We curse it for traffic jams, power outages, potholes in the middle of the road, long queues for paying bills; and praise it for its opportunities, infrastructure and entertainment.

The mid-term appraisal document of the 11th Five-year plan is now available on the Planning Commission’s website. (http://www.planningcommission.nic.in/plans/mtp/11th_mta/mta.html) After the initial celebration of a robust GDP growth amidst the global economic downturn, indicators like income and poverty, education, health, women and children, infrastructure and environment do not generate excitement due to lack of measurable impacts in many cases. However, the extensive importance given to urban renewal, and corresponding change management, hinting at the need for city managers and ‘professionalization’ of service delivery, is definitely a welcome sign and a harbinger of hope that things can change.

It has been obvious for some time that business as usual is not giving the desired results; the government’s recognition of this, though welcome, is rather late in coming. India’s urban challenges and problems need customised solutions. In order to do this, we need innovative solutions (‘Localising Millennium Development Goals’); need to understand the importance of going back and critically assessing our efforts (‘Saving the Lost Cause…’); and learn from others’ experiences (the book review of Recovering Resources-Recycling Citizenship). We hope through these articles this issue of PRAKRIA offers some insights into developing achievable solutions.

We look forward to your feedback and comments.

Cities all over the world are considered the economic growth engines of a country, and the needs of only those sections of the urban population contributing substantially to increasing GDP are being addressed in urban development policies and programmes. Worldwide, urban planners and developers have turned a blind eye towards excluded sections, particularly those of women, children, the aged, the differently abled, and the poor.

The very ambitious Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JnNURM) in India, in spite of being a significant part of the government’s agenda ‘Towards Faster and More Inclusive Growth’, fails to address ‘inclusiveness’ in totality with respect to gender equity. In its current form, the Mission is essentially a gender-neutral* scheme, i.e., it does not use the knowledge of gender differences in a given society to overcome biases in development interventions. It works within the existing gender division of resources and responsibilities.

Urban policies, schemes and projects should take concrete steps to deal with the specific needs of those excluded instead of considering all citizens as a homogeneous group. A brief analysis of the gender-quotient of the City Development Plans (CDPs) of six Indian mega cities reveals that the CDPs of Chennai and Mumbai are Partly Gender Aware* (i.e., they partly recognise that men and women are part of development and that they are constrained in different and often unequal ways as potential participants and beneficiaries); those of Ahmedabad and Delhi are Gender Blind* (i.e. they recognize no distinction between the sexes and therefore incorporate biases in favour of existing gender relations); and those of Hyderabad and Bangalore can be considered to be Gender Aware* (i.e., they recognise that men and women are part of development and that they are constrained in different and often unequal ways as potential participants and beneficiaries). The CDPs of Bangalore and Hyderabad nonetheless have a definite gap between recognition of women as a vulnerable group and concrete specific provisions to cater to their needs.

*According to Naila Kabeer’s Classification of Policies

Jutta prepares the ground in the first couple of chapters wherein she lays bare facts on how increased consumption induced by rapid urban growth has resulted in tremendous increase in solid waste, which in turn degrades the environment and affects livability of places. Jutta sees the role of informal recycling in light of the above-mentioned perils as that of poverty reduction, resource recovery and improving environmental quality, and advocates for inclusive pro-poor policy making in terms of solid waste management. This makes people involved in the activity of informal recycling environmental stewards and ‘agents of change’ rather than mere ‘rag pickers’. Using experiences from the municipalities of Diadema and Ribeirao Pires in the metropolitan region of Sao Paulo, she highlights the successes and hurdles of organised recycling, something that would appeal to policy makers in developing countries grappling with similar issues.

One hears the constant resonance of participatory approaches, inclusive and pro-poor policy making, solidarity economy and environmental sustainability while reading the book, even though it deviates from the path of policy making when the author talks of changing mindsets to one hears the constant resonance of participatory approaches, inclusive and pro-poor policy making, solidarity economy and environmental sustainability while reading the book, even though it deviates from the path of policy making when the author talks of changing mindsets to

Citizen-driven campaigns energise institutions of local self-government. Staggering in its outreach and magnitude, PEVAC (Pre-Election Voters’ Awareness Campaigns) reached out to huge swathes of the population through a unique network that incorporated civil society organisations across the country, the media and the State Election Commission itself. Citizen Initiatives and Democratic Engagement: Lessons from India takes us through the heat and dust of this extraordinary series of citizen-driven campaigns, drawing from a repertoire of field reports and interviews to reflect on the significance of this ‘experiment’ on deepening democracy in India. This book will be of interest to students of politics, sociology, development studies, gender, public administration, electoral politics, apart from readers generally interested in Indian politics and democracy, women’s empowerment, and civil society. It will serve as required reading in universities and research institutions.

Millennium Development Goals are by far the most simple, easily measurable and powerful tool available for achieving sustainable development and reducing poverty worldwide. Measured nationally, it often fails to take into account regional imbalances at community level. Thus, a need to realign or reshape the MDGs to make them more sensitive towards a local development process was felt, giving a momentum to the UN-HABITAT programme ‘Locaizing the Millennium Development Goals’. The programme aims at engaging local authorities and stakeholders to prepare local action plans to meet the MDGs.

The city of Pasay, Philippines considered family as the unit for development for achieving MDGs. The family-based localisation approach banked heavily on the commitment of an individual family to act as both an advocate as well as an achiever of the MDG’s. Around 80,000 families in the city of Pasay signed a pledge of commitment along with the Mayor to work towards the achievement of MDGs. In order to facilitate the family’s actions, eight global MDGs were translated into easily understandable family MDGs.

It is due to innovations like these, combined with other community-based monitoring initiatives, that Pasay was selected by the UNDP and the Galing Pook Foundation as one of the winners of the Gawad Galing Pook award that recognises excellence in local governance. Around 80,000 families in the city of Pasay, Philippines considered family as the unit for development for achieving MDGs. The family-based localisation approach banked heavily on the commitment of an individual family to act as both an advocate as well as an achiever of the MDGs. Eight global MDGs were translated into easily understandable family MDGs. It is due to innovations like these, combined with other community-based monitoring initiatives, that Pasay was selected by the UNDP and the Galing Pook Foundation as one of the winners of the Gawad Galing Pook award that recognises excellence in local governance.

POLL QUESTION

IS DEMOCRACY AND PARTICIPATION DELAYING THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS IN INDIA, LEADING TO GOVERNANCE ISSUES?

- YES
- NO
- CAN’T SAY

Log on to www.pria.org to register your vote.

FROM OUR RESOURCES

Recovering Resources—Recycling Citizenship
Urban Poverty Reduction in Latin America
Jutta Gutberlet

‘Inclusive waste management = poverty reduction = environmental quality + stronger community’ is the mantra of Jutta’s book.

One hears the constant resonance of participatory approaches, inclusive and pro-poor policy making, solidarity economy and environmental sustainability while reading the book, even though it deviates from the path of policy making when the author talks of changing mindsets to

Citizen-led, citizen-driven campaigns energise institutions of local self-government. Staggering in its outreach and magnitude, PEVAC (Pre-Election Voters’ Awareness Campaigns) reached out to huge swathes of the population through a unique network that incorporated civil society organisations across the country, the media and the State Election Commission itself. Citizen Initiatives and Democratic Engagement: Lessons from India takes us through the heat and dust of this extraordinary series of citizen-driven campaigns, drawing from a repertoire of field reports and interviews to reflect on the significance of this ‘experiment’ on deepening democracy in India. This book will be of interest to students of politics, sociology, development studies, gender, public administration, electoral politics, apart from readers generally interested in Indian politics and democracy, women’s empowerment, and civil society. It will serve as required reading in universities and research institutions.

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PRARRIA is a platform for civil society to share experiences on urban governance. We welcome your feedback and comments. Email us at akp@pria.org

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