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## Problems of urban development and planning in India

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### Abstract

Cities in India occupy just 3% of the land, but their contribution to the GDP is a ~60%. India is the second largest urban system in the world with almost 11% of the total global urban population living in Indian cities. India's urban population is expected to cross 50% of total population within next two decades. Urban growth is expected to contribute to 73% of the total population increase by 2036. This would bring enormous opportunities of economic growth and global competitiveness. Efforts must be channelised to ensure preparedness of the nation to manage such a massive urban transition and save our cities from the clutches of unplanned urbanization and unregulated construction activities. India is rapidly urbanizing. The cities and their infrastructure are coming under increasing pressure. It is thus imperative to enhance the urban planning capacity of the ULBs. As India reaches the tipping point of transitioning from a mostly rural to an urban society, the time to undertake planning reforms is now, because the process is irreversible. The improvement of living conditions such as improved transport options, sanitary facilities, clean drinking water, improved sewage, and waste management as well as a well-managed infrastructure lead to preventive measures.

**Keywords:** Urban, infrastructure, population, channelised, planning and activities

### 1. Introduction

In the first years of independence, almost 82 percent of the Indian population lived in rural areas or we can say only 18 percent was live in urban areas. This was a kind of moral justification for following the spirit of Gram Swaraj - the Gandhian model of independent villages based on a just and nonviolent order (Subhojit Goswami). It served as a guideline for political decision-makers in the years that followed and was reflected in some subtle ways in rural development policy. However, despite Gandhi's socio-economic vision for rural sustainability and the need to empower the village community, urban India continues to grow. Although it is one of the least urbanized countries, where urbanization increased by 17 percentage points in only fifty years between 1951 and 2011 (census of India). Still, it has the second-largest urban population in the world. While the concentration of capital, skills, and other resources in cities accelerated economic growth, Indian cities suffered from urban decay due to a lack of adequate investment in infrastructure and planning. India's urban development is not sustainable because there was less time for urban development and the pressure of development was high, so social and environmental challenges have become apparent. At the time of independence, the Indian government built more than 70 steel towns and focused more on existing urban areas. Unplanned urban growth leads to stressed infrastructure, slum growth, Environmental degradation, traffic problems, and high cost of living. India's huge population, huge and diverse country Mass and poverty-related rural-to-urban migration have the administrative leaders, policymakers, and Planners, which in turn leads to inadequate governance.

Cities in India occupy just 3% of the land, but their contribution to the GDP is a ~60%. India is the second largest urban system in the world with almost 11% of the total global urban population living in Indian cities. India's urban population is expected to cross 50% of total population within next two decades. Urban growth is expected to contribute to 73% of the total population increase by 2036. This would bring enormous opportunities of economic growth and global competitiveness. Efforts must be channelised to ensure preparedness of the nation to manage such a massive urban transition and save our cities from the clutches of unplanned urbanization and unregulated construction activities. The Ministry of Finance (2021) noted that one in-three poor people is living in urban areas, which was about one-in-eight in the early 1950s. The deluged city roads during monsoons, long traffic snarls, poor quality of air, vast slums all represent absence of sustainable urbanization in India. This situation, along with the projected urbanisation levels, if left unplanned and sub-optimally managed, may be detrimental to the society, economy, and environment.

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## 2. Review of Literature

Mahadevia, Joshi *et al.*, (2009) <sup>[3]</sup> Town and Country Planning Organization (TCPO). TCPO is an apex body in urban and regional planning in India. Based on the model regional planning and development law prepared by TCPO, Indian states enact their urban and regional planning acts. The preparation of urban development plans is regulated under each state's town and country planning act.

Jagtap and Singh, (2018) <sup>[1]</sup> Urban Development plans are vital tools to ensure planned and systemic development in rapidly urbanizing Indian cities. According to Census 2011, 230 towns have approved Master Plans and another 400 towns are in different stages of preparation from 7933 towns.

Kumar and Prakash, (2016) <sup>[2]</sup> The concept of Area Sabhas and Ward Committees for urban areas under Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM). These platforms were mandated through amendments in the local government laws. Another approach to propagate participation was through linking central government funding to participation. For instance, in 2007, under JNNURM, a model participation law was prepared for states to enact as part of the reforms. JNNURM also mandated 'stakeholder consultation' while preparing of City Development Plan (CDP).

Praharaj, Han *et al.*, (2017) <sup>[4]</sup> The launch of the smart cities mission in 2015 by the Government of India also mandated the preparation of smart cities plans through citizen engagement.

Maheshwari, (2006) <sup>[6]</sup> The urbanization has a concept is an integral part of the process of development. Both Industrialization and urbanization are inseparable, just as agriculture fosters villages, industry encourages growth of towns.

Singhsodhi, (2003) <sup>[7]</sup> As a result, many populations are living in urban areas, because cities, towns and other urban areas have facilitated the evolution of knowledge and have been the incubators of civilization and the engines of growth.

Isher Judge Ahluwalia; Ravi Kanbur and P.K Mohanty (2012) <sup>[5]</sup>, 'Urbanization in India: Challenges, Opportunities and the Way Forward', The challenges of urbanization in India have been discussed along with the opportunities it presents if it was utilized properly and efficiently through good urban planning.

## 3. Methodology

The paper design employed for the study is of descriptive type. Available secondary data have been broadly used for the study. Different news articles, Books and Web have been used which were enumerated and recorded.

## 4. Results and Discussions

### 4.1 Challenges of Urbanization in India

Cities are sources of both environmental problems and opportunities. On one hand, Rapid urbanization increases the environmental impact of cities. Cities make up some 75 percent of global energy consumption and over 70 percent of global carbon dioxide Emissions. Urban infrastructure is built largely without ecological considerations Sustainability. A resource-intensive consumer society drives and contributes to the urban lifestyle significantly adding to the pressure on the planet's ecosystems. The ecological footprint of mankind already exceeds the carrying capacity

of the planet by 50 percent, while biodiversity is on the rise strongly negative trend. The ecosystem services we depend on for our survival and humans Wells are exposed to critical levels of deterioration. At the same time, cities have enormous potential as hubs for the development of intelligent, sustainable solutions that can help meet human needs with a minimal footprint while even more quality of life. Parallel to international processes on climate and Sustainability requires strong, visionary leadership at the urban level. Cities that are already taking strong measures to address the sustainability challenges are becoming international stars.

Uneven urbanisation: The distribution of urban centres and the pace of urbanisation is not uniform across the country. States such as Bihar, Odisha, Assam, and Uttar Pradesh continue to be at a lower level of urbanisation than the national average of 31.1%. Over 75% of the urban population of the country is in 10 States: Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Kerala.

Statutory Towns Growing Without 'Master Plans': Master plans are critical for managing urbanisation. They are statutory instruments to guide and regulate the present and future urbanization (like utilisation of land, expansion, and zoning of cities for 20–25 years). According to the NITI Aayog Report, ~50% of India's statutory towns are expanding without any master plan to guide their growth and infrastructure. Urban economic activity is growing rapidly in these towns but there is no local government responsible and accountable for infrastructure development or service delivery. They continue to be governed as villages and do not have an urban local body. Haphazard growth, unplanned construction, and ad-hoc provisioning of infrastructure, over a long period of time, will put them at major risks of urbanisation. Even when master plans exist, there are several challenges during their implementation like delays, disputes in courts etc. Some master plans also get amended more than a thousand times during their implementation.

Sub-Optimal Utilisation of Urban Land: Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) noted that paradoxically congested land parcels of high population densities co-exist with vast parcels of under-utilized lands. A major reason for this is the fragmented and poorly recorded ownership of urban land. Moreover, multiple public sector organizations/agencies (ports, railways, ULBs, etc.) own land under their jurisdictions. This hinders holistic planning and development. Non-optimal utilization creates scarcity of land which raises land price and reduces space for affordable housing.

Magnitude of Population Living in Slums: According to Census 2011, 17.3% of the total urban population was under slums in India and about 70% of this slum population was concentrated in 6 States: Maharashtra (18.1%), Andhra Pradesh (15.6%), West Bengal (9.8%), Uttar Pradesh (9.5%), Tamil Nadu (8.9%) and Madhya Pradesh (8.7%). The proportion of slum population is rapidly rising. Lack of affordable housing is contributing to creation and expansion of slums.

Increasing Risk of Water Scarcity in Cities: The World Wide Fund for Nature India (2020) has found that Indian cities dominate current and future lists of global cities with the highest overall water risk. This situation is further

exacerbated by the lack of adequate infrastructure in cities and towns to handle their own wastewater and solid waste. NITI Aayog in its Composite Water Management Index noted that hunt for additional water resources to sustain Indian cities will lead to “serious harm to the country’s biodiversity, environment, and ecological balance”.

**City Planning for Disaster Mitigation:** The aspect of disaster mitigation is missing in growth of Indian cities. NITI Aayog notes that the way urban areas are planned, developed, and managed; can create long lasting impacts on the local water availability and vulnerability to disasters. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs in its report observed that the encroachment of lakes and riverbeds had played a major role in urban flooding in Chennai. **Pressures on Coastal Habitations:** The coastal cities are home to 14% of the population in India and are vulnerable to floods due to multiple causes, that include faulty urban design and planning, dynamic coastline, flash floods, storm surges, cyclones, and tsunamis. Coastal habitations and infrastructural investments are vulnerable to rise in sea levels due to climate change and cyclones.

#### 4.2 Perspective planning for Urban Development

Sustainable urbanisation requires a balance between the development of urban areas and protection of the environment with an eye to equity in employment, shelter, basic services, social infrastructure, and transportation in urban areas. The present urban chaos in India is mainly the result of ineffective and inefficient urban management, multiplicity of authorities, inadequate revenue base, lack of coordination between various municipal agencies, and the non-participatory attitude of stakeholders. It has become imperative to focus on various elements that are essential for the survival of urban centres, like social, economic, environmental, and urban governance. With better management, control, and utilisation of all these four elements, sustainable urbanisation can be achieved.

**Programmatic intervention for planning of healthy cities:** There is a need for convergence of multi-sectoral efforts in planning, public health, and socio-economic development. The focus of planning urban development must encompass not only the million-plus cities but also hundreds of small- and medium-sized towns. The Advisory Committee has recommended a central sector scheme ‘500 Healthy Cities Programme’, for a period of 5 years, wherein priority cities and towns would be selected jointly by the States and the local bodies. **Programmatic intervention for optimum utilisation of urban land:** All the cities/towns under the proposed ‘Healthy Cities Programme’ should strengthen regulations to maximize the efficiency of urban land (or planning area). The Committee has recommended review and revision of regulations for this purpose.

**Ramping up of human resources:** The public sector must have an adequate workforce in terms of quantity and quality to tackle the challenges of urbanization. The Committee has recommended that the States/UTs may need to: (a) Expedite the filling up of vacant positions of town planners; (b) Additionally sanction 8268 town planners’ posts as lateral entry positions for a minimum period of 3 years and a maximum of 5 years to close the gaps. **Ensuring qualified professionals for undertaking urban planning:** Urban areas and their developmental complexities have increased over the years. The discipline of urban planning or town planning has a dedicated course curricula with which graduates

acquire a multi-sectoral overview and skillset to address such challenges. The States may need to undertake requisite amendments in their recruitment rules to ensure the entry of qualified candidates into town planning positions. **Mainstreaming capacity-building activities:** Concerted efforts are required by the States/UTs to ensure regular capacity building of their town planning staff. Also, the existing centres of excellence established by MoHUA and State-level training institutions need to be further strengthened to regularly build the skills and expertise of urban functionaries.

**Re-engineering of urban governance:** There is a need to bring in more institutional clarity and multi-disciplinary expertise to solve urban challenges. The Advisory Committee has recommended the constitution of a high powered committee to re-engineer the present urban-planning governance structure with: (a) Clear division of roles and responsibilities among various authorities, appropriate revision of rules and regulations; (b) Creation of a more dynamic organisational structure, standardisation of the job descriptions of town planners and other experts; (c) Extensive adoption of technology for enabling public participation and inter-agency. **Revision of Town and Country Planning Acts:** The formation of an apex committee at the State level is recommended to undertake a regular review of planning legislations (including town and country planning or urban and regional development acts or other relevant acts). **Involvement of citizens in Planning:** Public’s participation in urban planning in India is limited. It is important to include public opinion and feedback in the planning process. The Committee has recommended a ‘Citizen Outreach Campaign’ for making the process of urban planning more inclusive and accessible.

**Building local leadership:** It is important to enlighten the city leadership about the significance of urban planning to achieve integrated development, mobilize finances, ensure affordable housing, and make cities more economically productive, liveable, inclusive and sustainable. The Committee has recommended a short-term training programme for city level elected officials on the economic and social benefits of urban planning. **Steps for enhancing the role of private sector:** The private sector needs to be evolved to heighten its role and employment opportunities for planners. Concerted measures must be taken at multiple levels to strengthen the role of the private sector to improve the overall planning capacity in the country. These include the adoption of fair processes for procuring technical consultancy services, strengthening project structuring and management skills in the public sector, and empanelment of private sector consultancies.

#### 5. Conclusion

India is rapidly urbanizing. The cities and their infrastructure are coming under increasing pressure. It is thus imperative to enhance the urban planning capacity of the ULBs. As India reaches the tipping point of transitioning from a mostly rural to an urban society, the time to undertake planning reforms is now, because the process is irreversible. The improvement of living conditions such as improved transport options, sanitary facilities, clean drinking water, improved sewage, and waste management as well as a well-managed infrastructure lead to preventive measures. It is important to acquaint society with these challenges, opportunities, and solutions, otherwise, their

performance in an urban context is almost impossible. We are responsible for the next generation and future cities, thus you have to minimize your negative impact on every part of the environment with the practice of reasonably sustainable urbanization. This has become vital to ensure that the growth of cities is sustainable and inclusive in the future.

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