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COHORT II

11 Interns

3 Months

9 Op-Eds

Over the last two decades Praja has been working towards enabling accountable governance. We conduct data driven research on civic issues, and inform citizens, media, and government administration and work with elected representatives to equip them to address inefficiencies in their work processes, bridging the information gaps, and mobilising them in taking corrective measures advocating for change.

In February 2021, Praja Foundation rolled out their second cohort of three-month digital research internship programme. The research internship engaged graduates and postgraduates to work on research projects and live projects in Praja. The internship provided interns with an opportunity to work on topical issues in urban local governance and to contribute to publication of research papers and reports.

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Financial Autonomy-
The key to robust self-governance
at the time of the Pandemic

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> Praja Foundation has offered me an immersive 3 months internship experience in the domain of urban local finance. Although, I had some knowledge about this field before joining the internship, my knowledge has increased manifold. Moreover, this internship has cultivated in me resilience and patience through the process of data extraction, which is not as easy as it may sound.

Shaivya Harit, Municipal Finance Research Intern, Praja Foundation

Shaivya is pursuing MA in Urban Policy and Governance from Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. She holds a bachelors degree in Economics Honours from Delhi University. Her interest area lies in urban local governance and how to make participatory governance a cornerstone of the development mandate. She is also an environmentalist with keen interest in solid waste management issues, along with a social worker, inclined to work for the cause of the underprivileged children.

Financial Autonomy- The Key to Robust Self-Governance at the Time of the Pandemic

The COVID 19 crisis has hit India hard. We most often come across the role played by the Centre and the State governments in handling the crisis. However, are these two the only major players in handling the crisis? Certainly not! We mustn't forget the important role played by our local governments in controlling the pandemic, particularly in the urban areas where the COVID numbers are increasing rapidly. Along with their usual function of ensuring water supply, sanitation and solid waste management, the local governments are involved in the task of sanitising containment zones, conducting household surveys in containment zones to identify persons with COVID symptoms, running COVID helplines, readying their hospitals to serve as COVID centres etc. They are thus, acting as frontline warriors in the fight against the Pandemic. However, are they adequately empowered to fulfil their functions effectively?

The 74th Constitutional Amendment Act mandates the creation of urban local governments in the States for effective local governance. The States are required to devolve the 18 functions given under the 12th Schedule of the Constitution to the local governments and one of the 18 functions is Public Health, which has become crucial at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, have all the States devolved the Public Health function entirely to the local governments?

According to Praja Foundation's Urban Governance Index 2020, only 4 States have devolved the Public Health function entirely to the local governments. These states are Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Odisha and Tamil Nadu, while in other States this function is either with the State government or with multiple other agencies.

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Moreover, in order to perform this function effectively, the local governments need sound finances, which involves effective devolution of financial powers to them from the States. However, most of our local governments are resource crunched and are financially dependent on the Centre and the States.

↘ As per Praja's Urban Governance Index 2020, 17 out of 28 States have not given independent authority to the local governments to revise the existing tax rates/ charges or to introduce new ones. Moreover, 14 out of the 28 States have not even given them the power to independently approve their budget!

↘ Further, a report by Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER) corroborates the fact that the local governments' financial independence has been on the decline. According to the report, the own source revenues as percent of GDP of 37 Municipal Corporations under study (including the large ones – Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Chennai, Kolkata and Ahmedabad) have decreased from 0.33 percent in 2012-13 to 0.23 percent in 2017-18.

One of the prominent reasons for the decrease in the share of own revenue for these municipal corporations is the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax, that deprived the local governments of one of the most buoyant sources of revenue that they had: Octroi. Apart from Octroi, other local taxes such as advertisement tax, local body tax etc. also got subsumed under GST. Apart from the Tax Revenue, the non-tax revenues of the local governments are also not satisfactory and have huge potential for improvement.

What then needs to be done?

The need of the hour is to realise the importance of the local governments, the third tier of government in India's federal setup, in the fight against the pandemic. One such success story is that of Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation, that has been applauded for its efforts in controlling the second wave of Coronavirus in Mumbai.

The BMC has taken massive initiatives in creating ward level war rooms equipped with doctors, ambulances and all the necessary staff to decentralise the process of handling the crisis. This has resulted in greater communication between the local government and the citizens, where the citizens approach the war rooms for seeking assistance and are guided accordingly to isolation centres or hospitals. Hospitals are further equipped with adequate oxygen supplies. The current vaccination drive undertaken by the local government has been added to its list of efforts. The steps taken by MCGM have thus been deemed worthy of emulation by other local governments as well.

However, one pertinent question to ask is "How has MCGM been able to achieve this?" Though there may be many factors playing their part, the crucial ones are worthy of mention.

↘ Firstly, the Maharashtra government has devolved the Public Health function entirely to the city government. Thus, MCGM has complete autonomy in handling the public health crisis in the city.

↘ Moreover, MCGM is the richest Municipal Corporation in India, with its own source of revenue, accounting for 73.06% of its total income (as of 2017-18). One of the reasons for this high share of own revenue in its revenue basket is the greater financial autonomy that the city government enjoys. As per Praja's Urban Governance Index, 2020, MCGM has the independent authority to approve its budget and introduce new taxes/charges, along with revising the existing ones. This freedom has allowed the MCGM to grow financially by being less dependent on the Centre and the State.

Taking the learning from BMC's example, it is essential that our city governments become financially independent to deliver good governance at the grassroots level. This can be achieved in the following ways:

⇨ **By increasing the Tax Revenue through increased property tax collection:**

With Octroi gone, property tax has now become the dominant source of tax revenue for the city governments. Thus, it is incumbent on the city governments to increase their property tax income by ensuring that more properties that were hitherto not included, come under their coverage. Coverage of properties can be increased by following technological solutions such as GIS Mapping and integrating this with door to door surveys.

Moreover, more buoyant property valuation methods should be adopted such as Unit area and Capital Value Method, rather than the Rental Value Method.

Apart from this, billing and collection procedures should be simplified and digitised and strict enforcement for payments should be ensured. Cities such as Bengaluru, Raipur and Pune could serve as good examples to learn from.

⇨ **Increasing Non-Tax Revenue:**

Apart from taxes, the local governments must increase their Non-Tax Revenue by charging higher user fees and charges that would at least cover the operations and maintenance of public services.

⇨ **Becoming Credit Worthy to access market borrowings:**

With the constraints in raising own revenue, the capacity of the local governments to borrow from market sources also reduces considerably due to their decreased credit-worthiness. Thus, for the local governments to become credit worthy, essential reforms such as those needed to increase tax and non-tax revenue base of the municipalities need to be considered seriously.

⇨ **Constitutional Amendment to share the receipts of GST with the local governments:**

Moreover, a long-term solution for this would come when the Constitution of India is amended to share the revenues accruing from GST collections not just between the Centre and the States but also with the local governments.

⇨ **Amendments in the State Municipal Acts:**

Lastly, amendments in the State Municipal Acts need to be made to give the city governments independent authority to introduce new taxes/ charges, revise the existing ones and also approve their budget without State Government's intervention.

Concludingly, it is important for us to ask ourselves "How can we truly implement the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act in letter and spirit?" We certainly cannot do it by keeping our local governments dependent on the Centre and the States. For true decentralisation to take place, our local governments should be functionally and financially sound on their own. This could be achieved by initiating reforms starting from the city governments themselves to increase their own source revenue. Additionally, the state governments should step in to provide the local governments with greater financial autonomy.

With greater financial autonomy, would come greater power with the local governments to deliver robust self-governance to the citizens at the grassroots!

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Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) in India

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"This was my first experience as an intern. Due to the pandemic regulations and constraints, the internship was done from the home. Coming from humanities background, I had no experience in going through the immense data available at various government sources. This experience gave me a closer look on how urban government releases its accounts, the problems while identifying data and working on it accordingly. To sum it all, Praja has given me the rightful exposure in areas of research and urban finance."

Tanishqua Ghare, Municipal Finance Research Intern, Praja Foundation

Tanishqua is a graduate with a BA in Political Science from Ramnarain Ruia Autonomous College. Her research interests include urban finance and development.

Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) in India

Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) is a financial invention. It converts the gender commitments into fiscal commitments by applying a 'gender lens' to the recognised processes, resources and institutional mechanisms to arrive at a beneficial conclusion. Globally, GRB has emerged as a vital tool to create budgets and policies that are more gender responsive. From only one country within the mid-1980s to over 90 countries, the last twenty years have witnessed a remarkable endorsement of GRB as a valuable tool for engendering budgets and policies everywhere the planet.

Evolution of GRB
Tracing the Institutionalisation and beginning of Gender Budget

In India, UN Women and the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) together with the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP), and Ministry of Finance have played a major role to initiate Gender Budgeting.

In India, gender outlook on public expenditure had been gaining grounds after the publication of the Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in 1974.

Eighth Five-Year Plan (1992-97) highlighted for the first time the requirement to make sure a steady flow of funds from the developmental sectors to this forgotten gender.

The Ninth Five Year-Plan (1997-2002), adopted Women Component Plan as a part of the key strategies. It instructed both the central as well the state governments to confirm "not but at least 30 per cent of the funds/benefits to be earmarked to the women's related sectors". During the budget announcement (2000-01), the then Minister of Finance, clearly stated a serious need for improving the access of females to national resources and for ensuring their rightful place within the mainstream of economic development. A Task Force under an eminent official was set up to review all existing legislation and government schemes regarding the role of women within the economy. In 2001, as a follow up measure, the National Policy for their Empowerment was adopted by the MWCD. It clearly mentioned that time-bound action plans to be required by the Ministries

should specifically include among other things, a gender perspective within the budgeting process. Subsequently, Ministry of Finance constituted an Expert Group in 2003 to review the arrangement for Government Dealings. The sanctions of the Expert Group were taken note of, and the same was seen within the Finance Minister's budget speech in 2004-05.

In the next Budget Speech, the Finance Minister reaffirmed his commitment and introduced a Gender Budget Statement. Although this was another step in the budget-making in India, it was only the first, though baby paces, in course of time. All Departments were required to adopt gender budgets similarly. The primary meeting of the inter-departmental committee was held in December 2004. It instructed all departments/ministries to start a 'Gender Budgeting Cell' by 1st January, 2005. Also, MWCD instructed that a gender breakdown should be included from next year in annual reports and performance budgets. The Tenth Plan made the first move in combining these two effective concepts of Women's Component Plan and Gender Budgeting. It played a balancing role by ensuring that women could receive their rightful piece of the pie from all the women-related and general development sectors.

The Eleventh Plan (2007-12) opined that Gender Budgeting and Gender Outcome valuation would be encouraged by ministries/departments of both- Centre and the State. It efforted to create Gender Budgeting Cells of all told Ministries and Departments.

The Twelfth Plan noted that one in all the seven key elements to be addressed for Gender Equity was "Mainstreaming gender through Gender Budgeting".

In due course, the gender budgeting statement increased to incorporate nearly 33 demands for grants. The number of ministry departments with gender responsive budgeting cells gradually increased to 54. The gender statement also branched the gender sensitive allocations into specifically targeted programs for women (Part A) and public expenditure with pro-women allocations (Part B). The Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) developed a Handbook and a Manual in 2007 for training the officers of those Gender Budgeting Cells of Government of India. The Ministry has been engaged in conducting variety of trainings, workshops, one-to-one interactive discussions and development of resource material.

-Research and Knowledge building
Investing in research on GRB was necessary for India in 2000, when the new concept was extremely unclear for a meaningful public policy. GRB thus began in India with knowledge building and networking at the time when no GRB models existed within the context of developing countries.

- Systematic environment and methodology of GRB
Analytical mediums for categorising public expenditure through a gender lens were identified as follows:
i. Specifically targeted expenditure to women and girls.
ii. Pro-women allocations, which are the multiple expenditure schemes with a significant women's component.
iii. Remaining public expenditures that have gender – gap impacts.

- Economic federalism and decentralization
With the beginning of fiscal reorganisation, the scope of determining gender equality within federal settings was studied across the country which explored the possibilities of integrating gender outlook at the local level.

As mentioned above, one of the key focus areas of the MWCD has been advocating for setting up of Gender Budgeting Cells in all Ministries/Departments. It will strengthen the internal and external capacities and help in building expertise of the cells and its mainstreaming of schemes. The training program of the MWCD has, in many areas, enabled adoption of Gender Budgeting by State Governments. Moreover, independent institutions too at state level have been supported by MWCD, to develop domestically, GB skills. It has also started imparting training to various other sponsors. Gradually, focus has been particularly laid on institutionalising the process by creation of structures and instruments and capacity building of important staff for mainstreaming gender through it. MWCD also has facilitated the gender-neutral ministries like the Ministry of Urban Development, Ministry of Information Technology, Ministry of Power, Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation for engendering their schemes and programs for better planning and resource prioritisation.

Responsible Mechanism

The accountability mechanism for this process in India is yet to become strong. Under it, the Benefit Incidence Analysis (BIA) is a relatively simple and practical method for estimating the distribution effect of public expenditure on gender. BIA can also be conducted across different demographic and socio-economic groups. BIA research studies have been done for selected sectors like health, though such studies are also rare in the Indian context.

Conclusion

Following the adoption of GRB at national level, several states have also undertaken measures, to institutionalise GRB at sub-national level. Despite such noteworthy efforts, it is increasingly argued that the potential of GRB as a tool to mainstream gender issues remains largely untapped in India. One of the major reasons is the limited application of GRB at the sectoral level. Since it is within sectors that national policies are translated into specific programs and interventions. For GRB to be meaningful it is important to invest in goal-directed gender planning at the sectoral level, i.e., identifying gender gaps in the sector and then outlining prioritised action points to address the gender gaps. It is required to ensure that sector-specific plans and budgets are developed, implemented, and monitored in a gender responsive manner.

Given India's federal structure, any attempt to produce budgets will achieve little success unless focused efforts are made at the sub-national level. The lowest tier of governance in urban areas is the city government. While adopting GRB, there is a need to strengthen women's participation in the budgeting process. Conducting gender audits and thereby weaving them into the current policies and programs that are under the scheme of state and central governments like AMRUT, PMAY, etc. These policy guidelines suggest that the numerous outcomes of urban infrastructure projects be undertaken under these. But it remains a dream that is yet to become a reality in the near future.

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A Digital Dream: Digital Revolution in Urban Governance

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> Travelling through the advancement and laggardness of the city administration, it has been an upward learning journey at Praja which is unique in all its terms. Having gained exposure to the city governance in India, I suggest the municipal corporations to be more digitally empowered and thus be upgraded to the contemporary standards

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Salma is a graduate student in M.A Development Studies from Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Hyderabad. She holds Bachelor's degree in B.A Triple Majors in Industrial Relations, Economics and Sociology from St. Joseph's College, Bengaluru. Her research interests include urban governance, urban poverty and livelihoods.

> Data has an immense potential to form one's opinion and manipulate views. Transparency and accountability have been two qualities which have been expected from all governance bodies for a long time and data transparency and its accessibility to all could mitigate the issue around it to a large extent. This is why our open source portals need to be properly maintained and people should be made aware about it for a better governed country.

Subhojyoti Dutta Chowdhury, WASH & Health Intern

Subhojyoti is pursuing his post graduation degree with a M.A./M.Sc. in Urban Policy and Governance from Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. He holds a bachelors of science degree in Geography and a post-graduate diploma in Fine Arts. His research interests include WASH services (their delivery and management), urban mobility, transportation and planning, and repair and restoration of dilapidated architectural identities of a city.

A Digital Dream: Digital Revolution in Urban Governance

Information and communication technology based services are increasingly becoming the norm in each and every walk of life. Starting from socialising with the world, learning skills and conducting face to face interactions, to buying groceries, medicines or finding a cab, going digital is the trend.

India also has a huge youth population who are increasingly becoming acquainted with smartphones and computers, thereby creating a sizeable digital friendly citizenship. Along with this, India is also the preferred destination for outsourcing, as skilled labour for the IT companies is easily available. Therefore, understanding the potential for solving governance problems with the help of ICT based applications and modes, the Government of India decided to strengthen its digital footprint and the national leadership has chosen to multiply the process of digitisation and is trying to set the country on the trajectory to become a leader in

technology. The government wants to have the policy infrastructure ready in that direction, being future ready and at the same time working to minimise the niggles.

The campaign aims for a complete overhaul of the functioning of economy and the governance service delivery mechanisms thereby catapulting towards the future to be in a favourable position, competing with the world powers. Therefore it has three main components for the campaign:

- *Developing a stable and secure digital infrastructure*
- *Delivering Government services digitally*
- *Universal digital literacy*

The first major step taken in this course is the Digital India Programme. This campaign was launched on 1st July, 2015, under the agency of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and Electronic Media. This programme is premised around three key focus areas:

Digital Infrastructure as a Core Utility to every citizen.
It aims to ensure high-speed internet access for delivering services to citizens, as one of the key priorities. Other key priorities in this aspect include, a safer cyber space; enabling citizens to participate in digital financial space; conveniently accessible service points and a shared private space on a common public cloud.

Governance and services on demand
The focus here is to integrate service delivery among departments and/or jurisdictions along with real time service delivery. This area also focuses on improving ease of doing business, especially by easing the acquisition of necessary documents and thereby cutting down delays and other discrepancies along with digital transactions to make financial records transparent, thereby ensuring more accountability. Also this approach aims to use Geographical Information Systems (GIS) for decision making and thus using maps/ spatial data to better understand the issue and devise integrated solutions to tackle the situation.

Digital Empowerment of Citizens
Here the government's primary objective is to increase digital literacy of all, accompanied by increased accessibility of digital resources. To achieve these two, the intent is to make these digital resources and services available in vernacular languages. Under this mission, a collaborative digital platform will also be made available to the citizens. This is for achieving the goal of participative governance along with virtually verified government documents becoming available and accepted to reduce the dependence on paperwork.

And it has 9 pillars for the campaign, among which the sixth one talks about e-governance reforming. The campaign proposes to adopt a methodology of centralised decentralisation when it comes to e-governance, i.e., the campaign would promote e-governance through a centralised platform to the extent necessary by aligning the service delivery towards citizens. A decentralised implementation model will be pushed for which will utilise various applications for e-governance purposes thereby increasing the utilisation of ICT infrastructure. The e-governance reforming would try to minimise the need for data collection, with collection of only necessary data and creating simplified forms which are user friendly. It also proposes to create an individual data repository for reducing the need of submitting documents every time.

All departmental and governmental organisation information and databases are to become electronic to increase efficiency and transparency of Government processes.

Progress so far

Some notable progress of this campaign with regards to e-governance are:

I. Launch of smart cities programme with the target to develop 109 smart cities by 2022.
II. Digital democracy using MyGov portal, which is to increase citizen participation in decision making processes and smoothen democratic processes. It has a crucial role for citizen-government partnership for inclusive growth of the nation.
III. Data.gov.in is also another portal for open source data availability of different departments of the Urban Local Bodies, especially of the smart cities.

Challenges of Digital India

Since Digital India is a new initiative, it is certain that it involves hurdles. Some major challenges which cause concerns and issues in the implementation of Digital India can be discussed below:

India is a pluralistic country involving diversified culture. Each state has specific languages, customs, food habits, laws and traditions of its own. The aim of Digital India is to integrate the whole country digitally. However, the complete integration may not be possible since various states use varied technology and there exists a difference in language. Hence, technological and linguistic integration remains a challenge (Goswami, 2016).

There exists different internet protocols in different states according to the implementation of different hardware and software and there are chances that these may lead to connectivity glitches. Therefore, there should be some initiatives to have a directive to standardise all the software protocols (Goswami, 2016).

India is facing a deficit of infrastructural facilities. Infrastructure such as the availability of towers has not reached a considerable part of India. Even though there exists some provisions of infrastructure, they are likely to be non-operational and lack competitiveness. In this regard, implementing a successful Digital India remains as a dream to the country (Midha, 2018).

The transformation of the country into a digitally empowered knowledge economy is the aim of Digital India. This is a herculean task, especially in a developing country like India. Proper coordination and cooperation of all the Government Departments is integral inorder to make this a reality. In the absence of smooth teamwork and collaboration between various Government Departments which are functioning diversely, the mission cannot be implemented to its full strength (Goswami, 2016).

Public Internet Access is a crucial element that is needed for the Implementation of Digital India Programme. However, poverty and illiteracy in India exists as obstacles that prevent the universalisation of internet access. In this, the presence of high illiteracy rate cannot be underestimated since it is a major roadblock in the path of achieving internet access in the nooks and corners of the country. Thus, internet expansion remains limited in India. (Goswami, 2016).

In the contemporary era, internet and cyber-crimes are co-existing enemies. Due to the increasing cyber-crimes, we need to design an architecture in which proper authentication is done for all the documents that will be uploaded by the citizens of the country and it must be available to the right users whenever they

want with the right authentication. There is also the need to have proper privacy norms in order to ensure the cyber security in the country (Goswami, 2016).

National Optical Fibre network is required to ensure broadband connectivity in all parts of the country. But it is a highly expensive and tiresome task. Providing broadband connectivity to various geographical locations such as hilly terrains and the tribal forest area is challenging and time consuming. However, National Optical Fibre is necessary for the success of the Digital India Programme (Goswami, 2016).

Some Solutions

India needs to have some new programmes that can aid in the Digital India Programme. There can be new programmes in the electronics manufacturing field along with skill development programmes. Both these should be nation-wide programmes with good coverage, ensuring the reach to every part of the country (Midha, 2018).

Since digital illiteracy is a major obstacle to the implementation of the Digital India Programme, dedicated training institutes must be set up in all the states of the country inorder to battle the digital illiteracy. This can increase the awareness level amongst all the citizens, especially the senior citizens. The training institutes must give special attention to the senior citizens and the marginalised section of the society (Midha, 2018).

Digital India Programme must be made a part of the school curriculum. Lectures should be mandated to enhance the policies of Digital India Programme (Midha, 2018). As a step that is practically visible, the school administration and processes must be made digital. Lectures should be taken to carry out digital empowerment in all areas such as the healthcare and banking sector.

The youth can be inspired for making the Digital India programme a success (Midha, 2018). Their fresh skills and innovations can result in greater ideas that will augment the provisions and reach of the Digital India programme. Therefore, youth must be given adequate responsibility and power to influence the Digital India Programme.

A Helpline number should be launched for the Digital India Programme in order to enable the citizens to report their problems. The helpline should be well functioning and be quick in responding to the queries and problems of the citizens. Besides, a help-centre should also be launched in each state to solve the public issues (Midha, 2018).

Inference

Digital India is an impressive programme of the Government of India. But its improper implementation due to various challenges such as the inflexibility and inaccessibility can lead to the failure of the programme. Based on the experience of the research interns and the data availability on data.gov.in, the single largest integrating platform under this programme, it could be said that there is a long way to go before the practical situation is transformed. However, in digital India, lies the best future of the citizens. Hence, the programme must be taken forward with sheer will and dedication.

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URBAN GOVERNANCE
INTERNSHIP

Enhancing Citizen Participation:
The need to make Municipal Corporation
Websites more Inclusive

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> My internship experience started out with my selection in the theme of citizen participation. Initially, I knew nothing about the theme but my mentors introduced me to the Urban Governance Index. It helped me understand the need of such a report and the importance of working on the issues pertaining to local governance. The weekly meetings with my mentors, officials from the organisation, fellow interns, etc. kept expanding my knowledge. I still sometimes find it hard to believe about how much I learned in just three months. Overall, the internship was a great experience with both outstanding professional and personal support.

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Aryan is currently pursuing his bachelors in Social Sciences at Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Tuljapur. He has also been chosen as a Transformative India Initiative Fellow for the period of 2021-2023. His interests include Environment, Climate Crisis, Agriculture, Governance, Migration, Gender Issues, Urbanisation and related fields.

Enhancing Citizen Participation: The need to make Municipal Corporation Websites more Inclusive

According to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, the decadal growth of population in urban areas was 31.8% as compared to 12.2% in rural areas (Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, 2017) (http://mohua.gov.in/cms/urban-growth.php) . As per the data released by Census 2011, there is an increase of 2774 towns comprising of 242 statutory and 2532 census towns, over the decade (Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, 2012). According to the World Urbanization Prospects Report of 2018, the urbanisation trend in India is likely to continue. It puts India's urban population at around 460 million, constituting less than half of the total population of India, but at an average 2.09 percent of decadal growth (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2019). In such a scenario, the importance of local governance must be realised fast. The most 'advanced' and large cities of the country, even after almost 75 years of independence, face several issues related to basic civic issues. These include municipal revenue and allocations, public health, waste management, housing, rivalry with other verticals of the government, etc. These issues have been specifically highlighted during the course of the pandemic. One stark example can be the inefficiency of crematoriums during the second wave of the pandemic which is one of the 18 functions which are to be performed by the municipalities, as mentioned in the Twelfth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.

Enhanced citizen participation is an important tool to improve the quality of life and reduce inequalities in every city. It is pertinent to ensure that basic services are provided, both in terms of quantity and quality, because such services fall within the fundamental rights of every citizen. In the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the entire country saw a shift of interaction from a physical medium to a digital one. Even though, such a step was taken to ensure faster and better delivery of health services, but the aftermath suggests that such a digitisation of resources has increased inequalities. Transparency and accountability are two important functions of a democracy but the municipal corporations of most of the states have been working in dark with respect to their functions. Even if the information is present, it is difficult for a large population of the country to access such information.

1) Language Accessibility

Upon analysing the websites of 11 municipal corporations[1] around the country, it was found that more than half of these websites did not provide any option to translate any information to the regional language (Figure 1). Moreover, none of the websites provided an option to translate any of the official documents such as minutes of the meetings, records of any particular function of the past years, etc. Such documents were available only in one language across all the websites. In such a scenario, it becomes difficult for the citizens who lack proficiency in either English or the regional language to access the information and provide

Figure 1: Accessibility of municipal corporation websites in terms of language

feedback. This causes exclusion of a major part of population as they are unable to access the online services which may be provided by the municipal corporation. Cities like Mumbai and Pune which receive a large influx of migrants from several states of India must provide options of multiple languages to include this population. Accessibility in the terms of language is the most important feature every municipal corporation should have.
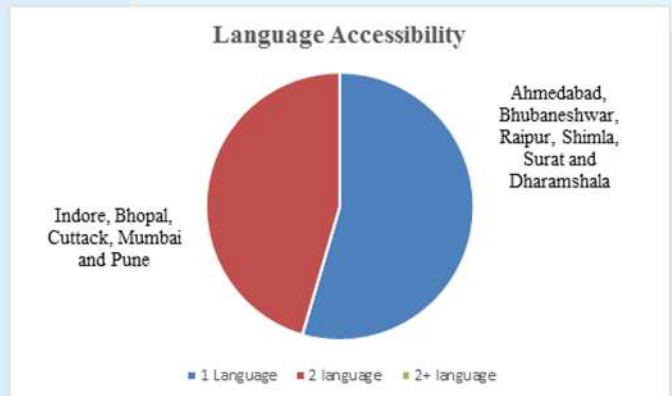
2) Updating Data (Analysis of 11 cities)

With reference to the 18 functions mentioned above, none of the municipal corporation websites hold data for any year concerning the 18 functions. Moreover, only 3 municipal corporations of the cities: Raipur, Mumbai and Bhopal, have annual reports of the performance of the municipal corporation present on their website (Figure 2). Almost half of the municipal corporation websites fail to provide citizens' charter on the website (Figure 3) which is necessary for a citizen to learn about the different departments present within the corporation. Some cities, such as Ahmedabad and Surat, which do have the citizen charter, thus fail to cover or update all the departments within the corporation.
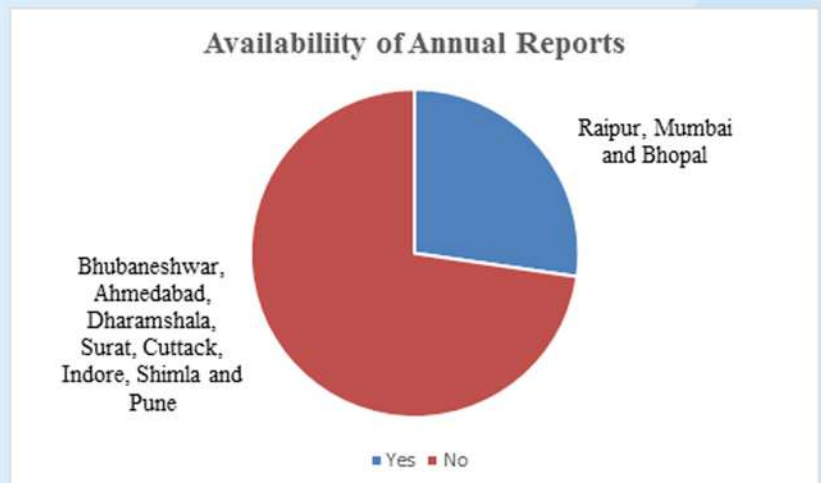

Figure 2: Availability of annual reports of municipal corporations in the website
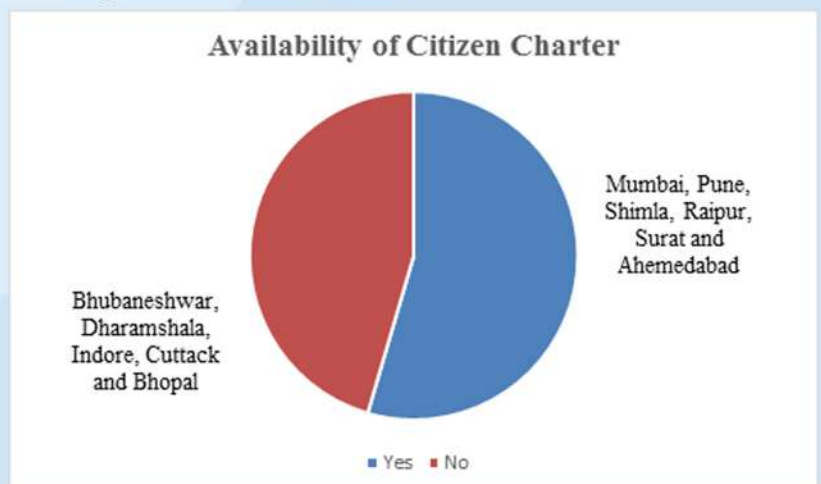

Figure 3: Availability of citizen charter on the website of the municipal corporation ➔

[1] *The 11 municipal corporations which were analyzed are from the cities of Mumbai, Pune, Ahmedabad, Raipur, Bhopal, Indore, Shimla, Dharamshala, Bhubaneshwar, Cuttack and Surat*

Figure 4: Details regarding Municipal Commissioner and Mayor

## 3) Distribution of power and contact information

It is important to have in-depth knowledge about the people in charge within the city, who are responsible for providing us with basic services in terms of infrastructure, different socio-economic dimensions and a decent quality of life. While most cities mention the name and contact details of the municipal commissioner, only four of the 11 cities mention the details of the mayor (Figure 4). Moreover, less than half of the cities mention the responsibilities of these heads, as well as provide with the chart describing the hierarchy of power or the administrative setup.

It is also important to know about the departments present in the city such as water and sanitation department, housing department, finance department, etc. and the members of such departments in order to provide citizen feedback and raise concerns about their respective performances. Most of the 11 cities have the required details of such departments with the exception of Raipur and Indore (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Details regarding city departments ➝ ▪
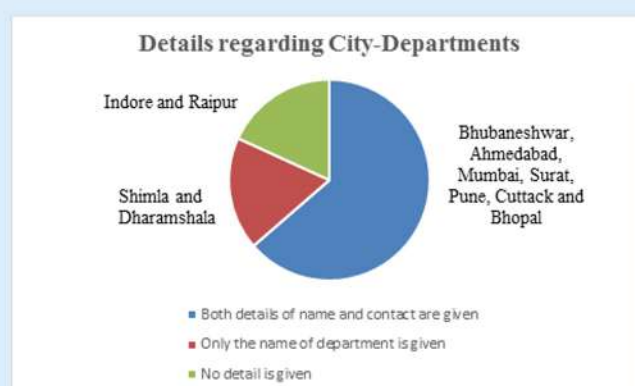
4) Information regarding services

The provision of services is one of the most important duties of every municipal corporation. As mentioned above, the 74th amendment added 18 functions in the 12th schedule under the responsibility of the municipal corporation but many of these functions are not provided by any of the cities. For example, most of the cities provide an online portal with the provision of registering for the birth and death certificate along with the option of filing taxes, but none of the cities have any domain for applying for services such as construction of roads & bridges, storm water drainage, social pension, cremation ground, veterinary services and street lighting.

Moreover, none of the cities have provided a data bank for any of the services for the past few years. This leaves the citizens completely uninformed about any progress within the city and reduces the scope of providing feedback or suggestions.

Apart from the above-mentioned features, none of the cities have any provisions for the physically challenged, who might be unable to access the online website or the services mentioned within it. Similarly, these websites also lack any updates, schemes or programs related to empowerment of women and marginalised communities. Even though every city corporation website contains a grievance redressal mechanism, no action taken report exists which could inform the citizens on the steps which have been taken by the corporation to address their respective issues.

Conclusion

As urbanisation across India increases, municipal corporations will hold immense responsibility and play an important role in ensuring a decent quality of life across all sections of population. The main challenges faced by the municipal corporations' websites, based on the analysis of 11 cities, include making data more accessible and regular updation, provision of a space for education about their responsibilities and duties to the citizens and make the websites and the services more equitable, especially for the people belonging to the marginalised communities. This could be done through consultations, adequate representation at the decision-making level and searching for ways to make the citizens more involved in the process. Such actions will require both financial and legal support from the other verticals of the government as well. Municipal corporations around India must learn from each other, and citizens must co-operate with the corporations as well, to improve the life in the vast urban spaces of the country.

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- *(Pune Municipal Corporation) https://www.pmc.gov.in/*
- *(Mumbai Municipal Corporation) https://portal.mcgm.gov.in/irj/portal/anonymous*

URBAN GOVERNANCE INTERNSHIP

Critical Evaluation of the Grievance Redressal System in Mumbai

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As a Political Science student, I was briefly aware of the government structures in place on various levels. However, I was intrigued by the extensive network of government functionaries that work at the grassroot level. This internship exposed me to the real-life governance scenarios, which are starkly different from the bookish knowledge I have gained over the years. I got an opportunity to visit the Delhi Jal Board Head Office. This was a unique and enthralling experience for me.

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Aanya is pursuing her Bachelors degree in Political Science from Kirori Mal College, University of Delhi. Her research interests include international relations, global diplomacy and urban governance.

Critical Evaluation of the Grievance Redressal System in Mumbai

Citizen Charter is an instrument which seeks to make an organisation transparent, accountable and citizen friendly. It can be viewed as a set of commitments made by an organisation towards consumers to ensure responsiveness to the citizens, who are the consumers of public services. One of the most important elements of this concept is the provision of establishing a grievance redressal mechanism.

Centralised Complaint Registration System (CCRS)

Two decades ago, the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai introduced the Centralized Complaint Registration System to ensure greater accountability towards the citizens. This has been implemented to enhance the role of citizens in urban governance by the means of reporting their grievances. The CCRS is managed by the Disaster Management Unit of the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM).

This system provides various trajectories an individual can assume, in order to register a complaint- complaint number (1916), an online portal on the MCGM website, or written complaint to the complaint officer in the ward. All the complaints from across Mumbai are received under the umbrella of this system and are then assigned to the respective departments.
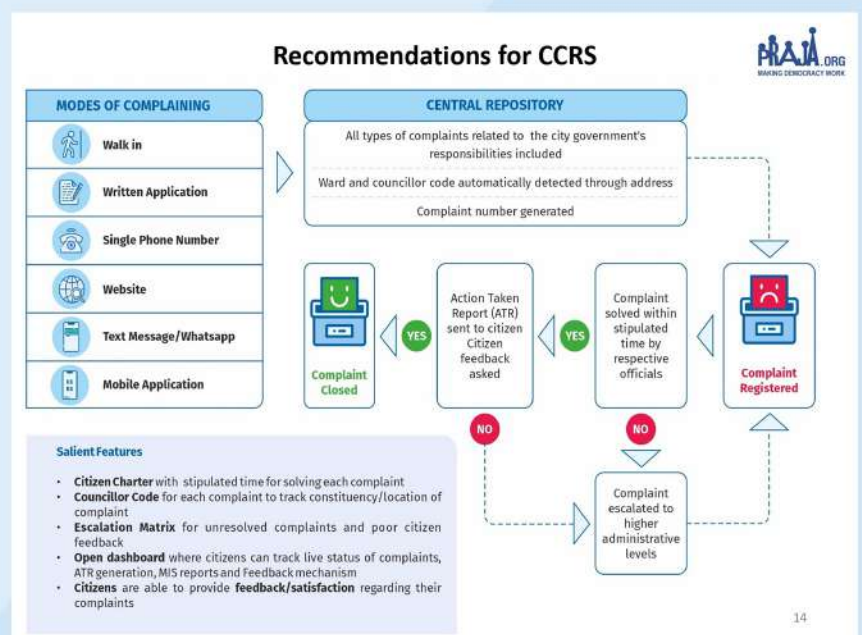

Figure 1: Ideal Working of Centralised Complaint Registration System for City Governments

The complaint is referred to the respective departments for taking necessary action and if not solved within the stipulated time, is escalated to the next level of administration. This is based on the 'escalation matrix' which has been adopted by the MCGM to address the problem of complaints remaining stuck at the lower level of the civic administration, with no way to enforce accountability. Through this system, the higher administration is mandated to take note of, and address complaints, if they are not solved within a stipulated time. Once the complaint is solved, the complainant is notified of the same.

Is it really as flawless as it seems on paper?

The complainant is provided with several options with respect to reporting of the complaint. For people who do not have access to the internet, the offline or telephonic mode of lodging a complaint is available; in situations like the COVID-19 pandemic, the online portal becomes most efficient way of lodging the complaint. This enhances the inclusivity of citizens and ensures that every citizen gets an equal opportunity to voice his/her concerns. At first glance, several channels of incoming complaints look interesting. However, this is met by several challenges. First, despite a centralised system, several departments still maintain physical registers for the complaints physically lodged by the citizens. This causes an enormous loss of time and data keeping becomes a tiresome task. Referring to these registers at a later date becomes cumbersome and more than often, the complaints are simply neglected. Secondly, the data is not compiled and saved in a common place, making it impossible for an official to trace a complaint back. Thirdly, the MCGM has provided separate portals to lodge complaints regarding potholes (http://www.mybmcpotholefixit.com/) and unauthorised construction (http://removalofencroachment.mcgm.gov.in/jsf/security/LoginForm.jsf) which causes confusion.

The responsibility of managing the CCRS is given to the Disaster Management Unit of the MCGM. This is reflective of the effort of MCGM, to respond to the complaints quickly. In circumstances where a citizen complains about a burst pipe, that caused a local manmade flood, the Disaster Management Unit can work with the Hydraulic Engineer Department to control the situation effectively. The quick-to-respond tendency of the Disaster Management Unit has intelligently been used to the advantage of the MCGM to redress the grievances of citizens effectively and on a timely basis.

The number of complaints is directly related to the level of satisfaction among the people. From 2016 to 2018, the number of complaints registered rose by 43%. While an increased number of complaints indicates increasing awareness among citizens, it also points towards the inability of the city government to provide basic amenities to the citizens. The establishment of a Centralized Complaint Registration System is insufficient if it cannot facilitate an enhancement in the standard of living of the people. The city government needs to actively work towards resolving such complaints in a manner that the same problems do not arise repeatedly. It would take sustainable solutions to bring the number of complaints down.

During a period between January 2008 and November 2009, the number of complaints filed under Roads by the citizens of Mumbai stood at 74,801. Bad patches, resurfacing of roads, fallen trees on roads, reinstatement of trenches, potholes were some of the major complaints by the citizens. In 2019, total 1,28,145 complaints were received and the highest number of complaints were related to drainage (24,267), followed by buildings (20,317) and Solid Waste Management (17,116). In 2010, problems related to roads were most common while in 2019, roads were not even in the top 3 issues faced by the citizens. This indicates towards tremendous efforts that the MCGM has put over the years to redress the grievances of the people. Such sustainable and long lasting solutions to civic problems are improving the standard of living of the citizens.

In 2019, out of 15,239 total complaints regarding roads, 644 were escalated to a higher level. On the basis of the escalation matrix, these complaints were escalated to higher hierarchical levels if they were not resolved in the stipulated time. It was astonishing to find out that 100% of these escalated complaints reached Level IV i.e. the level of Municipal Commissioner. This indicates sheer ignorance and attitude of neglect of the officials towards the citizen's complaints.

The way forward: Recommendations

An integrated system needs to be put into place to compile all complaints received via several channels of communication. The introduction of a practice where all physical complaints are immediately transformed into digital ones, seems imperative. The system of issue-specific portals should be abandoned and citizens should be encouraged to lodge all civic related complaints on the main CCRS portal. This would help in organising and tracking all the complaints efficiently, without wasting manual labor.

The councillor code is the constituency number of the councillor that is to be fed into the management system for locating the constituency of every complaint. This notifies the councillor about any complaints received in his ward. He is responsible for overlooking the entire process of grievance redressal in his ward and has to ensure timely solution of complaints. For any complaint to be processed efficiently, it is important for the complainant to fill in the correct councillor code. The system should have a software such that it can identify the councillor code from the ward address filled in, by the complainant. Not only would this reduce the burden on the complainant, it would also streamline the process of distributing and managing the complaints in a foolproof manner. By the means of this, the councillor can also identify the type of issues faced by most citizens in his ward. This would enable him to implement a goal oriented strategy to resolve the major issues faced by the citizens.

An Action Taken Report (ATR) is generated when the complaint passes through the third stage of the process (registration of the complaint). But, the ATR is not congruent to closure of the complaint. It simply indicates that some action has been taken on the report, irrespective of whether it is a step towards solving the issue or not. Instead of ATR, there should be a comprehensive report of the closed complaints. This would be truly indicative of how well the MCGM is responding to the complaints.

Mandatory feedback after the closure of every complaint can be incorporated. This would provide the citizen an opportunity to share his/her experience and feedback. If the complainant gives a positive feedback, it should be taken as a token of appreciation and acknowledgement for all the hard work done by the officials. However, if the complaint is dissatisfied by the service and gives a negative feedback, the MCGM would know its drawbacks. This would enhance the efficiency of the entire grievance redressal mechanism.

As a step towards Open Government Data and increasing transparency in the government machinery, an openly available dashboard should be set up by the MCGM. This should include all the lodged complaints along with citizen feedback. This would allow elected representatives and administration officials to better monitor and evaluate the corporation's performance on a real-time basis.

Conclusion

While the MCGM is on the way to become an accountable and responsive government organisation, it still has a long way to go. Continued commitment towards transforming MCGM into an accountable and responsive organisation would bear fruitful results. It would also empower the citizens to catalyse positive social change.

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URBAN GOVERNANCE INTERNSHIP

Functioning of Ward Committee in Mumbai: Need for Citizen Participation

Milan Sharma

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> Throughout my time at Praja, I was engaged with working on the civic papers of Mumbai and Delhi for 2021. It involved field surveys, filing RTIs and collecting secondary data. It was the first time, that I worked on a quantitative research project. While working on the civic paper, I not only learnt how to collect and collate data but also learnt the art of designing a logically sound research project. I realised that a quantitative report like this, is always supplemented with qualitative analysis of the acts and policies which guide governance in a city. The numbers and their inference will only make sense if the structure of governance and its details are well known. I am both humbled and grateful to be part of such a process.

Milan Sharma, Civic Services Research Intern, Praja Foundation

Milan is a graduate with an MA in Urban Policy and Governance from Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. She holds a bachelors degree in Political Science from Sri Venkateswara College, Delhi University. Her research interests include urban governance, migration and urban geography.

Functioning of Ward Committee in Mumbai: Need for Citizen Participation

In a bid to decrease the gap between citizens and city governments, the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act was passed in 1992. The act constitutionally recognised the municipal governments and made them a formal part of the three-tier governing system in India. The amendment aimed at deepening democracy by facilitating greater participation of citizens in governance. One of the provisions to realise the aim was constituting ward committees under the act. According to Article 243 – S of the 74th CAA, "there shall be constituted Wards Committees (WCs), consisting of one or more wards, within the territorial area of a municipality having a population of three lakhs or more" (Constitutional Provisions 1999). The primary motivation to divide municipalities into wards, was to ensure that governance comes closer to the roots and citizens become part of the governance structure.

However, after over almost 30 years, it is clear that ward committees have not fulfilled their purpose. States have either not created ward committees, or despite their presence, the functioning has been disheartening. According to Praja's pan-India study of 21 cities, only eight cities have constituted Ward Committees. These include Ahmedabad, Bhubaneswar, Delhi, Dharamshala, Kochi, Mangalore, Mumbai, and Udaipur. However, even within these eight cities, all ward committees are not active. Only in Ahmedabad, Bhubaneswar, Delhi, Dharamshala, Kochi and Mumbai, can one find active ward committees. This highlights that ward committee which increases citizen engagement has not been given priority in India.

The article will analyse the functioning of Mumbai's ward committees and argue that the shortfalls can be overcome by increasing citizens' engagement in governance.

Evaluating the Functioning of Mumbai's Ward Committees

In Mumbai, ward committees are constituted by elected councillors from the electoral wards of the administrative ward, the ward officer or divisional officer of that ward, and not more than three members of non-governmental organisations/community-based organisations (NGOs/CBO) (nominated by the councillors and are residents of the administrative ward). A plethora of conditions restrict the participation of NGOs and

Citizens . A majority of the citizens lack awareness of the fact that they can be part of the committees. The lack of participation by citizens is one of the most significant criticisms of the city's ward committees. The ward committees have failed to comply with the most basic function of citizens' engagement in decision-making.

Further, the meetings of the committees also depict problems. For instance, there is a lack of enthusiasm among councillors to work on civic issues. This is exemplified through the following: the fact that in 2017 out of a total number of 228 councillors*, 38 councillors did not pose any questions. The number has almost been consistent in the year 2018 and 2019. Out of total councillors, 31 and 32 councillors did not raise any questions respectively. There is no accountability on the part of these councillors who failed to perform even the primary function, i.e., deliberation in a committee meeting. There is no accountability of any councillor even if they ask questions and participate in debates. There is no system that can keep a check on the functions and responsibilities of the councillors.

The other issue that came at the forefront in ward committee meetings was the number of questions raised by councillors compared to the level of complaints received by them from citizens. For example, in the top three wards, which had the highest complaints in proportion to their population, the number of questions posed was low. In 2019, the M/E ward with a population of 8,07,720 received 4334 complaints. However, only 53 questions were raised in the meetings against them by the councillors. Most of the questions did not resonate with the complaints. Even when one analyses the wards with the highest number of complaints, it is realised that the number of commensurate questions remains low. Solid Waste Management (SWM) in the K/E ward in 2019 is a case in point. The total number of SWM complaints was 1,019, but the questions raised were only three. The ward committees deliberate and discuss issues that do not resonate with essential functions or complaints. For instance, in 2019, 105 questions were raised on the naming and renaming of roads.

Similarly, civic issues which should be of prime importance to ULBs, such as crime, the safety of citizens, environment, are not given much importance. The findings suggest that 285 questions were raised on issues other than critical civic issues. These were higher than the questions put together on Solid Waste Management, Water, and Drainage.

Other evidence that examined the seriousness of councillors towards resolving civic issues is the party manifestos released before elections. Analysing the manifestos of different political parties makes it clear that they are more interested in discussing cultural issues than civic issues. At the very outset, cultural resurgence and cultural tourism are promoted more than civic functions and other important issues like environment and housing. It highlights the apathy of councillors towards the citizens' issues.

It is maintained that most of these issues may be resolved through greater participation by citizens. The following section will discuss Kerala's ward committees to exemplify the benefits of citizen participation.

Citizen Participation: The antidote?

"According to different scholars, citizen involvement in governance through participatory forums is expected to improve representation of citizens especially of the poor and marginalised. It is also expected to increase effectiveness of public policy by providing feedback to policy makers or by allowing citizens to shape policies according to their needs. Such forums can play a role in developing mechanisms to extract accountability of elected representatives and local officials by providing a space for citizens to critically evaluate their performance. All of these outcomes are believed will contribute to larger goals of improving democratic legitimacy and develop an engaged citizenry." (Chottray and Stoker 2009).

Shailaja Girkar was elected in March 2017 but passed away in September 2017, and Pratibha Girkar was elected in her place. Shailaja Girkar's questions till August 2017 have been considered. Hence, the number of councillors has been shown as 228 and not 227.

If these words of Chottray and Stoker are to be believed, most problems of Mumbai's ward committees would be solved just by including citizens in the deliberations and discussions. Nevertheless, words are not as convincing as case studies. Therefore, this section will detail Kerala's ward committees' working, which are considered the hallmark of citizens' participation in India.

Kerala institutionalised ward committees with citizen participation, in 1999, by making amendments to the Kerala Municipality Act. Article 43 of the Act allowed neighbourhood groups to be part of the committees. It is revolutionary in the sense that it allowed even Civil Society to be part of the committees. These committees have the right to discuss priorities for development in the wards, identify beneficiaries in schemes, implement such schemes, and service delivery of civic amenities in the ward. Further, the wards have the right to know about all developmental schemes being implanted or implemented in the ward and discuss the budget. Their recommendations can then be discussed at the higher levels.

The outcome of the ward committee in Kerala has shown that discussions within the committee meetings have enriched grassroots democracy in Kerala. Members are free to discuss any topic they wish, and the expertise and knowledge of citizens are relied upon in discussions. The effectiveness and responsiveness of the elected members have also increased.

Mumbai's ward committees suffer from issues that Kerala seems to have solved by involving citizens in their wards. Thus, a strong case is made for Mumbai to follow suit.

Conclusion

The Kerala model shows that this can be remedied by enhancing citizen participation inwards, making a case for Mumbai to involve citizens in the governance of their wards. Though this will provide some level of participation to citizens, it is not the panacea to solve all the problems. It is observed that councillors often ignore citizens' views. In addition to this, municipalities are not responsible for many functions in the city, in which citizens might want a change or greater accountability.

Further, in Mumbai's case, the population under each ward is too high to ensure grassroots connections between councillors and citizens. Therefore, citizen participation in the wards may not make everything better. However, that would provide a leeway to make things better.

Further, it should not be forgotten that citizen participation is an ideal. To ensure that the 74th CAA delivers on its promise of enhancing grassroot democracy and subsequently improve Urban Governance, citizens' participation should be enhanced through ward committees across the country. Citizens' participation is an end in itself and should be valued as such.

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URBAN GOVERNANCE INTERNSHIP

Sufficient Affordable Housing, a Faux Pas for All?

Animesh Mehta

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Mandar Sunil Athavale

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> **My internship with the Praja Foundation has been an enriching experience. From struggling with questions on what to research, to finally deciding on researching on affordable housing, vacant housing and learning various ways of secondary data collection and writing concept notes were the important aspects dealt. I wish to carry forward this research activity further.**

Mandar Sunil Athavale, Housing research Intern

Mandar has completed his bachelors in Architecture and is also an Anant Fellow (Post Graduate Diploma in Built Environment). He has been working at MASHAL NGO, Pune for more than 1.5 years and is a co-founder at a not-for-profit organisation ' Basera Center for Innovation and Governance' working in the areas of housing and poverty.

> **The amount of freedom given to us as Housing Interns was very necessary and surprisingly shocking as its very rare to have such freedom of research during internship period but also it was very helpful for us to share our idea and work on the various housing topics under the guidance of the Project Coordinators.**

Animesh Mehta, Housing Research Intern

Animesh has a diploma in Civil Engineering along with a Bachelors degree in Management and is currently pursuing Masters in Urban Management from CEPT University, Ahmadabad. He has worked in Housing/Real Estate sector for three years in Mumbai city. He is working along with Rotary and Rotaract organisations to make a positive impact on society in all sectors.

Sufficient Affordable Housing, a Faux Pas for All?

It has always been a general ideology, that most Indians are inclined to give preference to physical assets like houses over soft assets like stocks. This assured feeling is due to it being a real asset rather than just a paper. Investors believe that in the long run, most real estate prices would appreciate. In India, buying a home is one of the top priorities for many people. But the skewed market forces, existing in the current housing economy due to highly inflated rates, has brought about a stall in the demand for these houses.

Mumbai too, is well accustomed to coherent rates of the housing sector. The high cost of apartments in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) has been a major impediment to the growth of residential sales in recent years. Prices increased due to the land-locked nature of Mumbai, coupled with the high cost of construction premiums, which lead to apartment prices remaining high despite a decline in sales. Developers began to

mitigate this by reducing the size of an apartment to make it more affordable. Hence, compact homes started becoming a well-adjusted concept within MMR.

COVID-19 pandemic, however, has challenged this long-time real estate structure once perceived as true. The lockdown forced schools/colleges and office activities within the boundaries of one's house, alongside regular household activities. This has made families recognise the need for more space. To boost overall sales, Maharashtra Government reduced the stamp duty charges. This shift in preference has been witnessed in the MMR, with an 8% decrease (2019 YoY was 3% increase) in the number of unsold housing units. Consequently, there is a preference for housing units in the periphery region of Mumbai like Vasai-Virar, Thane, Palghar, etc. an indication that there is an overall gradual increase in the demand for homeownership.
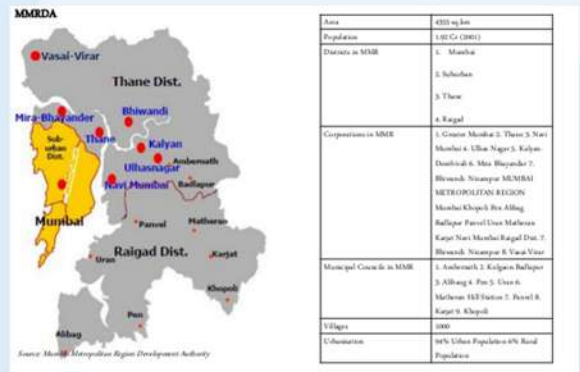
Affordability

Under the government's norms, the definition of an affordable house is with carpet area up to 90 square meters in non-metropolitan cities and towns, and 60 square meters in metropolitan cities, having value up to Rs 45 lakh, for both (PROPTIGER, 2020). To attract Economically Weaker Section (EWS[1]) and Low Income Group (LIG[2]) residents of an area the central government scheme allows the benefactor to receive financial benefits like low-interest rate loans, GST, and tax benefits. However, houses of these sizes in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) are priced much higher than Rs. 45 lakhs, hence do not qualify as affordable housing. A majority of the unsold stock is present in the western markets of Mumbai, with over 1.31 lakh unsold affordable homes.

Affordable housing- A case for Economically Weaker section (EWS)/Lower Income Group (LIG) sections

The cost of a house built by Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority (MHADA) in Mumbai (2020) for the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) is Rs. 20.00 Lakhs whereas as per the affordability matrix would be Rs. 12.00 Lakhs (four times the annual household income) (NAREDCO, 2008)

The current ongoing scheme Pradhan Mantri Aawas Yojana- Urban (PMAY-U) was launched in 2015 addressing the urban housing shortage among the EWS/LIG and Middle Income Group (MIG[3]) categories through various verticals. The Credit Linked Subsidy component of the PMAY scheme which entails an interest subsidy for housing loan upto Rs. 6-12 Lakhs has been provided for all the four economic classes. But, Mumbai is an expensive real estate market with an Equated Monthly Installment (EMI) to Income ratio greater than 50%, thus making it unaffordable to the EWS and LIG categories, as the limit beyond which banks hardly underwrite any mortgage loans (KNIGHT FRANK, n.d.)

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1 *As per PMAY (U) guidelines, Families with an annual Household income of Rs. 3.00 Lakhs.*

2 *As per PMAY (U) guidelines,Families with an annual Household income of Rs. 3.00-6.00 Lakhs.*

3 *As per PMAY (U) guidelines,Families with an annual Household Income of Rs. 6.00-12.00 are categorised as MIG-I and Rs. 12.00-18.00 Lakhs are categorised as MIG-II.*

Channels for accessing affordable housing- case for Middle Income Group-I, II sections

In MMR (Mumbai Metropolitan Region), the average price for a standard 1,000 sq. ft. property in areas within city limits is approx. Rs 1.85 crore, against Rs 55.35 lakh in the peripheral areas, a 70 percent cost difference. Micro-markets within city limits included Andheri, Vile Parle, Goregaon, Malad, Kandivali, Chembur, Wadala, Ghatkopar, Vikhroli, Powai, Mulund, etc. Peripheral areas include Kalyan, Bhiwandi, Dombivli, Mira Road, Vasai, Virar, Thane beyond Kasarvadavali and Owale Panvel, Ulwe, Taloja, etc. (NAREDCO, 2020)

The COVID-19 pandemic has however challenged the existing norms in the real estate sector. As per the Anarock consumer sentiment survey pre and post COVID, people are

preferring to have bigger configuration houses (3 BHK and 4 BHK) as compared to pre-COVID with more focus on affordable housing units (< Rs 45 lakhs). Work from home being a major influencer in home buying options, people now prefer to buy homes in the peripheral areas away from the city center at affordable prices and with more carpet area. (ANAROCK, n.d.)

Average monthly rent for a standard 2BHK home in areas within city limits is approx. Rs 45,800, against Rs 12,500 in the peripheries. In MMR, the average monthly rental outgo in city-limit areas is Rs 45,800. For five years, this equals nearly Rs 28.66 lakh (including standard rental escalation for this period). This is almost 52 percent of the total average cost of a property in MMR's peripheral areas. (NAREDCO, 2020)

Conclusions

As the data suggests, people have started migrating to the peripheral areas of MMR hence providing better transportation and connectivity, improving infrastructure in the peripheral area will be the key to the future developments. Further, only 12% of the houses are sanctioned under the PMAY- ISSR[4] and CLSS[5] scheme (Kanwar, 2019), hence a possibility of developing slums residing on government lands through PMAY- 4th vertical (beneficiary-led construction) could be an option worth exploring. As well as the government funded vacant housing can be used as rental housing by giving rental housing vouchers to the EWS/LIG section who are not able to write off a housing loan. Mapping of vacant housing stock across the city at administrative ward level will also help in this regard.

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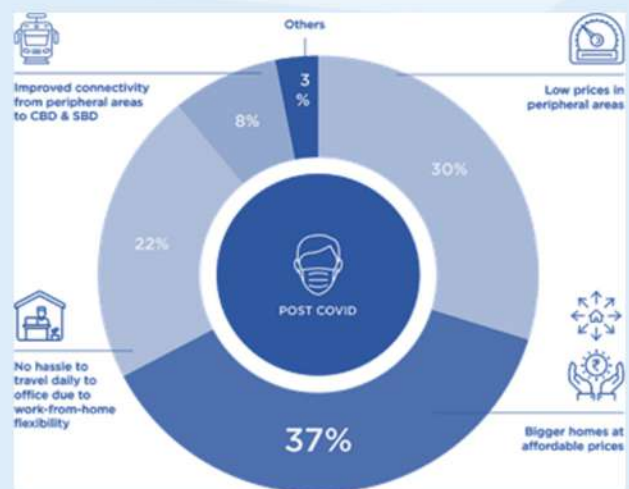
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URBAN GOVERNANCE INTERNSHIP

**Critical Review on
Why Implementation is Lacking?
Aapli Chikitsa - A Free Diagnostic
Scheme for Mumbai**

Dr. Aafreen Khan

in http://linkedin.com/in/dr-aafreen-khan-2136a913b

> It was a delightful experience with the Praja Foundation for a period of 3 months. Being part of the health research team, along with my fellow intern (Dr. Ipsha). It was a first-hand experience going through various Govt. websites on the data to look for health policy implementation in the city. Understanding the Urban Governance of a city, how it works for its citizen was the main feature of this Internship. Also, continuous Guidance & support from the team to look for challenges faced every week at every step was remarkable.

Dr. Aafreen Khan, Health Research Intern, Praja Foundation

Aafreen is a dentist by profession and holds a Masters degree in Public Health (health administration) from Tata Institute of Social Sciences. Her research interests include Child Nutrition, Urban health, Primary Health Care and policies on Health.

Critical Review on Why Implementation is Lacking? Aapli Chikitsa - A Free Diagnostic Scheme for Mumbai

Mumbai as a metropolitan city, is home to 12.44 million population (Census 2011) out of which almost 42% of them live with minimum basic amenities in slum areas. The Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai's (MCGM) Public Health Department is accountable for health care services in its region. The Public Health Department mainly focuses on preventive aspects of the health services, where the emphasis is on control measures of important diseases such as Malaria, Tuberculosis, Leprosy, Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs), HIV/ AIDS, etc. These cost-effective & efficient health services are provided through 16 Peripheral Hospitals, 5 Specialised Hospitals, 28 Maternity Homes, 186 Dispensaries, 183 Health Posts, 23 Postpartum Centres, S.T.D. clinic, Drug-De-Addiction Centre & mobile van unit, etc. Over the years, Mumbai has already seen the burden of communicable diseases such as TB & Malaria. Early detection of disease through diagnostic facilities is the key to successful treatment prognosis. Now just like the whole world, Mumbai is also suffering from COVID-19 crisis and is worst affected due to a weak public health care delivery system.

Diagnosis: A need of the Hour for Covid Crisis

Robust diagnostic and laboratory services are essential and fundamental for a sustainable health care delivery system. The functioning of hospitals and dispensaries could be improved by focussing/improving medical care which includes diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment. Early diagnosis improves treatment modalities and brings down the cost of treatment as it minimises the use of the syndromic approach to treating minor ailments. Therefore, it is essential not only as curative interventions but also for effective control of communicable diseases. Till now, the word "diagnosis" has not received the required consideration and approbation. The pandemic crisis provided enough evidence that early diagnosis is better than treatment of the disease. It is an actual need of an hour, as early/timely diagnosis helps progress patient care, protects patient's health, and optimises health care spending.

In COVID-19 disease management, there is the importance of diagnosis, monitoring, screening & prognosis. Diagnosis helps find out if a patient is suffering from a specific condition. A diagnostic test like antigen or RT-PCR confirms the possibility of COVID infection. It also facilitates healthcare professionals to assess the

effectiveness of the chosen treatment.

Patients suffering from COVID-19 disease with some chronic comorbid conditions like diabetes, cancer, coronary heart disease, that cannot be cured, but the chosen treatment, medications, and lifestyle changes can go a long way in avoiding a worsening situation in the future.

DIAGNOSIS ➤ **MONITORING** ➤ **SCREENING** ➤ **PROGNOSIS**

Also, some COVID-19 patients may be asymptomatic or with minimal symptoms in the initial stages, this is where screening comes into play. All asymptomatic patients can be screened at community levels. Therefore, it is affordable and easily accessible to all. Screening doesn't diagnose, it only identifies people who may have a disease.

Prognosis is a little far-fetched. It helps assess the likelihood of developing a disease in the near or distant future, thereby assisting a patient to take necessary precautions much earlier that might reduce the burden of disease.

Thus, it is important to note that diagnosis is integral to the process of detecting, treating, producing accurate results, and curing illnesses. Diagnostic tests impact of major healthcare decisions, though it also relies on an accurate interpretation of the test results, judgment, and an expert bent of mind in prescribing the treatment. In Mumbai, to reduce the burden from major civic hospital's & out of pocket expenditure from poor people, an innovative model named 'Aapli Chikitsa' has been started for the past three years, this article gives brief about this scheme and its impact on the public health system during the pandemic.

What is the 'AAPLI CHIKITSA' Scheme?

In 2017, MCGM launched a scheme named 'Aapli Chikitsa' in its yearly budget session which is similar to the 'Mohalla clinic' model of the Delhi government. Patients will be screened at 'Aapli Chikitsa' and accordingly, treatment will be suggested if further investigation is needed, then required tests will be performed and the patient will get reports on the same day at these health facilities. Under this scheme, below the poverty line patients will be screened for free, people above Below Poverty Line (BPL) will have to pay Rs. 50 for 101 basic diagnostic tests and Rs. 100 for 38 advanced diagnostic tests.

The scheme was proposed with an intention to provide 139 types (both basic and advanced,) including blood glucose and urine tests at free of cost via outsourcing to private laboratories. It includes the necessary test for the diagnosis of diseases like dengue, malaria and leptospirosis during the rainy season. MCGM ties up with private laboratories to collect samples and provide reports to the patient free of cost.

Why was this scheme needed in Mumbai at first?

Patients with minor ailments like fever, diarrhoea, etc. come to major civic hospitals i.e., KEM Hospital, JJ Hospital & others. They stand in queue for hours for check-ups by the doctor and to avail diagnostic services from civic hospitals. Such minor ailments can be treated at peripheral hospitals or dispensaries if provided with essential resources. It will further ease pressure from hospitals.

Mostly, a large number of patients visit municipal hospitals during the monsoon season due to the rampant spread of various epidemic diseases like dengue, malaria, typhoid, etc. In major civic hospitals like KEM hospital where around 3,000 patients visit on a daily basis, almost 50% of the patient load is for diagnostic services. Therefore, Aapli Chikitsa as an innovative scheme to provide "free pathological diagnostic services" to patients would have been the best solution.

Since major hospitals are overcrowded and burdened, patients often resort to private facilities for tests and pay hefty amounts. So, by diversion of these patients to a dispensary & peripheral hospital as well as urban health posts via this scheme it could be reduced. Also, through this scheme, the health department could strengthen peripheral hospitals and dispensaries.

Budget allocation to 'Aapli Chikitsa'

A budget provision of Rs. 16.15 crore was proposed in B.E. 2017-18 whereas in B.E. 2019-20 Rs. 16.38 crores were proposed. Medical facilities have been provided at the doorsteps of citizens via this scheme. It is applicable to all the dispensaries and peripheral hospitals except major civic hospitals of the city. Each year's budget earmarks a specific amount for this scheme yet, implementation of the scheme is pending for the past 3 years. There is scope to look for challenges in implementation.

Why was there a lack of implementation of the scheme?

Initially, when the scheme was launched, it was decided to provide laboratory tests for free, though it was not implemented yet. Why is this change in scheme required? Is MCGM not financially capable of providing free services to the poor population? It has been observed that the "fee for service" model in healthcare prevents misuse of the scheme as most of the patients seek random check-ups which are not even required. So minimal fee on the check-ups is important. Also, there is a possibility that a nexus could be formed between the doctor and 3rd party, suggesting to patients some unnecessary tests. But this free-for-service model may be contraindicated as the scheme is to benefit the poor, but MCGM's decision defeats the whole purpose of the scheme.

The MCGM signed an agreement with two companies i.e., Metropolis Healthcare and Thyrocare Technologies Limited to conduct medical tests in 2018. The MCGM had proposed to pay Rs 223 for basic tests while Rs 892 for advanced tests to contractors. The agreement initially demanded basic tests at Rs 100 and advanced tests at Rs 200. However, it opposed the decided amount to conduct basic tests at Rs 50 and advanced tests at Rs 100, Hence the deal got suspended. This difference in rates is one of the reasons for lacking & delayed implementation.

A recommendation has been projected by the standing committee of MCGM to re-look the proposal of the scheme, as no bidder was interested. Initially, the civic administration was adamant that there will be no change in the proposed charges for pathology tests. After multiple requests committees approved the proposal with an amendment that poor people will pay Rs 50 for basic tests and Rs 100 for advanced tests and others will be charged Rs 100 and Rs 200 respectively for the same. 139 tests are done at dispensaries of which 101 tests are basic and 38 tests are advanced under the new policy.

Conclusion

In literal meaning Aapli Chikitsa stands for 'your treatment', this scheme conveys the intention of providing hassle-free diagnostic services and treatment for poor people in the city's public health facilities. But in reality, this scheme's actual implementation is not seen in any public health facilities. Even their website (MCGM website) does not show any data related to Aapli Chikitsa scheme. There is a need to revamp the website by updating beneficiaries' data, to understand the actual utilisation. In the COVID crisis, the city's fragile and patchy health system shone a spotlight on the already infested poor diagnostic services in public health facilities. In developed countries, there have been innovations in diagnostics services that have transformed medical practice. Advancements in technology have further revolutionised healthcare, by guiding timely medical intervention. As we know, diagnostic tests play a crucial role at every step of disease management.

The main aim of Aapli Chikitsa is to provide immediate testing to patients at affordable rates. Had the scheme been implemented properly on time, there could have been a huge advantage during this pandemic. It could have helped patients to get screening and COVID testing easily at dispensary and peripheral hospitals at an affordable price. This could have had a greater impact on reducing community transmissions if patients would have been screened and tested properly on time. Even after submitting tenders twice, not a single diagnostic laboratory has shown interest in the 'Aapli Chikitsa' plan. There is a need to ensure immediate implementation of this scheme for the civic health department of the city to avoid gigantic out-of-pocket expenditure from millions of poor people's income.

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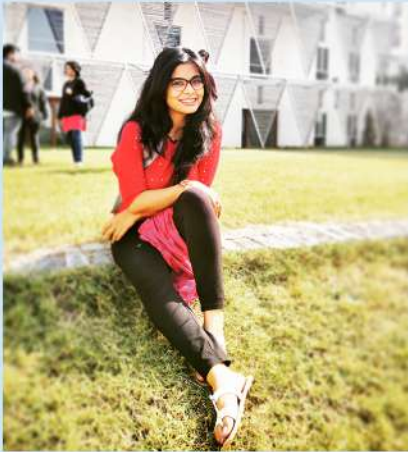- *https://www.acrossstates.com/civic-corner/bmc-standing-committee-approves-aapli-chikitsa-scheme/*

URBAN GOVERNANCE INTERNSHIP

Strengthening of Primary Health Care in Delhi: Aam Aadmi Mohalla Clinic

Ipsha Gupta

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> The internship at PRAJA was an enriching and learning experience. I was a part of health research team, and I looked for recent data (last 3 years) on government portal, the relevant articles published, policies made, to what extent these policies are implemented and what changes they have brought about. The internship also brought in front of me the working of PRAJA foundation, which I found to be of great importance when it comes to analysing how far the particular policy has been implemented and its effects.

Ipsha Gupta, Health Research Intern, Praja Foundation

Ipsha is a graduate with a master's in Public Health from Indian Institute of Public Health, Gandhinagar. She has a bachelors degree in Dental Surgery. Her research interests include health and related policies, intervention as well as communicable and non-communicable disease.

Strengthening of Primary Health Care in Delhi: Aam Aadmi Mohalla Clinic

Delhi is the national capital of India and the largest metropolitan city, with a population of over 16.78 million (Census 2011). Delhi also has a huge number of migratory and floating population from neighbourhood states which mostly resides in the urban slums and constitute a considerable patient load. Despite of having a world class structure in terms of healthcare facilities (both government and private) it is seen that many a times the people are unable to access quality and affordable public healthcare services. This has made them dependent of the private service providers which has resulted in increase in the out of pocket expenditure.

Due to unavailability of quality primary and preventive health services it was also found that there was a huge burden on the secondary and tertiary healthcare system which resulted in long appointment waiting time, lack of medicines and basic infrastructure and overcrowding which in turn also decreased the quality of the healthcare services.

With all these things in mind and also to fulfil their electoral promise, the Aam Aadmi Party launched a pilot project of Mohalla Clinic. This concept followed the success of mobile medical units. The first Mohalla Clinic in Delhi was inaugurated on 19th July 2015, with a goal of establishing 1000 such clinics, by 2020, across Delhi. Currently 485 such clinics are functional in Delhi.
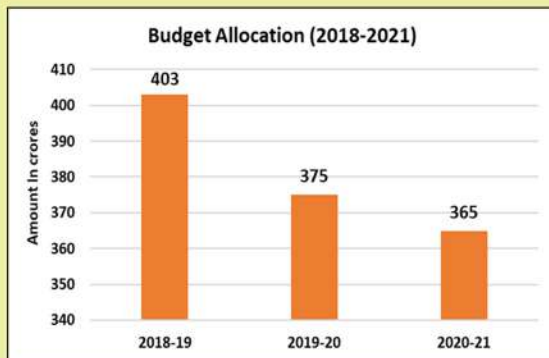
What are Mohalla clinics?

Mohalla clinics were started as a part of Delhi government initiative to strengthen the primary and preventive healthcare infrastructure, to reduce the out of pocket expenditure and to provide quality and accessible healthcare services. The clinics provide the following services:

a. Basic medical care based on standard treatment protocols which include curative care for common illnesses like fever, diarrhoea, skin problems, respiratory problems etc., first aid for injuries and burns, dressing and management of minor wounds and referral services.
b. All lab investigations are to be carried out by the empanelled laboratory for the clinic.

c. All drugs as per the essential drug list shall be provided free of cost to the patients.

d. Preventive services such as antenatal and postnatal care of pregnant women, assessment of nutritional status, counselling and promotion of National/State Health Programmes.

e. Health information, education and awareness.

The clinics shall function from 8.00 a.m. to 2.00 p.m. on all day from Monday to Saturday. Sunday will be weekly off.

Budget Allocation (2018-2021)

This scheme has received praises at national and international level, but it is seen that the Mohalla clinics are no longer the priority of the government. The AAP government has reduced the allocation for the development of Mohalla clinics and polyclinics from Rs. 403 crore in 2018-2019 to Rs. 375 crore in 2019-2020 and Rs 365. crore in 2020-2021.

There has also been a decline in the number of patients, visiting such clinics, which got reduced to 40 lakhs in 2019-20, as compared to the 80 lakh people reported in 2018-19.

Number of people visiting Mohalla Clinics
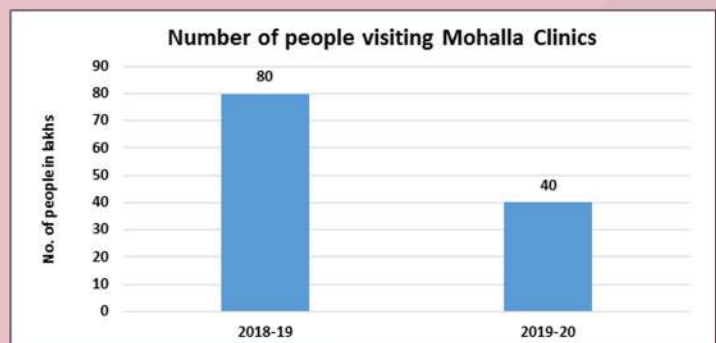
Despite of the free services and accessibility, according to a report of Praja released in 2019, 41% of Delhi residents still relied completely on private healthcare services and 12% accessed both, government as well as private services. This was still an improvement over 2017, when 47% of Delhi residents relied completely on private healthcare services, while 21% accessed both. A part of the reason behind this is also because Mohalla Clinics are designed to provide diagnostic services and consultation. For services such as immunisation and antenatal care people still have to visit government health centres.

The Delhi government has also failed to meet the target of setting up of 1000 Mohalla Clinics and polyclinics by 2020. Till now only 485 such clinics are functional. The main reasons behind the slow progress were:

-Insufficient advance planning (there was no operational plan developed uptill 1 year in the implementation process).

-Difficulty in selection of the sites (the land is not controlled by the state government).

-Delay in approvals of proposals at various levels.

-Frequent change in technical leadership in health department among others.

Success story of Mohalla Clinics:

Despite of all the insufficiencies, as mentioned above, Mohalla Clinics have their own success stories. The implementation has earned praises both nationally and internationally. According to Lancet, the Mohalla Clinic is a unique model, where consultation, medicines and diagnostic tests are offered all in one place and are free for people from all income groups.

It has shifted the focus on the importance of primary and preventive healthcare services, which are to be provided by the government.

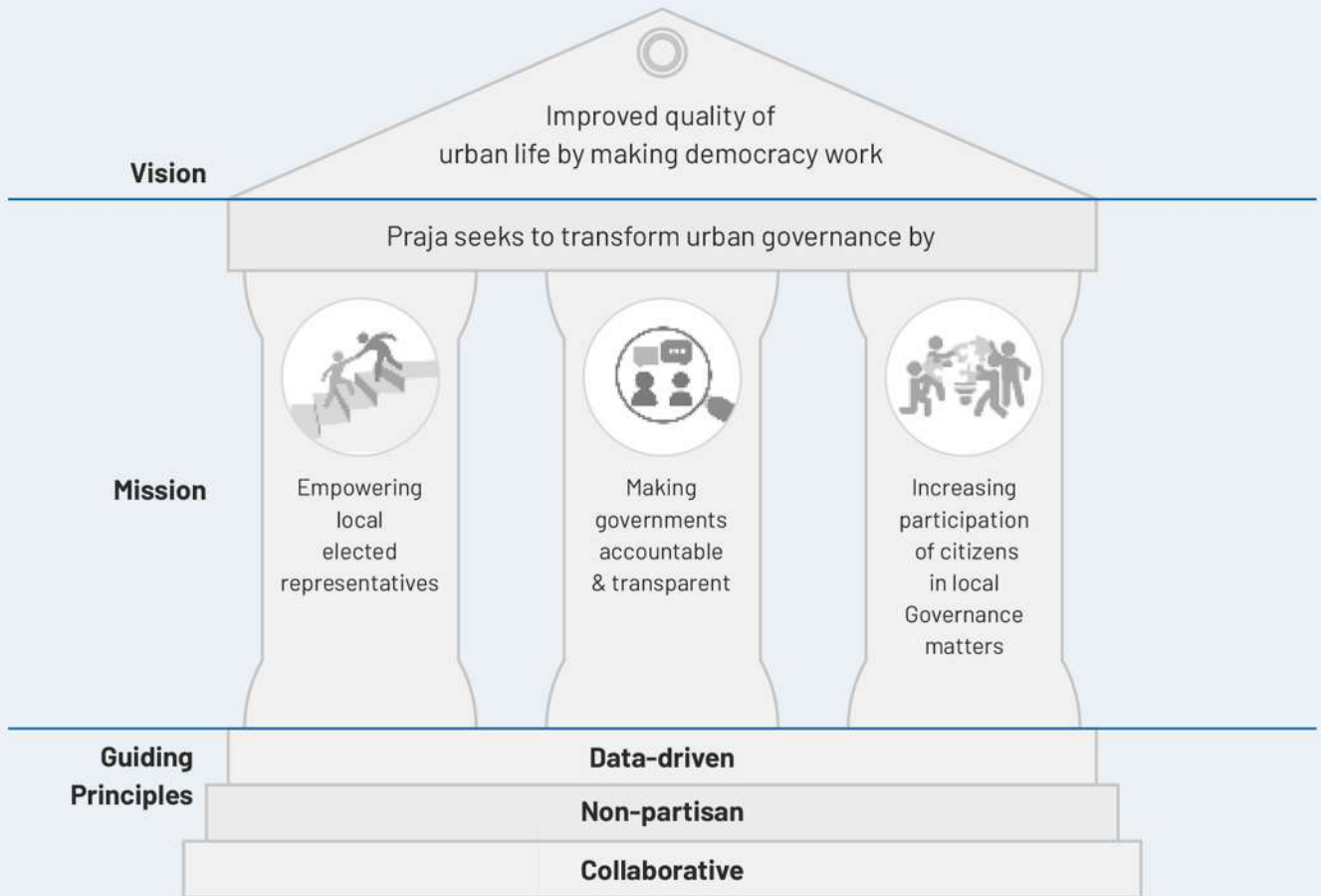In September–October 2016, when Delhi witnessed an outbreak of dengue and Chikungunya diseases and all the secondary and tertiary heath facilities were flooded with the patients, at that time the Mohalla Clinics became a key entry point for patients to get examined and laboratory tests for dengue to be done. This was considered a major relief. Moreover, the Mohalla Clinics played a vital role in reducing the out of pocket expenditure specially amongst the poor.

Mohalla Clinics during COVID:

With COVID spreading rapidly in the city, these clinics are being used as testing centres, all across Delhi. It was reported that only rapid antigen tests were performed here and that for RTPCR patients were referred outside. The infrastructure was not strong enough to admit patients. Even as the Delhi healthcare system crumbled due to COVID in April 2021, when the Delhi high court suggested to use Mohalla Clinics to tackle the current crisis, Delhi government responded that these clinics can't be used due to lack of infrastructure, and that it has only one entry and exit point. The Delhi High Court has also recommended that these facilities be turned into vaccination centres in future. Many clinics were providing tele-consultation and prescribing medicines to the people. Most of the Mohalla Clinics were reported shut since the healthcare workers had been tested positive.

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Praja undertakes data driven research for identifying capacities in urban governance, map inefficiencies in their work processes and identify best practices. It then provides this information to urban governance stakeholders including elected representatives, administration, citizens, media and academia; and works with leadership amongst its stakeholders to identify and address inefficiencies in building their capacities to improve work processes in urban governance.

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