Exercising rights for basic urban services
With reference to Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission

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What any common man of Urban India would like to have at the minimum is shelter, access to basic urban services (potable water, sanitation, roads, storm water drainage and streetlight), education, health and transportation. These services constitute basic necessities of modern urban life and hence it is advocated universally that every urban dweller should receive a minimum acceptable level of basic urban services even if he is poor and cannot afford or pay for them. This view has got enshrined in the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) adopted by all the countries. But how many urban Indians get these basic urban services?

![Figure 1](Large gap in basic services)

It can be observed from figure 1 above that 50% urban population does not have access to sanitation and solid waste services while in case of water supply service 10%
people do not have access. This data is about access only, and does not indicate adequacy and quality of the services.

As per 2001 census, in 4378 cities the urban population of India stood at 285 million (27.8%) while the total slum population (urban poor) stood at 61.8 million that is 21.75 percent of total urban population. Present (2008) total slum population can be estimated to be around 65 million. The 35 Million plus (Metro) Cities comprised 107.88 million urban populations (41% of total urban population) but constituted more percentage share (50%) of the total slum population. Thus around 35 million urban poor stay in these million plus cities.

If the slum population data (around 22 to 25% of urban population) is compared to the figure 1 above about availability of urban services to urban population, it can be noted that even non-slum dwellers suffer from inadequacy of urban services.

If the non-poor section of society has problems in getting the basic urban services then what should the poor section of society do? If as per Millennium Development Goals declaration an urban poor is entitled to demand a minimum level of basic urban services then what should he do? How should he demand and receive those services? Are there government schemes/programmes to provide basic urban services to the poor living in urban areas? This article is regarding these basic but most essential questions –

**Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission (JnNURM)**

The Government of India is also a signatory to the Millennium Development Goals declaration. In order to provide the basic urban services at least at a minimum acceptable level to all the people living in urban areas of India it launched an unprecedented financial assistance scheme of Rs. 70000 Crores over seven years duration known as the **Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JnNURM)** on 3rd December 2005 for 63 cities. The JnNURM recently completed three years of its existence. The JnNURM scheme can be called an unprecedented scheme because of the following –

- This is the first service and normative standard (basic services to all) based scheme for urban areas rather than the usual top-down projects or investment based schemes. It asks urban local bodies to provide basic urban services including housing to all urban poor without any discrimination (legal/illegal, registered/unregistered) by 2012 and offers financial assistance (up to 70 to 90% of project value) to them.
• The Scheme also makes it mandatory for ULBs to earmark certain percentages (in the proportion of urban poor to total population of the city or 20 to 25%) of their internal revenue for urban poor.
• Thus, the scheme indirectly gives right to the urban poor to demand basic urban services for their existence from Urban Local Body as central and state governments are ready to provide financial assistance to ULBs for this purpose.

In larger context it is unprecedented because

• It is a recognition of the phenomenon called “urbanization” and its economic and social significance in an official (public) policy by any government in the six decades of post independence era. It is a paradigm shift in policy which had an anti-urbanisation bias.
• It is an acceptance of the fact that urban growth, urbanisation and urban economy cannot be left to the mercy of the state government/local governments and, in the absence of positive and adequate efforts by them, in the hands of markets resulting in to lopsided, exclusive and iniquitous growth; and that the central government must play a pivotal role. Till date the central government rejected to assume this role.

On similar lines of JnNURM, the **Urban Infrastructure Development Scheme for Small and Medium Towns** has been launched for the cities other than the 63 covered under the JnNURM. Thus these two schemes are operated by two Ministries of Government of India under two modes or channels –
In the three years of its existence JnNURM scheme has achieved following progress:

- **BSUP Component under JnNURM** - In all, the Government of India has approved 355 Detailed Project Reports of 63 JnNURM cities totaling Rs. 22000 crore under Basic Services for Urban Poor, involving construction of 803089 dwelling units for urban poor. At this rate, in remaining four years another 1000000 dwelling units may get approved. Thus, under the JnNURM-BSUP component, if focused attention is provided then around 1.8 million dwelling units may get approved and hopefully created which will be enough to provide shelter to 9.0 million people.

- **IHSDP Component** - In all, the Government of India has approved 970 Detailed Project Reports of the cities other than 63 JnNURM cities, totaling Rs. 7500 crore under Integrated Housing and Slum Development Program involving construction of 286740 dwelling units for urban poor. At this rate, in remaining four years another 400000 dwelling units may get approved. Thus under IHSDP if focused attention is provided then around 0.7 million dwelling units may get approved and hopefully created which will be enough to provide shelter to 3.5 million people.

- **Urban Infrastructure and Governance Component under JnNURM** – Government of India has approved 328 projects of Rs. 30604.80 crore of the 63 cities pertaining to improvement of urban infrastructure and governance. It has approved financial assistance of Rs. 14675 crore as part of its share towards these projects and has released an amount of Rs. 3507 crore to the cities.

- **UIDSSMT Component** – Data is not available of this component as it is handled by State Governments.

The progress till date and the projected progress indicate that JnNURM will be the most significant and impactful scheme in the 60 years of independent India. Though the Government of India envisaged an investment of Rs. 120000 crore during 2005 - 2012 period, an actual investment in urban infrastructure may take place of Rs. 60000 crore which will be an unprecedented thing in the history of urban India. It will hopefully end up in improving to some extent, directly or indirectly, the life of 285 million urban dwellers. But the important questions here are- First, whether it will succeed in providing basic services to all by 2012? Second, Will it be able to provide basic services to all urban poor? And third, whether the De-Notified and Nomadic Tribes category of urban poor, who constitute a sizeable part of urban poor, will receive these basic services and housing units? The answer probably is NO to all the three questions. Around 30 % of urban poor will certainly get benefitted but urban poor belonging to the DNT and NT categories will get benefited only sparsely by the
JnNURM if things continue in current manner. Why the poorest of poor will not get benefited? What are the reasons for such an eventuality?

**Inadequacy of Supply** – The first reason is, against the estimated 35 million slum dwellers (urban poor) living in 63 JnNURM cities only 10 million will stand a chance to get a formal housing unit, while against the 30 million urban poor living in rest of the 4500 cities only 3.5 to 4.0 million will stand a chance to get a formal housing unit and a double of this number will stand to get basic urban services and improved quality of life. This inadequacy of supply itself is going to create problems of equitable distribution. Inadequate supply leads to various issues - Which urban poor should get immediate benefits and who should wait for the next turn? How to prioritize among the urban poor? What about a certain category (DNT-NT) of urban poor who suffer from special limitations? In the event of inadequacy of supply the urban poor who are unorganized, uninformed, politically unrepresented and who are not ‘formal or established’ among the urban poor are the ones most likely to miss the fruits of JnNURM in the following manner.

Usually slums are called informal settlements and the rest of the city is called formal city, but when compared to NT/DNT people’s living, the status of slum dweller can be considered as formal having semi-pucca to pucca shelters. Further, such slums get notified or regularized legal, semi-legal status as slum dwellers other than NT-DNT category possess the voter’s card, ration card and other legal identification documents that turn them into a political /electoral constituency. Against this, the NT-DNT category people who are not part of such ‘formal’ slum settlements and who do not possess legal status in the form of voter’s card, ration card or other legal identifications do not form a political constituency and do not exist for the system at all.

Thus among the urban poor, NT-DNT category people are the most informal (not part of ‘formal’ slum settlements), most illegal (not on legal records) and politically unrepresented group of people, and that is why they are most likely to miss the benefits of JnNURM.

Also, the NT-DNT category urban poor are more un-informed, as a result they lack information and know-how about various government schemes (including JnNURM); and as they are unorganized they are not in a position to stake their claim under various developmental and welfare schemes taken up under the JnNURM.

**The Way Forward** – The above discussion may appear extremely grim, like a doom’s day forecast. Is it intended to mean that half of the urban poor and especially the poorest of poor do not have any hope of availing the basic urban services? No, that is
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not the intention of this article. The progress facts and projections have been deliberately placed in a stark manner to provoke thinking and action. It is possible, even if not completely, to salvage situation to some extent, if appropriate and timely actions are taken up by all the stakeholders. What can be the way forward? What remedial measures/actions should be undertaken? In the following paragraphs, an attempt is made to outline various remedial measures.

1. First and foremost important things that need to happen are-
   - Organizing NT/DNT category urban poor,
   - Making this category of urban poor a ‘formal and legal urban poor’ (with voter card, ration card, domicile certificate, Below Poverty Line card etc), and
   - Bridging the information gap (educating them about this and various other welfare and development schemes available for them and their rights to claim these benefits).
   - Building sensitivity and capacity among implementers, bureaucrats, decision makers etc

Who should do it? Obviously the State and its various organs; but it will be too much to expect all these measures from the State and its institutions. Even if we may not charge them as insensitive towards issues of NT-DNT category urban poor, the State and its institutions lack the last mile reach or connectivity. So all the non-governmental organizations, individuals working with this category of urban poor and the leaders and educated members of NT/DNT category people need to come forward to undertake the above mentioned four tasks.

2. As this group of urban poor often lack the formal or legal citizenry status they do not get counted in planning and delivery of urban basic services. Legalizing or formalising NT/DNTs, that is getting them voting card, ration card, BPL card, domicile certificate etc. is going to be real crux of the problem. Even after sixty years of independence people of this category have remained deprived of this formalization or recognition. So entire civil society needs to take up this issue with each and every entity concerned.

3. The best aspect of JnNURM as noted earlier is that at policy level it does not differentiate any person whether or not he is having a voter identity card or a ration card. GOI has accordingly informed the implementing State and Local
Governments to cover all the urban poor without any discrimination under development programmes proposed for JnNURM assistance. So all the individual activists, civil society organizations, community leaders and members should start demanding minimum level basic urban services from local and state governments as basic human rights and not as a mercy or charity. It should be an immediate and simultaneous process while organizing, formalising and educating of NT/DNT category urban poor takes place. For this civil society groups, individual activists, community leaders etc. should start dialogue/interaction with the municipal government and other local institutions responsible for implementation of JnNURM or UIDSSMT to understand and to verify different projects already undertaken and planned in future from the point of inclusion of NT/DNT category urban poor. If necessary the Right to Information Act’s provisions should be invoked to get the necessary information.

4. Having examined the on-going and future schemes undertaken by local institutions under JnNURM or any other scheme from welfare and basic rights point of view, a charter of demands should be prepared in consultation with NT/DNT category urban poor. This charter or memorandum of demands should be put forward to all levels of government (local, state, national) and should form part of future interaction with governments.

5. There exists gross ignorance about peculiar limiting condition from which the NT-DNT category of urban poor suffer, which is resulting in insensitivity. Sensitization workshop should be undertaken by civil society for government officers, media and other stakeholders. Wide dissemination of information about the plight of this special category of urban poor should be undertaken.

6. The real solution lies in increasing total supply of urban infrastructure services including housing and improving equity in distribution. It is possible to increase quantum of development/welfare achievements than what is estimated above but for that it is necessary to push the local agencies responsible for implementation in terms of efficiency in all respects. For this, a bottom up movement not confined only to NT/DNT group of people should be created by
collaborating with and mobilizing all other subjects/stakeholders (other categories of urban poor, middle class, upper class, business, industry, etc) to make the government work efficiently and delivery equitably.

Finally, if need arises (in the wake of insensitive and inadequate response towards demands submitted for getting basic urban services), all concerned and participants should be ready to escalate dialogue into a peaceful mass movement and agitation.

**REFERENCES**

1. No consolidated exact figure available, different sources quote different figures. We have taken higher side figure. Ministry of Urban Development estimated slum population above 60 million.

PM launches Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission  December 3, 2005

“I welcome you all to the launch of the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission. There is no doubt that India by and large still lives in our villages. But the development process of the past five decades has made a significant difference. An increasing share of our population now lives in urban India. Urbanisation is a relentless process, which has come to stay and has to be factored into all our developmental thinking and development processes. We have already added 65 million persons to our urban population in the decade of the ‘90s alone. We are poised to have nearly fifty per cent of India living in our cities by the earlier part of the present century and that should give you an idea of the magnitude of the development and renewal task that awaits all of us.

With urbanization comes the need to invest in infrastructure and improve the quality of life in our cities. Rapid urbanization has not only outpaced infrastructure development, but has also brought in its train a terrible downside - the downside of proliferating slums, the downside of increasing homelessness, the downside of growing urban poverty and crime, of relentless march of pollution and ecological damage. This gives you an idea of the massive challenge that lies ahead.

Recognising this challenge of an acute urban crisis, the National Common Minimum Programme had stressed that the government initiate a process of urban renewal. I am happy that today we are commencing this new effort through the launch of the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission.

I compliment the Ministries of Urban Development, Urban Employment and Poverty Alleviation, Planning Commission, state governments, urban local bodies and other experts who have participated in the preparation of this Mission. This Mission is the single largest initiative of the Government of India for a planned development of our cities. It responds to the long-standing demand for tapping the vast potential and vitality of our cities.

Our urban economy has become an important driver of economic growth. It is also the bridge between the domestic economy and the global economy. It is a bridge we must strengthen. The latent creativity and vitality of our cities and the people who live in them must be tapped to facilitate higher economic growth.

It is therefore, a matter of great satisfaction for all of us that this new Mission is being named after Jawaharlal Nehru. Panditji used to refer to factories as the temples of modern India. He saw in industrialization a renewed hope for urban India. The infrastructure created by Panditji has helped the process of industrialization enormously. However, our cities have not been able to cope with the pressures of industrial development and the growth of the services economy. In many cities like Bangalore, the phenomenal growth of the services sector in the last decade
has exerted unexpected pressure on urban infrastructure and services. If we do not take remedial steps, the future could be in jeopardy.

As we build infrastructure we must also improve the quality of living for all those who live in our cities. Our vision of urban development has so far been uni-dimensional. This must change. We have thus far focused more on space and less on people. We need to have an integrated framework, in which spatial development of cities goes hand-in-hand with improvement in the quality of living of ordinary people living there. An important element of our strategy has to be slum improvement and providing housing for the poor.

To improve urban infrastructure and provide urban services for the poor, we need urgently urban governance reform. I am happy that this Mission has been structured with a clear focus on these two important components – urban infrastructure and basic services to the urban poor, with governance reform as an overarching third component.

Governance reform should be seen as a massive catalyst for change. Shri Rajiv Gandhi had conceived, with great foresight, the 74th Constitution Amendment for decentralization of power to the urban local bodies. While considerable ground has been covered under the 73rd Amendment relating to Panchayats, an honest assessment would show that the 74th Amendment has not yet been effectively translated into improved urban governance.

Cities unfortunately with some exceptions, have not been enabled to look inward and build on their inherent capacities, both financial and technical, and instead are still being seen in many states as ‘wards’ of the State governments. This should and this must change.

The Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission is a city-based programme. It will seek to build the capacity of our cities for management. Cities have the financial muscle and the technical resources to rebuild themselves. We see the governance reform-related proposal in the Mission for a participation law and a disclosure law, as enabling the cities to locate the needed human and financial resources for improving its services. This is a major reform for the governance of our cities.

To tap technical resources, the Mission envisages the creation of a Voluntary Technical Corps in each city. I place great hope on this effort, as I am personally aware that a large number of urban professionals today want to contribute their skills for the improvement of their cities. Many cities like Bangalore, Mumbai, Thiruvananthapuram have come up with citizen initiatives for urban renewal. This process would be strengthened through the creation of Voluntary Technical Corps for each of our city.

A major failure of city governance has been our inability to address the needs of the poor - basic services like drinking water supply, sanitation, housing and social services are not available to an increasing share of urban population. Countries in Latin America that have large cities in which more than 50% of the population lives, have addressed this problem through an effective system of property rights. Options like giving the urban poor land rights at affordable rates may see an increase in private investment. This in itself will improve the quality of living
in our cities. We have to make the poor increasingly bankable. Property rights can be used as a collateral for financing new investment in support of social development. Cities need people to provide services and our people need a decent place to live.

Cities need to develop a long-term planning framework. The Planning Commission and the Ministries, in consultation with States, have developed an agenda of reform to persuade urban local bodies to look ahead. All previous efforts in city planning have been limited by “a narrow-focussed project approach”. The problems of inadequate service and infrastructure levels, of inadequate investment in them, and the non-availability of adequate land and housing are much deeper. Our legal systems, our systems of work and procedures, and the inability of local bodies to effectively use their powers and responsibilities, make it difficult to deal with the many problems facing our cities.

The Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission addresses the problems of law, systems and procedures reform and aims to align them to the contemporary needs of our cities and towns. The Mission seeks to do away with those statutes that inhibit the functioning of land and housing markets; it seeks to bring in those improvements that will enable the city-level institutions to become financially strong and viable and our development programmes relating to the removal of poverty becoming increasingly bankable.

As you are well aware, municipal finance is in an extremely unsatisfactory state. This is on account of an inability to properly tap and utilize proceeds from property tax, due to the inadequacies of the property valuation system and inefficiencies in tax collection systems. Municipal governments are not able to recover the cost they incur in providing different services. They use accounting systems, which do not correctly reflect their financial position and therefore their projects do not become bankable and viable.

This Urban Renewal Mission is designed to assist city governments in improving property tax collection and bring user charge to the levels that cover at least operating and maintenance costs and change their accounting methods. The Mission is meant to bring in transparency in local budget making, as also a higher degree of community participation in decision-making processes.

The success of the Mission will depend on its ability to enlist the support of a large number of partners and stakeholders. There is no shortage of finance in the infrastructure sector, especially if we seek public-private partnerships. I hope our State and local Government authorities will be able to draw up programmes that can attract financial support from outside Government as well.

Services like education, health care and social security, like the public distribution system and old-age pension are inadequately provided to the urban poor. While designated agencies exist in rural India to address these issues, urban local bodies have not oriented themselves to ensuring that these universal services reach the urban poor.
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I urge the Ministry of Urban Employment and Poverty Alleviation to work to ensure that basic services are indeed provided to the urban poor. The issues to focus while appraising project reports are: (i) security of tenure, (ii) improved housing, (iii) drinking water supply, (iv) sanitation, (v) education, (vi) health care and (vii) social security. City governments should build in a strong component of support for urban basic services in their plans for infrastructure upgradation.

The Mission has to walk on two legs of improved urban infrastructure and improved urban basic services. The role of governance reform in the Mission should be to catalyze a process that enables both these to move forward.

I am happy that among the list of cities being covered initially, there are some that are important from the point of view of our national heritage, tourism potential and religious pilgrimage. I have in mind cities like Varanasi, Amritsar, Haridwar, Ujjain and many others. It would be a challenge before this Mission to see that these cities are restored to their historical glory. Let us not forget that in the history of the world, Indians stood out as city builders as evident from the traditions we carry from the ancient civilisations of Harappa and Mohenjadaro. Those cities were symbols of human engineering excellence in their own times. We should work to make them come alive again through this Mission.

I have great pleasure in launching this Mission. Like many Indians living in our cities, I look forward to it with great hope.”
## APPENDIX - 2

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