development (MoUD), National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) and Administrative Staff College of India (ASCI). The workshop was attended by over 50 participants representing MoUD, State Governments, Municipal Corporations, Research and Training Organisations, City Managers Associations, Cities Alliance, Water and Sanitation Program (WSP), etc. The major objectives of the workshop were to identify success stories, issues and way forward for the PEARL program.

Prof. S. Chary, Director, Urban Management Center, ASCI welcomed all the participants and gave genesis of the PEARL program which was set up for cross-learning and sharing knowledge among JNNURM cities. He said that the networking platform under the program should not be static. It should also focus on advocacy and capacity building of the urban sector.

Prof. Chetan Vaidya gave background of the workshop. He said that the major purpose of the PEARL program is to improve planning and implementation of projects and reforms under JNNURM. He added that a number of activities like a website (www.urbanportal.in), group workshops, newsletters and documentation of best practices have been undertaken. However, participation of various cities is not adequate. He invited suggestions from the participants to make the program more effective.

In her keynote address, Ms. Pushpa Subramanyam, IAS, Secretary (UD), Government of Andhra Pradesh highlighted that JNNURM was a watershed development for the urban sector. It has helped state governments and cities to focus on urban infrastructure development and reforms. The Mission triggered innovations and new approaches for the urban infrastructure

development and governance. She said there is need to strengthen capacity at state and city levels to improve service delivery and governance. She made specific suggestions: (a) set up knowledge cell at city and state levels; (b) set up e-group for senior stakeholders; and (c) help cities to access other national and international networks.

Mr. N. Venugopalan, Dy. Director, JNNURM, MoUD said that purpose of the program is to learn from success and mistakes of each other. There is also need to take stock of present status of the mission and suggest way forward. He brought out that implementation of projects under JNNURM is slow. He added that the cross-learning program should help cities to achieve the mission objectives.

The first technical session was chaired by Prof. Vaidya. Ms. Nilanjana Sur, Research Fellow, NIUA made a presentation on overview of PEARL activities. She apprised the participants of progress made through website, group workshops, newsletters, documentation of best practices, etc. She brought issues and need to institutionalize peer learning process among cities. Ms. Sur informed the audience that the WSP is helping the network to document Communications in Urban Reforms and the Cities Alliance is likely to support PEARL to set a knowledge network support unit. Objectives of the unit will be to assess knowledge gaps, develop capacity of cities for horizontal learning, link the network with other national and international networking.

Prof. Shrawan Acharya, CEPT spoke on issues, constraints and success stories based on experience of the Heritage Cities Group. The Group is working on heritage guidelines, development control regulation and cost resource optimalization techniques for projects. CEPT has set up a help desk and also initiated a web-based modular course on heritage conservation. Prof. Acharya added that heritage conservation is a felt need among city officials as well as elected officials. There is huge potential to provide livelihood potentials through heritage related projects in these cities. The group plans to work on human resource development, flexible capacity building, city to city exposure visits, etc. However, these require sustained budgetary support.

Mr. N. Bhattacharjee, India Team Leader, WSP made a presentation on urban reforms and communication. He said WSP is working on shifting focus of water and sanitation sector from asset creation to asset management. He said that a horizon of learning program is being implemented for local governments in Bangladesh. The program has increased accountability of the local governments and helped to transform relations among the three levels of governments. The program is very successful in Bangladesh and its main themes are connect, appreciate review, replicate and transform. He said that PEARL can learn from the Bangladesh experience.

There was extensive discussion after the three presentations. Large number of issues raised during the discussions included- need for cross-cutting discussions among the five like water groups on common issues , and sanitation, governance, resource mobilization, help desk, need for impact assessment, planning and implementation of basic urban services of poor projects, involvement of elected representatives, etc. .

The second technical session was chaired by Mr. N. Bhattacharjee, WSP. Prof. Chary made a presentation on lessons from evaluation of urban reforms under JNNURM. He described the status, issues, and support needed. Various cities need different types of support – clarity of reform, technical assistance, model options, operationalisation of enactments, preparation of reform implementation plan, orientation of elected representatives, etc. He also described working of the helpdesk set up by ASCI for JNNURM cities. He brought out the following lessons learned: (a) Knowledge can trigger change; (b) Peer learning can be effective if it is managed well; (c) Need to provide quality and timely information; (d) Involvement of

political representatives is necessary; (e) Tracking change is important; (f) Need for committed resources; and (h) Need to link with similar international networks.

Mr. Deepak Mahieskar, IAS, Commissioner, Nanded Municipal Corporation made a presentation on achievements of the city in planning and implementing JNNURM projects. The Government has sanctioned 11 detailed project reports of Rs. 732/- crores for the city. JNNURM has helped to improve roads, construct bridges, improve water supply and sewerage systems, implement Godavari river front development and construct low cost housing. The city is implementing a number of reforms like e-Governance, accounting system, property tax, user charges, etc. He identified the following lessons learned: projects delayed because land acquisition problems; need to select good and experience implementing agencies; time bound processing of installment and disbursement of funds, etc. The presentations lead to a large number of interventions by representatives of Rajasthan State Government, Municipal Corporations of Trivandrum, Agra, Faridabad, Hyderabad, City Managers Associations of Gujarat, Karnataka , Madhya Pradesh and Orissa, Center for Good Governance, CRRID, etc.

A panel discussion was organised at the end of the technical sessions. It consisted of Prof. Chetan Vaidya, Mr. Venugopalan and Prof. S. Chary. Prof. Vaidya summarized the deliberations of the workshop. The way forward for PEARL is below:

(a) Set up knowledge centers at city, state and national levels;

(b) Set up a help desk for JNNURM;

(c) Set up e-Groups for JNNURM projects and reforms;

(d) Organize workshops on specific issues like water supply and sanitation services, resource mobilization, governance, project implementation across various groups;

(e) Facilitate exchange visits among cities;

(f) Orient elected representatives;

(g) Develop linkages with other networks at national and international organizations;

(h) Focus on support for basic service for urban poor; and

(i) Integrate PEARL with other programs of MoUD like Service-Level Benchmarking, National Urban Sanitation Policy, Satellite Towns, etc.

The panel discussion ended with thanks to all the participants and organizers.