



Capacity building and experience sharing for enhancing sustainability in urban India

Date: June 3, 2015 | Time: 9:30 AM – 4:30 PM

Venue: Juniper Hall, Indian Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road, New Delhi

Background Note

Urban local bodies play a pivotal role in the planning and development of urban areas. The municipalities in India are confronted with a number of challenges, such as issues of bringing efficiency in the conduct of business, ensuring effective participation by the weaker sections of the population in local governance, improving financial condition, ensuring transparency in the planning and implementation of projects, to name a few. All these requirements are also coupled with serious development related challenges confronting the cities of the 21st century. At the one hand, cities have to gear up for the rising demands of urbanization and to stay abreast and prepared for National Government's vision for Smart cities, on the other hands cities need to continuously gear up for addressing issues of environmental degradation, air pollution, climate change and increasing frequency of climate induced events and disasters.

The issue of the present capacities of the cities call for addressing each of these challenges and equipping the cities to take these challenges head on. The matter is far beyond subject knowledge, it is about tuning urban governance, management systems and skill building at all levels to address new challenges. It is also about learning from past mistakes and bringing in new and improved systems. The training needs assessment carried out under the JNNURM scheme points out the strong need for systematic training which would enable the urban local bodies to discharge their duties and responsibilities effectively. Notwithstanding the fact that systematic training programs have to be designed, it is to be ensured that tangible benefits are derived and monitored at all levels through these training programs. Besides this, the content of the training programs should be critically formulated to address these issues holistically. Partnerships from global progressive cities, national and global governments and expertise would go a long way in addressing this challenge pragmatically.

Several assessments and reports like: The High Powered Expert Committee (HPEC) Report on the Urban Infrastructure and Services (2011); Report on the Mid-term Appraisal of the Eleventh Five Year Plan (2010); Training Needs Assessment (TNA) and Strategic Training Plan (2014) have expressed serious concern over the need for extensive capacity building in Urban Local Bodies. The training needs assessment report prepared as part of MoUD-World Bank CBUD project notes that the requirements for capacity building in terms of Demand – Supply gap is high not only on account of the number of people to be trained but also in terms of the competencies of the personnel required if the intended governance, service delivery standards and the goal of smart, environment friendly and climate sensitive cities are

to be achieved. It is also to be noted that given the purview of the 74th Constitution Amendment Act very few cities are looking at urban planning as a function which reflects in the quality of development plans and Master plans. The concerns like environmental degradation, air pollution, and extreme climate events are not addressed and need a specific entry point in the capacity building plans of the government. Capacity building has been so far accorded very low priority and is largely limited to administrative training. In the current context of rapid urbanization, the challenges in urban management require not only specialized knowledge but also cross sectoral learning to tackle several new and emerging challenges in managing a city. Urban development policies and schemes are expected to become more and more cross-sectoral and dynamic in nature. It is essential that the urban local bodies (ULBs) are able to keep pace with this rising demand. Constant learning has become an essential factor for every successful organisation. If the ULBs want to be effective they will have to create and foster a culture of learning in their organization.

It is under this context, the conference on ‘Capacity building and experience sharing for enhancing sustainability in Urban India’ is being organised by TERI on 3rd June 2015 at Juniper Hall, India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road, New Delhi. The conference will deliberate on relevant issues related to current scenario for skill building and capacity development in urban local bodies. It aims to explore the processes and approaches developed and implemented so far and deliberate upon the successes and challenges and need for building stronger knowledge and capacity building networks. The conference will also look at the mechanisms by which targeted capacity enhancement for various levels of officers with different work profiles could be integrated as a mandatory system. The conference will draw from the key learning derived from the recently completed TERI-APN program on building capacity of urban local bodies in four Indian states on the theme of “Urban Climate Resilience”. The key messages from this experience have gone beyond the theme for the training program itself and posed challenges of larger issues with training and capacity needs at ULB level. This has also been synthesised and documented in a briefing paper which will be released during the conference.

The key discussion and outcome points from these deliberations will be shared with relevant ministries as well as global programs which have an in-built component of capacity building in their activities.