Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs
Government of India

NIUA | NULP
National Urban Learning Platform

CAPACITY FOR CHANGE

Forging Sustainable Futures

08 January 2025

National Institute of Urban Affairs

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CONTRIBUTIONS

Report on

CAPACITY FOR CHANGE

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EVENT SUMMARY

The event 'Capacity for Change: Forging Sustainable Futures' was held on January 8, 2025, at the India Habitat Centre in New Delhi, organised by the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) in collaboration with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA). This initiative aimed to enhance capacity building for urban transformation, which is crucial for fostering sustainable and equitable development in cities. The event served as a platform to showcase ongoing capacity-building efforts and announce several significant initiatives from MoHUA and NIUA, engaging over 200 participants from various sectors, including government, academia, and think tanks.

The event witnessed launches of key initiatives including the nation-wide challenge to foster peer-to-peer learning 'अrban Learnathon 2.0', new features of the NULP, publications on nature-based solutions and property tax management systems for capacity building of ULBs.

During the inaugural session, the Hon'ble Union Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs Shri Manohar Lal emphasised the necessity of capacity building to effectively manage urban expansion and leverage technology and artificial intelligence for future city planning. Key NIUA and MoHUA initiatives were launched by him to build collaboration between urban local bodies, academic partners, and industry leaders.

The event featured a plenary session followed by three thematic sessions focused on various aspects of capacity building. The plenary session explored challenges and essential components in capacity building that lead to effective urban transformation, with panelists sharing experiences illustrating how enhanced capacities can drive sustainable development. The first thematic session discussed frameworks and strategies for strengthening institutions responsible for urban governance, highlighting the importance of effective leadership and resource management. The second session focused on enhancing citizen engagement, addressing gaps in capacity building to ensure that urban policies reflect residents' needs. Lastly, the third session underscored the necessity for urban officials to develop digital skills vital for efficient governance in an increasingly technology-driven environment.

Overall, the event successfully highlighted the urgent need for capacity building in navigating complex urban challenges and contributed significantly to integrating the National Urban Learning Platform (NULP) with Mission Karmayogi, allowing for personalised skill enhancement tailored to municipal officials' needs. The outcomes of this event are expected to foster collaboration and create a repository of diversified solutions and learning resources for urban officials across India.

BACKGROUND

Urban India stands at a pivotal juncture, where the challenges of rapid urbanisation, environmental degradation, and social inequality demand innovative and sustainable solutions. The first annual event held in October 2023, organised by the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), was a landmark event that successfully brought together a diverse array of urban practitioners, policymakers, academics, and civil society members. The event catalysed discussions on the critical role of data-driven decision-making and capacity building in transforming Indian cities into resilient, inclusive, and sustainable urban spaces.

Building on the success of the inaugural, this event aimed to deepen these discussions and expand the focus to include emerging capacity-building initiatives aimed at fostering sustainable and inclusive urban development. With the experiences and insights gained from the first event, the 'Capacity for Change' explored new dimensions in urban governance, emphasised the need for collaborative efforts to address the complex challenges faced by cities today.

The event was set to be a significant milestone in India's urban development discourse. It provided a platform for all the projects in NIUA to showcase their ongoing capacity building efforts in the urban domain, and the opportunity to launch new initiatives that will gain a wider audience at the event.
The event targeted the Directors / Principal Secretaries of States & UTs, NULP nodal officers (NULP Champions), all NIUA and NULP partners, NIUA program teams, empanelled e-learning agencies, multilateral and bi-lateral organisations.

Hon'ble Union Minister with Joint Secretary, MoHUA and Director (AC), NIUA

INAUGURAL SESSION

Welcome Address

Dr. Debolina Kundu, Director (AC), National Institute of Urban Affairs

The Director welcomed the esteemed dignitaries and highlighted the importance of all important stakeholders gathered at the event, including city officials, officials from the ministry, partners, and program teams, in showing their dedication to building resilient, inclusive, and sustainable urban futures. In addition, she emphasised that together, pathways for sustainable urban development can be forged to inspire transformative change across Indian cities.

Context Setting and Introduction

Shri Rahul Kapoor, Joint Secretary and Mission Director -DAY-NULM, PM-SVANidhi and SCM, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs

The Joint Secretary, MoHUA introduced the event by emphasising its role as a platform for deliberating on the capacity-building initiatives and stakeholder collaboration. He highlighted the importance of knowledge exchange and innovation in urban development, the 'quadruple helix' approach that integrates academia, civil society, industry, startups, and government.

He elaborated on the success of the National Urban Learning Platform (NULP), which has onboarded 14 states and over 500 Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), boasting a growing community of more than one lakh members. With 114 curated courses, 200 documented good practices, and four national programs, NULP has emerged as a pivotal tool for digital capacity building. The launch of the new NULP platform, enhanced with advanced features, was highlighted as a step toward fostering collaborative learning and addressing emerging urban challenges in Indian cities.

He concluded by articulating a vision for a progressive urban future, emphasising the importance of empowering government officials and stakeholders to lead India's cities toward a more sustainable, inclusive, and technologically advanced trajectory.

Hon'ble Union Minister, MoHUA addressing the audience

Key Note Address
Shri Manohar Lal, Hon'ble Union Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs and Power, Government of India

The Union Minister of Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, in his keynote address, outlined key priorities for urban development which are as follows:

- **Integrated Vision for Urban Growth by 2047:** With projections of 50% of India's population living in urban areas by 2047, the focus is on blending in-situ development, planned urban expansion, and new city construction. This integrated approach ensures sustainable growth and addresses the challenges of rapid urbanisation comprehensively.
- **In-Situ Development of Historic Cities:** Preserving and modernising historic Indian cities requires blending traditional wisdom with modern infrastructure, ensuring cultural heritage is maintained while upgrading facilities for contemporary needs.
- **Planned Development of New Urban Expansions:** Systematic planning is essential for expanding cities, managing unplanned growth, and developing sustainable infrastructure to improve quality of life of residents
- **Technology and Artificial Intelligence for New Cities:** Leveraging AI and modern technologies is essential for building future-ready cities. These tools can enhance urban planning, optimise resources, and ensure clean, efficient, and aesthetically pleasing environments in new urban developments.
- **Capacity Building through Mission Karmayogi:** The government's Mission Karmayogi initiative focuses on empowering officials with advanced learning modules to plan and manage urban development challenges effectively. This aims to improve service delivery and ease of living for citizens.

Launches

Hon'ble Union Minister with Joint Secretary, MoHUA and Director (AC), NIUA launching 'अrban Learnathon 2.0'

'अrban Learnathon 2.0' Challenge

Following the success of the first cycle of 'अrban Learnathon' and to identify and promote good practices in urban governance and planning, NULP launched the second cycle of the nation-wide challenge, 'अrban Learnathon' 2.0. The idea is to encourage innovative solutions for on-ground urban challenges and foster collaboration between government officials, academic institutions, and industry experts. The second cycle of the challenge will seek urban solutions (implemented and implementable) which will culminate in a repository of learning courses and urban solutions that can be utilised by Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) across the country.

Link to the challenge: https://nulp.niua.org/learnathon.html

New features of NULP

The National Urban Learning Platform with new features is an upgrade of India's largest digital learning platform for urban practitioners. As we step into the scale-up and sustainability phase of the platform, NULP promises a dynamic, user-centric experience with new features like discussion forums, direct connect, and conferencing tools, along with new learning journeys and essential programmes.

Link to the platform: https://nulp.niua.org/

Report on 'Towards a More Efficient and Equitable Property Tax System: A Case of Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike'
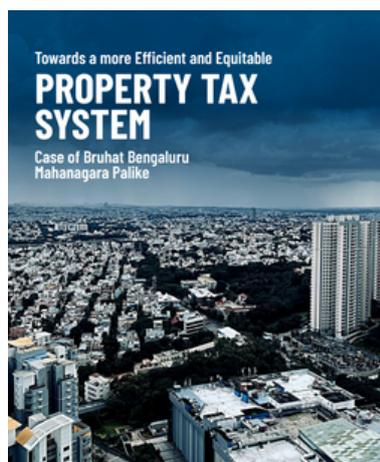
The report is prepared by NIUA in collaboration with Shri Vasanth Rao UA and the officers and staff of the Revenue Department of Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP). It represents a fundamental shift aimed at achieving fairness, transparency, and efficiency in property tax administration. The report suggests that transitioning from an area-based assessment to a capital value system can be implemented smoothly by incorporating realistic measures, ensuring broad acceptance among taxpayers and stakeholders.

Link to the document:
https://niua.in/sites/all/themes/color_glass/pdf/Bengaluru_Property_Tax.pdf

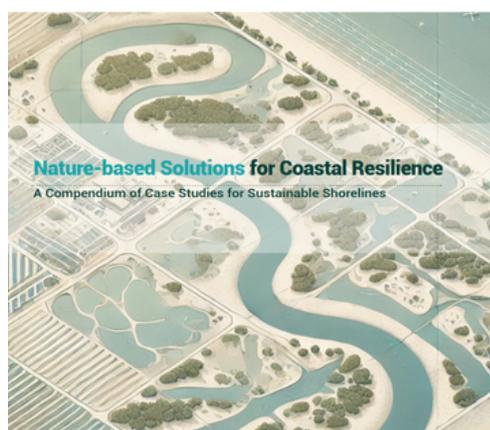## Compendium of Case Studies in Nature-based Solutions (NbS) for Coastal Resilience

The Compendium developed under the UrbanShift Country Project, is a comprehensive resource showcasing examples of implementing Nature-based Solutions (NbS) to enhance the resilience of coastal areas and communities. It provides valuable actionable insights to UrbanShift partner cities and other coastal Indian cities by,

- raising awareness about challenges coastal communities face due to climate change, such as rising sea levels, storm surges, and erosion;
- highlighting how NbS can act as natural barriers against coastal hazards like flooding and erosion; and
- showcasing relevant best practices on envisioning, planning, and implementing NBS to address climate-induced disasters and anthropogenic impacts.

Link to the document:
https://niua.in/sites/all/themes/color_glass/pdf/NBS%20compendium_Option%207.pdf

Discussion Paper on 'Pathways for Mainstreaming Urban Climate Actions'
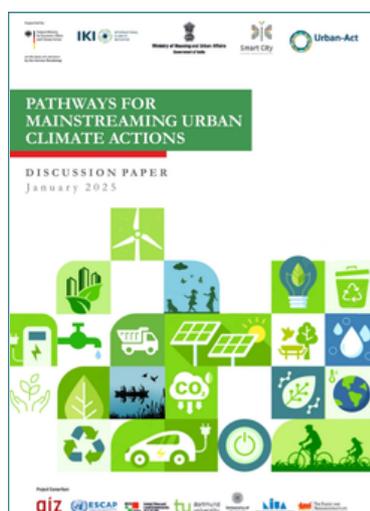
The paper highlights observations and hindrances to mainstreaming climate change in urban areas and emphasises effective vertical integration, effective coordination between relevant institutions, and strengthening institutional and technical capacities as crucial pillars for implementing urban climate actions.

Link to the document:
https://smartcities.gov.in/sites/default/files/2025-01/Pathways%20for%20Mainstreaming%20Urban%20Climate%20Actions.pdf

Capacity Building as a Catalyst for Sustainable Urban Transformation: Lessons Learnt and Good Practices

The session focused on successful strategies in capacity building for urban transformation. The panelists shared experiences, highlighting how enhancing capacities drove sustainable development. The importance of capacity building in enhancing stakeholder skills and resources was emphasised, alongside the recognition of technology, including e-learning, data analytics, and GIS, as vital tools for effective urban planning and decision-making. Successful examples from cities that had implemented transformative initiatives were presented, offering valuable lessons. Insights from both successes and challenges were reviewed to inform and enhance future capacity-building efforts in urban development.

Left to Right: Dr. Alka Mittal, Dr. Sudhir Krishna (IAS, Retd.), Dr. Sameer Sharma (IAS, Retd.)

Key Takeaways

- India's trajectory towards economic growth is closely linked to urbanisation, making it crucial to enhance the operational efficiency of urban systems and provide essential services to residents, ensuring a higher quality of life.
- The benchmarks for assessing urban capacity require a comprehensive needs analysis that is contextualised and individualised, given the diversity of urban needs, a one-size-fits-all approach is ineffective. Solutions must be tailored to each ULB's specific requirements, with annual capacity-building plans developed based on each council's needs, supported by state-level capacity-building units alongside dynamic training programs adaptable to evolving urban needs.
- Municipalities face specialised, repetitive, and crisis-driven work, which calls for a year-long mentorship program to support sustained capacity-building efforts and adapt to changing economic landscapes. ULBs must take ownership of capacity-building, addressing institutional and service-level issues, with a broader focus on mindset transformation alongside funding.
- Training councillors should prioritise political engagement, emotional intelligence, and decision-making skills to ensure accountability and governance within ULBs, supporting better management of urban affairs.
- Sustainability in capacity building demands that traditional training methods evolve from simply teaching solutions to guiding participants on how to address local challenges, with a focus on mentoring, feedback, and case studies.

- The integration of AR and VR technologies, alongside field visits and site assessments, offers immersive learning environments, enhancing the capacity of urban local bodies (ULBs) through innovative and interactive training methods.

Conclusion

Data structures for councillors and officials must be developed to plan effectively for constituencies, as they are eager to adapt when provided with the right tools. A one-size-fits-all approach is unsuitable given the diverse needs across the country, especially in states with lower capacity income. Solutions must be tailored to the specific needs of each ULB. At the state level, a capacity-building unit should be established to understand and address the varying needs across departments. Training should be designed based on the council's requirements, with an annual capacity-building plan developed, ensuring the appointment of new officials according to the states' needs.

Snapshot of Plenary Session

About Speakers

Chair and Moderator

Dr. Sudhir Krishna (IAS, Retd.)

Former Secretary, MoUD

Dr. Sudhir Krishna is a former Indian Administrative Service officer (1977 Batch, Karnataka Cadre). He served the Government of India as Secretary (Urban Development), Additional Secretary & Special Secretary (Panchayati Raj), Joint Secretary (Fertilisers), Joint Secretary, Finance Commission and Sr. Dy. Director, LBSNAA, and the Government of Karnataka, as Principal Secretary (Public Works, Ports & Inland Water Transport), Metropolitan Commissioner, BMRDA, Commissioner of Commercial Taxes, Divisional Commissioner, Gulbarga, Deputy Commissioner, Dakshin Kannada, etc. Post superannuation from the IAS in 2014, he was appointed as Chairman of the Fifth Delhi Finance Commission during 2016- 2017 and as Insurance Ombudsman, Delhi during 2019- 2022. He chairs the Committee on Standards for Smart Cities of the Bureau of Indian Standards, where he is currently working on development of indicators for sustainable habitats - both urban and rural. He is also a National Resource Person for the Department of Personnel & Training on Leadership Skills. He is a Fellow & Life Member of the Indian Council of Arbitration, Delhi, the Indian Institute of Public Administration, Delhi, and the Institute for Social & Economic Change, Bengaluru.

Dr. Sameer Sharma (IAS, Retd.)

Former Chief Secretary, Government of Andhra Pradesh

Speaker

Dr. Sameer Sharma has served the government of Andhra Pradesh as Municipal Commissioner of Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam and Hyderabad. Later he became Principal Secretary, Urban Development of Andhra Pradesh. During 2014-17, he worked as the Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs, Government of India. He was the Mission Director of the India: Smart Cities Mission, AMRUT and the World Bank-supported urban capacity building program. He completely redesigned the CBUD programme, introducing practices to continuously modify course contents based on the feedback of learners, giving low dose and high frequency training, introducing site visits, making full use of all training resources in India. Having taught statistics and urban spatial structures to graduate students in the United States of America, he now builds the capacity of civil servants at the national and state academies in India as well as corporate executives joining public services. With his experiences, he has authored books titled, "Smart Cities Unbundled" and "A Textbook on Urban Planning and Geography" meant for teaching urban planning in India. He has been awarded for the best city for promotion of community organizations in slums (2014) by the President of India; certificates of appreciation for governance reforms and making outstanding efforts to enable Hyderabad to attain a slum-free status by the Prime Minister of India. Later, Janagriha gave him the V. Ramachandran Award for Excellence for urban decentralization in the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation.

Dr. Alka Mittal

Member-Administration, Capacity Building Commission

Speaker

Dr. Alka Mittal, Member (Administration) at the Capacity Building Commission, assumed office on May 31, 2024. She is the former CMD and Director (HR) of ONGC. She was also the Chairperson of ONGC Group of Companies. Dr. Mittal has the distinction of being the first woman to head ONGC. She also was the first ever woman Functional Director of ONGC in its history, when she assumed the charge of Director (HR) in 2018. She superannuated from the services of ONGC in August 2022 after an illustrious career spanning more than 37 years. Dr. Mittal is a postgraduate in Economics, MBA (HRM) and a Doctorate in Commerce and Business Studies in the specialized area of Corporate Governance. She is also a Non-Executive Director Diploma holder - Pearson SRF BTEC Level 7 Advanced Professional Diploma from FT, UK. Dr. Mittal has been placed in the Fortune Global Top Ten Women CEOs list in 2023 and is recipient of prestigious awards like Inspiring CEO of India Award, HR World Thought Leaders 2022 by Economic Times, Silver Stevie Award in the Woman of the Year category at the International Business Awards 2021 and many other recognitions.

Building Institutional Capacity for Sustainable Urban Governance

This session focused on critical strategies for institutional strengthening and capacity building to drive growth and innovation. Discussions centered on seven key themes: Leadership and Growth, Knowledge, Expertise, and Talent Development, Data-Driven Decision Making, Technology Integration and Innovation, Continuous Learning and Performance-Driven Training, and Capacity for Change and Implementation.

It emphasised the importance of growth-oriented leadership that proactively engages with stakeholders at all levels. Building a skilled talent pool through continuous learning and equipping the workforce to handle emerging trends were also identified as crucial. The Question and Answer session addressed the gap between ideal and existing situations, calling for practical strategies to bridge this divide. Participants highlighted the challenges of conducting training needs assessments in tier 2 and 3 cities due to limited capacity.

Left to Right:
Dr. Ajith Kaliyath, Shri. R Srinivas, Dr. Surendrakumar Bagde (IAS), Dr. Anuttama Dasgupta, Mr. Anand Iyer

Key Takeaways

- Leadership should be growth-oriented, open to engagement, and proactive in driving change. This includes collaborating with local authorities and relevant stakeholders at various levels to foster an environment conducive to growth and innovation.
- Strengthen institutional capabilities by building a skilled talent pool and fostering continuous learning. Equip the workforce to handle emerging trends, challenges, and the application of new knowledge, ensuring behavioral understanding to adapt effectively.
- Develop a robust data infrastructure to guide decision-making processes. Capturing, analysing, and utilising data effectively is key to scaling efforts, optimising services, and ensuring that institutions can act with evidence-based insights.

- Leverage technology to streamline operations, enhance service delivery, and improve accessibility. Fostering a culture of creativity and innovation within institutions ensures that they can go beyond traditional methods and meet the evolving needs of the population.
- Foster a culture of continuous learning by aligning training efforts with institutional goals. Focus on building contextual competence and ensuring that training is directly tied to measurable performance improvements, motivating practical application through incentives.
- Build the capacity to drive and sustain change within institutions. Align training with the goal of implementation, using clear goals and competencies to ensure that learning leads to tangible results. Data collection and feedback loops help assess and address capacity gaps, ensuring progress toward institutional objectives.
- The role of the private sector in capacity building was discussed, highlighting its importance due to limited government resources. Panelists agreed that private sector engagement is crucial for city building and promoting entrepreneurship. It was noted that although many have knowledge, there's a gap in its practical application. Leadership's role in institutional support and capacity building at all levels was emphasised, along with the need for adequate manpower.

Conclusion

The session emphasised a holistic approach to institutional strengthening, integrating leadership development, talent cultivation, data-driven decision-making, technological innovation, continuous learning, and a focus on implementation. Addressing the challenges identified, particularly regarding capacity gaps in smaller cities and leveraging private sector expertise, will be critical for achieving sustainable growth and building resilient, future-ready institutions. The actionable strategies discussed, including the formulation of LAPs and a commitment to bridging the gap between knowledge and practice, provide a strong foundation for moving forward.

About Speakers

Chair and Moderator

Dr Surendrakumar Bagde (IAS)
Director General, National Centre for Good Governance (NCGG)

Dr. Surendrakumar Bagde has spent more than 31 years in the Indian Administrative Service. In his extensive career, he has promoted domestic & foreign direct investment in various sectors in the State of Maharashtra and was involved in the formulation of the State's policies for Information Technology and Biotechnology sectors at Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation. In his last stint in BEST, he has led initiatives of bringing in new models of bus operations and technology induction that has resulted in a complete transformation of bus operations in Mumbai. While working for the Government of India, Dr. Bagde worked on the formulation of a national strategy on bilateral economic cooperation with countries like the USA, Japan, and Canada. He has held the post of Additional Secretary, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India. He holds a degree in Electrical Engineering from VJTI, Mumbai, a degree in Industrial Engineering from IIM, Mumbai, and a PhD in Applied Economics and Management from Carnegie Mellon University, USA. His research has appeared in the American Economic Review and the American Sociological Review.

Speaker

Dr Ajith Kaliyath

Urban Chair Professor, KILA

Prof. Dr. Ajith Kaliyath is the Urban Chair Professor at Kerala Institute of Local Administration, Kerala. He is an urban and regional planner and has received British Chevening Scholarship for Young Indian Environmental Managers (2006) and Overseas Research Scholarship (2008) for PhD from the Government of UK. In the 25 years of his experience past, he served the State and Central Pollution Control Boards, Ministry of Environment and Forests and Climate Change, Government of India, German International Cooperation (GIZ), NIUA, Government of India, School of Planning and Development, Sushant University and a few private sector organisations. In his role as the Urban Chair Professor and head of Centre for Urban Governance at KILA, he has been entrusted with the task of academic support for the Kerala Urban Policy Commission. He is also the Convener of the 'Task Force on Digital Urban Planning and Governance' established by NIT Calicut, (a Centre for Excellence recognised by MoHUA) based on the recommendation of the Kerala Urban Policy Commission. Apart from steering the policy and urban planning activities at KILA, he is also responsible for designing and delivering training for the Urban Local Governments.

Speaker

Dr Anuttama Dasgupta

Independent Expert

Dr. Anuttama Dasgupta is an urban development and design expert specializing in capacity building, institution development and sustainable growth. Formerly, she led the Urban Practitioners' Programme at IIHS which collectively designed and delivered capacity building programmes for over 15000 learners in the past 9 years. Since 2016, she has worked extensively on MoHUA's Integrated Capacity Building Programme and designed CB frameworks and programmes for a diverse set of organizations including MoRTH, the DoPT, DTCP - Tamil Nadu, TPVD - Maharashtra, GIZ, NLSIU and most recently, an ADB funded TOD study for the Bangalore Metro.

Beyond facilitating urban learning, she is deeply interested in the training of trainers. She was responsible for setting up the Capacity Development Forum at IIHS which is a knowledge repository and community of practice for CB practitioners. Her most recent publication is a guideline for using AI tools for designing SMART Learning Outcomes.

Speaker

Mr. Anand Iyer

Chief Policy and Insights Officer, and Head- Organisation Development, Janaagraha

Anand Iyer is Chief Policy & Insights Officer at Janaagraha. Over the last 24 years, he has worked across State & Central Govt. in Urban Development; Private sector & Consulting in Land, Infrastructure and Building; Academia and Practice in Architecture & Design, and now a Civil Society Organization in Urban Governance and citizenship. Anand works on growth & strategy for organizations, developing policy, programs and projects. His core areas are Urban Affairs, Land Development and Climate Action. He was earlier Chief Project Manager at the National Institute of Urban Affairs, New Delhi (Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs); AGM, Strategy & Planning at Aspen Infrastructures, Pune (Suzlon Family Group). He is an architect from CEPT University, Ahmedabad and has studied Critical Theory from Nottingham University, England. With a passion for History and the Humanities, he inquires into the Social, Political & Ideological perspectives that inform Development.

Speaker

Shri. R Srinivas

Former Town and Country Planner, Town And Country Planning Organisation (TCPO)

R Srinivas is a former Town and Country Planner in Town and Country Planning Organization with an experience of more than three decades. He completed Post Graduation in Urban and Regional Planning from IIT Kharagpur and Professional Masters in Urban Planning and Management from ITC Netherlands. He headed the Metropolitan and Union Territories Division. Presently, he is engaged as Urban Planning expert with ADB Transit Oriented Development Cell, Institute of Urban Transport, MoHUA. He has been nominated as Secretary, Institute of Urban Transport for 2024-2026. He worked in the preparation of URDPFI, 2014 and Model Building Bye-Laws, 2016. He has assisted the High Level committee on Urban Planning towards the preparation of Report I&II, 2024. He has represented the MoHUA as Director in the Board of Directors of Smart City Ahmedabad Development Limited (2015-2022), various Committees viz., Inter ministerial Committee on RADPFI Guidelines, National Coastal Zone Management Authority, MOEFCC, and Thematic Working Group on Space Cooling of India-Cooling Action Plan. He has also worked on Development Control Rules and General Buildings Requirements for National Building Code, 2015 and CED 59: Development Standards for Smart Cities of the Bureau of Indian Standards. He has been very proactive on the professional front being Secretary, Delhi Regional Chapter, ITPI (2003-05) and Co-Chairman, Evaluation Committee; ITPI (2006 -2024). He has 35 publications to his credit.

Capacity Building for Citizen-centric Governance

The session focused on the critical importance of citizen-centric governance in today's rapidly changing world, emphasising the need for government actions to reflect the needs and aspirations of communities. Aligned with the vision for India 2047, the discussion highlights key principles of participative, transparent, effective, efficient, and responsive governance, fostering people's participation ('Jan Bhagidari') and a sense of duty ('kartavya'). Simple, practical solutions are often more effective than complex technological interventions. Leveraging low-cost, high-impact tools that are accessible to all stakeholders can lead to more sustainable, citizen-friendly outcomes. The session explored five pillars essential to achieving this vision: redefining governance in the digital era through advanced technologies, building institutional capacity for future challenges, leveraging transformative digital tools for innovation, strengthening participatory governance mechanisms for equitable policymaking, and integrating sustainability into urban systems to build resilience.

Left to Right:
Dr. Anshuman Karol, Smt. A Mona Sreenivas (IAS), Shri. Gopal Prasad, Mr. Jagan Shah, Dr. Laghu Parashar

Key Takeaways

- Efforts to prioritise citizen participation in planning and implementation must be strengthened to address the diverse needs of various groups, including slum dwellers and affluent residents. Transparency and feedback mechanisms foster a sense of ownership and trust.
- Digital tools like online tax systems and apps have improved service delivery, but challenges such as digital illiteracy and inconsistent usability prevent their full potential from being realised. Building awareness and trust is crucial for technology adoption.
- Overlapping responsibilities among multiple agencies create inefficiencies. A unified framework or single-window system can improve accountability, simplify governance processes, and enhance citizen engagement.
- Junior officials and sanitation workers play a key role in urban service delivery but often lack adequate training and resources. Capacity-building programmes and decision-making authority can enhance their efficiency.

- Active engagement from Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs), commercial groups, and local stakeholders enhances service management. Providing training, incentives, and structured participation models can improve urban governance.
- Planning must prioritise the needs of diverse users, including women, senior citizens, and vulnerable groups, rather than relying solely on numerical projections. Behavioral insights can help create more inclusive and effective transit systems.
- Aggregating and sharing reliable data enables informed policymaking, while shifting from input-based to outcome-focused evaluations improves governance effectiveness and long-term urban planning.
- A structured approach combining participatory platforms, digital tools, skilled professionals, inclusive policies, and transparent processes is essential to ensure responsive and citizen-friendly governance.

Conclusion

The session emphasised the need for innovative approaches to strengthen citizen-government relations, promoting participatory governance. It highlighted the importance of accessible platforms for citizen engagement, empowering officials and representatives to communicate initiatives effectively. Technology was noted as key to building trust, inclusivity, and accessibility, especially for marginalized communities. The session also stressed enhancing institutional capacity for adaptive governance, integrating digital tools to improve transparency, efficiency, and citizen-centred decision-making, ensuring fair consultation and fostering trust between governments and communities.

About Speakers

Shri. Gopal Prasad
Economic Adviser (Housing–II,LSG & UD), MoHUA

Shri Gopal Prasad is a distinguished Indian Economic Service (IES) officer with extensive experience in various governmental roles. He completed his undergraduate studies in Economics from St. Xavier's College, Ranchi, in 1994, followed by a Master's degree in Economics from the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Pune, in 1997. He served as a Deputy Director in the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation from September 2003 to December 2007, and later as a Director in the Ministry of Railways until March 2010. His expertise led him to the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, where he continued to contribute as a Deputy Secretary. In August 2015, he was appointed as Director of the 15th Finance Commission of India and subsequently took on advisory roles in the Ministry of Labour & Employment and the Heavy Water Board under the Department of Atomic Energy. As of September 2024, Gopal is serving as an Adviser in the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.

Smt. A Mona Sreenivas (IAS)
Commissioner, Faridabad Municipal Corporation

Smt. A. Mona Sreenivas is an IAS officer of 2006 batch of Haryana cadre and is presently posted as Additional Resident Commissioner of Haryana Bhawan in New Delhi. She has also been assigned additional charges of the offices of Commissioner, Municipal Corporation, Faridabad and Chief Executive Officer of Sonipat Metropolitan Development Authority.

Mr. Jagan Shah

CEO, The Infravision Foundation

Jagan Shah is the CEO of The Infravision Foundation. His previous roles include Senior Adviser (Capacity Building) at The World Bank and Senior Infrastructure Adviser in the UK's Department for International Development. As Director, National Institute of Urban Affairs, he co-created the Smart Cities Mission and incubated centres for digital governance, sanitation and climate adaptation. He has designed AfD's 'City Investments to Innovate Integrate and Sustain' program and CDRI's Infrastructure for Resilient Island States facility and led the preparation of the Draft Master Plan for Delhi 2041. Shah studied architectural design and history, theory; criticism in New Delhi, Cincinnati and New York.

Dr. Anshuman Karol

Lead- Governance & Climate Action, PRIA

Dr. Anshuman Karol is currently working as the Lead – Governance and Climate Action in PRIA. He has 24 years of experience in Decentralised Governance, Citizen Participation, Community Development, Participatory Research & Evaluation and Capacity Building and Training. He has successfully managed a diverse portfolio of projects on rural and urban governance and climate action. He has extensively worked with elected representatives and officials of Panchayati Raj Institutions, Municipalities, and diverse communities. He has provided advisory support to several ministries of Govt. of India, various state governments, and statutory institutions like State Finance Commissions. He has supervised and prepared capacity-building and training materials on various aspects of decentralisation, urbanisation etc. He is a certified Mentor on Community-Based Research under the Knowledge for Change (K4C) Consortium, an initiative of the UNESCO Chair in Community-Based Research & Social Responsibility in Higher Education led by PRIA and the University of Victoria, Canada. He is a PhD in Social Sciences (Economics).

Dr. Laghu Parashar

Senior Transport Specialist, The World Bank Group

Dr. Laghu Parashar manages the lending and knowledge portfolio for urban and electric mobility in India. His responsibilities include overseeing various development projects at both national and sub-national levels, focusing on policy development, regulatory frameworks, institutional strengthening, capacity building, and innovative financing. With over two decades of experience, Dr. Parashar has been involved in the planning, design, structuring, and implementation of sustainable transportation projects, policies, schemes and reforms. In his previous role as the project lead for urban and electric mobility at GIZ India, he assisted states and cities in various aspects of sustainable mobility. Dr. Parashar holds a degree in civil engineering, a postgraduate degree in transport planning, and a doctorate from the School of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi, India. He has served as the Honorary Secretary of the Institute of Urban Transport (IUT) in India and is also associated with planning institutions as a guest faculty and member of the Board of Reviews.

Building Capacities of Urban Officials for Digital Governance

The session explored the critical need to enhance the digital competencies of municipal officials for effective urban governance. The discussion focused on how technology can be leveraged as a catalyst for transparency, efficiency, and innovation in service delivery. It emphasised the importance of continuous digital capacity building to adapt to rapidly evolving technological landscapes. The session discussed examples to showcase the positive impact of digital tools on urban governance and public service delivery.

Left to Right: Mr. Manish Sharma, Mr. Vasant Rao, Dr. Debjani Ghosh, Mr. Gautham Ravichander, Mr. Vikas Aggarwal

Key Takeaways

- Technology should be used as an enabler to drive efficiency, transparency, and innovation in governance.
- Continuous digital capacity building through flexible and on-demand learning opportunities is essential for evolving technological landscapes.
- Digital and data skills are necessary for smarter decision-making, seamless collaboration, and improved governance outcomes.
- Effective capacity building requires matching resources with local realities and creating flexible, city-specific systems. Localized technology solutions are crucial to addressing city-specific challenges and improving governance systems.
- Collaborative platforms like NULP and Mastercard's "City Possible" promote best practice sharing and foster a learning culture among city stakeholders.
- Open-source platforms like UPYOG and UMEED help standardize service delivery, enhance transparency, and monitor urban service delivery more effectively.

Conclusion

Building the capacity of municipal officials is critical for establishing an efficient e-governance model supported by data governance. It is essential that capacity development initiatives begin at the grassroots level to ensure inclusivity and effectiveness.

By providing simple, user-friendly, and open-source digital platforms, urban governance systems can be made more accessible, reducing the administrative burden on officials and improving public service delivery. The focus on local context, resource allocation, and eliminating inefficiencies helps streamline processes, saving time and improving overall governance. Technology should continue to be a powerful enabler, ensuring the adoption of inclusive, efficient, and sustainable urban governance systems that contribute to long-term urban development goals.

About Speakers

Dr. Debjani Ghosh

NULP Team Lead, National Institute of Urban Affairs

Debjani Ghosh is a social scientist with a Masters and PhD in Planning with over 20 years of professional experience in the field of development planning. Presently working as Associate Professor, National Institute of Urban Affairs, New Delhi, she leads the projects related to sustainable urbanisation, capacity building and data driven decision making. Her interest and core area of work has been to engage with stakeholders working in knowledge exchange, data processes and evidence-based planning. Most of her research aims to influence change in urban policies and practice and engage with those working towards furthering the agenda of transforming the urban landscape.

Mr. Vasant Rao

Former Joint Commissioner, Commercial Taxes Dept, & BBMP

Civil Servant of the Karnataka State Government: Served for 35 years in various senior capacities across multiple departments including: Commercial Taxes Department, Social Welfare Department, Tax Reforms Commission, Industries and Commerce, Urban Development Department, Bruhath Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), and Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited. While at BBMP -Head the Finance (Resources) wing of the Bangalore City Corporation and was responsible for implementing fiscal reforms in tax and non-tax revenues. He designed the Optional Self-assessment scheme in the year 2000 and also the mandatory Self-assessment scheme in the year 2007. Was also the Member Secretary for BATF (Bangalore Agenda Task Force) and convener for ABIDe (Agenda for Bangalore Infrastructure and Development Task Force). The Karnataka State Government constituted both these civil societies for a comprehensive city planning and for improving municipal services.

Mr. Gautham Ravichander

Director – Policy & Advocacy, eGov Foundation

Gautham leads eGov's policy initiatives with the Government of India and partner states. He started his career at Janaagraha where he led the Ward Infrastructure Index Program and was a founding team member of The Education Alliance. Gautham has a MIB degree from The Fletcher School at Tufts University where his studies focussed on social enterprises and leveraging business models to reach underserved populations.

Mr. Vikas Aggarwal

Partner, Technology Consulting, Ernst & Young LLP

Vikas is a Partner in Consulting Services at EY India, where he leads the firm's initiatives in Smart Cities Technologies, Digital Infrastructure, and Education. With over 25 years of core consulting experience, Vikas has worked extensively in the field of Smart Cities, both in India and internationally. His expertise spans Urban Transformation, ICT; Mobility Platforms, Government Advisory, National and State-Level Program Management, and Infrastructure Projects. Vikas has significant experience in process improvement and designing government processes for a wide range of public sector clients across various domains. He is currently spearheading transformative projects across multiple cities within a state, focusing on Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) and Smart Cities. His efforts are aimed at driving reforms, enhancing efficiency in urban infrastructure, improving service delivery mechanisms, and ensuring greater accountability of ULBs toward citizens.

Mr. Manish Sharma

Product Manager, NUDM, NIUA

Manish Sharma is the Product Manager for the National Urban Digital Mission's Urban Platform for deliverY of Online Governance (UPYOG), with over 16+ years of experience in enterprise architecture, cloud computing, and agile transformation. With a strong background in technology leadership, he has successfully guided numerous organizations in modernizing their digital infrastructure and adopting cloud-native solutions.

Manish specializes in strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, and leading cross-functional teams to drive innovation and deliver impactful results. His expertise extends to developing scalable, efficient, and future-ready technology solutions for complex business challenges.

He has been instrumental in enabling digital transformation across industries, ensuring seamless integration of emerging technologies to foster business growth. A dedicated mentor and continuous learner, Manish focuses on fostering innovation, driving digital transformation, and enabling sustainable growth in an ever-evolving technological landscape.

VALEDICTORY

The valedictory session of the "Capacity for Change" event provided a platform for comprehensive discussion on urban transformation, capacity building, and innovative practices under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA). The event celebrated achievements in urban governance and unveiled multiple key initiatives aimed at fostering sustainable and inclusive urban development.

Launches

The session included several major announcements and the launch of critical publications and tools to advance urban planning and governance:

Hon'ble Minister of State with Joint Secretary, MoHUA, Director (NULM-II), MoHUA and Director (AC), NIUA launching NIUA and MoHUA initiatives

E-module on Form-based Codes

The course is developed based on the FBC guidebooks as an instrument to achieve the urban transformation agenda initiated by the Government of India. It provides tools to implement the Form Based Codes (FBC) approach for Indian cities - the Character Based Area Layout Plan (CBALP), Urban Form Regulation (UFR) unique to corresponding CBALP and Property Development Cards (PDC) for improving public realm by meeting the demands of live-work-recreate, safety, sustainability and resilience, including brownfield areas.

Link to the course: https://nulp.niua.org/webapp/joinCourse?do_11422330454242099211

National Outcome Report for the Smart Cities Mission

The 100 smart cities are developing 8000 multi sectoral projects. With more than 92% projects completed, this document compiles the outcomes and outcomes of the mission projects, across three core objectives; Liveability, Economic ability and Sustainability.

Launch of E-modules on Form-based Codes

Cybersecurity Handbook for Smart Cities

The handbook details over 10 cyberattacks and features more than 10 case studies on cybercrimes, offering insights on mitigation through a four-layer cybersecurity framework for urban environments. It highlights the significance of audits across four key parameters and the adoption of best practices to strengthen urban cybersecurity.

City Innovation Exchange (CIX): Compendium of Success Stories

The CIX Compendium highlights 15+ transformative innovations by startups addressing 11 critical urban challenges. The key lessons and best practices shared is to promote scalable and impactful solutions for urban transformation.

Transforming Cities: An ICCC Use Case Playbook

This Playbook highlights 30+ practical use cases across 12 sectors, demonstrating how ICCCs are transforming urban governance. It draws insights from 100 smart cities to inspire replicable solutions across other cities, thus amplifying ICCC adoption and impact nationwide.

Compendium on 'Vibrant Public Spaces: 50+ Water & Parkscapes from India's Smart Cities Mission'

The compendium captures unique riverfronts, lakefronts, parks and plaza projects that balance environmental needs with the recreation needs of citizens. Learnings from successes and limitations of these projects will help other cities as they develop public spaces.

Launch of Compendium on 'Vibrant Public Spaces'

Special Address
Shri Tokhan Sahu, Hon'ble Minister of State, Housing And Urban Affairs, Government of India

The Honorable Minister Sh. Tokhan Sahu, outlined a forward-looking vision for urban transformation:

- Recounted historical milestones in urban development, from early excavations to modern smart city innovations
- Envisioned cities in 2047 as engines of development, emphasizing equality, inclusivity, and resilience
- Highlighted the importance of capacity building as the foundation for sustainable urban ecosystems
- Encouraged the expansion of initiatives like the Urban Learnathon to engage more participants in skill development

Hon'ble Minister of State, Housing And Urban Affairs addressing the audience

OUTCOMES OF THE EVENT

The event's success was marked by its ability to highlight the urgent need for innovative capacity building in navigating the complexities of evolving urban challenges.

The nation-wide challenge 'अrban Learnathon 2.0' launched by the Hon'ble Union Minister, MoHUA is currently underway and is gathering local solutions and good practices from urban local bodies, academic partners, and industry leaders in India. The idea is to encourage innovative solutions for on-ground urban challenges and foster collaboration between government officials, academic institutions and industry experts. With the wider participation categories, the challenge is set to create a repository of diversified solutions and learning resources for urban officials.

The event's success has directly contributed to the integration of NULP with Mission Karmayogi as the urban arm of the iGOT platform for capacity building, after the launch of the new version of NULP with additional features. This integration will allow a novel approach resulting in highly personalised, focused and demand driven skill enhancement for each municipal official.

ANNEXURE
Agenda

Sr. No.	Time	Session Name	Session Description	Speakers
1	09:30 AM - 10:30 AM	Registration		
2	10:30 AM - 11:15 AM	Inaugural	1. Welcome Address	Dr Debolina Kundu, Director (AC), NIUA
			2. Lighting the lamp	All dignitaries
			3. Introduction and Context Setting	Shri Rahul Kapoor, JS - DAY-NULM, PM-SVANidhi and SCM MoHUA
			4. Key Launches of NIUA and MoHUA • Launch: अrban Learnathon 2.0 • Short Video: NULP • Launch of publication: Towards a more efficient and equitable property tax system • Launch of publication: Compendium of Case studies in Nature based Solutions (UrbanShift, NIUA) • Launch of publication: Pathways for Mainstreaming Urban Climate Actions - Discussion Paper	Shri Manohar Lal Khattar, Hon'ble Union Minister of Housing And Urban Affairs
			5. Keynote Address	Shri Manohar Lal Khattar, Hon'ble Union Minister of Housing And Urban Affairs
3	11:15 AM - 11:30 AM	Tea / Coffee		
4	11:30 AM - 12:30 PM	Plenary	Capacity Building as a Catalyst for Sustainable Urban Transformation: Lessons Learnt and Good Practices	• Dr Sameer Sharma (IAS, Retd.), Former Chief Secretary, Government of Andhra Pradesh • Dr Alka Mittal, Member-Administration, Capacity Building Commission • Dr Sudhir Krishna, (IAS, Retd.) Former Secretary, MoUD **[Chair & Moderator]**
5	12:30 PM - 1:30 PM	Session 1	Building Institutional Capacity for Sustainable Urban Governance	• Dr Ajith Kaliyath, Urban Chair Professor, KILA • Dr Anuttama Dasgupta, Independent Expert • Mr Anand Iyer, Chief Policy and Insights Officer, and Head- Organisation Development, Janaagraha • Shri R Srinivas, Former Town and Country Planner, Town And Country Planning Organisation (TCPO) • Dr Surendrakumar Bagde (IAS), Director General, National Centre for Good Governance (NCGG) **[Chair & Moderator]**

Sr. No.	Time	Session Name	Session Description	Speakers
6	1:30 PM - 2:30 PM	Lunch		
7	2:30 PM - 3:30 PM	Session 2	Capacity Building for Citizen-centric Governance	• Smt A Mona Sreenivas (IAS), Commissioner, Faridabad Municipal Corporation • Mr Jagan Shah, CEO, The Infravision Foundation • Dr Anshuman Karol, Lead- Governance & Climate Action, PRIA • Dr Laghu Parashar, Senior Transport Specialist, The World Bank Group • Shri Gopal Prasad, Economic Adviser (Housing–II,LSG & UD), MoHUA **[Chair & Moderator]**
8	3:30 PM - 4:30 PM	Session 3	Building Capacities of Urban Officials for Digital Governance	• Mr Vasant Rao, Former Joint Commissioner, Commercial Taxes Dept, & BBMP • Mr Vikas Aggarwal, Partner, Technology Consulting, Ernst & Young • Mr Gautham Ravichander, Director – Policy & Advocacy, eGov Foundation • Mr Manish Sharma, Product Manager, NUDM, NIUA • Dr Debjani Ghosh, NULP Team Lead, NIUA [Chair & Moderator]
9	4:30 PM - 5:15 PM	Valedictory	1. Summarising the learnings and way forward	Dr Debjani Ghosh, NULP Team Lead, NIUA
			2. Key Launches of NIUA and MoHUA • Course: E-module on Form-based Codes • Publication: Transforming Cities: An ICCC Use Case Playbook • Publication: Cybersecurity Handbook for Smart Cities • Publication: City Innovation eXchange (CiX) - Compendium of Success Stories • Publication: National Outcome Report of Smart Cities Mission • Publication: Vibrant Public Spaces - 50+ Water and Parkscapes from India's Smart Cities Mission	Shri Tokhan Sahu, Hon'ble Minister of State, Housing And Urban Affairs
			3. Special Address	Shri Tokhan Sahu, Hon'ble Minister of State, Housing And Urban Affairs
			4. Closing Remarks	Shri Rahul Kapoor, JS - DAY-NULM, PM-SVANidhi and SCM MoHUA
			5. Vote of Thanks	Dr Debolina Kundu, Director (AC), NIUA
10	5:15 PM Onwards	Tea / Coffee		