# TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN URBAN GOVERNANCE IN INDIA

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## INTRODUCTION

Transparency in public administration has been the central point of debate with paradigm shifts of development and governance globally and particularly in India. The demand for transparency and accountability in public administration in the wake of globalization, economic liberalization and new policy regime has been progressively increasing. The innovational improvements in technologies of information, communication and office management have also widened the scope of transparency, accountability and responsiveness in the governance in the country. Transparency may be defined as disclosure of government information and its use by the public. It requires public to access, understand, and use the information so received from the government. Transparency and accountability in administration have wider and greater impact on service delivery. Both are the central theme of Good Governance and Development Discourse. Accountability is widely accepted as a key tool in service delivery improvement while transparency enhances the administrative efficiency and delivery of public goods and services. It also improves the functioning of democracy enhancing the closure relationship between public and government to achieve the desired goals. The impact of transparency and accountability on service delivery has always been an underlying motif in the literature on service delivery. Accountability is a central theme of the debates on service delivery; however, it took roots only after the World Development Report, 2004 which identified failures in service delivery squarely as failures in accountability relationships (World Bank: 2004). The World Development Report sparked off a spate of work that examined ways of strengthening the short route from amplifying voice, increasing transparency and enhancing accountability (Sirker and Cosic: 2007; McNeil and Mumvuma: 2006).

Accountability initiatives in service delivery are more difficult to define. The clearest and most basic exposition of its concept is provided by Schedler (1999) as public accountability comprises of a relationship between the 'power holder' and 'delegator'. There are four elements to this accountability relationship viz. setting

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standards, getting information about actions, making judgments about appropriateness and sanctioning unsatisfactory performance. Further the accountability for service delivery can be demanded from a range of stakeholders and the initiatives to hold these multiple actors accountable can be state-led or citizen-led. In fact, the emerging literature on social accountability also tended to use the term quite loosely (Joshi, 2008). Some limit the term social accountability to citizen groups monitoring the use of public authority (Peruzzotti and Smulovitz, 2006). Others include participation in policy making, policy advocacy and deliberations as part of the social accountability (Arroyo, 2004, Malena *et al.*, 2004). Some scholars treat the question as an empirical one: asking whether particular institutional spaces are used for certain kinds of engagements, inclusion and accountability (Cornwall and Coelho, 2006). Menocal and Sharma (2008), evaluating the impact of five donor-led voice and accountability initiatives conclude that donor expectations of such initiatives in terms of poverty alleviation goals or the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals is too high. The interventions studied in their evaluation however, do not explicitly focus on health or education services. In an interesting examination of whether Top Down or Bottom Up accountability mechanisms work better, Nguyen and Lassibille (2008) report on a random experiment in which different approaches were compared in schools in Madagascar. The findings showed that demand-led interventions resulted in significantly improved teacher behavior, improved school attendance and test scores compared to the top-down interventions which seemed to have minimal effects. In contrast, a widely cited study on citizen monitoring of road projects in Indonesia found that citizen monitoring had little average impact compared to increased government audits (Olken, 2007).

Effective and efficient public administration promotes and strengthens democracy and good governance. An effective functioning of civil service is essential to ensure that elected leaders are able to protect the rights of the citizens and mobilize resources to pay for the provision of services. Democracy squarely requires the administrative capacity of the state to maintain law and order, and to promote and protect public goods and services. Improving public administration capacity has been and still is one of the most crucial issues facing developing countries. With the pace of globalization, the public sector is under pressure to increase its capacity to deal with the new challenges. Public administration continues to be indispensible for performing core functions of the state, including maintenance of law and order, setting societal standards and goals, protecting societies' valuable groups, and safeguarding the environment. The principles at the core of good governance are participation, pluralism, transparency, accountability, equity, access, partnership and efficiency. The essence of public administration as a democratic institution is to use the principles of good governance to design and structure of state institutions, their internal processes, mechanisms and their mission.

Transparency promotes openness of the democratic process through reporting and feedback, clear processes and procedures, and the conduct and actions of those

holding decision making authority. It makes understandable information and clear standards accessible to citizens. Decentralization including political devolution, de-concentration, delegation and transfer to non-governmental organizations promotes public administration and good governance by providing an institutional framework to bring decision making closure to the people and by building partnership and synergies among actors and organizations to achieve economic and human development goals. Therefore, over the years, policy makers, development practitioners and politicians have advocated for decentralization policies and programmes.

Civil society organizations play key role in development and governance to ensure proper accountability of the state and the private sector. The private sector has increased responsibility for employment creation that brings high value added, greater income, and subsequently added state revenue that could be used for social spending. Internal and external relationship and processes of public administration around the globe are being transformed with the increasing use of information technologies and E-Governance. The meaningful e-government development has added value to the government operations because (1) it empowers people and enhances their capabilities; (2) it equips people to effectively participate in the political and economic development process; and (3) it adds to the values of inclusive governance and democratic institutions Three main forms of participation are: (1) economic participation with opportunities to use their capabilities and gain income to increase their choices; (2) political participation and the rule of law; and (3) social and cultural participation.

The different political interference in the bureaucracy result in growing political and bureaucratic corruption, if there comes transparency in public administration, the link between the politics and bureaucracy will be exposed and thus corruption may be reduced. Criminalization of politics has resulted in great deal of corruption in the bureaucracy with the entry of criminal elements in politics more and more of the administrative personnel have fallen for the baits of power and money due to non-transparent working of government, the public is unaware about these practices in a democratic country like India and this necessitates transparency for proper functioning of the system. In a democratic country, the real power exists in the hands of general public and bureaucrats are public servants. Therefore public has the power to get the information about the process of administration which requires transparency. The money earned by the government and the money spent should be known to the public so that the general people could be satisfied that there is no lavishness or extravaganza. After all, the money earned by the government is the money given by the public. Thus transparency in administration is required to provide the appropriate information about the taxes collected by the government. Increased transparency, absence of corruption and good administrative practices in the public sector are decisive parameters in the government. Transparency in public administration will make the executive more responsible and friendly. The red *tapism* prevailing in the administration will be minimized as the public becomes

more powerful. Transparency will positively result in wiping out the authoritarianism and whimsical way of working of the bureaucrats under the patronage of politicians. It would empower the people and thus will strengthen the democracy at the same time bringing a fundamental change in the mindset of people.

There are different modes, approaches and tools for bringing transparency in public administration. These include mainly Right to Information, e- Governance, Citizens' Charters, Report Cards, Social Audit etc. besides the legal and Constitutional measures such as Community Participation Law, and Public Disclosure Law which promote the administrative transparency. Administrative reforms including , municipal reforms, service level benchmarking, and the provisions of Anti money laundering activities, Lok Pal and Lokayukta, Prevention of Bribery of Foreign Public Officials and Officials of Public International Organizations etc. ensures the transparency and accountability in public administration.

E-government, democracy and e-participation are the foundation of e-democracy. Governments will play a crucial role in the development of on-line world. They need to incorporate and adapt strategies and technologies that will expand participatory democracy. In order to ensure effective functioning of e-government, 15 guiding principles have been suggested by the international agencies. These include prioritization of development needs, efficiency and effectiveness, availability of resources, skills and organizational culture, coordination, legal framework, ICT infrastructure, political leadership and long-term political commitment, public engagement, development plans, partnership, monitoring and evaluation, perception and values, access and skills, privacy and security. These principles highlight the imperative need of improving the efficiency and effectiveness in administration besides, ensuring accountability and transparency in delivery of public goods and services to the citizens. E-Government also focuses on the principle of putting the people first and thus, the government may strengthen the bond with its citizens through simplifying delivery of services to the people; providing greater access to information; increasing the accountability of government to its citizens by making it more transparent; reducing corruption and promoting people's centred dialogue for allowing the public to interact with policy and decision makers.

Government of India has emphasized on publicizing the available data through Information Communication Technology. It has been striving to become SMART – Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsible and Transparent state. This has led to many e-governance initiatives. The Right to Information Act, 2005 has replaced existing state level RTI Act, as well as the Freedom of Information Act, 2002 and also overrides the colonial Official Secrets Act, 1923. Thus, the shift from a default of secrecy to transparency is a very important one as it is the state duty to provide information. The RTI Act provides for a very wide definition of "information" as any material in any form, including records, documents, memos, e-mails, opinions, advices, press releases, circular, order, log books, contracts, reports, papers, samples, models, data material held in any electronic form and information relating to any

private body which can be access by a public authority under any other law for the time being enforced

The proactive disclosure of information requirement of RTI Act has not met with much success. Many officials complain that the RTI Act invests duties in those designated as Public Information Officer, the duties are usually in addition to their regular duties and without any additional help being provided for information retrieval.. Though proactive disclosures have faced many problems, many argue that official workloads would decrease if proactive disclosure is followed. There are many groups in India who are unable to access information and services that are made available over the internet, including disabled, uneducated, and elderly people. Thus, Ministry of ICT has taken the initiative to formulate a national policy on electronic accessibility which would apply to all government funded infrastructure across the country. The process has been transparent and participatory, with deep involvement and collaboration from both disability groups and industry, and provides an example of best practices which may shed light on how best to coordinate the formulation of a robust national open data policy in India.

The structures required for civic governance are complex. There is no single model which suits all towns and cities given the vast diversity in their geographical location, size and cultural and historical backgrounds. The existing system has two important lacunae. First, there is very little role that the average citizen plays in his own governance. The second is that the elected representatives as well as the officials are not sufficiently accountable and this often undermines both efficiency and transparency. Citizens' participation in governance embodies a shift in the development paradigm from citizens as the recipients of development to one that views them as active participants in the development process. Equally, it involves a shift from "top-down' to a "bottom-up" approach to development involving increasing decentralization of power away from the upper tier to grassroots level. Citizens' participation refers to the mechanism and modalities by which citizens can influence and take control over resources and decision making that directly impacts their lives. The intent of the Constitution is to create a decentralized governance structure to ensure citizen participation and local decision making. It is therefore the emphasis is on constituting Ward Committee in every ward and Area Sabhas within a ward. The Area Sabha should not be merely a political space for opinion formation, but should be made functional by entrusting certain responsibilities.

As a consequence of the 74th Constitution Amendment Act and implementation of subsequent reforms as a prerequisite under JNNURM, Cadre of municipal officials is essential part of urban local governments. There emerges a challenge before the municipal administration to adopt the attitude of cooperation and collaboration and ensure on the process, observance of rules, regulations and procedures and also retain goodwill of the people's representatives. The pillars of democracy should also realize the situation and raise themselves from petty abode and strengthen the democratic finding at the grassroots level and treat the local government as a

nursery for learning political ethics, morality and cooperation and establish it as an agent of social change.

Improving public service significantly to create public value in an environment of constant change has become ongoing endeavors of the governments and public services organizations. Within this context, enhancing the innovation capacity of public service institutions to identify gaps in service provision or modes of delivery is essential for public service innovation. This must be combined with an ability to act, that is, transform these ideas into successful action – through appropriate programmatic intervention and/or legal framework that empowers actors to be creative in implementing a policy.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVE AND METHODS

The paper purports to review the efforts of government for bringing transparency and accountability in urban administration and governance. The paper uis based on major research study. The study is empirical and exploratory in nature. It is based on mainly primary data collected through field survey in selected cities of Lucknow and Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh and Bhopal and Indore in Madhya Pradesh. The sample of the study comprises 633 citizens and 62 concerned officials and 63 elected people's representatives. The data has been processed with the help of SPSS for drawing out results and conclusions. It has been interpreted, discussed and analyzed beside critical appreciation of pertinent literature.

## MAIN RESEARCH FINDINGS

### Urban Dwellers

- Majority of the respondents were males from middle age group. They were mainly from Hindu communities however, a large number of the respondents were from weaker sections of the society. More than half of the respondents were graduates and postgraduates. Their main occupation was reported to be business and self-employment, private job and government employment.

- They were mainly from middle class families. Their housing conditions were found to be good in terms of availability of infrastructure and facilities.

- Most of the respondents admitted that they are visiting municipal corporations however; frequency of visit to municipal corporations was mainly reported sometimes and occasionally. Main purpose of visit to municipal corporations was reported to be payment of taxes, user charges, getting birth and death registration certificates and submission of applications for skill training.

- About 1/3rd of the respondents were found aware about Citizens Charter and majority of them reported that time frame for the services have been provided in it.

- A significant proportion of respondents reported that they have asked for information under RTI Act. A large proportion of such persons received correct

and timely information. However, poor maintenance of records, apathetic attitude of officials and lack of staff are some of the main reasons for not receiving correct and timely information.

- Majority of the respondents revealed that they are regularly paying their property tax and more than half of them further reported that they are following self- assessment system. However, less than 1/3$^{rd}$of the respondents reported that they are paying their taxes and user charges online.

- More than half of the respondents revealed that they have registered complaints /grievances in municipal corporations. The complaints /grievances included different kinds of problems such as water supply, water connection, cleaning of drains, sewerage connections, quality of drinking water, payment of taxes, chocking of sewer, dumping of garbage and sweeping of streets.

- More than half of the respondents reported that they have visited E-Suvidha Kendra mainly for the purpose of payment of taxes, issuing of birth/death registration certificates and seeking of information pertaining to decision making process. Most of the respondents who have visited E-Suvidha Kendra were found satisfied with the services of such centres. More than half of the respondents further reported that e-governance has improved the functioning of municipal corporations.

- About 1/4$^{th}$of the respondents reported that Area Sabha and ward committees have been setup in their municipal corporations. However, it was found more pronouncing in Madhya Pradesh. A significant proportion of respondents also reported that they are participating in different kinds of meetings, public hearings, social audit, etc. A significant proportion of respondents were also found aware about the enactment of Public Disclosure Law and Community Participation Law.

- About 2/5$^{th}$of the respondents reported that they have visited the website of municipal corporations. Majority of the respondentswho have visited the website of municipal corporations also get updated information. Majority of the respondents further revealed that their municipal corporations have adopted computerized system for functioning.

- Majority of the respondents were found satisfied with public transport system. A large proportion of respondents were also found satisfied with the services of water supply, collection of domestic waste, sanitation, street sweeping and sewerage.

- Majority of the respondents were found aware about Swachch Bharat Mission, Smart City Mission and Digital India. A significant proportion of respondents were also found aware about the schemes of Pradhan Mantri Housing for All, National Urban Livelihood Mission, Battery Operated Rickshaw, Gharelu Kamkazi Mahila Scheme, Haath Thela Scheme an AMRUT. A large proportion of respondents revealed that their family has been benefitted under Swachch

Bharat Mission, Rajiv Awas Yojana, Battery Operated Rickshaw Scheme and National Urban Livelihood Mission.

## Municipal Officials

- Most of the municipal officials were male from higher age group. More than half of them were technically qualified and graduates and postgraduates. Majority of the respondents were Engineers andother senior officials. Most of them reported that AMRUT, Pradhan Mantri Housing for All, NULM, Swachch Bharat Mission, Smart City Mission and National Policy for Rehabilitation of Street Vendors are being implemented in their municipal corporations.

- All the municipal officials reported that their municipal corporations have been computerized. However, majority of them further reported that they are using information technology. Their municipal corporations have also local area network /wide area network and have connectivity with State Data Centre. All the respondents admitted that their municipal corporations have website / portal with timely updating of information.

- Most of the respondents reported that they have introduced biometric attendance system and are using different software for effective functioning of municipal corporations. Majority of them further reported that they have prepared personal data base of municipal staff.

- Most of the respondents revealed that GIS survey has been conducted for mapping of municipal properties. They further reported that registration of land and property has been computerized. Most of them also said that e-governance software is being used in their municipal corporations. Besides, e-Suvidha Kendras are providing services to urban dwellers.

- Majority of the respondents reported that they have introduced improved system of solid waste management, water supply, regulation of street lighting, etc. Majority of the respondents further reported that double entry accounting system has been introduced besides; self- assessment system in property tax is being implemented in their municipal corporations. Majority of the municipal officials reported that financial records have been computerized.

- Most of the respondents reported that public grievance redressal mechanism has been introduced in their municipal corporations. Citizen charter has also been developed. Most of the respondents further reported that Public Information Officer has been designated in their municipal corporations. Majority of the respondents further reported that help desk has been created in municipal corporations to facilitate citizens.

- Most of the respondents reported that birth and death registration certificates are being issued online. Similarly, taxes, fees and user charges are being paid online. Majority of the respondents also revealed that online applications are being received from beneficiaries under various development schemes.

- Most of the respondents reported that social audit and public hearings are regularly held. They further reported that Public Disclosure Law and Community Participation Law have also been enacted. The municipal officials are also organizing public meetings, consultation workshops for discussion and getting feedback in order to formulate development plans and schemes. Majority of the respondents revealed that service level benchmarking in delivery of municipal services is being conducted on regular basis besides, preparation of service level improvement plan on annual basis.

- Lack of political and bureaucratic will power, lack of administrative accountability, lack of transparency and responsiveness are some of the main reasons for poor devolution of functions to ULB. Lack of political commitment, administrative delay and lack of accountability and responsiveness are some of the main reasons for poor implementation of urban reforms.

### People's Representatives

- Majority of the respondents were males and graduates and postgraduates. About 2/5th of the respondents reported that they are regularly attending board meetings and raising questions related to local development, social issues, gender issues and economic issues.

- Awareness about devolution of functions and finances under 74th Constitution Amendment Act was found poor. Majority of the respondents who were found aware about the devolution process said that the level of devolution of powers and functions to ULBs has been complete however; it was reported mainly in Madhya Pradesh. Majority of the respondents further reported that their municipal corporations have formed District Planning Committee, enacted Public Disclosure Law, Community Participation Law and Right to Information Act. Besides, Metropolitan Planning Committee has been setup and they have also constituted Area Sabha mainly in Madhya Pradesh.

- The awareness about urban development programmes and schemes such as Swachch Bharat Mission, Smart City Mission, Rajiv Awas Yojana, NULM, AMRUT and Pradhan Mantri Housing for All Scheme. They further reported that JNNURM and AMRUT have reform agenda for strengthening of ULBs.

- More than half of the respondents reported that municipal records have been partially computerized however, most of respondents reported that their municipal corporations have websites and related portal with wide area network / local area network.

- Most of the respondents in Madhya Pradesh admitted that double entry accounting system has been implemented in their municipal corporations however, in Uttar Pradesh; all the respondents were found unaware about the fact. Most of the respondents reported that e-governance software is being used and citizen charter has also been developed. Majority of them further reported that services are being provided as per provision of citizen charter.

- Majority of the respondents reported that public information office is functioning efficiently. Majority of the respondents reported that public grievance redressal mechanism has been adopted by municipal corporations. Majority of the respondents also reported that citizens are getting desired information within time framework.

- Most of the respondents reported that municipal services such as issuing of birth and death certificates, payments of taxes and user charges, issuing of building map approval and e-procurement are available online. In view of bringing transparency in the functioning of municipal corporations, computerization and creation of website, development of portal, provision of RTI and Public Disclosure Law, e-governance, e-procurement and payment of taxes and user charges online, as well as receiving applications online have been ensured in municipal corporations.

- Participation of people's representatives was found high in sanitation services, construction of roads and drainage, street lighting and maintenance of public places. People's representatives were also found active in settlement of the issues pertaining to urban planning. Their relations with executive wing were found cooperative.

**Suggestions**

- There is imperative need to strengthen and widen the national public information infrastructure through developing information networks for wider access of digital information through wider use of information technologies.

- The existing provisions in the RTI Act and in view of recommendations of the National Knowledge Commission on e-governance should be a basis for promoting open government data. It is also suggested that software and network infrastructure for providing open data should form the basis of proactive disclosure of information under RTI Act.

- It is suggested that Public Information Officers (PIO) should be prompt in supplying the desired information. The shortage of staff should not be made a hindrance in supplying the information sought.

- It is imperative to focus on computerization of local government offices and digitalization of government data in order to ensure the proactive disclosure of information to citizens through wider application of information technologies and realization of e-government.

- In order to ensure wider access of information by the citizens, supplying information to the public in a language that they understand are comfortable with should be ensured. Similarly, the system and information networks should be made user friendly, ensuring the application of local languages.

- Changing the mindset of the local government employees is important. This may be addressed by organizing orientation, training and capacity building

programmes so that they may be prepared to use modern information technology and adopt proactive attitude for disclosure of information to the public.

- It is imperative to support government organizations at the local level and offices for creating data bases and websites so that the relevant information, reports, documents, etc. may be uploaded besides updating information from time to time. This will also reduce the pressure on the officials for providing information and data either directly and/or through Right to Information Act.

- The state governments may be advised to establish an independent Public Grievance Redressal Authority to deal with complaints of delay, harassment and corruption. It should work in close coordination/cooperation with the State Information Commissions. There should also be set up a local government Ombudsman to deal with local issues.

- It seems necessary to disclose more information related to provision and level of delivery of civic service; financial health; demand and collection of taxes, and user charges; sanitation level; open defecation, houseless population; slums and un-served areas etc.

- It is strongly felt that political and administrative will and commitment is required for effective implementation of e-governance projects. The change in mindset urgently required at the top level. This may be achieved by imparting training and sensitization workshops and by organizing meetings of all the stakeholders of e-governance system.

- Change management is the biggest issue and challenge in the application and practice of e-governance projects. Hence it needs to be managed very sensibly, carefully and with utmost priority to ensure its effective implementation. The core staff needs it most with corresponding changes in the process and procedures.

- There is urgent need to address the digital divide in the country and more so in the local administration in an integrated and holistic manner. Therefore, building e-governance literacy should be an integral component of every e-governance initiatives to bridge it to involve the people at the grass-root level.

- The application of E-Governance still needed to be widened and more services should be brought under the network. The city governments without fail should go for GIS mapping to identify the properties which may result into widening the tax network. There is a need to bring complete accounts and revenue records and their maintenance under e-governance network. With a passage of time, the municipal functioning should be made paper-less, and thus making it more transparent.

- Only those technological solutions for e-governance that are user and eco-friendly and can be implemented in a simple, easy and effective manner with long-term sustainability should be identified and taken up for execution in the first place.

- The state government and city government should take citizen charters seriously. It needs to be updated periodically. Some penalty clauses must be inserted for non-compliance of the provisions.

- Sustained and committed political and administrative will is imperative for ensuring effective implementation of municipal reforms and application of principles of good governance. It becomes therefore highly desirable to complete the unfinished agenda of decentralization and devolution of powers, functions, resources and also functionaries to the local governments. Concrete efforts on the part of the governments at the Union or State need to be taken up in right earnest.

- Active community participation in the provision and management of infrastructure services as well as development planning, execution of development programmes, schemes and projects needs to be encouraged through developing institutional partnership and proactive realization of Community Participation Law at local government level. The state government should make obtaining citizens' feedback on civic services mandatory through an appropriate legislation. Social audit should invariably be undertaken and emphasis should be on assessing social benefits.

- It is strongly suggested that administrative continuity should be ensured by giving minimum average tenure to the senior level municipalofficials and other public officials for bringing in accountability and administrative efficiency in governance and there is no hurdles in effective implementation of centrally sponsored schemes such as Smart City Mission, AMRUT, Swachh Bharat Mission, National Urban Livelihood Mission and Prime Minister Housing for All Scheme.

- The Citizen's Charters should be prepared in consultation with the employees of the department (if a separate Charter is deemed necessary for different departments) or Municipal Corporation as a whole including the officers and the service users. It should be published for wider circulation and suggestions invited from all stakeholders. E-citizen Charter may also be promoted as there is large scope for e-governance measures through wider application of improved information technology. DPRs , City Development Plans, City Sanitation Plans and other such reports should be prepared in consultation with elected representatives and be finalized after getting the feedback from the public at large.

- Report Card System, Service Level Benchmarking as well as Service Level Improvement Plan should progressively be encouraged to be implemented in each department of the local body so that the quality and delivery of services may considerably be improved, along with ensuring transparency and accountability to the satisfaction of the citizens.

- There is a need to amend the respective law and the institution should be more effective. There is a need to create a Municipal Ombudsman for more efficient

and speedy investigation of cases of corruption related to official and people's representatives at the local level as the Lok Ayukta is overburdened and inadequate human resources and infrastructure often result in delay thus defeating the purpose. For speedy disposal of cases related to municipal administration, the state government should create the institution of Municipal Ombudsman.

- The water bodies in urban areas should be protected and conserved so that water recharge through the water bodies may be ensured. The large lake and ponds may be further rejuvenated so that these may serve the purpose of water storage and after treatment, the water may be supplied for domestic use.

- Gross root level training of sanitary staff is imperative to make them sensitize regarding collection, transportation, treatment and disposal of domestic waste besides, ensuring municipal Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016.

- There is need for social campaign and mobilization for making the citizen sensitize towards segregation and disposal of domestic waste besides, construction and use of sanitary latrines.

- There is need for improving the taxes, fees and user charges in order to mobilize the municipal resources. There is imperative need to revise the tax rate besides, ensuring land monetization tax and user chargers. The property tax should be timely revised and all properties should be brought into tax net while demand and recovery should be gradually increased.

- In order to bring transparency and accountability in urban administration, Ward Committees and Area Sabhas should be made functional. The employees working at gross root level should be provided training and sensitization so that they may be accountable to their responsibilities. The Ward Committees and Area Sabhas should be empowered to function as gross root level agencies in urban governance. These committees may also play a critical role of social mobilization and creating awareness and sensitization regarding government programmes and schemes at the gross root levels.

- It is recommended that the most populated state having second largest network of urban local governments should immediately proceed for constituting the Ward Committees and Area Sabhas and make them functional.

- For a country having history of functional democracy, it is necessary to constitute and made functional both the committees –Ward Committees in every ward in each municipality; and Area Sabhas in each ward. This constitutional mandate is for deepening the democracy and making local government to be managed by people themselves locally in real sense.

- The municipal officials who are directly engaged in public dealing should be imparted such skills that help them in public dealing and making them accountable to public. They should be more sensitized to resolve the public

grievances timely. It is also suggested that there should be an electronic system of addressing and resolving the public complaints. Such system should be properly monitored by Municipal Commissioner.

- In order to resolve the problem of lack of human resources, contractual/ adhoc appointments in ULBs should be allowed at the ULB level while there should be regular process of induction of municipal employees so that ULBs do not face the manpower crisis.

- The skill and capacity of municipal officials need to be developed to make them capable and competent to benchmark the services provided in a realistic way. The views of consumers of services should also be obtained while undertaking this exercise.

- It is recommended that all the civic services should be brought under the Act. The municipal officials and peoples' representatives should be made aware of the provisions of this Act. The strict implementation of the provisions of the Act should be ensured.

The study reveals that although many interventions have been initiated to bring transparency in municipal governance and increasing the social accountability, many more concerted efforts are still required. It is praiseworthy that situation is comparatively better in Madhya Pradesh than Uttar Pradesh. Uttar Pradesh has to travel a long way to achieve the milestone. It is not only the creation of institutions, but making them functional is need of the hour. Further, the processes and procedures also need to be developed /modified compatibly. The capacity of municipal human resource should be developed along with the strengthening of the municipal institutions. This all requires strong political and administrative will at the state government level, as local government is a 'state subject' but a 'government' mandated by the supreme law of the land. In order to ensure autonomous functioning of local government it is therefore necessary to insert a 'local list' in the Constitution; and make the country a real Federation having three constituent partners Union, State and Local governments. Such autonomy is bound to provide wide scope to urban governments to develop transparent and accountable governance across the country.

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