

Minutes of meeting - Participatory Urban Governance

Date: Monday, 23/06/2020

Time: 11:30 am -1:00 pm

Venue: Google Meet (online)

Attendees:

1. Mr. I. P. Gautam, IAS (Retd)

From CEPT Research and Development Foundation (CRDF):

1. Dr. Saswat Bandopadhyay, Professor, CEPT University
2. Dr. Sejal Patel, Professor, CEPT University
3. Ms. Vijaya Salanke, Research Associate, CRDF
4. Ms. Priyankita Pant, Research Associate, CRDF
5. Mr. Vishal Chudgar, Intern, CRDF



Presentation/ Talk:

- Meeting started with introductory address by Dr. Saswat Bandopadhyay.
- Mr. I. P. Gautam delivered a talk on development of participatory platform for urban poor in context of urban Gujarat, essentially in slum redevelopment projects and status of ward committees (WC) as a participatory platform in case of Ahmedabad.
- He also threw a light on institutional structure in urban Gujarat and position of ward committees within them, present form of these ward committees and how the composition can be improved.
- Specific to Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation, he mentioned that the efforts have been made to involve citizens in the budgetary suggestions and monitoring.
- He also mentioned that community consultation has played a vital role in making some of the key projects successful in Ahmedabad (such as Kankaria lake development, delivery of houses under BSUP, some slum redevelopment projects etc.). Hence, Ahmedabad has a good tradition of addressing issues of urban poor through community consultation.

Discussion :

- The talk was followed by a round of discussion.
- Some of the key points that came forward during the discussion are as follows;
 1. Composition of ward committees plays an important role. All the other marginalized groups (SC, ST, OBC, women), citizens from middle and higher income group should be made to part of the WC along with urban poor.
 2. Number of ward committee members should be restricted between 10 to 15, otherwise the consensus building and decision making become problematic. These members should be on yearly rotational basis so that more people get opportunity to become members of ward committee.
 3. Constitution of ward committees without devolution of power is futile. Hence there is a need to hear them out and empower them through fiscal devolution, but, this devolution of power should be done in phases.
 4. The real issue is the conflict between representative democracy and participatory democracy which is starkly observed on ground and needs to be addressed.