



EDITORIAL

While the earlier half of 2015 would be remembered for of some of the most promising national initiatives unveiled for cities by the Ministry of Urban Development (MoUD), Government of India, namely the Smart Cities Mission, Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT), National Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana (HRIDAY) and last but not the least, Housing for All; the second half of 2015 is noticeable for several global initiatives that pose to hold substantial influence on local developmental issues particular to urban environment, planning and governance.

The world leaders convened for the UN Sustainable Development Summit due from 25-27 September at New York to decide for the post-2015 development agenda, commonly known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The agenda is supposed to take a lead from the recently concluded Millennium Development Goals that aroused a popular movement for poverty alleviation, health, education, gender equality, AIDS prevention amongst others, particularly in the developing world. The SDGs are meant for sustainable development of the entire humankind within the planetary boundaries. They bear some new themes like affordable energy, sustainable economic growth, industrialization, climate change and its impacts, marine resources, terrestrial ecosystems, inclusive and just societies, global partnerships and aims to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (Goal 11), commonly known as the *Cities Goal* or the *Urban SDGs*.

The inclusion of the urban theme in the global development narrative affirms the message of Dr. Joan Clos, Executive Director of UN-Habitat: "Our struggle for global sustainability will be won or lost in cities". It could be reasoned with credible evidence in support. As per the 2014 revision of the World Urbanization Prospects, the world population living in urban areas today (54%) exceeds the rural folk for the first time in the human history. By various estimates, they contribute to 70% of the global economy, over 60% of the global energy consumption, 70% of the greenhouse gas emissions and 70% of global waste. Continuing population growth and urbanization are projected to add 2.5 billion people to the world's urban population by 2050, with nearly 90 per cent of the increase concentrated in Asia and Africa.

By 2050, India is projected to add 404 million urban dwellers, China 292 million and Nigeria 212 million. Across the globe, cities and towns of various size and function will create an unprecedented demand of fossil-carbon to fuel national economies. As the world urbanizes



further, the 21st century poses a serious challenge in tinkering the global inequities in access and allocation of carbon. Traditionally, disparities were evaluated and negotiated from purely economic or 'state of development' perspective. Empirical research plotting carbon emission of over 200 nations/territories against a spatial framework suggests that existing dualities in the international climate change governance, evident in the so called global 'North-South' economic divide, has a stronger component of 'Urban-Rural' spatial disparity in the making, which is likely to further precipitate into a much local but complex dynamic, particularly relevant to the developing world, that face the double challenge of rapid urbanization and environmental sustainability.

Going by the widespread consultation process followed through the Open Working Groups during the SDG preparation, the acceptance of the *Cities Goal* draft was duly expected. But we need to acknowledge that its interpretation and application to various countries and regions would vary according to their local circumstances. In the past, nations have also overwhelmingly agreed to Habitat I (1976) and Habitat II (1996). Now, they are in the process of reassuring their commitments towards a newly revamped agenda for cities and settlements called as the New Urban Agenda as a part of Habitat III to be convened by UN Habitat in Quito, Ecuador, from 17 – 20 October 2016. Habitat III will be the first UN global summit pertaining to settlements after the adoption of the Post-2015 Development Agenda and also the new climate change deal, the *Paris Agreement* fostered at the UNFCCC COP21 in Paris on 7-8 December 2015. It would be interesting to see how the proposed NUA would bridge urbanization and environment, and in the process substantively and operationally complement the Urban SDGs.

Urban experts, policy makers and the community in general should probe such intermingling issues, with a focus on South Asia as one of the major urbanizing hotspots, and India in particular. In the process, *Urban India* aspires to make its contribution by evaluating and presenting relevant research that adequately represents the current situation and holds potential to influence future paradigms. This issue for instance presents research on India's current pattern of urbanization, local development, governance and finance. The first in the series is a paper by S.N. Nandy titled "Urbanization in India – Past, Present and Future Consequences". It asserts that while the urban population is growing more rapidly than the rural, this growth is mainly uneven but not skewed and not concentrated to a single city of the country. The state-wise distribution of large cities and million plus populous cities has been mapped across the country. The paper depicts the state-wise/region-wise trend of urbanization based on historical time-series data and the future state of



urbanization across the country. The paper asserts that while urbanization is considered as a potential demographic dividend, rapid and unplanned urbanization could create havoc, particularly in metropolitan cities in India. The carrying capacity of cities and environmental condition is under threat due to unexpected urban growth and unplanned industrialization respectively. This research makes an attempt to map the extent of distribution of urban growth across the country.

There is a counter perspective to the above too, that perceives cities to be more open and inclusive against the onslaughts of in-migration. It is based on the premise that cities of the developing world have adopted the role play of an open city by allowing all form of activities and human flows to get embedded into its fabric. Nonetheless, city space where social and economic exclusion have become a norm rather than exception, where selective marginalization and aggressive facilitation on the other hand coalesce to produce an urban order that actually decimates the context of openness. This argument is vividly presented by Kiran Sandhu in her paper, "Open Cities in the Developing World; Between Divides, Bridges and Endeavours". This investigates what kind of disparities exist in the urban development and management system in the developing world cities that deliberately produce divides instead of bridges, an issue so pertinent for a successful open city, by undertaking the case study of Amritsar in India, one of the youngest metropolitans of India.

One of the outfalls of this confusion and dichotomy manifested in open and contained cities is evident in how local bodies and authorities approach to the challenge of providing shelter and affordable and inclusive habitat for the deserving and economically weaker sections of the society. In past and for long, India has been implementing schemes for promoting affordable housing and slum for rehabilitation but the success has been modest. It is therefore important to examine whether current strategies address the critical challenges that have prevented the earlier schemes to live up to their promises. On June 25, 2015, India unveiled its mega urban missions which include its Scheme - Housing for All, launched to ensure pucca houses to all by the 75th year of Independence (2022). The paper by Rakesh Ranjan argues that despite housing being a private good, for a scheme of this nature to succeed, Governments at all levels have important roles to play without supplanting the markets altogether. Describing the current distortion in Indian urban land market, the paper asserts that they are quite deep seated and failure to address them may prevent the scheme from realizing its outcomes. At the same time, there are low hanging fruits within specific issues and policy areas requiring urgent action for success



of the scheme

In addition to provision of shelter and physical infrastructure in our cities, there is a pressing need to tackle social issues emanating from education, health & nutrition, safety & security related problems. Unlike developed countries that have social priorities at the fulcrum of urban planning and governance, developing countries like India would have to give concerted emphasis on social issues as they rapidly urbanize and grows physically in the immediate future. Any meaningful intervention on policy needs to be guided by methodical research on the ground. After all, deprivation of opportunities and infrastructure may not be particular to rural areas. Disparities exist within various sections of the society and various parts of the city. Arup Pramanik presents one such case of “Deprivation in Education of the Urban Poor in Siliguri Municipal Corporation Area (SMCA), West Bengal”. While comparing the access to education amongst squatters in the inner and peripheral parts of the city, the study reveals that educational deprivation of the slum dwellers in SMCA is caused not merely by economic factors, but also other and related non-economic factors. Surely, the article rekindles attention on intra-city inequity in access to social infrastructure, that would further necessitate similar debates in other part of the country.

A part of the inequity problem lies in non-scientific and ad-hoc manner in which several Indian cities are growing. They are profusely susceptible to the phenomenon of urban spread, fringe developments on their peripheries. While many cities resort to the conventional approach of land acquisition and master planning, the process is tedious, time-consuming, expensive and rot with litigations. In the wake of increasing pace of urbanization in India, it is being felt that the traditional approach of land acquisition using eminent domain for urban infrastructure development has not been very successful. Alternate instruments such as land pooling and plot readjustment methods can be used to aid the development of sub-urban infrastructure proposed under the Master Plans. The Town Planning Schemes (TPS) is a potential mechanism in that category which can be used for sub-urban infrastructure development by incentivizing individual land owners to part their land. The paper titled, “Financing Sub-urban Infrastructure Development: Illustrating the Potential of TPS Mechanism” presented by the faculty and scholars of NICMAR, Pune discusses the experiences of harnessing the potential of TPS mechanism in acquiring land as well as financing the development of ring road development projects of Ahmedabad and Surat, which serve as very useful infrastructure projects for these cities.

Another indispensable aspect of urbanization and local governance is provision of sufficient funds, so that better service could be delivered to the citizens. Under the federal system



of governance, where centre-state distribution is subject to the recommendations of finance commissions, the recent being fourteenth finance commission. The grants have been allocated based on Census 2011 urban population bringing variations in per capita allocations between states based on percentage of municipal population. In a research by Srinivas Chary Vedala and Ravindra Prasad, titled “Fourteenth Finance Commission and Urban Local Governments: Towards Better Service Delivery and Good Governance”, the authors raise doubt that given the states’ unwillingness to empower urban local governments, whether they would implement Commissions’ recommendations and respect the trust reposed in them.

Apart from the research papers and book reviews, this issue of Urban India carries a special section on projects and activities currently being executed by National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA). It is understandable that within the confines of a few pages, it is practically difficult to adequately cover the voluminous work being produced by the faculty across several projects; yet the section gives a bird’s eye view of the variety of portfolios being simultaneously handled by NIUA in the urban space. The showcase affirms the Institute’s strength as a premiere think-tank on urbanization and settlements in India.

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