Keywords: Participatory planning, urban planning, case study, PRIA, 2011, Chhattisgarh, model building

Abstract:
This resource describes a project by a civil society organization, PRIA (Society for Participatory Research in Asia), to undertake a model building initiative on community based urban planning in two towns of Chhattisgarh, a state in central India. The approach focused on forging genuine partnerships, thereby raising the stakes and developing ownership in the process, and ensuring greater chances of plan implementation by an “inclusive community”. PRIA’s attempt was to develop a methodology that could be integrated in the larger municipal developmental agenda. The lessons and experiences from the participatory town planning exercise in Chhattisgarh has immense potential for scaling up so that the process can have a more widespread application in cities and towns that are taking up participatory urban planning initiatives.

1. INTRODUCTION
Participatory planning is now largely being acknowledged by practitioners and also within academic circles as the most suitable planning approach to overcome the gaps in existing “top-down” methodology. It is a process wherein the local community tells the professional urban planner about their developmental needs and the potential resources of the region which can be tapped. They then work together to produce plans for the settlement which address the identified priorities of the people and these plans have a greater chance of effective implementation as stakes are evolved, trade-offs made, and conflict resolution and census building done during the interactive planning process itself. The planning process recognizes the role that communities, especially the informal sector and the urban poor, play in developing their towns and ratifies it.

Till recently, the usual mode of urban plan preparation was a technical, expert driven exercise, done on the basis of historical and trend data, quite detached from the environ for which it was being prepared. The only form of community participation was indirect, where salient features of the plan were presented in a public meeting before formal approval was granted. This was just a token gesture that did not foster any institutional commitment from the community. There was no community participation in the entire plan formulation process. Also, the “technical” terminology of the plans made it inaccessible to the local communities for which the plans were prepared.

Participatory planning is seen as an important tool of decentralization but its application is still poor. This bottom-up process has been authorized by UN-HABITAT, multi-laterals and bi-laterals and by various governments as a means of building effective partnerships, strengthening
communities, reducing conflicts and improving effectiveness. The thrust of the Government of India to upgrade urban infrastructure and basic services through comprehensive schemes (National Urban Renewal Mission and Urban Infrastructure Development Scheme for Small and Medium Towns) by developing City Development Plans (CDPs) through a community consultative process is a step forward in endorsing and recognizing the participatory method of urban planning as a precursor to any sustainable city development strategy.

Although pluralistic and advocacy approaches to planning emerged in the 1960s, application of these tools for spatial planning has been undertaken in a very limited sphere in India. Some of the reasons for ineffective use of participatory methodologies in India are:

- There are very few practitioners with the requisite skills to engage with the community to chalk out common ways forward. The necessary experience and skills, the know-how of the dynamic nature of the processes, of sparking debate and consensus building, etc, is limited in the country. There is little practical experience of developing community strategies let alone their interface with development plans.

- There is ambivalence and overlap of functions and responsibilities between the plan-implementing agencies, i.e., the urban local body and the plan making agencies like the Town and Country Planning Organisation (consisting of professional town planners), which creates an unfavourable situation. Both these entities are governed by a differential set of rules and regulations leading to uncoordinated efforts and ad-hoc decisions. There is need to create structural convergence between these agencies. The aspirations and needs of the people should be conveyed to planners by the elected body and the plan should be prepared in close consultation with them. Likewise, there is urgent need to train local governments on the basic tenets of urban planning for them to contribute meaningfully to the plan making and implementation process.

- Participation of all stakeholders, inclusive of the otherwise “unheard” voices of the marginalized sections of society, is a slower process. Often, due to time and budgetary constraints, participatory techniques are opted out of by professional consultants/planners who are caught in the dilemma of the demand for the end product vis-à-vis the “rightness” of the (participatory) process adopted.

- There has been lack of commitment from stakeholders, especially bureaucratic/political will, and lack of resources towards the development of planning itself, and given the limited resources extensive consultation and participation is seen as a burden, adding to the workload.

- The participatory process requires commitment from all stakeholders, which is sometimes short. The general apathetic attitude and cynicism of some primary stakeholders that “nothing will ever change” is a deterrent in developing necessary partnerships for effective participation.

The project described here was an attempt by a civil society organization, PRIA (Society for Participatory Research in Asia), to undertake a model building initiative on community based urban planning in two towns of Chhattisgarh, a state in central India. The approach focused on forging genuine partnerships, thereby raising the stakes and developing ownership in the process, and ensuring greater chances of plan implementation by an “inclusive community”. PRIA’s attempt was to develop a methodology that could be integrated in the larger municipal
developmental agenda, a process that would have more widespread application in numerous cities and towns of the country that are taking up urban planning initiatives. A planning firm, Environmental Planning Collaborative (EPC), provided technical support to the project.

The lessons and experiences from the participatory town planning exercise in Chhattisgarh has immense potential for scaling up, and is especially a good reference for the numerous towns which are in the process of preparing City Development Plans to reap the benefits of the National Urban Renewal Mission.

2. PROJECT BACKGROUND: PLANNING CHALLENGE PROMPTS PARTICIPATORY INTERVENTIONS

The new state of Chhattisgarh was carved out of India’s largest state of Madhya Pradesh in November 2000. Out of a total population of 20,736,000, the state has an urban population of 4,175,000 (Census of India 2001). Chhattisgarh had an urban population growth rate of 17.4 per cent in the 1990s and in the decade 1991-2001 the rate increased to 20.08 per cent. The urban birth rate is 23.6 per cent and death rate is 7 per cent. The present developmental and infrastructure priorities of the government are focused on the top five large urban centres of the state. In 2005, the state government hired consultants to develop infrastructure plans for 13 large towns in a phased manner.

However, there was a dearth of any planning attempt for the 100 small and medium sized towns, which are urbanizing at an intensifying rate and will soon grow to the size of any large town of the state. As is the case with any large town, the growth phenomenon is resulting in severe pressure on basic infrastructure facilities and amenities. Existing planning efforts of the government to control urban growth have evidently failed. The urban fabric is thus bursting at the seams and spilling over in the form of unregulated and unplanned development in all urban centres.

PRIA’s experience from numerous initiatives on citizen engagement in the two urban local bodies (of Rajnandgaon and Janjgir) revealed that most urban dwellers were disillusioned by the lack of access to basic infrastructure facilities and developmental gains, thereby forcing them to lead lives below an acceptable standard of living. Those bearing the vulnerable identities of poor, adivasi (tribal), women and dalit (socially excluded castes) suffer multiple foci of exclusion. These groups’ attempts to stake any claim to their rights and entitlements from developmental gains is further curtailed. Community clusters and new land uses were mushrooming more in response to local needs rather than as per any stipulated planning guidelines. The growth of the town was guided more by locational opportunities that had hardly been envisaged by the planners.

Who is to blame for all this? Is the planning process faulty? Is it that professional planners are unable to anticipate urban growth? Or is it that town planning has become confined to meeting rooms and colourful plans are seldom in consonance with the aspirations of the local population? These were some of the emerging questions that PRIA, dedicated to the task of strengthening municipal governance, was confronted with in the year 2005.
The 74th Amendment to India’s constitution seeks to give power to the people to plan for themselves and decide on their developmental priorities. There is an evident shift from the earlier bureaucratic style of functioning of the government with the realization that citizens are the most valuable source of input in anticipating future needs and rationalizing developmental priorities. Provision of urban services and maintenance of assets is now the responsibility of urban local bodies. The Twelfth Schedule (items 1, 2, 3) of the landmark constitutional amendment act significantly enhanced the role and functions of urban local bodies by including functions such as urban planning (including town planning), regulation of land use and construction of buildings, and planning for economic and social development.

But it is strongly felt that state governments all around the country are reluctant to assign these functions to urban local bodies. Para-statal agencies still control developmental functions without any participation of the people. On the other hand, even if the functions are truly devolved to the urban local bodies, there is acute shortage of technical manpower and funds and lack of institutional set up to facilitate them to carry out their assigned tasks.

It was in this context that the process of participatory urban planning was initiated wherein the planning process was made receptive to citizen inputs, and capacities of citizens and urban local bodies were built to be able to answer the questions, “What should be done?” and “How can it be done?” Partnerships were forged for inter-departmental co-operation and co-ordination that resulted in pooling of information, expertise and resources and had a greater chance of maximizing collective action for plan implementation.

3. EXISTING PLANNING APPROACH IN PRACTICE: IS THERE INCONGRUENCE?

The legal framework of planning in Chhattisgarh is governed by the guidelines mentioned in the Chhattisgarh Nagar Tatha Gram Nivesh Act 1973. The Town and Country Planning Organisation (TCPO) is the nodal agency that is responsible for town planning exercises in the state. The first level of the planning exercise, i.e., the preparation of a Development Plan, had been carried out for very few towns of the state. The Development Plan broadly identifies land use, road network and development control regulations for developments over the next ten years. Once the land use and road network is identified, the land gets frozen for any other kind of development. Another type of plan that has been envisaged in the Act is the Zonal Plan, which is similar to a Development Plan but carries minute details and addresses planning issues at the micro level. Till the time of PRIA’s intervention, there was no Zonal Plan for any town in Chhattisgarh. It needs to be mentioned here that the state planning act is not very clear on the level of details (plot level or neighbourhood level) which needs to be provided in a Zonal Plan. The third level of plans is Town Development Schemes which include plot level details in terms of provision of service delivery networks and layouts. The state planning act also does not clearly define the deliverables for Town Development Schemes.

TCPO is the nodal agency to prepare all these plans. Concurrently, an urban local body can also declare its intention to prepare them, especially Zonal Plans and Town Development Schemes.
But the prerogative and responsibility for plan preparation still largely rests with TCPO and the state departments.

In Chhattisgarh, there are two departments dealing with planning issues. The Housing and Environment Department prepares the Development Plan. The lower level plans are prepared by another department, i.e., the Urban Department, which also implements all levels of plans. There is no link between these two departments except at the urban local body level, which has the responsibility of carrying through the implementation of the plans.

**Roles and responsibilities: The urban local body is responsible for everything except preparing the Development Plan**

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*Source: Environmental Planning Collaboration (EPC), Ahmedabad*

The ideal scenario would be when the people’s needs and vision are conveyed to the planning agency by way of a bottom-up process and the plan preparation is done by the technical department (TCPO) in close consultation with all municipal stakeholders for successful plan preparation and implementation. Thereby, each component of developmental planning would be built with community perspective and bring in a developmental agenda fulfilling people’s priorities, whether it is land use planning, financial investment or implementation of building development control regulations.

### 4. PLANNING STATUS IN THE INTERVENTION SITES

The Development Plan for Rajnandgaon was prepared for the period 1991-2001 and updation was in progress at the time of the intervention. A Development Plan had been prepared for Janjgir and had been sent for publication. There was no Zonal Plan for any city in Chhattisgarh and therefore there were also no Town Development Schemes for any city of the state.

The earlier Development Plan of Rajnandgaon divides the city into 4 planning units/zones for which Zonal Plan preparation was proposed. Since there has never been an attempt before in
Chhattisgarh, the preparation of a Zonal Plan in Janjgir and that too in a participatory manner was to be a learning experience for all involved – TCPO, the urban local body, PRIA and EPC. It set a precedent for preparation of Zonal Plans for other cities in Chhattisgarh.

In the given scenario, PRIA took up the task of preparing a participatory Development Plan for Rajnandgaon and a Zonal Plan for Janjgir. A consulting firm Environmental Planning Collaborative (EPC) provided the technical support to the process.

How Should Planning Be? : A Basic Framework

Source: Environmental Planning Collaboration (EPC), Ahmedabad

5. PROJECT APPROACH

Development Plans are visions for a city’s growth and they cannot be prepared by a group of planners in isolation. The people of the city need to articulate and direct that vision; therefore their involvement is pertinent in the planning process. Planners, in most cases, will be there to represent these aspirations through a statutory format, under a formal process. In this light, for the plan preparation process, extensive consultation and participation was evoked throughout the Development Plan and Zonal Plan making process of Rajnandgaon and Janjgir respectively to get a better understanding of where the towns wish to be in the next decade. This included identification of stakeholders, conducting a city development strategy (CDS) meeting with the stakeholders, sharing the conceptual plan and getting their inputs through working group meetings. A CDS involves strategic planning through a consultative process incorporating local institutional and financial reforms.

Thus, the plans evolved through structured dialogue with all stakeholders. Before the formal plan preparation process started, the local government and the state level planning officials of both the departments (Urban as well as Housing and Environment) were involved in the process through a training workshop. The idea was to demystify the parlance of “the technical process of urban
planning”. The content of the sensitization workshop included aspects of spatial planning, the legal framework, financial operating plans and municipal budgets. Various delays in implementation, poor quality of the final product and non-implementable proposals have mainly been because of the lack of basic knowledge of key players. The training workshop ensured that even after the plans were submitted to the state government and sanctioned, the officials and people’s representatives would have a fair idea of the nuances and intricacies of the plans and would be able to take rational, consistent and informed decisions during their implementation.

The approach deployed in the participatory process went much beyond the statutory process. The broad aim of the inclusive approach was to strengthen local urban self-governance and the participatory planning agenda towards that was to:

- Develop a **vision statement** for the city through consultations – the vision statement to guide the preparation of the Zonal Plan and its implementation
- Identify a set of projects for implementation through a **structured consultation process**
- Prepare a **phasing plan** for these projects with municipal stakeholders
- Integrate these projects into the **municipal budget**, to make them financially viable
- Prepare **area specific urban design guidelines** for specific areas – slums, inner city, heritage precincts, etc.
- Demarcate areas to be developed as Town Development Schemes for the next 5, 10 and 20 years based on people’s consensus and needs
- Build capacity of the urban local body and create a process to review the plan every year to make appropriate modifications if required
- Ensure that the **informal sector and the marginalized** are part of the planning process.

6. **STEP-BY-STEP: PARTNERSHIPS AND PARTICIPATORY INNOVATIONS**

The planning methodology agreed upon was through partnership dialogue and discussions involving stakeholders at all levels. The collaborative methodology aimed to be participatory at all possible stages, technically sound adhering to the legal planning guidelines of the state and financially viable and implementable by the urban local body. The key steps undertaken were:

(a) **Liasoning and negotiation with the state government**: Support was garnered to undertake the participatory process from the state government, to give formal validity to the process and to procure the requisite secondary information and data. Both the concerned state level departments joined hands in the endeavour and the department of urban development sent a letter to the two municipalities for their comments and discussions in the MIC and PIC.
(b) **Signing of MoU with the municipalities:** Apart from the state government’s information, PRIA too sent a letter to the urban local bodies to discuss the issue in a relevant forum. The MIC/PIC approved the proposal and a formal MoU was signed with them. The understanding was that the municipality would partner in the entire process in terms of local support and participation.

(c) **Orientation of municipal officers and elected representatives:** Key role players needed to be informed of the planning process if they were expected to support the local planning process. Preparation of a Development Plan or a Zonal Plan is not a one-time affair. The Development Plan has to be monitored constantly to ensure that it enables sustainable growth. Therefore, it was essential that local government officials who are directly responsible for implementing projects under the Development Plan know the intricacies of the preparation and monitoring of the Development Plan. A two-day training workshop for local government officials and elected representatives from both towns along with officials from state departments was conducted at Raipur (the state capital). The workshop included training on basic elements of Development Plans, Zonal Plans and Town Development Schemes, sensitization on the basic concepts of good governance and participatory planning, need for reform in municipal finance and accounting, inputs to augment sources of municipal income, ways to implement plans and projects, etc. The training sessions helped to improve understanding on technical aspects, legal provisions, statutory planning procedures and methodologies of preparing participatory plans. The training workshop was particularly useful as it helped local government stakeholders articulate a vision and identify important issues of their towns, which was a starting point for the facilitators. The secretary, town planning and officials from TCPO also proactively participated and contributed to the process.

(d) **Preparation of a high quality base map:** Using geo-coded satellite imagery (CARTOSAT or PAN bought from the National Remote Sensing Agency), a good quality map was prepared. The *khasra* map having plot level details was digitized and overlaid on the imagery to correlate both. The linear features were updated and corrected with the satellite images using rubber-sheeting method. Through this methodology, after preparing the draft base map, ground check was done to verify the output and achieve more accuracy.

The insights gained through the imagery which depicted updated ground features on a scale of 1:8000 were analysed and shared with the community and was a way of kick-starting civil society involvement in the process. The maps and drawings had property boundaries, building typology, settlement densities, watersheds, public utilities, land use, etc. This was a tool on which the community expressed their concerns. The base map was put up at strategic locations of the towns where maximum participation was anticipated. People’s concerns/issues were mapped and recorded by developmental professionals present at various facilitation points in the city.
Preparation of a high quality base map from satellite imagery

(e) Data collection, widespread awareness generation and stakeholder consultations: The backbone of participatory town planning is public consultations to capture the residents’ views of the town and its developmental roadmap. Extensive public consultations were held in both the towns. Awareness about the intervention was created through distributing pamphlets, issuing press releases and in the form of advertisement on local television channels. In both the towns, appeals were made by the administration through advertisements to participate in the process.

The citizens sent their concerns and suggestions by post apart from phone calls. Local people were also contacted through informal household visits and their views recorded. Individualized contact was more focused on capturing voices that do not have a tradition of active engagement in planning, e.g., marginalized classes. In a more formal process, 40 stakeholder groups such as local communities, officials, market organizations, traders, unions, informal sector, etc, were identified and consulted through semi-structured interviews to make sure that larger and converging interests were taken care of.

Some critical stakeholders were also identified from the fields of academia, media, politics, health, public works department, transportation and youth groups to seek their participation about specific sectoral issues.

In the second phase of consultations, the town was divided into clusters of few wards where public meetings were conducted in smaller groups. This was a more intensive approach where half-day camps were held at nodal locations of the clustered wards. The process also facilitated exchange of information between all parties, not just information from the

Some problems experienced during stakeholder consultations

- Unrealistic community expectations
- Difficulty in involving citizens/groups with apathetic attitude or those less articulate
- The powerless felt inadequate to make any difference in the planning process or for that matter in bringing about any change.
planning authority to other stakeholders. Focus was given on receiving non-traditional forms of information from groups who are usually not reached by public participation strategies.

Through these consultations, data was collected from the public about the status and issues with regard to the following list, for which EPC had procured background data through secondary sources (various departments, gazette notifications, etc):

- Demography/population
- Physiography and drainage
- Environmental features like river, canals
- Economic development
- Land development/land use zoning
- Road network and transportation
- Water supply, sewerage and drainage
- Solid waste management
- Social amenities and facilities
- Housing and informal sector
- Heritage and tourism sites
- Legal and institutional framework
- Vacant land redevelopment
- Street facades
- Urban design and built-form
- Detailed sector studies
- High growth nucleolus localities

(f) **City Development Strategy (CDS) Workshop**: To synthesize the public consultations and the vision for the city, the representative groups of stakeholders were invited to the CDS workshop in both towns. The workshop agenda was to present the base maps and data to stakeholders to validate the inputs received so far, develop a vision statement, conduct a SWOT analysis (Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats), discuss strategies for future development and identify sources of revenue for projects. Questions were posed to the stakeholders about contentious issues likely to need mediation and negotiation. Active dialogue between a range of players helped to reconcile differences within the agreed rules and timetable. Negotiations and compromises were made for the overall development of the town. The role of the facilitators (PRIA and EPC) was to simplify the technical

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<td>1. Simplicity, key to the process</td>
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<td>2. Technical components sensitively addressed</td>
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<td>3. Focus on marginalized and less-educated participants</td>
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<td>5. Extensive use of graphics – maps, drawings, photographs and pictures</td>
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<td>6. Workshop conducted in local language</td>
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jargon for meaningful local participation. The role of the catalyst planners was not to impress with answers but to facilitate the process and make available mechanisms through which locally suitable solutions could emerge.

(g) **Preparing conceptual plans:** Based on people’s suggestions and feedback during the CDS, planners in EPC prepared a draft conceptual plan and a development roadmap for both the towns. The main contents of this draft included preliminary road network, land use zoning, building control regulations and identified areas of future expansion.

(h) **Conducting working group meetings with stakeholders:** The conceptual plan was presented to stakeholders again. Objections and suggestions were invited. This was done by creating working groups, each headed by a local stakeholder, who gave recommendations on their subject area to be incorporated into the Development Plan.

(i) **Preparation and presentation of final plan:** Based on the collated data from the working group, a draft Development Plan and Zonal Plan was prepared for Rajnandgaon and Janjgir respectively. This was presented to the local bodies and government officials of both the towns and to the state Urban Department at Raipur. Once again, any suggestions and objections from the meetings were incorporated and the modified plan sent for sanction to the planning authority.

7. **KEY ACHIEVEMENTS**

- The participatory urban planning process brought in a new partnership approach to the city development planning process in the two pilot towns. The integrated partnership model has helped to generate a demand-based realistic plan which was effective as all the urban stakeholders identified and prioritized issues to be addressed and consolidated their strengths to confront these issues to achieve an action-oriented plan. Each component of the plan was envisaged by the community and made operationally feasible by tapping resources identified and prioritized by the people. Planners helped in demystifying the town planning process, collated the people’s needs in a legal format and built the capacities of the municipal stakeholders to understand, implement and monitor the plan. Therefore, the partnership facilitated in evolving a plan which was participatory, technically feasible and economically viable.

**Development of a conceptual plan**

![Diagram of Development Plan]
Established link between planners and implementers, i.e., the two state departments (Environment and Housing, and Urban Department) and the municipality. By roping in all the key stakeholders in the plan preparation process, inter-department co-operation was elicited. Capacities of local government were built so that they could participate in the plan preparation process, understand the need to bring in municipal reform and effectively discharge their implementation role. The partnership development approach between the coordinating agencies was facilitated by learning and capacity building processes and by building relations that were mutually supportive.

Proactive developmental planning initiatives by urban local bodies: Through a consultative process, professional planners and the municipality identified projects that drive the planning process as against the conventional approach where planning drives projects. The former approach brought in a practice of developing realistic plans. Another significant aspect was the integration of the plans and projects with municipal budgets. This was to curtail dependency on external resources, enabling the municipality to implement the projects on a yearly basis as prioritized.

The municipalities suffer from lack of funds and heavy loan burden. Internal generation of income is minimal which paralyses development work. Capacity building of urban local bodies to identify and raise revenue through internal and external resources was undertaken. Tapping resources through national urban schemes was also suggested. A systematic structure and procedure was consented upon, by way of which urban local bodies could review the plan every year and make appropriate modifications.

8. LESSONS LEARNT AND KEY CHALLENGES

Absence of supportive legislation limits community and civil society engagement:
The existing state legislation (the state municipal as well as town planning acts) do not adequately recognize the potential contribution of demand-side stakeholders, i.e., the community and larger civil society. Their valuable contribution to the planning process and subsequent implementation is missing. Governments need to acknowledge local people’s knowledge and work in close collaboration with communities in all aspects – information procurement, planning, prioritizing, monitoring, implementing, etc. Support of the process by senior level
bureaucrats, politicians and senior planners helps in taking forward the process and in influencing policy.

**Participatory process, an elusive concept:**
Planners, local leaders and municipal authorities are at times apprehensive and resentful about participatory approaches as they wrongly conjure the approach as a need arising out of failure on their part to deliver. They might become apprehensive of the process as they think it is a challenge to their authority, which may result in their losing control. There is therefore need to build capacities of the local authority and citizen leaders on the process and its benefits. Dialoguing and capacity building is key to effective partnership. Everyone involved was co-ordinated and informed through a structured platform of a resource centre at the state and district levels.

**Local knowledge and information needs to be respected for effective implementation and sustainability:**
The plan should be based on local knowledge and resources, reflect community needs and priorities (of all socio-economic groups) and be bankable depending largely on local resources, which in turn will reduce the pressure on scarce government resources. Also, a participatory plan delivers effectively as it emanates from community ownership and various implementation stakeholders gain access to each other’s skills and resources, reducing the need-demand gap. The participatory process also ensures that the community becomes guardians of the assets created (physical infrastructure) and maintains it rather than disregard and misuse it.

**Plan should have a phase-wise implementation strategy:**
Community interest relies and is built on visible tangible developmental results. The participatory process raises people’s expectations and therefore it is imperative that the plan include an investment strategy which identifies resource needs, potential areas of tapping resources and roles of each partner in the short, medium and long terms. It is also important that all implementing actors be comfortable with the process (contentious issues are resolved) and the phasing strategy for them to contribute and complete the deliverables.

**Inclusivity of existing structures and their capacity building:**
Ingeniously target existing structures and mechanisms, be it government or civil society structures (ward committees, health and sanitation committees, etc) throughout the planning and implementation process. The element of “capacity building” and “acquiring new competency” results in stronger bonds of partnership in effective implementation.

9. **CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD**
The town planning exercise in Rajnandgaon and Janjgir demonstrates how a participatory planning approach can be made to work. For mainstreaming participatory urban planning there is need for continued dialogue and advocacy. Professional planning colleges and learning institutions need to confirm and adopt this approach as part of their teaching curricula. Media channels, both electronic and print, are important linkages to disseminate the process to a wider audience. Exchange visits (especially inter-state, comprising of mixed teams of planners, elected
representatives, officials and citizen leaders) have been found to be most effective to further the application agenda of participatory urban planning.

Participatory urban planning is a democratic process, supported by the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act of India which gives sweeping powers to the local authority, especially in planning and development by involving people at all levels. But it is evident that in practice the technocratic conventional approach is in use and people’s participation is negligible. Indirect participation is also a token gesture as the prepared plan is presented to the elected body for objections/suggestions; these elected bodies are generally incapacitated to comprehend the full significance (as the plan relies heavily on technical data and maps, etc). The participatory urban planning process is, on the contrary, a viable urban management tool that focuses on collaborative partnership and continuous dialogue between planners, government officials, elected representatives and the community for integration and convergence of knowledge, skills and resources to prepare a plan in which people have an interest, ownership and have concern for the investments since the decisions affect them. Thereby, on implementation, sustainability is enhanced and the process helps reduce operation and maintenance costs as local stakes and ownership has been evoked.

Success of the process rests upon effective facilitation to mobilize and sensitize stakeholders in order for them to effectively participate. It is critical that they understand the benefits of the town plan and its implications. Civil society organizations/NGOs can play a key role in supporting grassroots mobilization, in documenting and sharing their knowledge and in training the divergent groups to contribute to the inclusive process. The capacities of all partners in the planning and implementation process should be strengthened.