

Summary:

The present times are faced with unconventional challenges of rapid urbanisation, often inadequately met by existing conventional urban planning and management mechanisms in India. These are based within traditional structures and rigid institutional frameworks that are seemingly hesitant in adopting new approaches and innovations. In this context, city support institutions have emerged as a response to these hazy institutional and legal frameworks incapable of effectively responding to dynamic urban settings. The workshop titled 'Resource Institutions for Efficient Urban Planning and Management' held on the 16th December 2013 at Gulmohar Hall, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi, provided an excellent opportunity to recognize the emergence of such city support institutions in India, document them in their present stages and enrich them through international experiences. The workshop was organized by the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) with the support of the Ministry of Urban Development (MoUD), Government of India, World Bank Institute (WBI) and Cities Alliance (CA) and was coordinated through the Peer Experience and Reflective Learning (PEARL) Programme at NIUA as part of its knowledge sharing and dissemination platform. About 80 participants including high level officials and city managers from various cities and states, representatives of academic institutions, civil society organizations and the international donor community participated in the one day workshop that provided a platform for global knowledge exchange on city support institutions.

The workshop was structured into four highly interactive sessions that illustrated resource institutions through their support for regional planning, planning and managing cities, infrastructure improvement for cities and developing sustainable support mechanisms. The individual sessions were chaired by distinguished Indian urban administrators from various departments of the government. Each session focused on two cases presented by International and Indian participants and were followed by discussions with competent urban practitioners from various states. The presentations highlighted the different roles support institutions have played; the role of filling gaps as is the case of the Mumbai Transformation Support Unit (MTSU) to that of being sole custodians of planning like The Seoul Institute (TSI) and the Regional Plan Association (RPA) of New York. Dr. Sudhir Krishna, Secretary, Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India provided the keynote address for the workshop that highlighted the importance of building capacities of various institutions for planned urbanisation. He spoke of achieving this by developing synergies within the existing legislative and institutional frameworks and adequately strengthening existing paradigms, centres of excellence and empanelled consultants. He promoted the creation of a 'hub and spoke' mechanism for capacity building to extend its support to the 4,000 odd urban administrations in the country.

The workshop concluded with Mr. Anand Mohan, Director (NURM 1), MoUD, Mr. Victor Vergara, WBI and Prof. Jagan Shah, NIUA summing up the discussions and suggesting the way forward. As highlighted in the following section, some of the important points discussed in the workshop, put forth the need for recognizing the power of data, innovations, networks and citizen engagement strategies enabling institutions to formulate efficient plans and management structures. Documentation of successful initiatives and their impacts is also essential for further informing the planning processes. To achieve this, capacities of existing institutions requires being enhanced especially with the support of a strong national network of resource institutions.

Key Issues discussed:

The First Session highlighted the role of institutions in supporting regional planning through the case of New York and Barcelona. In the case of New York, the Regional Plan Association (RPA) which is the oldest independent urban research and advocacy organisation has a ninety year history of preparing three successful regional plans that were eventually adopted by the city government. The success of RPA is primarily attributed to its ability to transcend electoral cycles, political boundaries, partisan interests and human prejudices. Its capacity to modulate between the neighbourhood level and the overall region, proved to be the crucial element for its success. The case of Barcelona on the other hand, presented the need of a strong political will that has successfully initiated change. The ability to focus on 'human scale' projects such as housing, open spaces, social infrastructure, among others, through citizen-engagement strategies while focusing on larger national issues was possible through the consensus reached with the citizens by a democratically elected government.

One of the key issues highlighted through this session was the need to develop successful civic engagement strategies. Subsequently, the need to be able to focus on larger regional issues as well as neighbourhood level issues for perceiving the city as a 'social project' was essential to ensure successful planning and management of cities.

The Second Session illustrated cases of two institutions that provide planning support and are primarily the 'think-tanks' of the metropolitan city. While one plays the role of filling gaps and joining dots within the planning process, the other acts as a custodian of 'special information' and 'special data' for the city. The Mumbai Transformation Support Unit, a solitary case in India, is a unique experiment in Public-Private-Partnership that successfully combines state governments', citizens' and World Bank initiatives altogether and provides the required administrative and technical support to various government departments. The Seoul Institute highlights the case of a support institute created by the metropolitan government for supporting its research and planning by connecting various organizations and institutions and in facilitating the creation of special data for the city.

Both these cases were discussed in detail alongwith their strengths and constrains. While these support institutions play an important role, they are essentially filling gaps created by inefficient present day institutional structures. Therefore, it was felt that the need to assess the existing capacities of the city institutions and restructure their legal and institutional frameworks for effective functioning in the present day context was also essential.

The Third Session focused on two different approaches to infrastructure provision and service delivery. While the case of Grand Paris provided an excellent example of present day planning by estimating future needs for service provision, the KUIDFC example highlighted a successful case of the role played by a support institution strategizing accelerated service delivery for addressing existing infrastructural backlogs for a city. One of the key issues that emerged, was the need to urgently address the definition of administrative boundaries, functions and jurisdictions of different authorities, streamlining existing institutional structures and building capacities of various governmental bodies in order to enable successful planning for the future.

The Fourth Session, focused on identifying key factors that have ensured sustainability for the support provided by the resource institutions. The case of Janmarg in Ahmedabad specially

stands out as a successful example of a sustainable support mechanism. The case of Rajasthan pointed out that while a number of support mechanisms are designed to support ULBs on specific issues like raising funds and enhancing technical capacities, these are mostly temporary and last only for the term of specific projects/programmes or the funding support. While the case of Ahmedabad, highlighted the symbiotic relation between the academic institution (CEPT) and the host City (Ahmedabad). The support institution offers its expertise to the city through its professional services, hand holding and capacity building support. The city, in turn, provides a live laboratory imparting practical knowledge to the students.

Additionally, the last session provided a platform for assessing the Indian issues and providing a discussion for the way forward. Some of the key needs discussed were those of developing a vision for urban India, a need for strong leadership and sustainable financing mechanism and a need for better understanding and co-ordination between the technical and political wings of the Government.