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Capacity building for elected representatives: A key to effective service delivery system in urban governance

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Abstract

Today's urban scenario, the development of cities primarily focuses on the provision of basic services to cope up with the growing needs of urban population. The delivery and maintenance of basic services would require huge amount of resources like manpower, material, money, etc. As per the functions laid down in 74th Constitutional Amendment Act, the resource requirements have increased manifold both institutional and individual levels. In this regard, it is necessary to manage the resources effectively and enhance the capacity of the stakeholders to meet the pressures of urban development through urban reforms and smart governance. In this context, this paper attempts to describe the concept and dimensions of capacity building in general and the initiatives undertaken by the governments to enhance the capacity of the institutions and the stakeholders in particular.

Keywords: capacity building, service delivery, stakeholder, urban governance

Introduction

Over the past two decades, capacity building has gained importance among not only government departments but also in NGOs, CBOs, CSOs, stakeholders and other agencies which are involved in the process of sustainable development. It has become clear that capacity building is central to the quest for sustainable development and the scope has been enlarged to include all the aspects of development.

The experience of functioning of urban local bodies in the past 20 years in India makes it clear that effective urban governance is still a distant dream and requires enormous interventions to realize its potential.

Effective functioning of urban governance requires active, engaging and well - organized citizens, citizen leaders and functionaries. In the practical context, elected representatives, functionaries and other agencies have generated vested interests and exercise their responsibility to apply public resources in an unaccountable manner. Though elected representatives are one of the main stakeholders of urban governance, many of them were experiencing political participation in public space for the first time in their life. They do not have the idea about procedures for conducting meetings, developing participatory micro plans, mobilizing resources, maintaining transparent systems of financial management, etc. Hence, most significant interventions are necessary to focus on building individual leadership, their roles and responsibilities, learning of new skills and practical understanding of each of the elected representatives. Therefore, capacity building interventions aimed at strengthening individual and empowerment of new leaders would be foremost challenge in urban governance. Without necessary capacity, the elected representatives are unable to identify, understand and solve the administrative and development problems of the urban local bodies.

Thus, enhancing the capabilities of elected representatives is the key to address the principal challenges of urban governance and successful implementation of delivery mechanism. This article offers a glimpse of the concept, framework of capacity building, why has the focus shifted towards building capacity of stakeholders in urban areas and the range of activities undertaken in Tamil Nadu at different levels.

The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments brought in 1993 which provided the legal framework for constituting democratically elected governance mechanisms at the grassroots level. The provisions laid down in these amendments have some far reaching implications with respect to democratic governance and local development.

Concept of Capacity Building

The term capacity building perceives with different meanings and interpretations depending on who uses it and in what context. There is no established, agreed terminology, structure or

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approaches of the concept. Broadly, it is an all-inclusive concept with varied interpretations and operationalizations.

UNDP (1997) defines capacity building as “the process by which individuals, groups, organizations, institutions and societies increase their abilities to perform functions, solve problems and achieve objectives; to understand and deal with their development needs in a broader context and in a sustainable manner”.^[1]

World Bank (1998) looked at capacity building as a “combination of people, institutions and practices that permit countries to reach their development goals. Capacity building is an investment in human capital, institutions and practices”^[2].

Lusthaus (1995) considered capacity building as an “ongoing process by which people and systems operating within dynamic contexts, enhance their abilities to develop and implement strategies in pursuit of their objectives for increased performance in a sustainable way”^[3].

Thus, capacity building is a holistic approach encompassing a multitude of activities. It includes strengthening the processes, systems and rules that influence collective and individual behavior and performance in all development endeavours. Further, it also means enhancing people’s technical ability and willingness to play new demands and situations.

Capacity building is a long-term, continuing process in which all stakeholders participate, viewed in this sense, it may mean, strengthening of stakeholders based on systematic learning of new knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Goals or Fundamental Objectives

- ❖ Enhancing the ability of an organization or individual to follow sustainable development paths.
- ❖ Proper utilization of resource capabilities in all dimensions.
- ❖ Enhancing the ability to evaluate and address the crucial problems related to policy choices and modes of implementation among development options.
- ❖ Understanding the potentials, limits and needs as perceived by the local citizens of the area concerned.
- ❖ Knowing the institutional and legal framework for making necessary regulatory changes to enable organizations to achieve the desired goal.
- ❖ Focusing on a series of actions towards their knowledge, skills, understandings and attitudes needed to bring about the desired developmental change.

Why capacity building is needed for elected representatives of urban local bodies?

The scale of capacity need is enormous but understanding of the problem and its solutions are not appropriate. Further, lack of administrative structures, processes and procedures of local governance and also to manage relationship between various stakeholders (i.e., public, CBOs, NGOs, etc) play evident role in capacity building. Moreover, lack of alternative ways to develop attitudes needed to bring about the desired developmental change needs addressing capacity building issues. In the era of e-governance, lack of access to authentic information about the system of local governance, their roles and responsibilities, etc must be taken into consideration while training the representatives for capacity building. Apart these, lack of motivation and new skills to emerge as an individual leader.

Dimensions of Capacity Building

UNDP in its guidelines for capacity building redefined four dimensions. They are^[4]

- System oriented
- Institution or Organization oriented
- Individual oriented
- Society oriented

Though capacity efforts were initiated at both system and institutional levels, individual level has gained more attention for the effective functioning of the system. Capacity building at individual level is very crucial. It examines the capacity needs and close the gaps through training and other awareness activities. The dimensions of capacity at individual level covers designing the training and educational programmes which can reduce the identified gap in the system.

Strategy for Capacity Building

The capacity building process of the organizations and individuals has to be carried out in a phased manner and should include short term and long term strategies.

The short term focus would be on consolidating information on training course materials, identifying individual trainers and institutions, conducting ToTs in the specific domains already identified and conducting training programmes for urban local bodies and their stakeholders.

Capacity building of key stakeholders including elected representatives should be accorded priority including co-ordination and monitoring of various initiatives. Towards this, adequate capacity at the National level should be built to ensure forceful implementation. All programmes were evaluated against the measurable indicators for effectiveness and outcomes.

The long term capacity needs has to be addressed through academic and professional institutions which are introducing courses aimed at improving urban governance.

Capacity Building Programmes in India

For strengthening urban governance, Ministry of Urban Development has undertaken several initiatives under various schemes to augment the capacity of urban local bodies and stakeholders.

Capacity Building for Urban Local Bodies (CBULB)

This scheme is aimed at strengthening urban local governments through capacity building for better governance and financial management.

Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM)

Capacity building efforts received a significant boost in terms of scale as well as scope under JNNURM. The scheme guidelines permitted utilization of an amount of up to 5 per cent of the total outlay of the mission for capacity building. The Government of India and various state governments has launched several programmes for enhancing the quality of the individual and to provide impetus to ecologically sustainable growth.

Backward Regions Grant Fund (BRGF)

Capacity building is extended to backward regions of the country also. In order to achieve all-rounded socio-economic development, enhancing the capacity of the stakeholders of the backward regions is also inevitable.

Tamil Nadu Urban Development Project (TNUDP)

World Bank develops capacity of the key urban stakeholders which facilitate to influence collective and individual behavior and performance in all development endeavours. For this,

World Bank has initiated various programmes particularly TNUDP to strengthen urban reforms and to address capacity gaps in institutional strengthening ^[5].

Capacity building and Urban Governance

India's rapid urbanization clearly indicates an inescapably urban future. Cities are emerging as the engines of economic growth. Simultaneously rising level of migration is fuelling urban poverty. In this background, it is critical to preserve and promote the economic and social viability of our cities and to enhance the quality of life of the urban population.

The 74th Constitutional Amendment Act clearly stipulates the need for decentralized urban governance and the empowerment of urban local bodies. Good urban governance accelerates the sustainable development. It brings civil society, private sector and other actors into a developmental process.

Capacity building has so far been given low priority and is largely limited to administrative training. In the present context of rapid urbanization, the challenges in urban management require not only specialized knowledge but also cross - sectoral learning to tackle several new and emerging challenges in managing a city. Many reports points out that the strong need for systematic training that would enable the stakeholders to discharge their duties and responsibilities effectively. Such strategies include capacity enhancement of urban stakeholders in local planning, decision making, responsiveness, transparency, administrative efficiency and service delivery system.

Urban governance, in particular, is sought to be addressed through administrative and technical efficiency to urban stakeholders and promotion of relationships with local communities. A grassroots perspective of capacity building for good urban governance has to support the cited initiatives.

Institutional Arrangements for Capacity Building

Institutional arrangements are considered as one of the main driven force of Capacity Building efforts. Institutional

framework is a basis for the development to sustain their role and capacity. An increased understanding of the wider institutional framework is essential for addressing the gaps and weaknesses.

Training programmes, courses, workshops, seminars, etc on various specializations are conducted by different academic, research, training and professional institutions and government departments both at national and state level in the field of urban management. Some of the institutions are as follows:

- National Institute of Urban Affairs
- Regional Centres for Urban and Environmental Studies
- All India Institute of Local Self Government
- Administrative Training Institutes
- State Training Institutes of Urban Affairs

National Institute of Urban Affairs is a pioneer institute which has contributed much in the areas of research, training and information dissemination in urban management.

Tamil Nadu Institute of Urban Studies

As far as Tamil Nadu is concerned, Tamil Nadu Institute of Urban Studies (TNIUS) is the state level training and research institute promoted by the state government in the field of urban management. One of the main objectives of the institute is to disseminate knowledge on various aspects of urban governance resting on established system of rules and regulations to the stakeholders of urban administration.

Since the institute helps in improving skills and capability of both officials and non-officials of urban local bodies, special attention is being given to elected representatives by enhancing knowledge and administrative skill required for good urban governance and provides exposure to current thinking around the issues in an environment.

The details of capacity building programmes conducted for elected representatives of urban local bodies in Tamil Nadu and number of participants attended during 2007 - 2014 are given below: ^[6]

Sl. No.	Period	Name of the training programme	No. of participants attended
1.	2007 - 08	Orientation Training Programmes	3288
2.	2008 - 09	Training on Stress Management for Women Elected Representatives of ULBs	226
3.	2010 - 11	Training on JnNURM for the Chairpersons of ULBs	172
4.	2010 - 11	Training Programme on Municipal Acts and Rules for the ERs of ULBs	145
5.	2010 - 11	Basic training for ERs of ULBs under BRGF	1823
6.	2011 - 12	Functional training for ERs of ULBs under BRGF	1612
7.	2013 - 14	Orientation Training Programmes	2648
8.	2013 - 14	Training on HR for Women Elected Representatives	748

Suggestions

- ❖ Improve the level of awareness of civil society – citizen leaders, community based organizations, voluntary organizations, gram sabhas etc.
- ❖ Capacity building, sensitization and policy advocacy within the governance institutions to respond to the voice of the new leadership from civil society.
- ❖ Enabling linkages between the civil society and the institutions to demonstrate innovative, transparent and accountable use of development resources in favour of the marginalized and excluded.
- ❖ Focusing on building individual leadership of the each stakeholder.
- ❖ Capacity building should facilitate the enhancement of practical understanding of the various dimensions of local governance.

- ❖ Networking of institutions needed to be created for building relationships and support mechanisms with other stakeholders in neighbouring units.
- ❖ Structured interface between officials and elected representatives were facilitated to enhance their level of confidence.
- ❖ Cross - sectoral networks among stakeholders have to be promoted to negotiate with the government for future course of action.
- ❖ Reorientation of attitudinal changes among the stakeholders at all levels to be initiated.
- ❖ Broadening awareness about trends in policies, strategies, etc in urban development.
- ❖ Developing leadership skills required for providing a citizen centric governance.

- ❖ Transferring of knowledge, expertise and experience through networking among the stakeholders to be initiated.

Conclusion

The article highlights the pervasiveness of capacity building programmes for the elected representatives of urban local bodies in Tamil Nadu. The capacity building training undertaken by them helped institutions to discover the perception and consensus amongst its members vis-a-vis its HR practices. They have added a new dimension to the existing literature that helps measure the effectiveness of HR functions of elected representatives.

Given the pervasiveness of capacity building program, it can be applied to institutions, individuals and nations. At an institution level, capacity building could entail many things such as better governance, effective service delivery, vibrant leadership, vision, strategic intent, and programme conceptualization, development and execution, fund raising, policy frameworks, partnership and assessments. For a typical individual, capacity building may involve learning of new knowledge, skills, attitudes and other competence. For a nation, capacity building may entail robust governance, developing and further strengthening policy frame works, and devolution of power to local government to ensure better governance. Interestingly, the common strands in various studies undertaken points to the fact that an attempt is made to identify the existing level of capacity which served as a basis for chalking out strategy to further mould their capacity levels and then build on new capacities. Organizations get their competitive edge by becoming more learning-centric and less control-driven. In nutshell, capacity building can be applied to all institutions and individuals in the world to improve their skills in governance, service delivery mechanisms, alleviate poverty, improve infrastructure and accomplish goals by strengthening their existing capacities and building on new capacities. Thus, capacity building would help organizations focus on their priorities, foster co-ordination, reduce scope for conflict and ensure favorable outcomes.

While the importance of capacity building is widely acknowledged, more attention needs to be drawn to the identification and implementation of effective capacity building approaches. The ultimate goal of capacity building is to sustain the development of individual and institutions and to enable institutions, groups and individuals to achieve their targets. Any capacity building activity needs to be carefully designed so that it contributes to this goal. In this process, it is essential that the needs of the beneficiaries as well as the already existing capacities are carefully assessed and that the specific capacity building objectives are clarified.

Obviously capacity building exercise goes beyond the scope of the human and financial resources of international organizations and implies a fundamental change in the approach to capacity building. Rather than offering a vast of variety of capacity building activities, which are often one-off events and not properly coordinated, international organizations could focus their efforts on institutionalizing capacity building programmes at regional and national level and building the structures in the countries through which capacity building programmes could be offered on a regular and long-term basis. Instead of offering capacity building programmes themselves, international organizations could see their role in identifying institutions at national and regional level that have a potential to become capacity building providers, catalyzing and kick-starting activities, and

providing targeted financial and technical assistance, while national institutions and local exerts.

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