



## **India Urban Conference 2011: 'Evidence and Experience'**

### *Multi-stakeholder dialogue deepens understanding of India's urban dynamics*

**Delhi, India, 22 Nov, 2011:** The Indian Institute for Human Settlements (IIHS), Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy (JCCD) and the South Asian Studies Council at Yale (Yale) released the preliminary findings from a 700 person multi-stakeholder dialogue held this week (November 17-20) in Mysore. The gathering, which brought together students, citizens, investors, policymakers, bureaucrats and academics from India and abroad, examined a series of key issues affecting the potential for India's ongoing urban transition to contribute to sustainable, inclusive, growth. The meeting was the largest such gathering of urban experts in India and was an important step in bringing together and sharing findings between groups with deep experience and knowledge of urban economy, polity, culture, social services, infrastructure and ecological impacts among other topics.

A common theme across all the sessions was governance and India's readiness to respond to India's urban problems. At a macro level, the debates surrounding the rate and level of urbanization in India, the growing but insufficient public investment in cities, the lack of attention to small and medium towns, importance of addressing the informal sector and dramatically increasing employment opportunities to address both urban and rural poverty, density levels in Indian cities, land prices, land acquisition and the peripheralization of the urban poor and vulnerable. There was agreement on the importance of agglomeration economics and questions were raised on sustainability as India's big cities grow larger.

Water is seen as a fundamental constraint and sanitation practices and groundwater quality were highlighted as the key problem areas. The evidence from the discussions suggest that about 70% of liquid waste remains untreated and leaches into the ground, therefore contaminating groundwater.

The critical role of political processes in focusing attention on the urban sector was highlighted. There was a discussion around electoral reform and it was recognized that urban citizens are under-represented in the current political structure. It was concluded that the current model of urban planning needs to be replaced by holistic planning, placing the city in the context of the region. There is a revival of interest in town planning schemes and it was highlighted that inclusiveness should be a guiding principle for planners. Legal, financial as well as institutional barriers to conservation and heritage activities emerged as a key highlight.

The Indian Institute for Human Settlements (IIHS) also announced the three winners of san-kranti, the national Student Urban Challenge ([www.transformurbanindia.com](http://www.transformurbanindia.com)), a unique platform to bring together young people with diverse professional and educational backgrounds and talents to work together to solve real problems and enable change in their cities. The top ranked teams, namely ChalobEST, Taramani Thunders and Deep Blue received IIHS technical support along with implementation grants of INR 3 Lakh each for their proposals to 'transform urban India'. Over 170 teams covering 625 student participants from



across the country registered for this unique innovation-and-implementation challenge launched by IIHS in July 2011. The teams were mentored by some of the country's leading practitioners and entrepreneurs to hone their proposals to change the city, town or neighbourhood where they are living or studying in. This provided great scope for collaboration, peer-learning and multidisciplinary problem solving.

The Mysore meeting, hosted by Janaagraha, was the second in the series of "India Urban Conference 2011: Evidence and Experience" events. The first, an academic conference held at Yale University, examined scholarship from a range of disciplines. The third, a policy conference, hosted by IIHS, held in Delhi on 22 November, will introduce some of the key facets of urban change for discussion by a group of senior leaders from the local, state and national governments, academics, the private and civil society sectors.

The conference series has been undertaken with collaboration from the Ministry of Urban Development and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation. IDFC and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation were core sponsors for the Delhi policy conference and HUDCO was an additional sponsor. Infosys has donated the use of its training facility in Mysore. san-kranti has been funded by the Rockefeller Foundation and the implementation grants by Marico Innovation Foundation and Pirojsha Godrej Foundation.

The following organizations are Context Anchors for IUC:

**JCCD (Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy- Bangalore):** JCCD is a non-profit organization that engages in advocacy to improve the quality of life in India's cities, by working with citizens and government. The two quality of life indicators are quality of infrastructure and services and quality of citizenship.

**IIHS (Indian Institute for Human Settlements- Bangalore):** IIHS is an education and action-oriented research institution mainly focused on the issues related to urbanisation. IIHS carries interdisciplinary academic programs and research pertinent to the ongoing challenges of Urbanisation in India.

**Arghyam (Bangalore):** Arghyam is a public charitable foundation which is working on the issues related to water and sanitation. The organization is involved in the research, implementation and advocacy parts of projects related to water and sanitation.

**DRONAH (Development and Research Organization for Nature Art and Heritage- Gurgaon, Haryana):** DRONAH takes up the historic research, documentation and conversion of old monuments with the help of the community. The organization also promotes cultural activities such as local arts, indigenous constructed-materials and techniques by counselling and educating the community in building and preserving nature and heritage.



**IFMR Trust (Chennai):** IFMR Trust is a private trust whose mission is to ensure that every individual and every enterprise has complete access to financial services. Working with several partners, it is advocating for systemic changes that will enable development of an inclusive financial system.

**India Urban Space Foundation (IUSF):** is a registered not-for-profit Trust, established to further the objectives of reforms for urban India that can support the demands of a modern urbanizing India, within the framework of democratic principles enshrined in the Constitution. The Foundation's work focuses on establishing land rights through a system of clear titles, and spatial development planning with an emphasis on regional urban-rural integration.

**PHFI (Public Health Foundation of India - Delhi):** PHFI is an independent foundation engaged in training, research and policy development in the area of Public Health. It focuses on broad dimensions of public health that encompass promotive, preventive and therapeutic services.

**Pratham:** Pratham is a non-governmental organization working to provide quality education to underprivileged children of India. It works in rural and urban areas.

**The School of Planning and Architecture (SPA- Delhi):** is a specialized deemed University which provides training in different aspects of human habitat and environment. It provides Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral programmes in fields related to urban planning and development. It has a campus in Delhi. To promote research, extension, documentation and dissemination in respective fields, Centres of Research and Advanced Studies have been set up by the School for advanced studies in Architecture, Urban Design, Conservation Studies, Environmental Studies, Housing Studies, Rural Development, Transport Studies, Urban Studies and Innovative Spatial Planning. In addition, there is also the Centre for Analysis and Systems Studies providing for computer education and computer support facilities.

## **ABOUT THE ORGANISERS**

### **INDIAN INSTITUTE FOR HUMAN SETTLEMENTS**

The Indian Institute for Human Settlements (**IIHS**) is a national education institution committed to the equitable, sustainable and efficient transformation of Indian settlements. IIHS is India's first prospective independently funded and managed National University for Innovation that focuses on its ongoing urban and development transformation. It is a first-of-its-kind, practice and innovation-oriented knowledge institution that seeks to bridge the conventional excellence, scale and inclusion divides. More information about IIHS is available on [www.iihs.co.in](http://www.iihs.co.in)

### **JANAAGRAHA**

Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy (JCCD) is an established non-profit organization that works to improve urban India's quality of life, as measured by two indicators: quality of citizenship and quality of



infrastructure and services. Janaagraha's work spans advocacy with the Union, to empower urban local bodies (ULB's), and engagement at the grassroots, to deepen democracy. The Janaagraha Applied Research Program (J-ARP), which is anchoring the conference on behalf of JCCD, is a core program whose mission is to generate primary data/ evidence in collaboration with academia, both for internal consumption (for grassroots and advocacy initiatives) and for external publication. More information about JCCD is available on [www.janaagraha.org](http://www.janaagraha.org)

#### **YALE UNIVERSITY**

The South Asian Studies Council at Yale University is committed to promoting a comprehensive understanding of historical and contemporary South Asia, encompassing Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. As part of the MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies at Yale University, the Council seeks to foster lively intellectual exchange from a wide range of disciplinary perspectives by integrating teaching and research on traditional South Asia with contemporary study of the region. More information about The South Asian Studies Council is available on [www.yale.edu/macmillan/southasia](http://www.yale.edu/macmillan/southasia)

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