

## CAPACITY BUILDING: WAY TO GOOD GOVERNANCE AT MUNICIPAL LEVEL

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### **Abstract**

*With the passage of the 74th Constitution Amendment Act 1992, there is increasingly more pressure on the ULBs to ensure better service delivery to the citizens. Good governance is one of the essential propositions for providing better service delivery to the citizens, as well as for sustainable development in both economic and social senses. Capacity building is a scope and an initiative to address the three essential aspects of good governance, viz. transparency, accountability and responsiveness of the administration. Purpose of this article is to identify the methods of capacity building at municipal level.*

*The essay is based on some direct observation of the methods suggested by various competent authorities for capacity building at ULB level. Considering the theoretical and the practical issues, we shall attempt to find out an ideal process for good governance at ULB level through Capacity Building.*

*Capacity building is the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes in individuals and groups of people relevant in the design, development and maintenance of institutional and operational infrastructures and processes that are locally meaningful (Groot and Moolen, 2001). It is a long-term, continuing process, in which all stakeholders participate. Instead of just training, capacity building involves Human Resource Development, Organizational Development, Institutional and Legal Framework Development, Infrastructure Development and Financial Capacity Building.*

*The concept of Capacity Building is the process of improving organizations. It should be carefully planned and implemented to benefit the organization, its employees and its stakeholders. The organization may be an entire company, public agency, non-profit organizations, volunteer group or a smaller part of a larger organization. This study confines itself in process of planning for Capacity Building at the ULB level.*

**Key Words:** *Good Governance, Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), Capacity Building, Service Delivery, Organisational Development*

### **Introduction**

Local government is the directive and management of slender interaction by the inhabitants of the locality through elected representatives. Local government refers to the operations of Municipal corporations, Municipalities, Panchayats which are entrusted with the implementation of functions, relating to and concerning the locality. Local Self Government is not at all new concept in Indian context. Tradition of the local government institutions in India has a long history. The village governments were ancient institutions and were themselves small republics. Although local government existed in India in ancient times, in its present structure and style of functioning, it owes existence to the British rule in India. A beginning of local government in India may be said to have been made in the year 1687.

### **Local Governments in India**

Then what does Local Body mean? In India, there are three levels of government, viz., local, state and central government. To simplify, we may say that 'Local Government' is the first level and is responsible for matters close to local communities. Indian local governments are basically a State-subject figuring as item 5 in List II of the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution of India. Article 243 G of the Indian Constitution enshrines the basic principle for devolution of power to the Local Bodies. In the nation's journey towards becoming an economic power, Local Body plays an important part in enabling infrastructure availability to the citizens <sup>2a</sup>.

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<sup>2 a,b</sup> (Research and Publication Unit, Central Statistics Office, 2014)

Local Body is broadly classified into two categories, such as, the RLBs (Rural Local Bodies) i.e., *Panchayats*, which are constituted for local planning, development and administration in the rural areas; and the ULBs (Urban Local Bodies) i.e., *Municipalities, Corporations*, which are constituted for local planning, development and administration in the urban areas<sup>5b</sup>

### What does it mean by Good Governance?

**Mahatma Gandhi** says: Keep your thoughts positive because your thoughts become your words. Keep your words positive because your words become your behaviour. Keep your behaviour positive because your behaviour becomes your habits. Keep your habits positive because your habits become your values. Keep your values positive because your values become your destiny.

And those are the key words behind Good Governance in search of a high-quality surroundings, superior livelihood, and excellent world within a limited globe. Since our country, our India is free, sovereign, we, the citizen of India must be positive in all sense. We must be truthful to ourselves. We must be sensitive to each other. However, there is no accepted definition of governance. There is divergence of opinion about the meaning of governance between the conservatives and the liberals, between socialists and the communists<sup>3</sup>.

For example, Governance is “*The traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised*” (Kaufman et al); the way “... *power is exercised through a country’s economic, political, and social institutions.*” (The World Bank’s PRSP Handbook); “*The exercise of economic, political, and administrative authority to manage a country’s affairs at all levels. It comprises mechanisms, processes, and institutions, through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations, and mediate their differences.*”(UNDP).

Making it more logical, we may state that “... *that governance is the process – by which authority is conferred on rulers, by which they make the rules, and by which those rules are enforced and modified. Thus, understanding governance requires an identification of both the rulers and the rules, as well as the various processes by which they are selected, defined, and linked together and with the society generally.*”<sup>2a”</sup>

And the term “Good Governance” can be imagined to be associated with democracy and good civil rights, with transparency, with the rule of law, and with efficient public services<sup>4b</sup>. Not necessarily, Good Governance is always associated with making “correct” decisions but it is essentially *about the best possible process* for making those “correct” decisions.

The process of Good Governance is about<sup>5</sup>

1. The sustenance of accountability secured by transparency of the government;
2. The process of safeguarding the existing rules of law;
3. The responsiveness of the government towards its stakeholders as well as the whole community in an apt balanced manner;
4. The equitability and inclusive mind-set of the government;
5. The liberty of participation of the whole community in the decision making process ;
6. The efficiency and effectiveness of the government.
7. Good Governance is not an automatic phenomenon. It is to be put into practice. It should be, in chorus, be offered by the government and demanded by the society in an unremitting manner. There must be no point of saturation as it should be a ceaselessly self-improvising process. A strong civil society, unprejudiced judiciary, sensitive government and free press

<sup>3</sup> (Singh, 2013)

<sup>4a,b</sup> (The World Bank, 2013)

<sup>5</sup> (MAV, VLGA, LGV & LGPro 2012, 2012)

are the prerequisites for initiating the process of Good Governance<sup>6</sup>. For sustainable economic development led by economic growth, the process of Good Governance is one of the fundamental requisites. It is simply because that Good Governance may help citizen within its jurisdiction to maximise returns on investment.

Now, for the purpose of our study, we may confine governance only to the local public domain. We are concerned here with that form of governance which provides social security; uphold of law and deliver services ranging from education, health to livelihood and food security to a localised area. Let us concentrate our study within the governance of the Urban Local Body (ULB).

### **Urban Local Bodies in Indian context: a Brief Overview**

Various historical records may be referred to wherefrom it is believed that some form of local self-government did exist in ancient India. Moreover, in the epic tales of *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, we found some kind of self-government such as Paura (guild), Nigama, Pauga and Gana, performing various administrative and legislative functions and raising levies from different sources. Local government continued during the succeeding period of Hindu rule in the form of Town Committees, which were known as ‘Goshthis’ and ‘Mahajan Samitees’.<sup>7a</sup>

The urban local self-government entered a new phase after the Constitution of India came into force in 1950. The Constitution of India has allotted the local self-government to the State List of functions. The first commission to study and to suggest on all possible aspects of urban management was the “National Commission on Urbanisation”. The commission was appointed in 1985 and it gave its suggestions in 1988. There were other various committees appointed in different states in order to improve the Municipal Organisations<sup>6b</sup>.

The Constitution (74th Amendment) Act, 1992 is a landmark initiative of the Government of India to strengthen local self-government in cities and towns. The 74<sup>th</sup> Amendment Act, 1992 enables the Municipalities to undertake the tasks of planning for ‘economic development and social justice’ and implement city/town development plans.

As per Article 243Q, every State should constitute three types of municipalities in urban areas. Provided that a Municipality under this clause may not be constituted in such urban area or part thereof as the Governor may, having regard to the size of the area and the municipal services being provided or proposed to be provided by an industrial establishment in that area and such other factors as he may deem fit, by public notification, specify to be an industrial township. The constitution of three types of municipalities by every State is as under<sup>8</sup>:

**Nagar Panchayat:** Nagar Panchayat (by whatever name called) for a transitional area, that is to say, is an area in transition from a rural area to an urban area.

**Municipal Council:** A Municipal Council is constituted for a smaller urban area; and

**Municipal Corporation:** A Municipal Corporation is constituted for a larger urban area.

The Constitution (74th Amendment) Act, 1992 has introduced a new part namely, Part IXA in the Constitution, which deals with the issues relating to municipalities. The main provisions introduced by the above Act are related to:

1. Constitution of Municipalities
2. Composition of Municipalities
3. Constitution of Wards Committees

<sup>6</sup> (Moily & others, October 2007)

<sup>7 a,b</sup> (Research and Publication Unit, Central Statistics Office, 2014)

<sup>8</sup> (Article 243Q, Constitution of Municipalities, CONSTITUTION OF INDIA)

4. Reservation of seats
5. Duration of Municipalities
6. Powers and Functions of the Municipalities
7. Elections to Municipalities-
8. Planning and implementation of draft development plan considering ‘economic development and social justice’ within the area.

### **Good Governance at Municipal Level**

*‘.... We sought freedom of power in our language, freedom of imagination in our literature, freedom of soul in our religious creeds and that of the mind in our social environment. Such an opportunity filled me with confidence in the power of education which is one with life and which can give us real freedom - the highest that is claimed for man, his freedom of moral communion in the human world....’, our Rabindranath believes.*

So, basically to sustain the quality of government, whether local or not, the essential requirements are organisational development supported by well-defined institutional as well as legal configuration and education in its factual expression. And such development could never been happened without skilled and competent professionals. On the other hand, democracy and decentralisation help in improving accountability, responsiveness and transparency of government, whether local or not, which in turn facilitate effectiveness and efficiency of government services.

In this connection, we may mention four characteristics of Good Governance viz., Transparency, Responsibility and Accountability, Participation, Responsiveness to the need of people. Then, a local government should have one developed organisation with construction of distinct legal and institutional support to attend these points. A local government shall become effective only when it is able to provide sensible attention to both of its democratic vision and the criteria simultaneously with an eye to maintain the standards of good governance. For this, not only the improvements in performance of the local government is requisite but also an better interaction among the civil society, the private sector and other line public institutions is very much compulsory<sup>9</sup>.

Considering the basic postulates of the process of the Good Governance, at localised urban area, we can expect that an ULB shall strive to play various roles to promote Good Governance. We expect an ULB as

**A Regulator**, namely the administration of various acts and regulations to secure the process of safeguarding the existing rules of law;

**A Provider**, that involves providing urban services efficiently and equitably by managing its accounts effectively and efficiently which will in turn, certainly sustain the accountability of the government secured by its transparency;

**An Agent** that takes the schemes of higher levels government to the people as well as put together the critical gaps on various aspects of infrastructural, socio-economical set-up of the society to formulate an overall developmental plan with active consultation with the common people in a decentralised manner, or what we might term, with a “bottom-to-top” approach . This includes promotion of popular participation as well as the responsiveness of the government towards its stakeholders over and above the whole community in an apt balanced manner;

**A Welfare Agency**, which provides active assistance to higher level governments in the equitable distribution and delivery as promised for providing equitability and inclusive mind-set of the government;

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<sup>9</sup> (FRCS Project Team Members; Hammer, Dorothee,; 2006)

**An Agent of Development**, who strives for improvement in the quality of life through not only the augmentation of infrastructure but also providing liberty of participation of the whole community in the decision making process .

We may remember Nobel laureate, Amartya Sen, when he says, “*I don’t think it is a question of economics, but of public policy. There is need for more explicit analysis of the effects of public policies on different classes, particularly the extreme underdogs of society. Good governance can make all the difference.*” Good governance promises expansion of social opportunities and removal of poverty. As Shri Balmiki Prasad Singh, Governor of Sikkim, suggested, “*In short, Good Governance means securing Justice, Empowerment, Employment and efficient delivery of Services, Administrative Response, Capacity Building.*”

### **Good Governance vis-a-vis Capacity Building at Municipal Level**

‘....Indiscipline can be corrected by example and by introducing self governance..’ -Rabindranath.

So we can assert that, the ULBs, in general, have to face some challenges for practicing Good Governance. In a broad sense, we can categorise them as follows and with help of simple reasoning we can emphasize “Capacity Building” as the most promising nucleus of the solutions against such challenges:

**Challenge to secure Justice:** Providing security to life and property of the citizen, making the judiciary system more accessible and endorsing the rules of law are the imperative, moreover interlaced issues for securing justice. But this is not the end! There is a demand-side, too. The lay people should be made aware about their rights, privileges. As important stakeholders of the localised government, the society should actively partake in the “capacity building process” of the government by continuous and moderate self-education and self-awareness on social rights.

**Challenge to Employment Generation:** This might be the most challenging task in Indian economical context. It is a logical fact that a substantial rate of increase in population shall affect the working population in an exponential way ensuring more workers which shall bring more income to the society with a greater possibilities of savings by the society and hence more investment. There is another side of the coin tossed. Increasing population certainly boost up the working force. Such working force is undeniably, for the sake of argument, willing to work but is this working-force efficient enough to find job, is the government able to generate enough employment opportunities in public and or private sector and has the government equipped the new youth with good quality education and skills? If answer of any one of the questions is ‘no’, then the government itself and the society as a central stakeholder of the government should critically think about the augmentation of “capacity building”. If not, then the demographic dividend may results in demographic liability.

**Challenge to efficient service delivery<sup>10</sup>:** To make the “service delivery” more effective and efficient, as well, the demand side should be stronger enough than the supply side, so that the inequality stress the government to strive to improve service delivery. In a simplified manner, there should be a continuous need of better service delivery from the society to the government in a manner of bottom-to-top approach; the society should not hang around waiting for delivery of service from the government like a top-to-bottom approach.

There are three institutions which have a good role to play in improving public service delivery, such as the judiciary, the media and the civil society. The media has the immense influential capability to bring forth the aspirations of the common people which in turn can exert enormous pressure on the government to deliver services in an efficient manner.

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<sup>10</sup> (Singh, 2013)

Due to ever improving consciousness of the laypeople, mostly due to expansion of basic education, various institutions have emerged, in some cases independent of the public domain, as guardians of the civil society in different fields ranging from environment to culture to education. These institutions are particularly sincere to protect the interest of the society and bringing forward the concerns of the society.

This kind of phenomenon owes to “*capacity building*” of the whole society, otherwise the government may not feel need to initiate the process of *Good Governance* by ever improving its service delivery.

**Challenges to Administrative Responses:** It is true that improvement of service delivery is frequently obstructed due to the weakness of accountability mechanisms in an administrative structure in any level of government. As pointed out by Shri Balmiki Prasad Singh, Governor of Sikkim, “*Bureaucratic complexities and procedures make it difficult for a citizen as well as the civil society to navigate the system for timely and quality delivery of services. The lack of transparency and secrecy that have been associated with the administrative system from colonial times, besides generating corruption, has also led to injustice and favouritism*”.

The bureaucratic system and procedure should be made more straightforward and transparent so that the chief stakeholder, i.e., the civil society of a local government (ULBs, RLBs) can feel free to partake with bringing forth its social concerns and look after the timely and quality delivery of services. *Decentralised* way of governance might be the essential step for improving the administrative responses.

**Challenge to Capacity Building<sup>11</sup>:** Capacity building is the most important approach to achieve quality of services and customer’s satisfaction at any level of organization irrespective of public and private. Capacity Building is all about enhancing empowerment of all stakeholders of a government. The empowerment of the administrative staff at all level with classy professionalism equipped, not only, with the sufficient knowledge of administration, modern technology but also with moderate administrative ethics, etiquettes which will definitely boost up the confidence. On side by side, empowerment of individuals even outside of the bureaucracy shall allow them to come forward to handle ‘community needs’ and enhance public service effectively without hesitancy or the need of approval by higher level authorities. In a democracy, decentralised governance is viewed as necessary to empower people in rural and urban areas to improve their lot.

Thus, we can easily foresee from the above brief discussion that Capacity Building plays a pivotal role to the ULBs while facing the challenges for practicing Good Governance. Good governance builds on institutions, mechanisms and processes, through which society can voice their needs and interests, perform their stipulated rights and responsibilities. Good governance at ULBs requires institutions equipped with sufficient authority and resource capable to perform their functions in a responsive and accountable manner. It also demands an active civil society able to identify and channel their concerns to their elected representatives<sup>12</sup>.

### **Capacity Building Method for Urban Local Bodies**

Various Capacity Building Schemes at the level of local government like ULBs basically focus on the improvement of the service delivery of the government by interweaved up gradation of the local democracy, accountability, comprehensiveness and sensitivity of the government. Such schemes also have an eye to sensitise the laypeople about their rights, legitimate privileges as promised by the

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<sup>11</sup> (Singh, 2013)

<sup>12</sup> (FRCS Project Team Members; Hammer, Dorothee;, 2006)

government. Such schemes thus improve the bargaining power and networking skills of the local stakeholders. Such process helps the local government to be more citizen-centric. Capacity Building schemes has the potentiality to encourage ‘gender equality’ by mainstreaming gender issues. And, in due course, the Capacity Building process with various designated schemes improves the co-ordination and co-operation among various stakeholders of the government which ultimately results in emergence of Good Governance.

Capacity Building is a comprehensive instrument and a long-term process. A variety of unified mechanisms and involvements need to be undertaken. We may mention some of such involvements such as:

**Knowledge Management** suggests ‘Training within functional groups’ and ‘Coaching and Process-oriented advisory services’. The ‘*Training within functional groups*’ is mainly designed to acquire necessary knowledge, skills and attitude which shall help to build sufficient knowledge of administration, modern technology with moderate administrative ethics, etiquettes and eventually the desired class professionalism among the officials . This also in turn shall help the common man to access the government with ease and comfort. Warm and sensible response from public officials always help the common man to feel free to interact, to query about their needs to know their rights, to access the services. While ‘*Coaching and Process-oriented advisory service*’ helps to strengthen the self-learning capacities of the stakeholders of the local government in regard of acquiring and applying problem-solving skills.

**Organisational Development (OD)** basically suggests the process of ‘*System Analysis and Design*’ of the existing internal structure, both the soft structure and the infrastructure, of an organisation with the aim for providing better service delivery. Better Organisational Development within any public institutions under local government tries to identifying various loopholes, possible causes of failure of any scheme, reasons of distress among stakeholders, reasons of over burden among officials and then tries to address such off-putting issues with a constructive practical outlook. Addressing various problems within the organisation, setting goals with realistic objectives and consequent strategies is the purpose of Organisational Development. Through the practicing the process of Organisational Development, government at local level make itself able to develop its own ‘*Vision*’. *Inter Organisational forum* is another important instrument for Organisational Development. The forum provides an opportunity to share experiences on issues such as roles and responsibilities, modes of partnerships or even to mediate when difference of interests occurs<sup>13</sup>.

A systematic approach for Capacity Building is essential for getting success. A contextual analysis and subsequent assessment of the ULBs are required by the authority to identify the critical specific Capacity Gaps within the government to initiate the process. After that, establishment and capacitating of a team of professional facilitators is essential for the purpose of implementation of various realistic schemes to strengthen and consolidate different Capacity Building activities.

Ministry of Urban Development has undertaken several initiatives under JNNURM and other schemes to augment the capacity of ULBs to implement projects and reforms. Some of such projects are<sup>14</sup>

1. Rapid Training Program (RTP),
2. Peer Experience and Reflective Learning (PEARL),
3. UNDP-GOI initiative for Capacity Building for Decentralised Urban Governance,
4. Programme Management Unit (PMU),

<sup>13</sup> (FRCS Project Team Members; Hammer, Dorothee;, 2006)

<sup>14</sup> (Ministry of Urban Development, 2013)

5. Project Implementation Unit (PIU),
6. World Bank assisted Capacity Building for Urban Development (CBUD) Project,
7. PHE Training Programme
8. Holding of workshops, conferences, symposia, sponsoring of research studies etc

The Central Government has supported the need for promoting Capacity Building at local government level. There are a many institutions from public as well as from private sphere to undertake urban policy research, technical advisory services and building capacity of senior and middle level officials and elected representatives of urban local bodies. We may name few of them viz,

1. Regional Centres for Urban and Environmental Studies (RCUES)
2. National Institute of Urban Affairs
3. All India Institute of Local Self-Government

Promotion of Excellence in specific areas of urban management is essential. In addition to project implementation and urban governance, it is proposed to set up Centres of Excellence (CoE) in reputed institutions in the country to create the necessary knowledge base for improving municipal service delivery and management. Each of the centres will be unique in its area of work and all CoEs will foster cutting-edge and crosscutting research, capacity building and technical knowledge base. At the conclusion of this discussion, we may again solicit recourse to Mahatma Gandhi, when he says”..... Consciously or unconsciously, every one of us does render some service or other. If we cultivate the habit of doing the service deliberately, our desire for service will steadily grow stronger, and will make, not only for our own happiness, but that of the world at large...”. Thus, we may also remember that Good Governance through proper Capacity Building in its truest term, may make the ULBs, the molecules gear up our India towards a new horizon. And we may utter the memorable

Words again with Rabindranath:

*Where the Mind is Without Fear*

*Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high*

*Where knowledge is free*

*Where the world has not been broken up into fragments*

*By narrow domestic walls*

*Where words come out from the depth of truth*

*Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection*

*Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way*

*Into the dreary desert sand of dead habit*

*Where the mind is led forward by thee*

*Into ever-widening thought and action*

*Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.*

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