



Councillors' Capacity Building Workshop in Srinagar

On 8th February 2022, Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) and Praja Foundation signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in presence of Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor, Srinagar, with the vision to improve urban governance in Srinagar by '**Empowering citizen participation through enhanced e-governance platform**' and '**Capacity Building Programmes for SMC and citizens (Youth) of Srinagar**'.

Urban governance in Srinagar is going through a revolutionary transition with the implementation of the 74th Constitution Amendment Act, 1992 (74th CAA, 1992), in the recent past. Several reforms have been introduced by the Government of Union Territory (UT) of Jammu & Kashmir to enhance urban governance in the cities of the UT.

Noting this transition, Praja Foundation in collaboration with SMC had conducted a comprehensive study to map the status of implementation of the 74th CAA and the levers and barriers of various facets of the urban governance system in practice in Srinagar. This involved interviews and discussions with the Mayor, Commissioner, Councillors of SMC, civil society representatives and, ward visits to capture the ground situation along with interaction with citizens.

Praja in collaboration with SMC has planned to undertake specific programme interventions to strengthen urban governance in Srinagar:

- 1. Empowering citizen participation through an enhanced e-Governance platform:** Praja will empower citizens by creating an e-governance platform, which will help **citizens to know what their city governments are doing and enable them to communicate their demands effectively**. Praja and SMC have joined hands to include the following in the existing mechanisms of its e-governance interventions like Programme Management System (PMS), Citizen grievance redressal mechanism, Citizens' needs and wants and Feedback system.

- 2. Capacity building of city elected representatives, administration, and youth:**

i Elected Representatives (ER) and Administrators: Praja had conducted an **expectation setting workshop** with selected elected representatives on 21st February 2022 to design need-based capacity building workshops for city elected representatives in Srinagar. An interactive session was organised where a questionnaire was



provided to the ERs through which they expressed their requirements in the training/workshop sessions. The workshop was attended by the Mayor and Joint Commissioner of Srinagar along with the senior councillors. All the participants were very interactive where they suggested to include sessions on funds, functions and functionaries of SMC, duties and responsibilities of councillors, etc.

Based on the suggestions received from the councillors in the expectation setting workshop, Praja has designed a **Councillor Workshop** module which was held between 29th and 31st March 2022, being a first of its kind, in Srinagar. The module was divided into eight sessions over the three days consisting of understanding the **three tiers of government, understanding the 74th Constitution Amendment Act, functioning of committees, method of reading an act, history of Jammu and Kashmir Municipal Corporation Act, 2000 (JKMC Act, 2000), roles and responsibilities of councillors as per Act, the importance of deliberation, devices of deliberation, understanding departments of SMC**, etc.



Day 1

The Mayor, Deputy Mayor along with 43 councillors, the Municipal Commissioner, Joint Commissioners and other officials attended the workshop on the first day. The workshop was inaugurated by the Mayor and the Municipal Commissioner with their welcome speech. The first session was held by introducing SMC and Praja Foundation to the participants after which an exercise on capturing the expectation of the councillors from the entire workshop was done.

In session 2, the three-tier government system of India was explained which included functions of central, state and city government along with the Union Territory Government system. This was done with the help of the 74th Constitution Amendment Act, 1992.

Session 3 included the method of reading a Bare Act where participants were explained from titles to the interpretation of sections with the help of snippets from the JKMC Act. Every part of an Act was carefully explained for the participants to understand later when they read the JKMC Act. Specific chapters and sections were mentioned to the participants which would be crucial for them while being a councillor in Srinagar like Obligatory and Discretionary Duties of the corporation, functions of committees, devices of deliberations, etc.

Day 2

On the second day, the Deputy Mayor and the Municipal Secretary welcomed the other 34 councillors to the workshop. The welcoming was followed by the start of the fourth session where the history and amendments of the JKMC Act 2000 were discussed. Several participants brought their copy of the Act for reference which helped them to understand the Act better.

Session 5 was opened with an activity where the participants identified the obligatory and discretionary functions of SMC as mentioned in the Act. This was followed by the explanations of each and every function mentioned in the Act and whether it is performed by the corporation or some other agency of the UT. This was important for the councillors so as to understand the devolution of funds, functions and functionaries mentioned in the 74th Constitution Amendment Act, 1992.

In Session 6 the importance and working of various committees were discussed. At first, the existence of the committees was discussed as mentioned in their Act and in practice. People were very interactive where they talked about their grievances regarding the inability to gather proper information on the roles and functions of committees. Participants were also introduced to the sphere of business of committee meetings as per the JKMC Act 2000.



Session 7 included the importance and process of deliberation was discussed taking the help of the Corporation Procedure Rules (CPR). Various devices were discussed with the help of which councillors will be able to deliberate better in the council meetings. However, the councillors brought to light the point that council meetings were rarely held in the corporation which reduces the forum where they can raise the questions.



Day 3

On the last day, 32 councillors were welcomed by the Deputy Mayor, the Joint Commissioners and the Municipal Secretary of SMC. The objective of that day was to discuss the structure and function of various departments of the SMC.

This session started with explaining the website of SMC and its various tabs which would be helpful for the councillors. Later, various officials participated in explaining the structure and functions of their respective departments. Topics like the strength of the corporation, revenue sources, building bye-laws, and services like sanitation, solid waste management, enforcement, town planning, roads, etc were laid down by the officials.

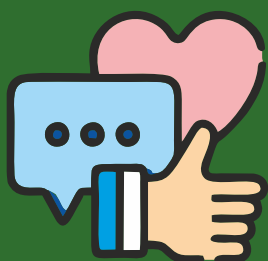
The session ended with questions raised by the councillors regarding the services and grievances from their respective wards, which were responded by the corporation officials. Discussions were also done on the protection of the city environment.

The workshop was concluded by a thanking and encouraging speech by the Municipal Commissioner where he also mentioned the various e-governance progress being done by the corporation which would be helpful for the councillors.



FEEDBACK

Councillors and officials alike mentioned that they understood the entire structure of the government in a simplified manner. Major feedback from the councillors that was received was that they have understood the functioning of the corporation as per the duties mentioned in their corporation act. They suggested that the officials may also be included in a combined workshop for better communication between the councillors and the officials. A few of them also requested personal assistance in future. Councillors suggested resuming regular council meetings and the formation of Ward Committees for enhancing their forum for deliberation. They also brought to light that the standing committees be made functional and duties be explained and revised at regular intervals.



We would like to thank Praja foundation for conducting this 3-day workshop. This has given us a holistic understanding of our duties and powers, the functioning of corporation and departments of the SMC. We hope to have many such workshops in the future to help us deliver the mandate given to us by the citizens of Srinagar.

Councillor, Srinagar Municipal Corporation

- ii Citizens (youth):** Internships/Fellowships are also be planned to engage the 'youth' with the city government, wherein the city government will receive research & data support, and the youth will gain a substantial understanding of the functioning of the city government and participate in city governance processes.

The first cohort is being planned where fellows will be carefully chosen, through a structured selection process. These fellows will then be divided into pairs of two and each pair will be allotted specific wards to work on, with councillors and administration of SMC for a period of 10 to 12 months after rigorous training by Praja.

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