



URBAN GOVERNANCE DIALOGUE

Transforming Urban Governance

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Praja Foundation

BUILDING CAPACITY. STRENGTHENING CITY GOVERNANCE.

Effective urban governance requires elected representatives and municipal officials to understand the systems they work within, engage with the people and institutions around them, and apply this understanding to the challenges of their cities.

In June and July 2026, Praja Foundation conducted a series of **Urban Seminars and Capacity Building Workshops across Odisha, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh**. These programmes brought together elected representatives, municipal officials and practitioners to exchange experiences, strengthen institutional understanding and explore practical approaches to improving city governance.

The programmes covered **inclusive urban services and community participation in Odisha, municipal institutions and processes in Maharashtra, and the implementation of the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2026 in Uttar Pradesh**.



Interactive Sessions



Sharing Ideas, Shaping Solutions



Expert Insights



Stronger Collaboration, Greater Impact



Engaged Councillors, Active Participation

URBAN SEMINARS

Cities are complex systems where decisions about housing, sanitation, water, mobility, and public services impact communities differently. **Urban Seminars provide a shared learning space for elected representatives and municipal administrators to explore these interconnected challenges.** They encourage elected representatives to look beyond departmental silos and focus on how policies affect real-life services. By sharing experiences and solutions from different cities, participants learn from successful models while addressing their own governance issues. The discussions emphasise community participation in decision-making and the vital role of city governments in fostering inclusive development, ultimately facilitating dialogue and collaborative problem-solving.



ODISHA: Learning Through Seminar and Field Exposure

On **19–20 June 2026**, Praja Foundation, in collaboration with the **Urban Management Centre (UMC)**, organised a Urban Seminar on **“Inclusive Cities: Strengthening Urban Services through Community Participation”** at the Odisha Urban Academy.

The two-day programme brought elected representatives and municipal administrators together **to understand how urban services can respond more effectively to the needs of different communities.**

The Urban Seminar also included senior leaders from the **Housing & Urban Development Department, Government of Odisha**, including **Mamata Rani Naik, OAS, Joint Secretary**, and **Usha Padhee, IAS, Additional Chief Secretary**, who shared insights on Odisha’s Viksit Odisha vision and the role of women-led SHGs in driving urban transformation.

The seminar introduced participants to Odisha's initiatives such as **Garima, Jalasathi, Drink from Tap, decentralised waste management and mechanisation**. Through discussions, interactive exercises and field exposure, participants explored how inclusive governance can strengthen service delivery while ensuring dignity, safety and community participation.



The programme began with a **Power Walk**, helping participants **reflect on how access to rights, services and opportunities differs across communities** living within the same city. This was followed by discussions on the role of city governments in advancing inclusive urban development and strengthening participatory planning.

The learning then moved beyond the seminar hall into four **on-ground exposure visits** that demonstrated how municipal systems operate in practice.



Field Exposure: Seeing City Governance in Action

The field exposure took elected representatives beyond the seminar room and into the systems that keep cities running. Across **Bhubaneswar and Puri**, participants explored sanitation, waste management, water supply, public transport and worker welfare.

At the **Bhubaneswar Sanitation Hub**, they visited a **Micro Composting Centre, Material Recovery Facility, Fecal Sludge Treatment Plant and Sewer Entry Professional Training Centre**, while interacting with sanitation workers and operators to understand safety, training and working conditions.





In **Puri**, elected representatives travelled on an **electric bus driven by a woman driver** and explored how public services can support more inclusive cities. At **WATCO facilities**, they saw systems supporting **24x7 water supply, Drink from Tap, sewer and septic-tank mechanisation**.

The final visit to a **Garima Griha** brought the focus to sanitation workers, their dignity and wellbeing. Together, the four visits showed how **infrastructure, institutions and people come together to shape everyday urban services**.



During an informal interaction with Bhubaneswar Mayor Smt. Sulochana Das, councillors participating in the Urban Seminar gained insights into the successes of the Bhubaneswar Corporation and the governance practices adopted by the city administration.

The discussion covered key urban governance themes, including urban mobility, market accessibility, and the implementation of city-level projects and initiatives. The interaction offered valuable learnings and practical insights that councillors could adapt to strengthen urban governance and service delivery in their respective cities.

Following the field exposure, elected representatives came together to reflect on the experiences and identify practices that could be adapted within their own cities. It concluded with participants developing three- to six-month action plans, translating their learning into practical interventions for strengthening inclusive urban governance and community-responsive service delivery.

CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOPS

Elected representatives make decisions every day that influence the quality of life within their wards and cities. To make these decisions effective, they need a clear understanding of municipal laws, institutions, finances, and governance processes. **Capacity Building Workshops provide practical learning opportunities that strengthen this institutional understanding while connecting legislation with day-to-day governance.**

Rather than focusing only on theory, the workshops use discussions, case studies, examples and participatory exercises to help participants apply their knowledge to real civic challenges. They create a space where councillors and municipal officials can openly discuss ward-level issues and learn from each other's experiences.

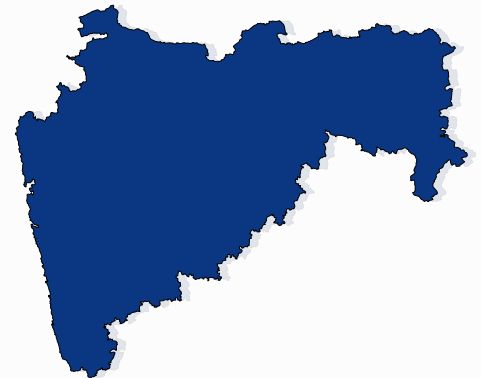


The programmes also strengthen **confidence in using municipal provisions, council procedures and deliberative tools more effectively**. Ultimately, capacity building supports stronger institutions by equipping city leaders with the knowledge and practical tools required for responsive, accountable and citizen-centric governance.

Maharashtra: Building Understanding of Municipal Institutions

Between **June and July 2026**, Praja Foundation conducted capacity-building workshops across **9 Municipal Corporations in Maharashtra**, reaching **350+ participants, including 200 councillors**.

The workshops focused on strengthening participants' understanding of the institutions, laws and processes that shape the day-to-day functioning of municipal governance.



The sessions covered:

1. The **three-tier structure of government**
2. The **74th Constitutional Amendment**
3. The **Maharashtra Municipal Corporation Act, 1949**
4. How to read a **Municipal Act**
5. **Committees and council proceedings**
6. Using **questions as a deliberative tool**
7. Understanding the **18 functions of the city**

Participants also worked through practical examples, drafted questions and discussed governance issues emerging from their own wards.



In **Nagpur**, the engagement included a two-day module covering the **Municipal Corporation Act and Municipal Finance**, enabling elected representatives to better understand institutional and financial decision-making within city governments.

The workshops also brought in the experience of **Shubhangi Sawant, former Municipal Secretary of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation**, who shared insights from more than **37 years of public service** and discussed councillor responsibilities, committees and deliberative processes within municipal institutions.

The discussions also highlighted areas where elected representatives sought continued institutional learning and support.

- **Pune:** Corporators called for such programmes to be made mandatory.
- **Nashik:** Participants requested continued workshops covering different aspects of municipal governance.
- **Nagpur:** Participants expressed interest in continued capacity-building programmes.
- **Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar:** Discussions highlighted the need to finalise the Rules of Procedure for Council Proceedings, along with regular capacity-building programmes.

"During the discussion, the Mayor highlighted the need to finalise the Rules of Procedure for Council Proceedings for Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar and emphasised that such capacity-building workshops are essential and should be organised regularly."

- **Sameer Rajurkar**, Mayor, Sambhajnagar

Uttar Pradesh Connecting Rules with Implementation

In **June 2026**, Praja Foundation conducted capacity-building workshops in **Varanasi, Gorakhpur and Meerut** on the **Solid Waste Management Rules, 2026**.

The workshops followed Praja's longer engagement with elected representatives in Uttar Pradesh. In **July 2023**, Praja signed an MoU with the Directorate of Urban Local Bodies and Urban Development Department, Government of Uttar Pradesh, to strengthen elected representatives' understanding of the **Uttar Pradesh Municipal Corporation Act, 1959 and municipal finance**.



The 2026 workshops built upon this institutional foundation by connecting municipal governance with the implementation of the **Solid Waste Management Rules, 2026** at the ward level.

The workshops enhanced councillors' understanding of the **key provisions of the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2026**, with particular focus on source segregation, waste processing, the responsibilities of elected representatives and practical ward-level implementation strategies.



Participants actively engaged in discussions and shared challenges from their own wards, reflecting a strong commitment towards improving solid waste management and supporting compliance with the new Rules.

Through interactive sessions, group discussions, case studies and practical activities, councillors explored workable solutions for strengthening citizen awareness, improving coordination with municipal officials and enhancing waste segregation and collection systems within their wards.

The workshops also enabled participants to better understand their role in monitoring implementation, communicating with citizens and using municipal systems to improve service delivery at the local level.



The sessions covered:

- Source segregation
- Waste collection and transportation
- Processing and scientific disposal
- Institutional responsibilities
- Citizen participation
- Monitoring of waste-management systems

Participants examined practical questions including:

1. **What happens at the source?**
2. **Who monitors collection?**
3. **How can citizens participate?**
4. **What can an elected representative ask for, track and communicate?**



Feedback received from participants indicated that the workshops were highly informative and equipped councillors with practical knowledge and tools that can support the effective implementation of the **Solid Waste Management Rules, 2026** within their respective wards.

CITY WISE ENGAGEMENT

Varanasi

Elected representatives participated in discussions focused on promoting source segregation, conducting citizen awareness drives and strengthening monitoring of waste collection and processing systems.

Gorakhpur

Councillors along with senior municipal leadership, participated in detailed discussions on the implementation and monitoring of solid waste management systems across wards.

Meerut

Councillors and municipal officials connected the provisions of the new Rules with the city's existing waste-management systems and discussed implementation challenges specific to their local context.

"The workshop was very good. I found the suggestions and the things discussed by the speaker to be very useful. This learning will benefit the development of our wards and the city. In my opinion, workshops like this should be conducted regularly. Personally, I have learnt a lot and have greatly benefitted from this experience."

- **Saroj Paswan**, Ward 8, Gorakhpur Nagar Nigam

Participants across the three cities also identified practical actions such as strengthening coordination with municipal officials and involving **resident groups, schools and self-help groups** in improving waste-management practices and citizen participation.

CONTINUING THE WORK ACROSS CITIES

The Urban Seminars and Capacity Building Workshops conducted across Odisha, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh are part of Praja Foundation's ongoing work to strengthen city governance through institutional learning and practical engagement. What began with capacity-building initiatives in the **Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation more than a decade ago** has today expanded into **100+ municipal training sessions across India**. Across these engagements, Praja continues to work with elected representatives, municipal officials, and city-level stakeholders to strengthen understanding of municipal institutions, urban services, laws, policies, and governance processes. Each programme is designed around the specific governance needs of participating cities while creating opportunities for leaders to learn from one another, exchange practical experiences and translate knowledge into stronger urban governance.

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



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