



## Urban Planning in India

### Table of Content

1	Introduction .....	2
2	Challenges thrown by Urbanization.....	2
3	Institutional Arrangement .....	2
4	Problems with Urban Planning.....	3
5	Way Forward.....	4

# 1 Introduction

- Urbanization in India is increasing at a rapid rate. In 2011, the urban population was more than 30% and by 2030, it is expected to reach 41%. The speed of urbanization poses an unprecedented managerial and policy challenge, yet India has not engaged in a national discussion about how to handle the seismic shift in the makeup of the nation. Urban India today is “distributed” in shape with a diverse range of large and small cities spread widely around the nation. India will probably continue on a path of distributed model of urbanization because this suits its federal structure and helps to ensure that migration flows aren't unbalanced toward any particular city or cities. As the urban population and incomes increase, demand for every key service such as water, transportation, sewage treatment, low income housing will increase five- to sevenfold in cities of every size and type.
- Recent reports suggest that India spends \$17 per capita per year in urban infrastructure, whereas the most benchmarks suggest a requirement \$100. The investment required for building urban infrastructure in India, over the next 20 years, is estimated at approximately US\$ 1 trillion. And if India continues on its current path, urban infrastructure will fall woefully short of what is necessary to sustain prosperous cities.

## 2 Challenges thrown by Urbanization

- Urbanization has been an instrument of economic, social and political progress, but it has also led to serious socio-economic problems. The sheer magnitude of the urban population, haphazard and unplanned growth of urban areas, and a desperate lack of infrastructure are the main causes of such a situation. The rapid growth of urban population both natural and through migration, has put heavy pressure on public utilities like housing, sanitation, transport, water, electricity, health, education and so on. Poverty, unemployment and under employment among the rural immigrants, beggary, thefts, dacoities, burglaries and other social evils are on rampage. Urban sprawl is rapidly encroaching the precious agricultural land. Poor planning has been evident in metropolises, for example, the massive problem of pollution in Delhi, floods in Mumbai and Chennai indicate poor urban planning and management.

## 3 Institutional Arrangement

The Institutional arrangement for municipal governance and urban service delivery mainly comprises the Constitutional provisions, State Municipal Laws, role of State Finance Commission (SFC) and Central Finance Commission (CFC), and status of ULBs and parastatals.

**Constitutional Arrangement:** Municipal institutions in India have a history of over 300 years. However, the Constitution did not make local self-government in urban areas a clear-cut constitutional obligation. As a consequence of inadequate Constitutional provision for Local Self Government, democracy in municipal governance was not stable. As a result, many urban local bodies became weak and were not able to perform effectively. In this context, 74th constitutional amendment came into force in June, 1993 which sought to strengthen decentralization. The main provisions include constitution and composition; constitution of wards committees; reservation of seats; duration of municipalities; powers and functions; finances; finance commission; elections; district and metropolitan planning committees, etc. The 74th amendment, expects that ULBs will assume responsibilities for urban planning, water supply, social and economic planning, slum up gradation, public health, etc.

**State Municipal Laws:** Municipal laws in India are very old and often do not enable ULBs to implement reforms. Therefore, the Government of India (GOI) has developed a Model Municipal Law (MML) in 2003 to guide States to enact municipal legislations. The basic objectives of the MML are to implement the provisions of the 74th CAA in totality.

**ULBs and Parastatals:** Three broad institutional frameworks are discernible in states in India with regard to water supply and sewerage services. First are the states where the entire system is with a department or a parastatal of the State Government; second, where the ULBs themselves handle the entire activity and, third, as in some large cities, where exclusive water supply and sewerage boards have been set up for the city.

**SFCs and CFC:** As per 74th CAA, state governments have set up SFCs that suggest ways to augment the resources of ULBs. CFC also can suggest ways and allocate resources for ULBs.

## 4 Problems with Urban Planning

- **Weakness of Institutional mechanisms:**

- Study of implementation of 74th CAA in various states shows that there has been full compliance in respect of provisions, such as constitution of three types of ULBs, reservation of seats, and constitution of SFC, the same cannot be said for other provisions, namely constitution of Wards Committees, District Planning Committees and Metropolitan Planning Committees. Many states have not transferred functions, funds and functionaries. Revenue powers of ULBs are often not in consonance. There is also no consistency about term, powers and method of election of Mayors.
- Public monopoly, organizational inefficiency, technical flaws in the form of high leakages, lack of preventive maintenance, poor accounting as well as over staffing and lack of autonomy have led to failure of the public sector to provide adequate service delivery. City planning function has not been handed over to ULBs in many states. These state level organizations are often not accountable to ULBs. Though 74th CAA expects that major civic functions should be transferred to ULBs many small and medium sized ULBs are not in position to manage water supply, sanitation and town planning functions.
- Most SFCs have formulated the fiscal packages without access to a clear directive on the functional jurisdiction of municipalities. Absence of clarity in respect of the functional domain of municipalities constitutes a serious gap in the functioning of the SFCs.
- The staff of ULBs is demotivated, lacks capability and skill due to poor recruitment and training policy. Most of the non-elected staff is on deputation from the state government and hence lacks commitment.
- The 74th CAA has mandated the State Governments to constitute Metropolitan Planning Committees (MPCs) and District Planning Committees (DPCs), which are responsible for the preparation of Metropolitan Plan and District Development Plan. However, the State T&CP Act and Development Authorities Acts have not been amended so as to incorporate the provisions for preparation of Metropolitan Plans and District Development Plans. Only 50% of the DPCs and MPCs are actually functioning to some degree.
- There has been an incomplete devolution of functions to the elected bodies as per 74th Constitutional Amendment Act, possibly because of the unwillingness of the state governments. In addition, very few Indian cities have 2030 master plans that take into account peak transportation loads, requirements for low-income affordable housing and climate change.
- **Individual Control or small parcel of lands:** Within the city limits, both the government and the private parties including individual owned small parcels of land exist. When all these small landowners are put together the collective land ownership comes to more than half of the total urban land. They may own the land in the form of residences, stores, factories, commercial centres including recreational centre, and vacant land. Private ownership of small parcels of urban land sometimes interferes with the effective control of the space pattern of the city.

- **Arbitrary Political boundaries:** Effective urban planning requires that the city/town be dealt with as an integrated natural unit. An adequate plan covers not only the built-up area of the city but also parts of the unoccupied hinterland. However, this is missing in most urban areas.

- **Heritage of Past construction:** With few exceptions, most of the cities of the town have grown without the early guidance of comprehensive city plans. Some which have grown, based on plan, have now outgrown their earlier designs. Consequently, most city planners have dealt primarily with built-up urban areas characterized by the established patterns of streets, transportation lines and buildings. Under these conditions, their work has been greatly limited and modified by the almost overwhelming heritage of past construction.
- **Anticipation of future change:** The city planner cannot exactly say the future changes that may affect the city. But he can anticipate some of the changes and provide for it in the plan. These may turn out to be inadequate in the long run. Thus, a planner in trying to anticipate the future needs as related to the spatial pattern of the city faces exceptional difficulties because he/she cannot always foresee new inventions or their effects.
- **Lack of integrated planning:** Present proposals of master plans are land use oriented and lack integration across sectors i.e., land use with transportation, infrastructure, ecology and environmental issues and socio-economic needs.
- **Issues arising due to topography:** Special knowledge and expertise is needed in urban planning in hill states, coastal regions, riversides and disaster vulnerable areas.

## 5 Way Forward

India needs to work on several areas to manage its urbanization:

- **Inclusive Cities:** The poor and lower income groups must be brought into the mainstream in cities. The planning should be such that it includes the needs of the marginalized sections including their residence, health, water, transportation and other amenities at affordable prices.
- **Urban Governance:** India's urban governance of cities needs an over-haul. India's current urban governance is in sharp contrast to large cities elsewhere that have empowered mayors with long tenures and clear accountability for the city's performance. India also needs to clearly define the relative roles of its metropolitan and municipal structures for its 20 largest metropolitan areas. With cities growing beyond municipal boundaries, having fully formed metropolitan authorities with clearly defined roles will be essential for the successful management of large cities in India.
- **Integration:** Integrate various urban development and related programs at local, state and national levels to develop sustainable city or metropolitan regions.
- **Financing:** Devolution has to be supported by more reforms in urban financing that will reduce cities' dependence on the Centre and the states and unleash internal revenue sources. Consistent with most international examples, there are several sources of funding that Indian cities could tap into, to a far greater extent than today: Monetizing land assets; higher collection of property taxes, user charges that reflect costs; debt and public-private partnerships (PPPs); municipal bonds and central/state government funding. Inter-government transfers should have in-built incentives to improve performance. This has been incorporated by both the thirteenth and fourteenth CFCs.
- **Planning:** India needs to make urban planning a central, respected function, investing in skilled people, rigorous fact base and innovative urban form. This can be done through a "cascaded" planning structure in which large cities have 40-year and 20-year plans at the metropolitan level that are binding on municipal development plans. Central to planning in any city is the optimal allocation of space, especially land use and Floor Area Ratio (FAR) planning. Both should focus on linking public transportation with zoning for affordable houses for low-income groups. These plans need to be detailed, comprehensive, and enforceable.

- **Local capacity building:** A real step-up in the capabilities and expertise of urban local bodies will be critical to devolution and improvement of service delivery. Reforms will have to address the development of professional managers for urban management functions, who are in short supply and will be required in large numbers. New innovative approaches will have to be explored to tap into the expertise available in the private and social sectors. India needs to build technical and managerial depth in its city administrations. Like Indian Civil Services, an equivalent cadre for cities can be created, as well as allow for lateral entry of private-sector executives.
- **Affordable housing:** Affordable housing is a particularly critical concern for low-income groups—in the absence of a viable model that caters to their needs, India can meet the challenge through a set of policies and incentives that will bridge the gap between price and affordability. This will enable a sustainable and economically viable affordable housing model for both government housing agencies and as well as private developers. India also needs to encourage rental housing as an option particularly for the poorest of the poor, who may not be able to afford a home even with these incentives.
- **Delivery of Services:** Management of water supply and sewerage system should be the primary function of ULBs. They should be given responsibility for water supply and distribution in their territorial jurisdictions whether based on their own source or on collaborative arrangements with parastatal and other service providers. Municipal Corporations may be given responsibility for the entire water supply programme from development to distribution. For smaller and medium sized ULBs, a phased transfer of responsibilities for management of the distribution networks should be developed. Parastatal agencies should be accountable to ULBs.

Government has taken up many initiatives in recent times aimed at urban planning and management: JNNURM, Smart City, AMRUT, Digital India, Rajiv Awas Yojna, Swach Bharat and HRIDAY.

These programmes need a sound backing of efficient planning and management for their success. Ministry of Urban Development has started scheme for capacity building of urban local bodies. The Indian economic development depends a lot upon the development of urban areas. Hence, effective urban planning and management becomes the keyword in the sustainable and inclusive growth and development.

**Copyright © by Vision IAS**

*All rights are reserved. No part of this document may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission of Vision IAS.*