

REPORT

SAMVAD CONVERSATION

INSPIRING LEADERSHIP OF MAYORS AND COUNCILLORS FOR INCLUSIVE URBANISATION

06 OCTOBER 2021

4 – 6 PM

PRIA@40
SHAPING OUR TOMORROWS, TODAY



Sustainable urban future



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- ***Invest in the training of elected leaders*** – There should be a continuous learning process for the elected representatives at the local level and a need for peer-to-peer mentoring and support to inspire the next generation of leaders and young people to engage in decision making of their communities.
- ***Build gaps and relationships beyond the formal authority*** – Councilors and mayors need to bridge gaps between the policies and practices so that the cities are not only seen as engines of economic growth but also of inclusiveness and sustainability.
- ***Mobilise expertise to a common purpose*** – Elected leaders should pay attention to the issues the people are facing. They should also know how to plan and organise smartly with the available resources to improvise and sustain the living conditions for the citizens.
- ***Need for collaboration and cooperation*** – Mayors and councilors should communicate and empower themselves so that they can build pressure through collective efforts to claim their one decision-making authority and to make the governance of the city sustainable.



Dr Bernadia Irawati Tjandradewi, Secretary General, UCLG-ASPAC has been working in urban development and related fields for more than 15 years. She was selected as one of prominent women whose work makes impacts in Asia Pacific in 2018 by GovInsider Asia. Her interests are on strategic urban planning, climate change, disaster management, water management, women empowerment, and local governance.

Hon'ble Dr Beena Philip, Mayor, Kozhikode Municipal Corporation, India fondly called as Beena teacher, had played a key role in raising the academic standards of the Government Vocational Higher Secondary School, Nadakkavu, and improving the infrastructure there through the PRISM project, which was later emulated by many other schools. She had also held the post of principal, Government Higher Secondary School, Azchavattom, in the city.



Mr. Hitesh Vaidya, Director, National Institute of Urban Affairs, India has over 20 years of experience in the field of urban management, urban governance and capacity building. He has been involved in providing technical assistance and capacity building support to several urban local bodies and instituting significant urban reforms at local level. He brings on board strong demonstrative experience of improving institutional capacities including developing strategies to support in delivering the program results

Ms. Lucy Slack, Acting Secretary General, Commonwealth Local Governance Forum (CLGF), UK is responsible for policy, which contributes to the strategic direction of the organisation, and takes a leading role in the development and management of CLGF's capacity building projects. Her specific areas of expertise are decentralisation, intergovernmental frameworks, local economic development, local government finance and inclusive local government.



Hon'ble Ms Madelaine Yorobe Alfelor, Mayor, Iriga City, Philippines has a big concern in Disaster Risk Reduction. As one of the capital cities in the Philippines who always pass by hurricane and tornado. Iriga City has lost many things because of the effect of the disaster. One of the reasons, she was active in Disaster Risk Reduction Forum and Organization. Therefore, they have fast disaster recovery process. Iriga City received many awards and recognition both national and international not only from disaster management and recovery process but also from tourism.



Mr Tikender Singh Panwar, Former Deputy Mayor, Shimla Municipal Corporation, India, has been able to create a vision with the development plan that speaks about inclusive growth, greater planned social infrastructure and making not just the city but the citizens resilient. Environment and ecology happen to be the major area of concern and it is because of this reason that the forest cover is being enhanced in the city with peoples' participation. A model for democratic decentralisation is being developed by strengthening the ward sabhas and empowering the ward committees.

Dr. Michelle R. Maziwisa, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Dullah Omar Institute Her research focus includes the functions and powers of provincial and local governments in international trade and investment. She is an admitted attorney, and advocates for multi-disciplinary approaches to economic development, taking into account the gendered dimensions of economic governance and prioritizing the constitutional mandate of local governments as 'developmental'.



Dr. Rajesh Tandon, Founder President, Participatory Research in Asia, India, is currently a UNESCO Co-Chair on Community Based Research and Social Responsibilities in Higher Education. He serves as chairperson of the Global Alliance on Community-Engaged Research (GACER) network, which facilitates the sharing of knowledge and information worldwide to further community-based research and has also served as an Advisor to the Commonwealth Foundation, UNDP, and numerous other international agencies.

Dr. Kaustuv Kanti Bandyopadhyay is the Director of Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), India. For more than 30 years he has been working on citizen participation in urban and rural contexts. He is an internationally acclaimed researcher, trainer, and facilitator of organisation development and participatory planning, monitoring, evaluation, and impact assessment. Currently, he is the Co-Coordinator of Asia Democracy Research Networks (ADRN) and serves on the Governing Council of Asia Democracy Network (ADN).



As Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) completes its 40 years, it recommits to continue institutional strengthening and capacity development support to civil society and non-profits with a special focus on new-generation civil society and non-profit groups. Between August and December 2021, PRIA will be convening [PRIA@40 Conversations](#) with partners, associates, supporters, experts, investors and colleagues, drawn from civil society, government, business, media and academia, to share ideas and experiences that can help 're-imagine' PRIA, its interventions and the world in the coming period.

In this context, PRIA co-convened a digital symposium on [Inspiring Leadership of Mayors and Councillors for Inclusive Urbanisation](#) on 6 October 2021 in partnership with [National Institute of Urban Affairs \(NIUA\)](#) and [Commonwealth Local Governance Forum \(CLGF\)](#). The webinar was held virtually and attended by 43 participants. The session was moderated by **Dr. Kaustuv Kanti Bandyopadhyay** (Director, PRIA).

The symposium focused on the following key questions:

- What lessons can be drawn from efforts to inform and strengthen the leadership of city mayors and councillors?
- In what ways can mayors and councillors be supported to provide inspiring and responsive leadership to the governance of cities for all its citizens?

The discussion began with a short presentation by **Ms. Nikita Rakhyani** (Youth Trainer, PRIA) on PRIA's work on different thematic areas over 40 years. The speaker also introduced the participants to PRIA's work related to the theme of [Sustainable Urban Future](#). As early as the 1980s, PRIA recognised the emerging urban challenges through exploring the realities of urban pavement dwellers in the city of Mumbai in partnership with the [Society For The Promotion of Area Resource Centers \(SPARC\)](#) as well as urban informal workers in Indian cities deprived of social security benefits.

Through addressing capacity deficits in elected representatives and councilors through innovative training and learning methodologies, mobilising networks of women councilors pan-India and generating evidence and conducting advocacy for greater and faster devolution of funds, functions, and functionaries, PRIA has advanced its portfolio in the domain of urban governance, since then.

Dr. Kaustuv Bandyopadhyay took the presentation forward and said that despite a constitutional mandate, the devolution of funds, functions and functionaries is grossly inadequate and interrupted. The vision of local leadership responsive to citizens is yet to be realised. The recent pandemic highlighted the leadership vacuum in urban local bodies. He said, '*National and provincial level learning programmes are often sectoral and not focused on leadership and institutional development of urban local bodies*'.

After his presentation, Dr. Bandyopadhyay invited the panellists to share their reflections.

Ms. Lucy Slack (Acting Secretary-General, Commonwealth Local Governance Forum (CLGF), UK) spoke about her organisation CLGF that covers countries across 54 member states in Africa, Asia, the Americas, the Pacific, and Europe and focuses on development and democracy. The key focus of their work is 'empowerment' concentrated on democratisation at the local level and ensuring that local governments can deliver effectively for citizens on the ground.

Their work assumes importance with the arrival of the pandemic, which has affected the way local governments in different parts of the world function. Urban local bodies need to be capacitated to address the main challenges at the local level due to climate change, rapid urbanisation, and for accelerating progress towards achieving Sustainable Development Goals which governments have signed up to. The process of decentralisation is incomplete, and it is very difficult for local leaders to play a full role in development if they don't have the powers and the functions and resources to conduct their work effectively. That concern has to be addressed. There has been a focus on establishing multi-level governance which is increasingly complex, however, is born out of a need to bring all the stakeholders together and engage with the citizens on the ground. We need to focus more on building leadership skills.

Capacity-building efforts at the local level must be continuous because there is a possibility of change in the composition of local bodies once the elected term is over. While developing the framework for capacity building, there is also a need to recognise the value of peer-to-peer mentoring and support and empower the networks so that they can continuously support stakeholders on the ground. A critical area of development that needs work is on developing and recognising women in leadership as role models for young people to meet development targets and to support inclusive leadership. The importance of social media and leadership models in the local government also needs to be recognised where young people as leaders can engage with local governments and be involved in the decision-making in their local communities.

“the pandemic has put local government on the forefront”

Hon'ble Ms. Madelaine Yorobe Alfelor (Mayor, Iriga City, Philippines) admitted, from her experience, that the job of a local chief executive or urban elected representative has become difficult in the wake of the pandemic which has impacted societies, communities, and countries across the world while emphasising on the need of adopting a multi-stakeholder approach in urban governance. Multiple definitions of leadership exist, but they all converge in the theory that leaders can make strategic and visionary decisions and convince others to follow those decisions. Even though the notion of leadership as 'innate' or 'in-born exist, it can also be learned and improved through various interventions and activities. The speaker gave the example from the Philippines where the establishment of a local government academy has paved the way for delivering innovative training solutions anchored on the principles of transparency, accountability, participatory and responsive local governance.

Leadership should be flexible and should have the capacity to adapt to the demands of the changing and progressive times. The persons occupying positions in urban governance should also be trained to effectively work together with the city departments, local officials, employees, and the community itself. Advocating for a strong partnership with the business community, national and local government, the speaker highlighted the need for adopting a multi-stakeholder approach to drive anti-poverty strategies in the development plan of cities.

Inclusive urbanisation, which entails making a city safe, resilient, and sustainable, is a challenge for all local leaders especially in the current context of the pandemic. The challenge stands magnified in countries like the Philippines affected by natural disasters (typhoons), hence innovative governance strategies have to be developed or adopted to strengthen the capacity to cope with the effects of calamities as well; policies and programmes should be developed and localised to ensure sustainable and inclusive urbanisation. It is important as a

leader to have the ability to communicate with the people. It is also advisable for local leaders to incorporate and document best practices.

“in modern times, the concept of leadership of city mayors and councilors have been broadened”

Mr. Hitesh Vaidya (Director, National Institute of Urban Affairs, India) highlights the objective of NIUA which is to build a bridge between the practice and policy. He brought the attention of the participants to lessons learnt during the pandemic. Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) were looked upon as ‘heroes’ and their reliability and responsibility towards pandemic management were much-lauded and appreciated.

The speaker appealed to the participants to not view cities only as an engine of economic growth but also in terms of inclusiveness and sustainability. There is a need to value and invest in human capital and revisit institutional frameworks and structures if a shift in perception is to be achieved. In order to work on urban issues, it is important to strengthen local leadership through data and empiricism and also build the capacity of elected urban representatives to make evidence-informed decisions. In addition to working with numbers, it was also critical to strengthen the local leadership in the domain of technology. We need to make linkages with policy instruments and planning instruments at the local level, which is currently jumbled up according to the speaker.

Coordination between different departments within the local bodies should be more responsive. The reference to health and other Governmental departments coming together during the pandemic to get the work done aptly demonstrates the need for inter-departmental coordination. At the city level the tendency to dissect different issues into ‘departments’ can only be avoided if urban practitioners look at the city as one spatial unit.

Enabling urban local bodies to function through capacity-building efforts should not be transactional. While developing capacities of ULBs, there is a need to develop performance indicators to evaluate capacity as an outcome. Leadership development and learning should be easy and accessible with ample time given to the ‘learner’ to absorb new changes. The language of capacity building has to change to reflect an understanding of the pedagogy of the people. We need to deconstruct the complex language used by experts.

“we don't want cities to move forward; rather we want cities to be forward-looking”

Dr. Michelle R. Maziwisa (Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Dullah Omar Institute) presented the case from South Africa, which is a quasi-federal system of governance where certain powers vested with local governance mechanisms cannot be encroached on by the other spheres of government and are essentially protected by the Constitution. It follows a power-sharing arrangement at the level of local governance similar to India.

In terms of demography, almost half of the population lives in poverty and within this population, women are at a greater disadvantage. There are women-led households, and they experience poverty and issues of safety and security on the streets. More vulnerable are children, less likely to have access to safe and secure places and while accessing public places like sanitation. The constitution and legislation ensure that everyone has access to government and enjoys representative and participatory democracy at all levels of government.

Communities need to be provided with an opportunity to express their views either verbally or in writing and then considered by the municipalities. There are different mechanisms used in the context of South Africa to strengthen the leadership of city mayors and councilors. Constitution requires three spheres of government that operate within the context of cooperative and coherent government. There is a constitutional obligation on the provincial government to support local Governance. Support in the form of administration where the municipality is unable to discharge its functions or in passing budget provides the local bodies much-required capacity to channelise their resources and time in a productive manner. There is also a mechanism for seeking judicial interference, whereby several cases have come up from businesses and communities challenging and requiring the Constitutional Court to impose an obligation on the national government to intervene in municipalities as a measure of local governance.

The district development model, which requires the district government to work together with the local government that is within its jurisdiction and provide support to them, especially towards integrated development plan is another step in the right direction. The South African Local Government Association organises various training workshops and gives continuous support to its members throughout the year. In terms of academic institutions, at the University of the Western Cape, a postgraduate diploma has been introduced, which seeks to train practitioners on the legal and constitutional systems.

Mr. Tikender Singh Panwar (Former Deputy Mayor, Shimla Municipal Corporation, India) emphasised the gaps in the institutional framework of urban governance in the context of Indian cities. Two important provisions were included in the 74th Constitutional Amendment there should be elections to the local bodies every five years in urban centers and 18 subjects should be transferred to cities of which city planning is an important one. Unfortunately, 26 years after the first urban commission, no other commission has been constituted. So, the focus should also turn towards identifying the reasons for the lack of initiative in constituting commissions. Urban development happens to be a provincial subject, where the state government takes the decision. Barring a few states, this arrangement is generic. The Governments did not want to share the responsibility of city planning because it may have led to a large-scale capital accumulation with the development authorities.

Most of the executive decisions in the cities are taken by a bureaucrat from the provincial government and the term of the mayors are often restricted to shorter periods, which goes on to prove that the provincial governments do not empower the mayors. A key recommendation was to democratically hand over the city planning process to cities and to empower the elected city council and the people through structured training processes to reclaim the spaces in the cities for city governments.

“train the mayors so that they can claim their spaces in city governance”

Hon’ble Dr. Beena Philip (Mayor, Kozhikode Municipal Corporation, India) shared her experiences of being a mayor and highlighted the theme of ‘inclusive governance’. She began by listing the initiatives undertaken by the Calicut Municipality towards ensuring the safety of women and building toilet facilities for women. Women`s-only toilets have been built in spaces that are not secluded and where police patrolling happens regularly. Now they have planned to build parks for the senior citizens and differently abled people, with the help of the social justice department, which can also alternate as a therapy center operating in open spaces.

The speaker also highlighted two important initiatives undertaken by the Calicut Municipality. The scheme, 'Vayomitram' provides health care and support to elderly above the age of 65 years residing at Corporation/Municipal Areas in the state in the form of palliative care, counseling and referral services.

During the Corona pandemic, telemedicine consultation was conducted where medicines were taken to homes through volunteers or ASHA workers. There were homeless people in the city of Kozhikode who have found a safe roof above their head through the Udayam Home Project which aims at the comprehensive rehabilitation of street dwellers, homeless, destitute, and adult orphans.

“when we think of inclusiveness, we have to think broadly to include women, elderly and disabled”

Meet our panellists....



[From L to R: Dr. Kaustuv Kanti Bandyopadhyay, Ms. Lucy Slack, Dr. Hitesh Vaidya, Dr. Rajesh Tandon, Hon'ble Ms. Madelaine Yorobe Alfelor, Dr. Michelle R. Maziwisa, Dr. Bernadia Irawati Tjandradewi, Mr. Tikender Panwar, Ms. Beena Philip]

Dr. Bernadia Irawati Tjandradewi (Secretary-General, UCLG-ASPAC) presented her experience of working with the leaders and mayors making positive changes to the communities through incorporating voices of the community and ensuring the participation of the people in the development of the cities. Her organisation has been working with local governments and has, in the past, promoting women's participation in local governance. They have been specifically targeting newly appointed mayors and leaders who can share the challenges they are facing with each other and find solutions through knowledge-sharing. Through an academy for mayors, networks are created between the mayors and local leaders which results in sustainable learning and information dissemination efforts. The pandemic has

been a huge challenge for the local leaders but they should ensure that they listen to the people.

“leaders must be ethical and above all a good listener”

Moving on to the next segment, **Dr. Bandyopadhyay** opened the floor for Q&A.

Q 1: How to resolve issues related to the dynamics between the provincial government and the city government?

Dr. Maziwisa replied that decentralisation was a sensitive and delicate issue. One of the primary reasons was that when certain powers rest with one level of government and others rest with a different government, it can make the relation between them complicated and complex.

Q 2: What happens to ward committees in cities where the population is not more than 3 lakhs?

Mr. Tikender opined that it was easy to hold ward committees in such places where the population is less than 3 lakhs and to decentralise powers, but there was a need to identify ways to empower the urban local bodies and ward members in such situations. He suggested a revenue-sharing model whereby 10% of the money collected back could go back to the ward committees, it could create a lot of confidence among members and representatives. **Dr. Beena** spoke about how the thinking process of mayors tends to be unidirectional. She recommends a multi-dimensional approach to public works, which not only looks at the marginalised but also the rich.

Dr. Rajesh Tandon (Founder-President, PRIA) opened his remarks by pointing to the question of leadership. When we talk about elected representatives, politically and democratically elected councilors in city governments, most of them have demonstrated enough leadership at the local level as a result of which they were elected. However, as soon as they assume the office of elected representatives, the first contradiction happens with the political party system and hence most of the energy goes into preventing the opposition from being in opposition. The second fault line is between elected leadership and administrative jurisdiction. The third fault line is for the leaders, the mayors, the councilors to recognise that they need to build bridges and move beyond a formal relationship with their citizens. Informal connections make a lot of difference to the way cities are governed. In the case of councilors and mayors, the collaborative network has not evolved beyond the province and within the province; the fault line of the political parties has kept them aloof. The governance of the city without the leadership of the councilors and mayors is not sustainable. We need the expertise they bring but they have to be accountable to the elected leadership.

“empowerment of the institution is inadequate”

The symposium ended with **Dr. Bandyopadhyay** delivering the vote of thanks.

4.00 pm to 4.15 pm

Welcome and Introduction to PRIA@40 Programmes and Conversation

Moderator: Dr. Kaustuv Kanti Bandyopadhyay, Director, Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), India

4.15 pm to 5.30 pm

Panellists -

- Dr. Bernadia Irawati Tjandradewi, UCLG-ASPAC
- Hon'ble Dr. Beena Philip, Kozhikode Municipal Corporation, India
- Mr. Hitesh Vaidya, Director, National Institute of Urban Affairs, India
- Ms. Lucy Slack, Commonwealth Local Governance Forum (CLGF), UK
- Hon'ble Ms Madelaine Yorobe Alfelor, Iriga City, Philippines
- Mr. Tikender Singh Panwar, Former Deputy Mayor, Shimla Municipal Corporation, India

5:30 pm to 5.45 pm

Open Discussion/ Q&A

5.45 pm to 5.55 pm

Key Takeaways

Dr. Rajesh Tandon, Founder-President, Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), India

5.55 pm to 6.00 pm

Vote of Thanks and Closure

Dr. Kaustuv Kanti Bandyopadhyay, Director, PRIA, India

PRIA@40 EVENTS

DATE	TITLE	THEME
12 August 2021	Youth Participation and Active Citizenship	Citizen Participation
20 August 2021	Planning for Urban Informalities	Sustainable Urban Future
31 August 2021	Accelerating Capacities in Civil Society and Non-Profits	Empowering Civil Society
2 September 2021	Nurturing Civil Society Partnerships in Uncertain Times	Empowering Civil Society
15 September 2021	Redesigning Civil Society Ecosystem: From Local to Global	Empowering Civil Society
28 September 2021	Unlearning Patriarchy: Expanding Impacts of Gender Training	Making the Gender Leap
30 September 2021	Investing in Civil Society Innovations	Empowering Civil Society
01 October 2021	Community-led Adaptations: Water is Life	Decentralised Community Governance
06 October 2021	Inspiring Leadership of Mayors and Councillors for Inclusive Urbanisation	Sustainable Urban Future