We curse it for traffic jams, power outages, potholes in the middle of the road, long queues for paying bills; and praise it for its opportunities, infrastructure and entertainment.

The mid-term appraisal document of the 11th Five-year plan is now available on the Planning Commission’s website. (http://www.planningcommission.nic.in/plan/mta/11th_mta/mta.html) After the initial celebration of a robust GDP growth amidst the global economic downturn, indicators like income and poverty, education, health, women and children, infrastructure and environment do not generate excitement due to lack of measurable impacts in many cases. However, the extensive importance given to urban renewal, and corresponding change management, hinting at the need for city managers and ‘professionalization’ of service delivery, is definitely a welcome sign and a harbinger of hope that things can change.

It has been obvious for some time that business as usual is not giving the desired results; the government’s recognition of this, though welcome, is rather late in coming. India’s urban challenges and problems need customised solutions. In order to do this, we need innovative solutions (‘Localising Millennium Development Goals’), need to understand the importance of going back and critically assessing our efforts (‘Saving the Lost Cause’), and learn from others’ experiences (the book review of Recovering Resources-Recycling Citizenship). We hope through these articles this issue of PraKria offers some insights into developing achievable solutions.

We look forward to your feedback and comments.

Cities all over the world are considered the economic growth engines of a country, and the needs of only those sections of the urban population contributing substantially to increasing GDP are being addressed in urban development policies and programmes. Worldwide, urban planners and developers have turned a blind eye towards excluded sections, particularly those of women, children, the aged, the differently abled, and the poor.

The very ambitious Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JnNURM) in India, in spite of being a significant part of the government’s agenda ‘Towards Faster and More Inclusive Growth’, fails to address ‘inclusiveness’ in totality with respect to gender equity. In its current form, the Mission is essentially a gender-neutral* scheme, i.e., it does not use the knowledge of gender differences in a given society to overcome biases in development interventions. It works within the existing gender division of resources and responsibilities.

Urban policies, schemes and projects should take concrete steps to deal with the specific needs of those excluded instead of considering all citizens as a homogeneous group. A brief analysis of the gender-quotient of the City Development Plans (CDPs) of six Indian mega cities reveals that the CDPs of Chennai and Mumbai are Parity Gender Aware* (i.e., they partly recognize that men and women are part of development and that they are constrained in different and often unequal ways at potential participants and beneficiaries); those of Ahmedabad and Delhi are Gender Blind* (i.e. they recognize no distinction between the sexes and therefore incorporate biases in favour of existing gender relations); and those of Hyderabad and Bangalore can be considered to be Gender Aware* (i.e., they recognise that men and women are part of development and that they are constrained in different and often unequal ways at potential participants and beneficiaries). The CDPs of Bangalore and Hyderabad nonetheless have a definite gap between recognition of women as a vulnerable group and concrete specific provisions to cater to their needs.


*According to Naila Kabeer’s Classification of Policies
Family MDG 1: My family has a job and savings.
Family MDG 2: All our children go to school.
Family MDG 3: Men and women have equal rights.
Family MDG 4: All our children are healthy.
Family MDG 5: We keep pregnancy safe and healthy.
Family MDG 6: We avoid HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases.
Family MDG 7: We keep our homes and the environment clean.
Family MDG 8: We get involved in community development.

Millennium Development Goals are by far the most simple, easily measurable and powerful tool available for achieving sustainable development and reducing poverty worldwide. Measured nationally, it often fails to take into account regional imbalances at community level. Thus, a need to realign or reshape the MDGs to make them more sensitive towards a local development process was felt, giving a momentum to the UN-HABITAT programme Localising the Millennium Development Goals. The programme aims at engaging local authorities and stakeholders to prepare local action plans to meet the MDGs.

Jutta Gutberlet

Jutta prepares the ground in the first couple of chapters wherein she lays bare facts on how increased consumption induced by rapid urban growth has resulted in tremendous increase in solid waste, which in turn degrades the environment and affects livability of places. Jutta sees the role of informal recycling in light of the above-mentioned perils as that of poverty reduction, resource recovery and improving environmental quality, and advocates for inclusive pro-poor policy making in terms of solid waste management. This makes people involved in the activity of informal recycling environmental stewards and agents of change rather than mere ‘rag pickers’. Using experiences from the municipalities of Diadema and Ribeirao Pires in the metropolitan region of Sao Paulo, she highlights the successes and hurdles of organised recycling, something that would appeal to policy makers in developing countries grappling with similar issues.

One hears the constant resonance of participatory approaches, inclusive and pro-poor policy making, sound economy and environmental sustainability while reading the book, even though it deviates from the path of policy making when the author talks of changing mindsets to the mantra of Jutta’s book.

Recovered Resources – Recycling Citizenship
Urban Poverty Reduction in Latin America
Jutta Gutberlet

‘Inclusive waste management = poverty reduction + environmental quality + stronger community’ is the mantra of Jutta’s book.

Localising Millennium Development

Citizen-led, citizen-driven campaigns energise institutions of local self-governance. Staggering in its outreach and magnitude, PEVAC (Pre-Election Voters’ Awareness Campaigns) reached out to huge swathes of the population through a unique network that incorporated civil society organisations across the country, the media and the State Election Commission itself. Citizen Initiatives and Democratic Engagement: Lessons from India takes us through the heat and dust of this extraordinary series of citizen-driven campaigns, drawing from a repertoire of field reports and interviews to reflect on the significance of this ‘experiment’ on deepening democracy in India. This book will be of interest to students of politics, sociology, development studies, gender, public administration, electoral politics, apart from readers generally interested in Indian politics and democracy, women’s empowerment, and civil society. It will serve as required reading in universities and research institutions.