

GOVERNANCE IN THE MUMBAI METROPOLITAN REGION:
A REPORT FOR BOMBAY FIRST by JANAAGRAHA CENTRE FOR CITIZENSHIP AND DEMOCRACY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The statement “The quality of life in Mumbai is poor” is one that no stakeholder of the city will disagree with – citizens (rich or poor), urban administrators, elected representatives, media, corporate leaders or civil society organizations.

This unanimity in opinion is based primarily on two sets of perceptions: the first is the **visible evidence** of poor quality of urban life, both in absolute terms as well as when compared to other cities around the world. A second set of perceptions arise out of **transactional experiences**: a trader looking to get a license or permit to establish a business; a citizen seeking to pay his property taxes; a widow attempting to get a promised pension allowance for her deceased husband; a community association wishing to participate in the choice of municipal priorities in their neighbourhood; a multinational organization seeking to find clean title land to invest in the city; an irate resident seeking to complain about a broken water pipe. These transactional challenges also exist for people within government: junior clerks in the accounts department; executive engineers in the works department; IAS officers in so-called decision-making roles within the municipality, but with minimal control over the actual decision-making outcomes; ward corporators who have little control over even their ward budgets, let alone on larger city-wide infrastructure decisions; a water utility provider who is constantly being pressed to serve more and more citizens in far-flung areas, with broken distribution systems and minimal pricing discretion.

Seeking solutions at an operational level

One way of thinking of such operational challenges is as at the interface between citizens and their local governments, in this case, the BMC. Essentially, there are six different categories of citizen interface with their local government:

- a. Payment of taxes
- b. Payment of user charges in return for service benefits
- c. Procurement of licenses and permits
- d. Access to social welfare benefits
- e. Redressal of grievances
- f. Participation in the decision-making process

There are enormous gaps in ensuring that these interfaces are running smoothly, to the satisfaction of the citizens. These gaps can be thought of as having two perspectives: that of citizens and that of those within government:

Citizen perspective

From a citizen’s perspective, some of the reasons for these operational gaps are:

- a. Structures of government
- b. Procedures of government

Government perspective:

- a. Accountability of officers

- b. Transparency in the system
- c. Over-centralisation of enforcement

Addressing these gaps in the day-to-day interfaces that citizens have with government can go a long way in relieving the operational conflicts that confront both citizens and those within government.

While many of the operational challenges can be solved by looking at Mumbai's quality of life in purely tactical terms – i.e. improving interactions/ awareness/ simplifying administrative procedures etc., there is merit to the argument that even these changes will not address the larger issues that confront urban quality of life in the city region.

The Case for Urban Governance

The operative term needs to move from “managing” Mumbai to “governing” Mumbai, because this not only encompasses the function of managing but also locates it in a larger context. The problems of urban governance in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region are not trivial. There are technical issues, such as urban planning, design and management of mass transport systems, and access to such resources as water and power along with their pricing and distribution. There are public finance issues of ensuring that the local bodies in the region get access to the resources they need to provide services of acceptable quality. There are regional issues too: how does Mumbai relate to the larger region in which it is located and the other local bodies in the region, and how can the relationship between these be managed?

Examples of gaps that arise out of these “governance” related issues include:

- a) Affordable housing: the lack of sufficient affordable housing is driven by a complex set of inter-related issues:
 - a. Complexity of current regulations and control on urban land
 - b. Social issues of the poor and how they are oppressed
 - c. Challenges in enforcement, due to political interference and criminal-politician nexus
- b) Poor urban planning that extends from the neighbourhood to the metropolitan level
- c) Weak design and implementation of urban infrastructure projects, resulting in time and financial costs
- d) Lack of opportunities for citizens to participate
- e) Insufficient financial resources available to urban local bodies

These issues cannot be solved merely by thinking of the urban “quality of life” problem purely in visible or transactional terms. These challenges arise because there is something more fundamental wrong with how our cities are run. Viewed in this perspective, the approach of solving only transactional issues seems an over-simplification of the complex urban challenges that confront Mumbai.

It is this perspective that can be called “Urban Governance”: analyzing Mumbai's problems through this prism of institutional arrangements and deeper issues helps to answer the more complex questions, and offer answers that – while their implementation may take time and political will, technical competence and administrative skill – are the ones that will result in

long-term sustainable improvements to quality of life in Mumbai. A summary of recommendations in order to improve urban governance in Mumbai follows:

No	RECOMMENDATION
1	REGIONAL SYSTEM
1.1	INCLUDE COMPLETE DISTRICTS IN METROPOLITAN AREA
1.2	EMPOWER MPC TO PREPARE METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT PLAN
1.3	REVISE MPC COMPOSITION
1.4	SET UP SECTORAL COMMITTEES IN MPC
1.5	PROVIDE TECHNICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT FOR MPC
1.6	ESTABLISH UNIFIED METROPOLITAN TRANSPORT AUTHORITY
1.7	ESTABLISH UNIFIED METROPOLITAN ENVIRONMENT AUTHORITY
1.8	ESTABLISH DIRECTORATE OF METROPOLITAN ECONOMICS AND STATISTICS
1.9	ESTABLISH METROPOLITAN SPATIAL DATA CENTRE
1.10	RESTRUCTURE MMRDA
1.11	ELIMINATE DPC AND DPDC IN ALL DISTRICTS
1.12	RECLASSIFY AND CONSOLIDATE RURAL LOCAL BODIES TO URBAN LOCAL BODIES
1.13	NOTIFY LOCAL BODIES AS SOLE PLANNING AUTHORITIES
1.14	CREATE INTEGRATED METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT PLAN
1.15	CHANGE LAWS RELATED TO LAND-USE PLANNING
1.16	ESTABLISH GUARANTEED LAND TITLE SYSTEM
1.17	DECENTRALISE PLAN ENFORCEMENT SYSTEM
2	EMPOWERED LOCAL BODIES AND CITIZENS
2.1	TRANSFER PLANNING FUNCTION TO LOCAL BODIES
2.2	ESTABLISH MAYORAL SYSTEM
2.3	EMPOWER WARD COMMITTEES
2.4	ESTABLISH OFFICE OF OMBUDSMAN
2.5	ESTABLISH AREA SABHAS
2.6	STRENGTHEN CIVIL DEFENCE SYSTEM
3	ENABLED LOCAL BODIES AND CITIZENS
3.1	GIVE INDEPENDENCE TO LOCAL BODIES IN APPOINTMENTS AND RECRUITMENT
3.2	STREAMLINE DEPARTMENTAL HIRING PROCESSES
3.3	UPGRADE CAPACITIES IN URBAN MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE
3.4	ESTABLISH E-GOVERNANCE SYSTEMS
3.5	ESTABLISH ROBUST GIS SYSTEM
3.6	IMPLEMENT E-PROCUREMENT SYSTEMS
3.7	CREATE COMPREHENSIVE DATABASE ON URBAN SERVICES
4	DIRECT ACCOUNTABILITY
4.1	IMPROVE ELECTORAL ACCOUNTABILITY
4.2	CREATE SINGLE WINDOW SERVICES AND STREAMLINING URBAN SERVICES
4.3	ESTABLISH CITIZEN CHARTERS
4.4	DEVELOP PARTICIPATORY PLANNING PROCESSES
4.5	PASS DISCLOSURE LAW AND PUBLISH PERFORMANCE STANDARDS
4.6	BUILD COMPREHENSIVE WEBSITE FOR ALL LOCAL BODIES
4.7	ESTABLISH OFFICE OF OMBUDSMAN