

(i) National Institute of Urban Affairs: Objectives and Functions etc.

National Institute of Urban Affairs

In recent years a growing volume of surveys, research studies and other literature on urbanisation and its various facets, has been put forth by geographers, sociologists and economists as well as technical and professional groups such as engineers, town-planners, architects, transport specialists, sanitarians and the like. Practically every discipline in the areas of social sciences and technology has been drawn into this field of study of the modern manifestations of life pointing to the expansion of human needs and the resultant complexities of growth. The over-all impact of all these researches on the quality of human environment and on planning and policy formulation has, at best, been marginal. The policymakers and the executive organs charged with the management of urban affairs, look upon the available results of research as largely academic, providing little guidance for informed decision making in dealing with practical issues and field problems. This may be ascribed, among others, to the following factors:

(a) Urban studies are obviously multi-disciplinary. As a corollary they require an inter-disciplinary approach—a meeting ground if not fusion of different expertise—which rarely takes place. Studies are taken up in an ad hoc manner without much inter-relationship. Urban research requires continuity and integration for practical application.

(b) Even when individual research findings are useful, pertinent and of high quality from the academic and technical angles, there is hardly any attempt at coordinating and translating the results into research utilisation for meaningful action programmes.

(c) There is hardly any interaction and dialogue between researchers and the technical experts and managers of Planning and Development Authorities to ensure policy and problem oriented research as an aid to decision-making by the Government and local development authorities.

(d) Often the research patterns and study designs are based on experiences, thought processes and perspectives of the western industrialised societies. There are principles enunciated and, policies and programmes adopted by them, which may either, have become obsolete or may be inapplicable to our conditions. Some approaches, norms and standards may seem ideal but unsuited for immediate integration into a given environment. For instance, often the rural context may remain neglected. Not enough consideration is given to the inhabitants of the country: their roots, history and culture, ways of living, customs and traditions, their ability to solve their own problems with their limited means and the know-how inherited from their ancestors.

The Government of India had in view, for sometime, the question of promoting an organisation that could bridge the gap between researchers and practitioners in the field of urban and rural integrated planning and development. In November 1975, the Ministry of Works and Housing, after obtaining the views of some

organisations and knowledgeable persons in various meetings, took the decision that an autonomous body to be name as the National Institute of Urban Affairs be set up with the support and commitment of the Government of India and with participation of the State Governments, urban and regional development authorities and other agencies interested in urban affairs.

The Institute was thus registered as a society under the Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860 on January 12, 1976.

Objectives and Tasks

It is envisaged that the proposed Institute would cover all important issues concerning urban and rural environment, assist policy makers in evolving suitable solutions to the problems faced by them and make available to the national and state governments and other authorities, critical and objective analysis of the urban and rural situation in the regional setting. It is felt that there should be a machinery to formulate objective strategies and action plans, induct studies in various existing institutions, coordinate the results of such studies and researches and advise the Government and public agencies in the application of research so conducted. The National Institute would thus be a high level body consisting of academics as well as those in charge of policy-making and programme implementation, so that the results of research can be given practical shape. The Institute will promote continuing action research on different aspects of urban-rural development in the context of the national five-year plans.

The Institute's task system will focus on the human factor—the people, the communities and their habitat. The impact of technology and the compulsions of livelihood that drive the rural folk to live in an environment alien to their culture, habits, values and attitudes require careful study and analysis to secure a smooth transition and adjustment rather than confrontation with the urban environment. Modern technology has to be harnessed to promote healthy surroundings and better liveability. It is not technology that creates pollution but the manner in which it is exploited and the ends it is required to sub-serve Urban environment has to be attuned to the needs of the people, to serve the ends of justice and to provide, the necessary opportunities for the growth and development of human personality, particularly of the rural and the urban poor—as reflected in the 20-point programme of the Prime Minister.

The immediate tasks of the Institute may broadly be outlined as:

(1) the preparation of a comprehensive frame of reference for policy and programme oriented urban research in India. This implies identification of different areas of research and training programmes taken up so far by existing agencies with a view to ascertain relevant gaps and accord priorities for programmes to be undertaken;

(2) coordinating research and promotion of effective utilisation of the results of studies and researches in their application to field problems; relating research to the practical problems of urban areas; and action research for programme formulation and implementation;

(3) projecting the perspectives of integrated rural-urban planning and development to the general public and the decision makers—both administrative and legislative—and also providing the necessary forum by arranging seminars and workshops and other means, for an objective discussion with a view to evolve policies and programmes for meeting the new challenges;

(4) collection, analysis and dissemination of information and intelligence on rural urban processes through various communication channels including the publication of a journal; and the gradual development of a documentation centre.

Urban studies today extend over a wide-ranging field of various disciplines concerned with the total human environment. There is shortage of trained and experienced research personnel in the different specialised fields of urban affairs. No organisation can hope to have as large and varied a faculty as could handle all the facets of human settlements. The Institute will therefore, be organised on rather unconventional lines with a modest core research staff with emphasis on bringing together like minded intellectuals and practitioners—academic institutions and field agencies—to generate new ideas and promote fresh innovative thinking in dealing with problems of integrated rural-urban planning and development.

The Institute will aim at 'pooling of expertise' enlisting the cooperation of existing active institutions and specialised agencies in the country as well as individual specialists. Research studies identified by the Institute after due consultations, will be entrusted to high ranking experts and inter-disciplinary specialists' teams for high level scrutiny and advice. A feature of the functioning of the Institute will be not only cooperation but close association and participation of senior administrative and technical officials of Government and urban authorities in:

- (a) identification of tasks and areas for study;
- (b) the conduct of problem oriented research; and
- (c) evolving workable programmes and projects.

The Study Panels and Working Groups will ensure interaction between academics, professionals and experienced officials; thus ensuring realism and objectivity in the task system of the Institute.

In brief, the Institute is expected to study factors that go to make for happy liveability of man in a congenial environment in rural and urban settings. It will be the endeavour of the Institute to involve knowledgeable and devoted persons to achieve these ends and to mobilise its individual and corporate members to assist in the stupendous task ahead.

The functions as laid down in the Memorandum of Association of the Institute are as under:

- (a) to act as an autonomous scientific and research organisation to undertake, promote and coordinate studies in urbanisation, rural-urban

relationship, administration, environment and technology pertaining to human settlements and urban and regional development in India;

- (b) to act as a centre for advanced study of urban problems and to provide and promote the necessary training and research facilities;
- (c) to initiate and assist in developing suitable policies and programmes pertaining to the problems of urban development and allied fields by the Central, State and Local Governments as well as private and public sector undertakings;
- (d) To study social, administrative and financial and other aspects of the implementation of various plans for urban development vis-à-vis policies and in different regions;
- (e) to act as an agency for strengthening the interaction on urban affairs between the Government and the people, local authorities, legislature, and members of academic, industrial and business communities;
- (f) to mobilise available expertise in the field of urban affairs and to offer and coordinate technical and consultancy services with or without payment of remuneration as necessary;
- (g) to establish and maintain libraries and to act as a clearing house of information, operate a documentation centre and disseminate information on urban affairs;
- (h) to undertake, facilitate, publish and distribute newsletters, research papers, books, periodicals, journals, bulletins, pamphlets, monographs, posters and other literature pertaining to urban affairs;
- (i) to organise and facilitate study courses, conferences, seminars, lectures, research and investigations in matters pertaining to urbanisation, urban environment and urban development and administration;
- (j) to constitute or cause to be constituted or give affiliation to regional, state or local centres to promote the purposes of the Institute;
- (k) to appoint, if it deems fit, delegates to represent the Institute at conferences in which the Institute is interested in India and abroad;
- (l) to accept any grants, gifts, donations and subscriptions whether in cash or securities and of any property either movable or immovable;
- (m) to accept the management of any trust fund or endowment with objects identical, analogous or comparable to the objects of the Institute;
- (n) to borrow or raise money as may be required for the purposes of the Institute upon, securities, bonds, debentures, promissory notes or other obligations or securities of the Institute or otherwise or by mortgage or charge on the property of the institute;

- (o) to acquire by gift, purchase, exchange, lease, hire, or otherwise, any lands, buildings, or other immovable property together with all rights appertaining thereto for the purposes of the Institute;
- (p) to construct and maintain buildings for furtherance of the objects of the Institute including the right to alter, equip and improve the same;
- (q) to manage, sell, transfer, mortgage, lease, exchange or otherwise dispose of, any and all properties of the Institute movable and immovable;
- (r) to hire or appoint full or part time employees to carry out the work of the Institute, and to provide for emoluments, allowances and service benefits as may be determined by bye-laws made in this behalf;
- (s) to carry out all such other things as are conducive or incidental to the attainment of the objects of the above mentioned objects of the Institute.