REPORT

SAMVAD
CONVERSATION

SCALING UP CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT FOR INCLUSIVE URBAN GOVERNANCE

20 OCTOBER 2021

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PRIA@40
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JANAAGRAHA
JANAAGRAHA CENTRE FOR CITIZENSHIP & DEMOCRACY

The Bridgespan Group

Sustainable urban future

CONTENTS

KEY TAKE-AWAYS

❖ ***Sustain trust and engagement with communities*** – Partners engaging with communities need models that can tailor solutions in addressing their diversity of needs and build trust amongst the communities for inclusive urban governance.

❖ ***'Do not harm' principle of urban practice*** – Upscaling civic engagement needs no brutal policing regimes but must create spaces to address sustaining violence and think about reconciliation and resolution as part of that effort.

❖ ***Support the functions of ward committees*** – The functions of ward committees and Mohalla sabha must be endorsed for decentralised governance where people can engage themselves, build consensus and resolve their conflicts.

❖ ***Local data keeping is critical*** – It is important to observe the use of public spaces and data at the neighborhood scale and map the impact of the work which is being done in the communities to make cities more inclusive.

Ms. Roshni K. Nuggehalli is Executive Director at Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action (YUVA) an Indian development organisation set up in 1984. YUVA's work questions social structures alongside the poor, to empower them to participate in a process of meaningful change. YUVA aims to address poverty and social justice through community interventions, research and policy advocacy. Specifically, Roshni works on issues of youth and child rights, migration, informal economy and governance.

Mr. Jeff Thindwa is the GPSA's Program Manager, leading its strategies for collaboration of civil society and governments to improve accountability and performance of public policies and key sectors such as health, education and water. Jeff joined the Bank in 2000 as a senior social development specialist and led work on participation in operations, social accountability and the Bank's global engagement with civil society.

Dr. Jaideep Gupte is a Fellow of the Institute of Development Studies, where he leads the Cities Cluster. He is currently seconded to lead the Cities and Sustainable Infrastructure portfolio of the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF), UKRI. Gupte's research is on urban violence, poverty and development. His other research interests and expertise include urban inclusion, justice/security in informal settlements, and using GIS/GPS aided mobile data collection platforms for spatial research.

Ms. Pritha Venkatachalam is a partner in Bridge span's Mumbai office heads market impact in South Asia. She has advised governments, donors, foundations and philanthropies, multilateral organizations, non-profits, and the private sector on a wide range of global development challenges. Her experience includes public policy formulation, design and implementation of global development interventions, strategy and financial advisory, and evaluation of programmes.

Ms. Akhila Sivadas, Managing Trustee and Executive Director, Centre for Advocacy and Research, brings with her rich and varied experience as a researcher and communication expert on issues related to gender and development and its impact on the lives of marginal communities. Over the last ten years, her major area of focus has been to educate communities about welfare schemes and services.

Mr. Srinivas Alavilli is Head of Civic Participation in Janaagraha. He leads the efforts in increasing civic participation in governance. Srinivas drives the design and development of the Janaagraha civic tech platform IChangeMyCity, pioneering civic tech which is being used in thousands of cities across India and he works on creating grassroots networks between civil society and local governments. Srinivas believes in systemic change that happens when citizens demand it and the political system delivers it.

Ms. Rushda Majeed is responsible for the Bernard van Leer Foundation's work in India. She has led research in 11 countries for Princeton University's Innovations for Successful Societies to analyse reforms that improve government performance and accountability. She has also served as a core team member on the re-election campaign of a two-term Member of Parliament, advised a World Bank team on case study research, and managed a global leadership programme for a New York-city based non-profit

Dr. Rajesh Tandon, Founder President, Participatory Research in Asia, India, is currently a UNESCO Co-Chair on Community Based Research and Social Responsibilities in Higher Education. He serves as chairperson of the Global Alliance on Community-Engaged Research (GACER) network, which facilitates the sharing of knowledge and information worldwide to further community-based research and has also served as an Advisor to the Commonwealth Foundation, UNDP, and numerous other international agencies.

Dr. Kaustuv Kanti Bandyopadhyay is the Director of Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), India. For more than 30 years he has been working on citizen participation in urban and rural contexts. He is an internationally acclaimed researcher, trainer, and facilitator of organisation development and participatory planning, monitoring, evaluation, and impact assessment. Currently, he is the Co-Coordinator of Asia Democracy Research Networks (ADRN) and serves on the Governing Council of Asia Democracy Network (ADN).

As Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) completes its 40 years, it recommits to continue institutional strengthening and capacity development support to civil society and non-profits with a special focus on new-generation civil society and non-profit groups. Between August and December 2021, PRIA will be convening PRIA@40 Conversations with communities, partners, associates, supporters, experts, investors and colleagues, drawn from civil society, government, business, media and academia, to share ideas and experiences that can help 're-imagine' PRIA, its interventions and the world in the coming period.

In this context, PRIA convened a Conversation (Samvad) on Scaling up Citizen Engagement for Inclusive Urban Governance on 20 October 2021 in collaboration with The Bridgespan Group and Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy. The virtual conversation was conducted in the English language and it was simultaneously being translated into the Hindi language by the interpreters. It was attended by 84 participants, was moderated by **Dr. Kaustuv Kanti Bandyopadhyay** (Director, PRIA).

The conversation began with a short presentation by **Ms. Nikita Rakhyani** (Youth Trainer, PRIA) on PRIA's journey of the past four decades – a journey about sustaining an independent forward-looking and energetic civil society organisation in an otherwise rapidly disruptive and uncertain world. PRIA's *theory of change* follows something unique in the development sector which acts as a bridge between the supply and the demand side of issues or themes that PRIA invests in. On the demand side, efforts are made to mobilise individuals, especially the poor and marginalised sections to make them aware of their rights and responsibilities and thereby fuelling a sense of agency to demand services, inclusion, participation and so on. On the supply side, PRIA works with government and private agencies to sensitise them to deliver their mandates and be accountable to citizens. PRIA continues to engage with as many stakeholders as possible to explore answers which are long-lasting and effective.

Talking about the theme of *Sustainable Urban Future*, **Ms. Rakhyani** said that PRIA recognised the emerging urban challenges as early as 1980s. After the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act (CAA) was enacted in 1993 in India, PRIA tried to address capacity deficits in elected counsellors through innovative trainings and learning with the donations. PRIA has established more than 50 urban resource centres to support both supply and demand sides of the issues. PRIA also facilitated the first-ever participatory town plans and participatory city development plans in India. Read more on the theme here.

Next, **Dr. Bandyopadhyay** spoke about the need for active citizenry in the 21st-century city governments to improve inclusivity, effectiveness, transparency and accountability. In this context, he introduced the focus question of the conversation (samvad), which are as follows:

• What innovations have been fostered to promote citizen engagement in urban governance and how these innovations can be institutionalised and scaled up?
• What form(s) of collaborative learning will help achieve increased capacities of civil society to scale up citizen engagement?
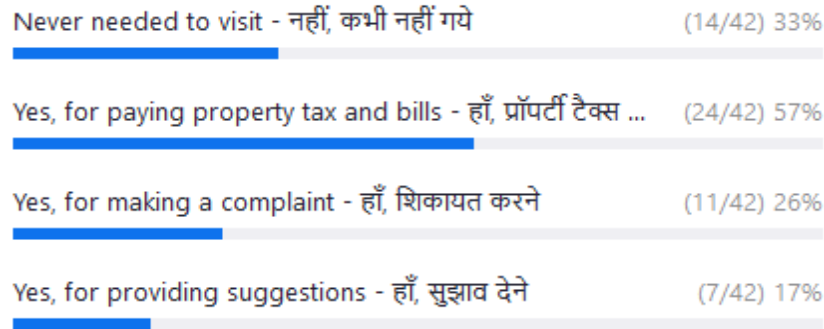
Before inviting the panellists to deliberate on the questions, **Dr. Bandyopadhyay** launched a zoom poll with three questions, as follows:

Question1

Poll ended | 1 question

1. Have you ever visited the Municipal Office in your city where you live now? / आप जिस शहर में रहते हैं, क्या आप वहां की नगर पालिका/ निगम में कभी गये हैं ? (Multiple Choice) *

42/42 (100%) answered

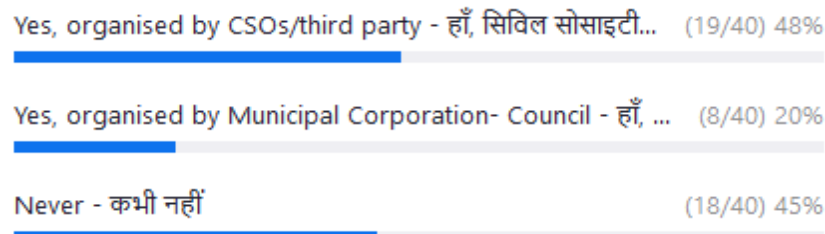|	
Never needed to visit - नहीं, कभी नहीं गये	(14/42) 33%
Yes, for paying property tax and bills - हाँ, प्रॉपर्टी टैक्स ...	(24/42) 57%
Yes, for making a complaint - हाँ, शिकायत करने	(11/42) 26%
Yes, for providing suggestions - हाँ, सुझाव देने	(7/42) 17%

The responses highlighted that 33% of the participants had never needed to visit the municipal office in their cities, where they live. 57% of the participants said that they have visited for paying property tax and bills. 26% of the participants said they have visited to make a complaint and 17% of the participants said they have visited for providing suggestions.

Question 2

Poll ended | 1 question

1. Have you ever participated in any consultation in your city for improving municipal services? / क्या आपने अपने शहर में नगर निगम/ पालिक oт द्वारा दी जा रही सेवाओं में सुधार के लिए किसी परिचर्चा में भाग लिया है ? (Multiple Choice) *

40/40 (100%) answered

Yes, organised by CSOs/third party - हाँ, सिविल सोसाइटी...	(19/40) 48%
Yes, organised by Municipal Corporation- Council - हाँ, ...	(8/40) 20%
Never - कभी नहीं	(18/40) 45%

The responses highlighted that 48% of the participants said that they have participated in the consultation organised by CSOs/ third party for improving the municipal services. 20% of the participants said they have participated in the consultation organised by Municipal Corporation. 45% of the participants said that they have never participated in any consultation.

Question 3

Poll ended | 1 question

1. Do you think, digital technology can make citizen engagement in city governance more inclusive? / क्या आपको लगता है की 'डिजिटल तकनीक' शहरी सुशासन में जन सहभगिता को और समावेशी बना सकती है ? (Multiple Choice) *

39/39 (100%) answered

Yes, it will enhance 'ease of engagement' - हाँ, यह जुड़ा...   (11/39) 28%

Yes, with some help even 'digitally challenged' people ...   (17/39) 44%

No, only a few elite citizens will be able to engage - नह...   (8/39) 21%

No, the poor and marginalized will never be able to e...   (15/39) 38%

The responses highlighted that 28% of the participants said that digital technology can make citizen engagement in city governance more inclusive. 44% of the participants said that with some help even 'digitally challenged people will be able to participate. 21% of the participants said that only a few elite citizens will be able to engage. 38% of the participants think that the poor and the marginalised will never be able to engage digitally.

Taking these interesting insights forward, **Dr. Bandyopadhyay** invited **Ms. Pritha Venkatachalam** (Partner, Head of Market Impact, Bridgespan India) and **Dr. Jaideep Gupte** (Fellow, Institute of Development Studies) to set the stage for conversation (samvad).

'*Traditionally in India, a lot of the development focus has been on rural health, rural livelihoods and rural education*', said **Ms. Venkatachalam**. The pandemic has laid bare the need for more inclusive systems for urban governance and development. The focus of her presentation was community engagement as part of citizen engagement in urban slums. In this context, she spoke about a study that was conducted by Bridgespan, during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, which explored the importance of community engagement in the development agenda in the face of crisis. The study aimed at mapping the models for community engagement. The starting point was to understand the multi-dimensional needs of the slum communities that have become dire and urgent in the light of the pandemic. It is imperative that the solutions must be tailored as per the needs of the community.

To build an urban governance model that is mindful of the citizens holistically one needs to engage with them across the spectrum of their needs and not just work on what seemed important at that point in time. It was imperative to co-opt communities and build their trust as well as reliance on the issue of engagement with the government and other multilateral & bilateral partners. In terms of the COVID-19 preparedness, the study revealed some major concerns: one, there was a need to improve awareness and promote healthy behaviours, such as masking, social distancing, better hygiene practices and so on. But in the slum context, given some of these facilities were not even available, getting communities on board to spread social awareness required co-opting community leaders and the local community influencers. Two, in terms of service support, we thought that services are being delivered to

the communities in fact there was a very high degree of participation, co-creation and execution of services by community leaders, youth collectives, community action groups and multiple slums, that the study focused on. Finally, for informing both policy action and new policies that came into play in face of COVID- 19, related to enabling better wash conditions and access to health systems, many community volunteer groups took it upon themselves to use social media or even write letters to the municipal authorities and the municipal government representatives in the slum to inform their action during COVID- 19. These areas of concern illustrated the significant role that was played by the communities, during the pandemic, with support from the government and other philanthropic partners.

She also shared the three models that can promote deep community participation. First was the recipient model: it is not the ideal model to work with communities, but in the face of a pandemic, when they were thrown out of their regular sources of basic services and livelihoods, this model helped in sustaining their livelihood. The second was being a partner and co- creating the solution and executing the same. The community leaders in the community action groups need to work hand in hand with the community volunteers, not just for decision making but to engage with everyone in the community. In other words, a true partnership at all levels between the civil society volunteers and the community members. The third was the owner model. It was difficult to implement this model during the time of crisis but a lot of civil society and other partners who have been deeply embedded and working with communities over several decades have trained and nurtured the communities, have built the trust and social capital to treat them as actual owners of solving their problems. And the owner model has the highest level of community participation engagement, but it does require a lot more investment and capacity building, nurturing of trust and building cohesiveness and the peer-to-peer connections in the community.

There was a shift from the recipient model to the owner model where the community members themselves came up with the responses and solutions with some kind of external support, if needed. So, the agency and collective ownership shift from the recipient model to the owner model in a more desirable way to the communities. The question at hand is to explore how the external stakeholders – whether it's government or NGO partners, engage and collaborate with the communities. We need to understand the socio-economic, political and legal characteristics of slums before jumping in because there's no one size fits all. During the pandemic one witnessed fluidity and flexibility in the role that the community played, their roles often shifted. For instance, at the peak of the lockdown, they were recipients of the food kits or water supply but as the lockdown lifted many of the communities marshalled resources to set up community kitchens or they undertook awareness campaigns about COVID. It's important that the partners that work with the communities need to be agile and nimble to adapt to the community needs. So, in face of the lockdown, they were moved from being self-reliant to being reliant on providers of resources and basic services which made them quite flustered. But in the end, they evolved through the face of crisis and to build greater inclusiveness and the way they contribute to their governance.

"community engagement models need not be discrete…no one model is best"

Dr. Jaideep Gupte (Fellow, Institute of Development Studies, UK) focussed his presentation on the post-pandemic environment and said that we must acknowledge the violence of the pandemic. He said, '*Any conversation around scaling up citizen participation in the future, needs to acknowledge the experience of subaltern groups through the pandemic*'. Many of these struggles were extremely violent and detrimental to long-standing struggles for rights in the city, which predates the pandemic. So when we talk of scaling up participation, we need

to explicitly put on the table a 'do no harm' principle of urban practice because there was momentary aberration of these rights for us to get through and pass this pandemic. But we must not normalise these practices and must not see them as part of the urban practice as we work towards upscaling civic engagement. Any new normal and upscaling efforts need to create space to address the violence that's been sustained and also think about reconciliation as part of that effort to upscale civic engagement. Having said that, it is also important to recognise that we are in a state where we have a tremendous infrastructure shortfall already – upwards of 40% of the infrastructure that we require isn't even built yet and the infrastructure that we have today is deeply gendered. And in fact, have even gendered the digital infrastructure and these inequalities get magnified when it comes to looking at low-income groups in many ways.

Drawing from the work he has been involved in at IDS on *Digital openings and Closings in Africa*, through the African Digital Rights Network, he said that during the pandemic, one had to increasingly rely on digital surveillance and clamp down on digital spaces to control public space and to control mass misinformation. But we need to now classify them as digital closings. This is important because we are increasingly relying on digital spaces for our civic engagement and advocacy needs. In a way, it is a double-edged knife. But there are many openings, alongside these closings and we need to recognise this balance and tension as we look to upscale engagement and indeed increase opportunities for advocating for citizen's rights, rather than rushing to a techno-utopian solution to all problems around scaling up in the future.

We need to balance carefully between our desires to provide agency to very locally rooted relative understandings of everyday experiences with universal knowledge around healthy living in cities now. It's important because we know that our advocacy and communication is such an important part of the governance. After all, it's not just about knowing the right science and evidence-based policymaking, but it's about convincing people that we are using the right science. We need to somehow be able to balance universal truths in and amongst that we need to invest in understanding each other ideologically, politically and make these civic bridges across disciplines. We just need to see that as the way to upscale and bring a new form of civic engagement to our urban futures.

"'do not harm' principle in urban practice as we upscale civic engagement"

Next, a quick survey was facilitated by **Ms. Rakhyani**, to gauge the participant's understanding of different strategies for enhancing citizen engagement in city planning and governance? The survey conducted via [Mentimeter](#).

Responses to the question, "What has worked in enhancing citizen engagement in city planning and governance?" highlighted e- governance, IT interventions, ward-specific plans, inclusive approach, participatory planning as some of the strategies that enable citizen engagement in planning and governance.

Moving on to the next segment of the discussion, **Dr. Bandyopadhyay** requested the panellists to share their reflections on the focused questions of the webinar.

Meet our panellists…

[Top L to R: Dr. Kaustuv Bandyopadhyay, Mr. Srinivas Alavilli, Dr. Rajesh Tandon, Mr. Jeff Thindwa, Ms. Roshni K. Nuggehalli, Ms. Pritha Venkatachalam, Ms. Rushda Majeed, Ms. Akhila Sivadas and Dr. Jaydeep Gupte]

'*Pandemic has made it extremely clear that the government just does not have the capacity to do things without active citizen partnership*', said **Mr. Srinivas Alavilli** (Head, Civic Participation, Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy, India). Although the 74th CAA has been there for almost about 27 years now, but it has been on paper for a large part in most of India. But the pandemic changed all of that and made the city officials realise the futility of the work that they can accomplish with the scale at which the pandemic has hit us. This is where citizen participation received a new lease of life in India. Citizens played a

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significant role in every little aspect of the pandemic, right from isolation, helping sick families and people that cannot be isolated in the home with the common isolation centres and so on.

The ward committees require a certain amount of sustained energy from the people to work efficiently. We need to create sustainable forums and without ward committees, it's nearly impossible to create formal citizen participation urban governance. One can create energy on a particular issue but cannot solve governance, on a long-term basis without a formal engagement with the local government and that's what ward committees are for.

The unique approach that Janaagraha has been trying is connecting the city budgets to the ward committees and citizen participation. City budgets, unlike the union budget and the state government, are unknown or lesser known in India. The monumental event of presenting the city budget goes without any noise in the media or the public domain. There is no importance given to the making of the city budget. Janaagraha has taken this approach with a unique campaign called 'my city my budget' in the process of making a budget. We now have a very solid footing, on which people can participate in the ward committees. We are taking this participatory budgeting model to many other cities across India, where we create an index, called the ward infrastructure index, take input from citizens, and combine these things to come up with a realistic budget that can be used by the citizens.

"decentralised governance had really come to the fore during the pandemic"

Ms. Roshni Nuggehalli (Executive Director, YUVA, India) began by stating that the principle of participation is a constitutional right that can guarantee participation. Participation is most important for those who are already marginalised and are vulnerable. Thus, special efforts are needed to be put into enabling their participation and not just participation and voice but also transparency and the ability to push for accountability. This must be done within the framework of human rights and justice.

In reality one sees a lack of political will and decentralisation, particularly handing over power from the state to the local levels. While we look at the representative democratic space in the ULBs, the spaces for people's direct agency like the ward committees, are weak. The elections get delayed, and these complexities primarily point to the lack of political will. In this context, it's also important to think about how cities are built and grow, when we talk of participation. Cities are originally grown by people's planning, people's decisions, particularly that of the poor. This exists even before formal planning and formal budgeting comes into the picture but is ignored by formal bodies. Owing to this, it creates a dissonance between what people want to say and how they participate, as well as how city governance is shaped.

Speaking of the examples from the ground that indicates their efforts to claim different pieces of the larger participation in the urban governance puzzle, she listed a few examples. First, the concept of a mohalla sabha, which is a similar model as that of gram sabha. In Nagpur, the legal tenured rights were granted through a government resolution after several years of advocacy and collaboration between the local network called Shehar Vikas Manch and Yuva, after almost decades of work. It was a huge achievement to have such a government resolution passed where slum dwellers got tenure security. However, it's easy to have that in place but implementation was a huge challenge. This way mohalla sabhas was a big strategy that was used to identify the beneficiaries and facilitate documentation work with a municipal corporation, planning and primarily push for accountability.

Another, more local example, is the Child Protection Committees that have been formed through a resolution of the Maharashtra State Government. These have been institutionalised at the electoral ward level under the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS). The

corporator/ the councillor is the convenor and has other local executive officials but there is also the representation of caregivers and children. It's been working very strongly to implement the Child Protection Committees, to build a safe environment, prevent protection violations which have become so much important post the pandemic. There's a lot of scope to expand that and scale up the ICPS across the country. These experiments provide a foundation on which one can emphasise on the strength of people's collectives. We must use these sorts of collectives to strategically move towards deepening democracy as we are witnessing a rapid increase in hate and sectarian violence, where basic institutions of democracy are being shaken at the foundation. In the context of this shrinking space, impunity is seen at the highest levels of power. She concluded, *'It gives us a bigger impetus to really invest in strengthening democracy at that local level'*.

"getting people involved in planning is a huge part of urban governance space"

Mr. Jeff Thindwa (Programme Manager, Global Partnership for Social Accountability, World Bank) said that citizen engagement and inclusion in urban governance are bound by technological and non-technological innovations. At the Global Partnership for Social Accountability (GPSA), a collaborative social accountability approach to governance is used, that tries to bridge citizens, civil society and governance, sort of in between the traditional demand and supply dichotomy. This process engages citizens and communities, civil society groups and public sector institutions in processes. The idea is to think of solutions to jointly identify problems and helped improve accountability and performance. One of the things he said was opening up government to be informed and influenced by the citizens, is one of the defining priorities of our time.

Collaboration of citizens and government, civil society and governments, builds their synergies and contribute to a much more responsive city government. When they make commitments, they follow them through using charters and getting citizens to monitor and report on what has been accomplished. It takes insightful innovative leadership and an engaged citizenry, but it also takes strong intermediaries – the civil society organisations, to foster these processes. Inclusive governance is not automatic, it doesn't come with legislation, and it has to be folded into the design of the initiatives. Collaborative governance approaches have to include perspectives of demographics that are traditionally excluded. While celebrating the presence of not just legal frameworks that enshrined participation, but evidence of practice, from leaders that make it work and civil society organisations that mediate these practices, we still have to ask how these practices can go to scale. Now they can go to scale through lateral multiplication of practices, or through the embedding of these practices in larger programmes and delivery systems, especially of governments. GPSA supports the engagement of civil society organisations in collaborative social concrete with governments and uses sector delivery systems to take up the good practices and lessons from social accountability that are led by CSOs and make them a part of the government system.

"transformative innovations in citizen engagement are ushered in by legal frameworks"

Ms. Akhila Sivadas (Managing Trustee and Executive Director, Centre for Advocacy and Research, India) stated that everyone recognises that citizen engagement is very complex as it is often faced with structural and systemic barriers. These barriers are the hidden roadblocks that come in the way of community engagement, even if advocacy is done at its highest level. Gender inequality is the highest in the structural barriers. From 2005- 2006 onwards, it

became very clear, that urban poverty is something deep-rooted and wilful exclusion be extremely high. So, when we talk about informal spaces, we assume that a crisis of this magnitude, such as the pandemic, is required to confront the issue of the urban poor. It also became clear that the formal structures can never meet the informal structures.

In this context, three things need to happen for our learning for working with the urban poor: building leadership, promoting organic participation, structured calibrated mediation. Out of these emerged a mechanism called 'a single window' – we run it in close coordination with all the local stakeholders including CSOs, CBOs, union's market associations. It tries to create a level of mediation and facilitation. This was supported by a mechanism called the 'help desk' in each slum and settlement. At the help desk, each member represents a constituency, and it is through facilitation on the ground that the whole process of change was evolved. She said, '*Over the years we have realised that we talk to the top, we talk to the bottom, but we rarely deal with the middle – the middle is the most resistant to change. They don't feel sufficiently empowered*'.

During the pandemic, there was a lot of community action and hence professionalising their service and recognising that they are no more just volunteers, but they are doing whatever is needed. They have become integral to the process. The government has also realised that they do not just need participation; they need insight, perception, views, and most importantly the element of resilience to grow. One of the things we must understand is that the community daily garners knowledge about the system. The system does not need to be just confronted, but it needs to be taken on its strength. That's the knowledge system that the community has developed. Conversely, the duty bearers who used to shun the community, who distrusted them, now not only respect them and seek their opinion, but see them as part of their system. They don't see them as beneficiaries but as an integral part of the solution.

"formal structures cannot interact with the informal structures without mediation"

Ms. Rushda Majeed (India Country Representative, Bernard van Leer Foundation, The Netherlands) began by talking about one of the core initiatives at the Bernard van Leer Foundation (BVLF) called Urban95. It is a city-scale initiative across many cities around the world. The '95' in the name '95 cms' – height of a healthy three-year-old child. Through Urban95 the cities, their leaders, citizens and other key stakeholders are asked if they would do anything differently and look at the city from the height of 95 cms. This initiative focusses on enabling full citizen engagement and particularly tries to get to the core of how one can bring about change.

She listed three examples under the Urban 95 initiative. One example is pre-pandemic – the Smart Cities Challenge that was conducted in Bhubaneshwar, India. The idea of including citizen engagement in the design of initiatives was something that was seen on the ground in Bhubaneshwar. It was a good model for cities to understand that engaging citizenry through consultations is the key to strengthening their work, services and quality of life. It's also the key to scaling and institutionalisation. The second example was the Nurturing Neighbourhoods Challenge. Of course, citizen engagement is the key. But how does one do it in a sustained manner, over time, if it is built into the design of an initiative? Under this challenge, the focus was on neighbourhoods and wards that are conducive to engaging local communities, including a lot of low-income communities' migrant populations – people living in slums and informal settlements and so on. The theme throughout the design of this initiative was co-creation.

Data is critical at the neighbourhood scale to enable change and it can feed into an engagement process with the citizens that are part of those communities and cities. It's easier

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to have people coalesce around a particular piece of infrastructure-built environment and continue to engage them in having a say in public spaces. A lot more needs to be done to build trust and promote peer-to-peer learning. Policy level changes are critical.

"we must focus on the scale, sustainability and institutionalisation"

Dr. Bandyopadhyay requested **Dr. Rajesh Tandon** (Founder-President, PRIA, India) to sum up the discussion and share the key take-aways.

In his closing remark, **Dr. Tandon** said, '*The pandemic has graphically illustrated that are societies are highly unequal*'. It's not just income or wealth inequality, it's also inequality in terms of conditions of one's life and the scale of human suffering that has happened during the pandemic in the cities. It has reinforced the notion that urban informality is not merely a concept, but it is a living reality for generations of people who were born on the pavement. Participation for them is not about sitting in a council meeting but it is a struggle for survival. The second reality that has slowly crept into the cities is the gradual privatisation of basic services over the last 20- 30 years in many of our cities. Privatisation follows two parallel tracks: one is the privatisation of fancy global international schools, hospitals and gated communities. The other is privatisation for poor housing. Either way, citizen participation has to contend with the inequality and the privatisation forces that have moved together in the last 2- 3 decades. In the Indian context, therefore, we need institutional spaces – ward committees, mohalla committees, etc. It is important to note that even though we have had these spaces, they have not been activated. That is one of the failures of civil society in India to engage with urban space and urban poverty in the same way that they were engaging with rural for many years.

Reiterating **Dr. Gupte's** comment on the need for a 'do not harm' principle and 'acknowledging the violence of city life', **Dr. Tandon** said that it has indeed become very significant now; while it was perhaps not so visible before the pandemic it has become gravely visible. For instance, 20 years ago, we used to fight evictions and now we accept it. We take it as a part of urbanisation. Why are the rights of people being trampled within the name of improving city infrastructure? This reality demand of us, who are promoters of participation and look at participation as a constitutional mandate, to find a way to go beyond the technocratic digital fixes, because creating a mobile app is not enabling participation.

This is where social mobilisation, awareness generation, forming settlement level, organisations, building connection between settlements, as many people has is important. The cities in this country lack the human and institutional capacity to sustain participation. That capacity was built by 2- 3 decades of work since 1980 in our rural development programmes, largely because it was demanded by civil society and communities. But that capacity hasn't been built in urban institutions and urban local bodies. Civil society's role – intermediation role, facilitation role, mobilisation role and pressure building role is political.

"participation is a struggle for survival for the urban informals"

The conversation (samvad) ended with a vote of thanks by **Dr. Bandyopadhyay**

5.00 pm to 5.20 pm

Welcome and Introduction to PRIA@40 Programmes and Conversation

Moderator: Dr. Kaustuv Kanti Bandyopadhyay, Director, Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), India

5.20 pm to 5.40 pm

Setting the Stage -

- Dr. Jaideep Gupte, Institute of Development Studies, UK
- Ms. Pritha Venkatachalam, Bridgespan India, South Asia

5:40 pm to 6.45 pm

Deep Dive Conversations (first round)

- Mr. Srinivas Alavilli, Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy, India
- Ms. Roshni Nuggehalli, YUVA, India
- Mr. Jeff Thindwa, Global Partnership for Social Accountability, World Bank
- Ms. Akhila Sivadas, Centre for Advocacy and Research, India
- Ms. Rushda Majeed, Bernard van Leer Foundation, The Netherlands

6.45 pm to 6.55 pm

Key Takeaways

Dr. Rajesh Tandon, Founder-President, Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), India

6.55 pm to 7.00 pm

Vote of Thanks and Closure

Dr. Kaustuv Kanti Bandyopadhyay, Director, PRIA, India

PRIA@40 EVENTS

DATE	TITLE	THEME
12 August 2021	Youth Participation and Active Citizenship	Citizen Participation
20 August 2021	Planning for Urban Informalities	Sustainable Urban Future
31 August 2021	Accelerating Capacities in Civil Society and Non-Profits	Empowering Civil Society
2 September 2021	Nurturing Civil Society Partnerships in Uncertain Times	Empowering Civil Society
15 September 2021	Redesigning Civil Society Ecosystem: From Local to Global	Empowering Civil Society
28 September 2021	Unlearning Patriarchy: Expanding Impacts of Gender Training	Making the Gender Leap
30 September 2021	Investing in Civil Society Innovations	Empowering Civil Society
01 October 2021	Community-led Adaptations: Water is Life	Decentralised Community Governance
06 October 2021	Inspiring Leadership of Mayors and Councillors for Inclusive Urbanisation	Sustainable Urban Future
12 October 2021	Trajectories of Participation: From Development to Governance	Citizen Participation
20 October 2021	Scaling up Citizen Engagement for Inclusive Urban Governance	Sustainable Urban Future