



Urban Governance & Political Rights - Strategies to Empower Stake Holders

D.B. Channabasappa, Assistant Professor, Dept of political science
Government Arts College, Hassan, Karnataka State

Abstract

Urban governance is the art of promoting public leadership which has constitutional recognition. Urban governance is a topic of discussion as urbanizations has speeded up in India along with the adoption of liberal economic policies. Stake holder role in urban governance is being streamlined as urban issues are different from rural governance. The Urban centers need efficient governance because urban challenges are directly linked with national development. Urban governance needs speedy reforms as urban scenario is fast changing towards global trends. This demands the involvement of all stake holders. This paper examines the constitutional importance of urban governance & highlights the imperative role stakeholders need to play in promotion of the competency governance mechanisms.

Key Words: urban governance, stake holders, challenges, urbanization

"Good governance occurs when societal norms and practices empower and encourage people to take increasingly greater control over their own development in a manner that does not impinge upon the accepted rights of others"- UNDP Internet Conference Forum on "Public Private Interface in Urban Environmental Management

Introduction

Governance is the art of public leadership. There are three distinct dimensions of governance the form of political regime the process by which authority is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources; and the capacity of governments to design, formulate, and implement policies and discharge functions. (Desai & others -India Human Development in India challenges for a society in transition

2010). The criteria that constitute good governance have been drawn from these three dimensions, and include legitimacy of government accountability of political and official elements of government (media freedom, transparency of decision-making, accountability mechanisms), competence of governments to formulate policies and deliver services, respect for human rights and rule of law (individual and group rights and security, framework for economic and social activity,



participation). (Desai & others -India Human Development in India challenges for a society in transition 2010).

The Constitution of India has assigned the subjects pertaining to the urban areas to the State Legislatures. as the urban issues are concerned, the legislative powers of the Union are limited only to Delhi and other Union Territories. A subject of the state list is a constitutional provision meaning two or more state legislatures can authorize Union Parliament to legislate on the topic concerned.

The Amendment of Indian Constitution: In exercise of these legislative powers, the Parliament of India has enacted the following legislations which are administrated by the Ministry of Urban Development.

Constitution (Seventy-Fourth Amendment) Act 1992

This is a revolutionary piece of legislation by which Constitution of India was amended to incorporate a separate Chapter on urban local bodies, which seeks to redefine their role, power, function and finances. The salient features of this Act are Urban local bodies, to be known as Municipal Corporations, Municipal Councils and Nagara / pattana Panchayat depending on the population, shall be constituted through universal adult franchise in

each notified urban area of the country. These shall be constituted for a period of five years and if dissolved earlier, an election to reconstitute it shall be completed before the expiration of a period of six months from the date of its dissolution. Not less than one-third of total number of seats in each urban local body shall be reserved for women. The Legislature of a State may by law entrust on these bodies such power and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as institution of local self-government, including those listed in the Twelfth Schedule. The Twelfth Schedule of the Constitution has listed the following functions of the urban local bodies:

1. Urban Planning including town planning.
2. Regulation of land-use and construction of buildings.
3. Planning for economic and social development.
4. Roads and bridges.
5. Water supply for domestic, industrial and commercial purposes.
6. Public health, sanitation, conservancy and solid waste management.
7. Fire services.
8. Urban forestry, protection of the environment and promotion of ecological aspects.
9. Safeguarding the interests of weaker sections of society,



- including the handicapped and mentally retarded.
10. Slum improvement and up-gradation.
 11. Urban poverty alleviation.
 12. Provision of Urban amenities and facilities such as parks, gardens, playgrounds.
 13. Promotion of cultural, educational and aesthetic aspects.
 14. Burials and burial grounds; cremations, cremation grounds and electric crematoriums.
 15. Cattle pounds; prevention of cruelty to animals.
 16. Vital statistics including registration of births and deaths.
 17. Public amenities including street lighting, parking lots, bus stops and public conveniences.
 18. Regulation of slaughter houses and tanneries.

Role of the Stake Holders

1. **Paying Taxes Regularly:** In order that the urban local bodies can perform the functions assigned to them, the Legislature of a State shall assign them specific taxes, duties, tolls and levies and authorize them to impose, collect and appropriate the same. All the stake holders should pay taxes in time & help the regular administration to run smoothly. Stake holders should not forget that efficient administration needs funds & performance of good governance depends on regular monetary resources.

2. Involvement in Finance

Matters: Constitution has framed that each State shall also constitute a Finance Commission which shall review the financial position of the urban local bodies and recommend the principles which should govern the decentralization of resources. (Report of the Election commission report 2014). Stakeholders have to take time to review the financial spending on infrastructural developments, budgetary allocation to urban water management, waste management, slum development, urban poor alleviation etc . Stake holders should participate in budget planning process & overall spending pattern on urban infrastructure. This acts as a check to government as well & government becomes defensive in its policy making.

3. Exercising the right to

vote: The constitutions supports the superintendence, direction and control of the preparation of electoral rolls for, and the conduct of, all elections to the urban local bodies shall vest in the State Election Commission. All urban population should exercise their right to vote .India is a democratic country & urban involvement in voting is very poor. Only 23- 57 % of the urban people exercise their voting right. (Report of the Election commission report 2014). Urbanites stay away from political involvement such as mandate seeking, debates on budget, fund



allocation, infrastructural spending etc. But if all stakeholders express their willingness to take part in decision making process, then urban governance can perform better. (Constitution of India amendments 2013 official website). Improved participation will help to enhance the equality of the project & it reaches larger section of the urban population as well.

4. **Preparing plans to urban issues:**

Constitution says in each district a District Planning Committee shall be constituted to consolidate the plan prepared by the urban and rural local bodies. Similarly for each metropolitan area a Metropolitan Planning Committee shall be constituted to prepare a development plan for the metropolitan area a whole. But the planning commission will become successful if the stakeholders involve in its process of policy formulation. (Urban agendas – Hindustan Times 2014).

5. **Support through self-awareness:**

People can support government through self-awareness. Instead of complaining about lapses by governments, they can support government machinery through blue prints, strategies, plans, projects & innovative schemes on parking, public parks

, maintenance, garden maintenance, solid waste management, saving drinking water, carpooling, sharing public places equally, using non-motorized vehicles, tree planting, supporting urban poor, supervising governmental works etc. If people can support government with good advice, then government would consider implementing some of them or including it in policy framing. (Report of the Election commission report 2014).

Role of Stakeholders

1. All stakeholders should adopt initiatives uniformly
2. Regional workshops should be held to create awareness on stakeholders initiatives
3. Ministry of urban affairs should be strengthened towards promoting stakeholders initiatives
4. Capacity building towards stakeholders initiatives is required at all levels of urban governance
5. Empanelment of resource persons for creating awareness on stakeholders initiatives is required
6. Regular evaluation of the urban welfare schemes should be undertaken by stakeholders
7. Review meetings should be regularly held on schemes implementation & its progress by all stakeholders



8. General infrastructural grant in aid schemes should be evaluated periodically by all stake holders
9. stakeholders should evolve concepts for urban substantive growth

An express obligation to promote participation as the primary political sustainability mechanism is a judicious prerequisite. Key urban issues should be identified for development and promotion of urban centers by all stake holders alike. The implementation of policies should be executed through appropriate citizen Committees. Activities like improving the local environment, hygiene, infrastructure transport etc. should be entitled for pertinent assistance from stakeholders. Apart from proper allocation of financial assistance the focus should be to tap the resources available for promotion of political sustainability among all stakeholders.

Conclusion

The constitutional provisions are very vital to the nation's growth as the provision for good governance would get not only constitutional support but also creates awareness about involvement. The urban governance has many facets as urban centers reflect multi-functional

grades of administration. All urbanites should become responsive towards involving in evolving a successful agenda for urban challenges. Western countries have an exceptional accomplishment in urban centers because urbanites involve completely in policy making process but in India urbanites always keep away from political maneuvering. Indian urban are complained as lazy, indolent & laid back in taking part in political debates. But a demand for good governance will succeed if all urban people feel their responsibility & act convincingly.

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