

“How can urban development work for the poor?”

Report of a workshop on Improving centrally sponsored urban development programs

On June 14, 2014, Transparent Chennai, an action research group that creates maps, data, and research on civic issues affecting the poor, held a regional workshop on urban development in Chennai. 60 people attended the meeting, including city residents, researchers, students, media, and officials from the Corporation of Chennai (CoC) and the Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (called Metrowater).

The workshop was organized as part of a research partnership with the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), through which research on the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) is taking place in four states and eight cities across India. Representatives from TISS were also present at the meeting.

Based on the presentation of research findings at the workshop and residents' and researchers' own experiences of the JNNURM, participants at the workshop came up with a series of suggestions to ensure that future iterations of the JNNURM or new centrally sponsored urban development programs will result in outcomes that are better for the city's poor. These changes are summarized in the summary recommendations section, and the detailed notes from the discussion are available in the following section.

Summary Recommendations:

Accountability and transparency:

1. Substantive information about programs needs to be made publicly and widely available both in English and the local language so that residents can take advantage of entitlements and so that the performance of the government can be clearly evaluated. Websites need to be regularly updated. There should be public information officers dedicated to particular schemes, who can speak to people as well as provide documentary information. System of proactive disclosure

Most importantly, the following information must be available:

- Clear eligibility criteria and application processes, as well as the selected beneficiaries after these are finalized.
 - Target areas (including maps of streets or households and future planned locations of infrastructure) and expected outcomes from projects.
 - All program materials in a timely manner, including Detailed Project Reports, materials from consultants, monitoring reports, detailed budgets, tenders, and contracts.
2. Stronger accountability measures need to be put into place for these programs.
- Central government holding states to account to project guidelines
 - Monitoring measures
 - There should be penalties for poor performance
 - E-governance measures need to be improved,
 - Citizen-based accountability
 - Binding Social Audit
 - Citizen inspections in the middle of projects conditional on project disbursements
 - Grievance redressal system in the form of quasi judicial system??

Planning and participation:

1. Better planning needs to take place before projects. Rigorous CDP needs to be created, that is followed during the program. Planning should include the city officials and states before the central government creates the schemes.
2. Participation of citizens needs to be substantive and robust. Community participation committees perhaps?
3. Media campaigns for participation, advertisements on television

Housing and water sector recommendations:

1. Services for all – right to services act, even to unauthorized slums
2. Public squares like shops and markets (What does this mean?)
3. New designs for construction can be solicited from architects.
4. Quality improvement in infrastructure created, refurbishment of all existing infrastructure
5. In-situ housing needs to be prioritized, and should be made binding on the government through legislation.
6. Surplus land needs to be found within the city.
7. Drives for sale deeds.
8. Water programs need to be focused on the poor.
9. Coordination between departments in planning and implementation of these projects.

GENERAL:

10. Use of land needs to be reconsidered – mindset of land for markets, must be changed to that of land for public infrastructure, public housing, social purposes
11. Human resource crunch in government.
12. 25% of land must be allocated to unorganized workers in every zone