

Minutes of meeting - Participatory Urban Governance

Date: Thursday, 01/10/2020

Time: 4.30 pm -5.30 pm

Venue: Google Meet (online)

Attendees:

1. Prof. Angelique Chettiparambil Rajan, University of Reading, UK

From CEPT Research and Development Foundation (CRDF):

1. Dr. Saswat Bandopadhyay, Professor, CEPT University
2. Dr. Sejal Patel, Professor, CEPT University
3. Shelly Kulshrestha, Assistant Professor, CEPT University
4. Vijaya Redekar Salanke, Research Associate, CRDF
5. Priyankita Pant, Research Associate, CRDF

The screenshot displays a Google Meet window with a PowerPoint presentation titled "Planning in India.pptx - PowerPoint" by Angelique Chettiparambil Rajan. The presentation slide is titled "Bottom-Up Planning In India" and lists several issues: Corruption and lack of transparency (accountability deficiency), Slow bureaucratization (autonomy deficiency), Inter-sectoral integration (technical deficiency), Less progress in economic development (production deficiency), Declining public engagement (participation deficiency), and Rural/urban difference (spatial equity deficiency). The meeting interface shows four participants: Sejal Patel, Angelique Chettiparambil Rajan, Shelly Kulshrestha, and Vijaya Redekar Salanke.

Discussion :

- Meeting started with an introductory address by Dr. Sejal Patel followed by a brief presentation explaining the project and understanding gathered so far.
- Prof. Angelique gave many insights on the working of ward committees, PPC and the Kudumbashree members in Kerala.
- She highlighted the importance of 'working group' in PPC. Ward Sabhas are a platform for 'expression of needs' whereas, working groups are where actually the 'projectization' takes place. Working groups can be called as the 'Secretariats' of the ward sabhas/ ward committees.
- While talking about the mandates, she mentioned that, participation of Kudumbashree members is neither mandatory in the Working groups nor in the ward sabhas (for ULBs with population below 1 Lakh). It is mandatory only in the Ward Committees (for ULBs with population more than 1 Lakh).

- Prof. Angelique shared her experience as a Voluntary Technical Corps (VTC) member. Projects prepared by working groups are approved by the ULB based on their own priorities. This is then sent to the Voluntary Technical Corps (VTC) for checking technical and financial viability. After receiving approval from VTC, these are then forwarded to DPC for final approval.
- In Kerala, participation of people is very crucial for efficient working of the system.
- Prof. Angelique suggested that, as the current focus of the study is on shelter and basic services, it would be important to look at its significance in context of Kerala. What would really be prioritized at local level and is it possible that the decisions at local level would influence these? For example, in Kerala, water is not devolved to city level.
- Dr. Sejal enquired about the discretionary budget to councillors in Kerala to which Prof. Angelique responded that there is no such budget.
- There is devolution of 25% State plan fund to Local Governments (this devolution is formula-based) whereas the Local Government also has its own funds through taxation etc. Ideally, the planning of both, devolved fund as well as own funds, should take place through PPC. But in practice, PPC is only takes place for planning of the devolved fund. Prof. Angelique suggested that this could be a point of enquiry in the study.
- In Kerala, there are beneficiary committees at local level who can directly report their problems at ULB level and seek assistance. Contribution of kind and labour through these committees is counted in local budget. Prof. Angelique suggested that we should check if these committees are still working in Kerala.