



URBAN GOVERNANCE DIALOGUE

Transforming Urban Governance



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EQUIPPING UTTAR PRADESH'S LOCAL ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

Over the past two decades, Praja Foundation has been working towards **strengthening accountable governance**. It undertakes data-driven research on civic issues to inform citizens, the media, and government administrations. Praja also works closely with Elected Representatives (ERs) to equip them to address inefficiencies in work processes, bridge information gaps, and mobilise corrective advocacy for change.

Praja initiated its **Capacity Building workshops** nearly a decade ago at the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC). Since then, it has organised over 100 training sessions across India for councillors on various municipal programmes.

In March 2025, Praja Foundation conducted capacity-building workshops for **Elected Representatives of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation** and the **Meerut Municipal Corporation**, focusing on improving councillors' understanding of **the Guwahati Municipal Corporation Act, 1971** and the **Uttar Pradesh Municipal Corporation Act**.



Lucknow Nagar Nigam



Varanasi Nagar Nigam



Gorakhpur Nagar Nigam

Praja conducted **capacity-building workshops for Elected Representatives of the Lucknow, Varanasi, and Gorakhpur Municipal Corporations** in November 2025. The workshops aimed to strengthen their understanding of **Municipal Finance** and **Town Planning**.



Councillors of the Lucknow Municipal Corporation during the workshop on Municipal Finance.

P. D. Hariprasad, former Deputy Controller of Accounts in Delhi Municipal Corporation, **facilitated the session on 'Municipal Finance' in Lucknow**. For these workshops, training modules were specifically designed to simplify the budget document for the Councillors in Lucknow. **Ninad Sansare**, Associate Director of Urban Design Research Institute (UDRI) along with **Prerna Yadav**, Senior Research Associate from Urban Design Research Institute (UDRI), **facilitated the session on 'Spatial Planning for Varanasi and Gorakhpur Municipal Corporations.'**



Councillors of the Varanasi Municipal Corporation during the workshop on Spatial Planning

In July 2023, Praja Foundation signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Directorate of Urban Local Bodies (DULB) and the Urban Development Department (UDD), Government of Uttar Pradesh (GoUP), for **capacity building of Elected Representatives on the Uttar Pradesh Municipal Corporation Act, 1959, and Municipal Finance**. Praja developed city-specific modules for all the selected cities to simplify the understanding of Municipal Finance. In addition, UDRI, along with Praja, developed modules for the selected cities to simplify the understanding of Town Planning. Training module booklets were provided to all councillors during the workshops.

FROM VISION TO ACTION



Members of the Praja and UDRI teams with councillors of the Gorakhpur Municipal Corporation

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Capacity Building workshops have been conducted in UP since 2023



CAPACITY BUILDING SESSIONS

The workshop in **Lucknow** was organised on 12th November 2025 and primarily focused on **Municipal Finance**, with an emphasis on reading and understanding the **municipal budget**. The workshops in the cities of **Varanasi** and **Gorakhpur** were organised on 14th and 15th November 2025, respectively. Both workshops focused on understanding **Spatial Planning and its application at the local level** for Municipal Councillors.

The workshop in Gorakhpur was attended by the **Mayor of Gorakhpur, Manglesh Kumar Srivastava**, along with the Additional Municipal Commissioner, Durgesh Mishra.

The workshop in Lucknow was conducted by Praja Foundation, while the workshops in Varanasi and Gorakhpur were organised in collaboration with UDRI. The sessions were initiated with an engaging keynote address by **Aviral Dubey, Program Manager at Praja Foundation**, outlining the structure and content of the sessions.

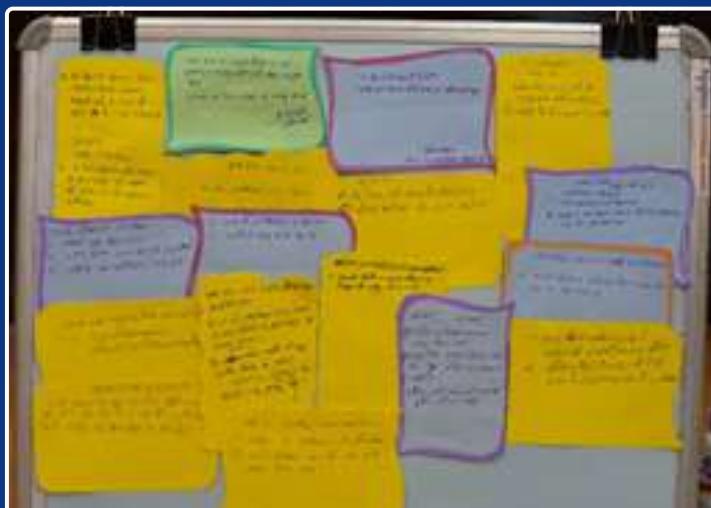


Praja Foundation and UDRI Teams

LUCKNOW WORKSHOP

An activity was conducted to understand the expectations of the councillors from the session. Following the activity, a pre-test was administered to assess the baseline understanding of the councillors. Aviral explained the purpose and methodology of the pre-test. The responses were collected to inform facilitation priorities and to measure learning outcomes.

This was followed by an overview of the Municipal Corporation's departmental structure, with an explanation of the functions assigned to each department. Hariprasad explained the core components of the municipal budget, with financial concepts illustrated through comparisons with household budgeting. Councillors actively raised questions and sought clarifications on technical aspects.



Expectation-setting activity with councillors



Praja team during the workshop



Councillors of the Lucknow Municipal Corporation



During the workshop, a detailed explanation of the procedural stages involved in budget preparation was provided:

departmental proposal drafting → consolidation → approval → implementation

The linkages between the municipal budget and the recommendations of the Central and State Finance Commissions were also clarified.

Thematic discussions were held on:

1. Park maintenance (expenditure, contracts, and monitoring)
2. Vending zones (financial and administrative frameworks)
3. Utilisation of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds (procedures and alignment with municipal priorities).

Facilitators shared practical examples and explained the relevant statutory provisions governing these areas.



Councillors actively participating in activities during the session

Interactive activities were also conducted, including a group exercise on identifying budget heads and sub-heads for key service areas such as sanitation, water supply, roads, street lighting, and public health. Councillors were asked to identify whether the heads belonged to Revenue or Capital categories. They were also able to distinguish between income and expenditure segments from the provided heads.

These activities enhanced the councillors' ability to read and understand municipal budget documents.

VARANASI AND GORAKHPUR WORKSHOPS

The Workshops in Varanasi and Gorakhpur were organised for the councillors to provide an understanding of the Spatial Planning practices at the Regional, City, Zone as well as neighbourhood level. The sessions were designed to help them understand the impact of large-scale plans on their respective wards through interactive activities.



Praja team with councillors of the Varanasi Municipal Corporation

Praja and UDRI teams with councillors of the Gorakhpur Municipal Corporation



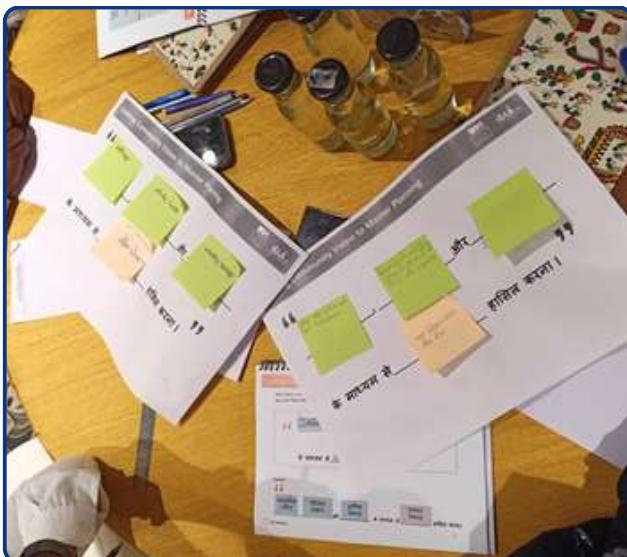
Manglesh Kumar Srivastava, Mayor of the Gorakhpur Municipal Corporation

Councillors understanding the Spatial Planning concepts

The sessions gave an overview of the extent of urbanisation over the years and the planning projects currently being undertaken in each city. This was followed by an introduction to the relevant planning guidelines, including the Uttar Pradesh Urban Planning and Development Act, 1973, and the Urban and Regional Development Plans Formulation and Implementation (URDPFI) Guidelines, 2014. The session further explained the institutional requirements for plan preparation, such as the role of the Development Authority, and an overview of the Uttar Pradesh Building Construction and Development Bye-laws, 2025. The workshop also focused on “how to read a master plan” through an interactive exercise that involved identifying key components of a map, such as legends, direction, scale, and other essential elements.

VARANASI AND GORAKHPUR WORKSHOPS

The councillors were further engaged through exercises that encouraged them to articulate a vision for their respective cities and break it down into simple, achievable steps. They further developed these ideas by identifying the appropriate geographic scale for each step. Councillors in both cities participated actively and presented thoughtful ideas relevant to their local contexts.



Councillors of the Varanasi Municipal Corporation completed the activity



Praja and UDRI teams after the workshop in Gorakhpur

Key highlights from the sessions:

- The workshop saw participation from Councillors from different parties and also members of Executive Committee of Municipal Corporation.
- The sessions strengthened councillors' understanding of Municipal Finance and Spatial Planning,
- **Councillors shared positive feedback**, noting that the sessions were beneficial in enhancing their understanding of critical gaps in budgets and planning practices.
- Analysis of the pre- and post-tests conducted by the Praja and UDRI teams indicates that **most participating councillors were able to address gaps in their understanding** of basic finance and town planning concepts.

Way Forward:

- The workshop aimed to support Elected Representatives through capacity building, with the objective of strengthening city-level functioning and contributing to improved governance outcomes.
- With each election cycle bringing in newly elected councillors, there is a clear need for continued support to help them perform their roles effectively. Praja will continue to conduct capacity-building workshops for councillors to address this need.
- Regular training programmes for councillors on various aspects of Municipal Finance and budgeting are recommended, given the breadth and complexity of the subject.
- Periodic follow-up meetings with councillors are suggested to reinforce learning and support improved functioning.

TESTIMONIALS

“The budget session provided valuable insights that will support development efforts in our ward. The information shared by Praja Foundation was clear and practical, and it will help us accelerate progress and serve our community more effectively.”

— Ranjit Singh, Councillor, Ward 70, Lucknow Municipal Corporation

“The workshop was very informative and provided valuable learning opportunities. We would like such workshops to be conducted regularly for continuous skill development. I plan to apply the learnings from the session for the improvement of Ward 79.”

— Kanak Lata Mishra, Councillor, Ward 79, Varanasi Municipal Corporation

“The workshop was excellent, building on a previous session that was equally beneficial. It taught effective communication strategies for ward development and engaging officials to implement suggestions. Councillors play a crucial first-step role in the master plan process, like the base of a ladder conveying ideas upward.”

— Seema Verma, Councillor, Ward 47, Varanasi Municipal Corporation

“The workshop was very beneficial for new councillors like me, as it provided essential information that was previously lacking. I have learned how to propose development works and implement them effectively in my ward. With regard to urban planning, I plan to address local issues such as missing roads and water-related problems to improve basic facilities.”

— Maya Nisha, Councillor, Ward 18, Gorakhpur Municipal Corporation

We would appreciate your views and feedback based on the information shared above. Please feel free to reach out to us at info@praja.org.



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