



Participatory city planning in Chhattisgarh: a civil society initiative

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1. The Act provides the basis for devolving 18 functions to the municipalities, and this is mentioned in the 12th Schedule of the Act.

ABSTRACT This paper describes the experience of an NGO, the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), with participatory town planning in one small and one medium-sized urban centre in the state of Chhattisgarh in India. Taking on the challenging task of reforming urban governance within the framework of development where people matter, PRIA initiated a participatory process in each of the urban centres, bringing together civil society groups and local politicians and civil servants as well as officials from state-level institutions. This sought to strike a balance between inclusive town planning and working within the legal framework. This paper explains how the various stakeholders in urban planning, including state government, municipal staff, elected representatives and citizens and civil society groups drawn from all sections of society were brought together to decide on the future of their towns. There is also a discussion of the methodology that was adopted and the challenges that were faced. This is perhaps the first time in India that an NGO has sought to address issues of equitable and integrated urban development at city level, focusing on technical issues of town planning and backed by public participation. Similar initiatives have since been launched in other urban centres.

KEYWORDS participatory planning / small urban centres / urban planning

I. INTRODUCTION

For decades, town plans in India have been the prerogative of a few influential interest groups and external consultants. They have protected the interests of the richer and more powerful groups and neglected the needs and interests of the lower-income majority, especially those living in "slums". The results of this approach can be seen in most urban centres in India, where a high proportion of the population live in informal settlements lacking provision for basic infrastructure and services.

There is an obvious need to incorporate the interests and aspirations of citizens in town plans, especially those of the populations living in settlements that lack infrastructure and services. Greater public support is needed to ensure that town plans are relevant and implemented, and this in turn requires provision to encourage and support the involvement and participation of local people in designing and implementing town plans.

The 74th Constitutional Amendment Act of the Indian parliament in 1992⁽¹⁾ has considerable importance for urban planning and management because it significantly enhanced the role and functions of urban local

TABLE 1
Status of urban services in Chhattisgarh

| Urban facilities | Number of houses | % of the population |
|---|------------------|---------------------|
| Families living in slums | 192,000 | 24.3 |
| Number of the houses without a bathroom | 380,000 | 48.1 |
| Number of houses without a latrine | 374,000 | 47.4 |
| Number of houses with drainage | 497,000 | 62.9 |
| Number of housing without drainage | 292,000 | 37.0 |

SOURCE: Government of India (2006), *Census of India 2006*, Table H-7, New Delhi, pages 34–52.

bodies in urban planning and the regulation of land use and building construction, and planning for economic and social development. But in general, state governments have been reluctant to support urban local governments taking up these functions, resulting in a slow process of devolution. Wherever devolution has taken place, the functions assigned to urban local bodies have not been backed by devolving funds and professional staff. Parastatals such as Public Health Engineering, the Public Works Department and the Town and Country Planning Organization (TCPO) still control the major development functions of urban local bodies, with only token participation or no participation from these urban centres' populations and civil society organizations. In turn, the urban local bodies show little interest in developing town plans and this is evident in the acute shortage of professional staff and funds allocated to this task, and the lack of an institutional set up to facilitate carrying it out.

Until recently, urban plan preparation had usually been a technical expert-driven exercise, which drew on existing official data and had little connection with the environment for which it was being prepared. This generally produced plans that were unrelated to the local government's capacity to implement them, that did not reflect the ground realities and for which the local populations felt no ownership. The planning agencies acted as an external agency, planning the future of the city and its people without their consent – this is evident in the master plans of various cities. Provision for public participation was limited to displaying the development plan for a certain period of time to allow "public comment" before formal approval of the plan was granted. However, with no community participation in the preparation of the plan and with the plan's "technical" terminology making it largely inaccessible to local communities, this can be judged to be no more than token participation.

It was within this local context that a national-level Indian NGO, the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA)⁽²⁾ sought to support participatory urban planning in two towns in the newly formed state of Chhattisgarh: Rajnandgaon (with a population of 160,000) and Janjgir (with a population of 36,000). As described in more detail later, this support for participatory urban planning was complemented by other measures to support civil society engagement with urban planning and management, especially in "slums" or informal settlements. But it was recognized that addressing the needs and priorities of those living in slums and informal settlements needed a more holistic focus that included changing the way in which town plans were designed and implemented.⁽³⁾ The slums had to be

2. PRIA (Society for Participatory Research in Asia) is an international centre for learning and the promotion of participation and democratic governance, with its head office in New Delhi, India. It works across 12 states in India on promoting good governance. For more details of its work, see www.pria.org/

3. Dove, Lesley (2004), "Providing environmental urban services to the poor in Andhra Pradesh: developing strategic decision making", *Environment & Urbanization* Vol 16, No 1, April, page 105.

seen as key parts of these urban centres and had to figure in the town plan documents. PRIA also selected these two urban centres of different sizes with a view to developing a model for small and medium-sized towns.

Although many people in national and state governments recognize the importance of “bottom-up” approaches to urban planning that also address the micro-realities of each area, there is little evidence of this actually influencing town planning. This is where civil society can have an active role, by addressing issues emanating from the ground, especially for those key citizen concerns that have long been marginalized from planning. The experiment with participatory town planning in these two towns in Chhattisgarh sought to demonstrate how it was possible to more fully involve urban populations in town planning and plan implementation.

II. EXISTING PLANNING APPROACH IN CHHATTISGARH

The new state of Chhattisgarh was formed in November 2000, from land that had been part of Madhya Pradesh, one of India’s biggest states. According to the 2001 census, the new state had a population of around 20 million, 20.8 per cent of whom lived in urban areas. The state’s major urban centres are Raipur (the state capital, with around 700,000 inhabitants), Bilaspur, Durg, Bhilai, Korba and Raigarh. Chhattisgarh has witnessed rapid urbanization in the last decade. In 2000, when the state was formed, there were 75 urban local bodies; now there are 110, within which 72 municipalities are transitional towns (*nagar panchayats*) and of these, 33 have very recently acquired the status of a town. Before that, they were *gram panchayats* (village-level local government bodies) and most still bear many of the characteristics of an urban village. These towns offer scale and social cohesiveness, with strong social networks. In addition, their problems are also more manageable, as the towns are relatively small with regard to population and area.

The legal framework for planning in Chhattisgarh is governed by the guidelines mentioned in the Chhattisgarh Nagar Tatha Gram Nivesh Act 1973. The Act describes the standards, norms, protocols and content of development plans, including provision for the legal processes that are to be followed. The Town and Country Planning Organization (TCPO) is the nodal agency responsible for town planning in the state and is basically a central government-created institution with state and regional offices located across India. In each state, the State Town Planning Act governs town planning. In Chhattisgarh, very few urban centres have reached the first level of town planning, which is the preparation of a development plan by the TCPO. The development plan broadly identifies land use, the road network and development control regulations for a period of 10 years, and once land use and the road network have been identified, land use for any other kind of development is frozen. Another type of plan that has been envisaged in the State Town Planning Act is the zoning plan, which is normally prepared for planning units identified within the development plan. It is similar to a development plan but is much more detailed and addresses planning issues at the micro level. The third level of plan is the town development scheme, which includes plot-level details in terms of provision of infrastructure and service delivery networks, in addition to layout. However, the State Town Planning Act does not clearly

define what town development schemes should actually deliver. The TCPO is responsible for preparing all these plans but, at the same time, an urban local body can also declare its intention to prepare them as per the Act, especially the zoning plan and the town development scheme. To date, the prerogative and responsibility for plan preparation has rested with the TCPO and the state departments.

In Chhattisgarh, there are two planning departments dealing with town planning issues: the Housing and Environment Department (which includes the TCPO), which is responsible for preparing the development plans; and the Urban Administration and Development Department (UAD), which prepares the lower level plans such as the infrastructure development plan. There is no link between these two departments except at the urban local body level, which is responsible for implementing all the plans prepared by both the TCPO or the UAD.

The ideal scenario for developing and implementing a successful town plan would be when people’s needs and visions for the future are conveyed to the planning agency by way of a bottom-up process and the plan preparation is undertaken by the technical department (the TCPO) in close consultation with all municipal stakeholders. This would ensure that each component of development planning is built with a strong community perspective and would produce a development agenda that fulfilled people’s priorities, whether it is land use planning, financial investment or the implementation of building development control regulations. But in Chhattisgarh, the urban local bodies (the municipalities) have yet to take on this planning function.

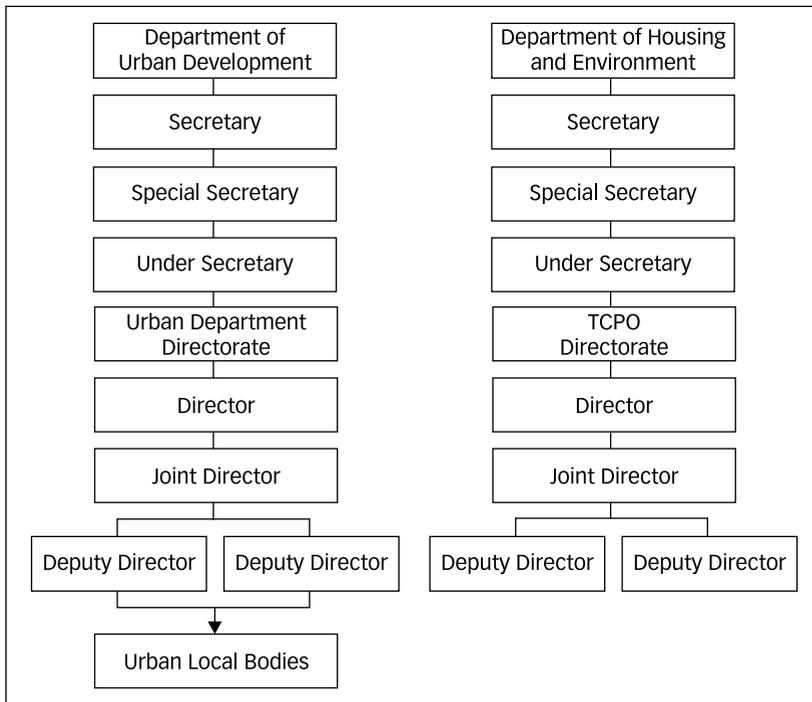


FIGURE 1
Institutional framework of planning in Chhattisgarh

III. PRIA'S WORK IN CHATTISGARH

PRIA initiated a programme to support more pro-poor urban governance in many locations in India under the broader framework of "governance where people matter". This was in part a response to the opportunities created by the 74th Constitutional Amendment for more active and pro-poor local government in urban areas, and also of a growing interest within the government of India and many state governments in supporting urban development; it was also in recognition of the scale of poverty in urban areas in India. The programme built on PRIA and its partners' long experience in catalyzing, encouraging and supporting more pro-poor governance in rural areas and over the last five years, the programme has been active in 13 states and in more than 30 urban centres. Much of the work has focused on relatively small urban centres, in recognition both of the weakness of local government and of the high proportion of India's urban population who live in small urban centres; data from the 2001 census show that close to half of India's urban population live in urban centres with fewer than 200,000 inhabitants.

In the two urban centres of Rajnandgaon and Janjgir that were selected for plan preparations, PRIA and its partner institutions sought to:

- support poorer groups' active engagement with (and involvement in) local government. This has included support for those living in "slums" or informal settlements to get on the voters register and to press local government for services; also to encourage people from these settlements to stand at local elections;
- encourage and support pro-poor attitudes and actions among local government offices (both professionals and politicians). This has included training for and technical advice to newly elected local councillors within the governments of small urban centres; and
- encourage local governments to respond to new opportunities for pro-poor action as a result of the 74th Constitutional Amendment, and new possibilities for support for local government investment and development (with action also taking place at district and state levels).

In addition, working at state level, PRIA and its partners have been supporting pre-election voter awareness campaigns, which helped establish contacts between those standing for local councillor positions and those living in slums. These campaigns also received support from many other civil society organizations and the state election commission.

PRIA has been working in Chhattisgarh for the past five years on different issues of urban governance. Within the mandate to strengthen the marginalized sections, PRIA has worked with *beedi* workers (mainly women who work at home preparing these small cheap cigars) who had long been fighting with the local and state government to obtain occupational rights such as government approved wages, regular health check ups and market structure. The intervention helped bring both parties closer by creating forums of citizens and by providing technical support to the municipality on different issues. Capacity building of elected representatives and citizen leaders continued to promote accountable governance. It was also recognized that in order to advance a comprehensive development approach with greater impact, poorer groups needed to be included within the legal structures with regard to service provision. In addition, interaction with citizens on a range of different topics created an enabling environment for more participatory town planning. All this work was carried out with the help of urban resource centres run by PRIA in both towns.

What these urban resource centres in Rajnandgaon and Janjgir are testing is the extent to which having a small local centre that works both with poorer groups and with local government staff and politicians can catalyze and support more pro-poor (and more transparent and accountable) local governance. This is a very different concept from a “project-implementing” NGO. And the success of these small resource centres in supporting pro-poor change is likely to depend on the extent to which they receive the support needed for a consistent, long-term programme that can respond to new opportunities.⁽⁴⁾ The success of their work in each particular urban centre depends heavily on the knowledge, capacity and contacts of its local staff – and on the local staff developing good relationships with politicians and civil servants and the groups formed by the poor/marginalized. The support provided for participatory urban planning in these two urban centres is one example of this.

IV. THE APPROACH

Development plans should not be prepared as technical exercises by a group of planners in isolation. The inhabitants of any urban centre should be able to articulate their needs and put forward their own visions, so their involvement is pertinent to the planning process. In most instances, planners should be there to represent these aspirations through a statutory format, under a formal process.

In Rajnandgaon and Janjgir, the plan preparation process involved extensive consultation and participation throughout the development plan and zoning plan-making process. This included the identification of stakeholders, conducting city development strategy workshops, sharing of the conceptual plan and getting stakeholder input through working group meetings. Thus, the plans evolved through structured and unstructured dialogue with all stakeholders, with special emphasis on poor groups and other groups usually marginalized from planning and development. Before the formal plan preparation process started, local government – including elected representatives and state-level planning officials from both the urban and the housing and environment departments – were involved through a training workshop. The idea was to de-mystify the language of the “technical process of urban planning”. The content of the sensitization workshop included aspects of spatial planning, the legal framework, financial operation plans and municipal budgets. This workshop ensured that even after plans are submitted to the state government and sanctioned, local government officials and people’s representatives will know something of the nuances and intricacies of the plans and can take rational, consistent and informed decisions during their implementation. Thus, this initiative sought to overcome delays in plan implementation, poor quality plans and un-implementable proposals that have been common in the past, mainly due to the lack of basic knowledge of the key players.

This approach went far beyond the statutory process. It had a broader aim of strengthening local urban self-governance and the participatory planning agenda in order to:

- develop a vision statement for each urban centre through consultations – the vision statement to guide the preparation of the zoning plan and its implementation;
- identify a set of projects for implementation through a structured consultation process;

4. There are many parallels between these local resource centres and the Urban Resource Centre in Karachi and other urban centres in Pakistan, as described in Hasan, Arif (2007), “The Urban Resource Centre, Karachi”, *Environment & Urbanization* Vol 19, No 1, April, pages 275–292.

- prepare a phasing plan for these projects with municipal stakeholders;
- integrate these projects into the municipal budget to make them financially viable;
- prepare area-specific urban design guidelines – for slums, the inner city, heritage precincts, etc.;
- demarcate areas to be developed as town development schemes for the next five, 10 and 20 years based on people’s consensus and needs;
- build capacity of the urban local body and create a process to review the plan every year and make appropriate modifications if required; and
- ensure that the informal sector and those living in slums/informal settlements become an active part of the planning process and that their aspirations and interests are highlighted in the development plan.

V. PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

The planning methodology was partnership through multi-stakeholder dialogue and discussions, involving stakeholders at all levels. The collaborative methodology sought to:

- be participatory at all possible stages as well as being technically sound;
- adhere to the legal planning guidelines of the state; and
- be financially viable and implementable by the urban local body.

The key steps undertaken are shown in Figure 2.

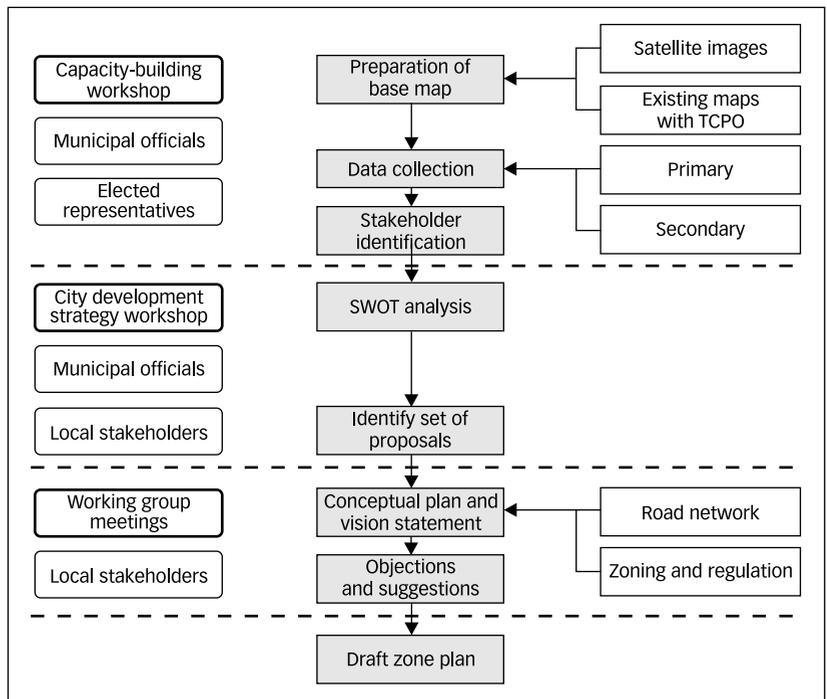


FIGURE 2
Methodology

a. Liaising and negotiating with the state government

This participatory process needed the support of state government both to give it formal validity and to procure the official data it needed. The two state-level departments worked together on this and the Department of Urban Development sent a letter to the two municipalities for comments and discussion during mayor-in-council and president-in-council sessions on carrying out such an exercise, since doing this is at the discretion of the municipality.

b. Signing a memorandum of understanding with the municipalities

A joint letter from PRIA and the state government about what was proposed was sent to each of the municipalities and this was discussed at a relevant forum. The mayor-in-council/president-in-council approved the proposal and a formal memorandum of understanding was signed (Box 1). The understanding was that the municipality would be a partner in the whole process in terms of local support and participation. They also agreed to implement the plan.

c. Orientation of municipal officers and elected representatives

Obviously, local politicians and officials need to be informed of and involved in the planning process. Thus, it is important that the local officials who are directly responsible for implementing projects under the development plan know the intricacies of the plan preparation and subsequent monitoring. A two-day training workshop for local government officials and elected representatives from both towns and also state department officials was conducted in the state capital. The workshop included training in basic elements of development planning and preparing a zoning plan and a town development scheme. The workshop also allowed a discussion of basic concepts of good governance and participatory planning along with the need for reforms in municipal finance and accounting. Ways in which to increase sources of municipal income and implement the plan and projects were also discussed. The training sessions helped to improve all participants' understanding of technical aspects, legal provisions, statutory planning procedures and methodologies for preparing participatory plans. The workshop was particularly useful in helping local government stakeholders articulate a vision and identify the important issues for their towns. This might sound obvious, but in the past many town plans have been prepared by state government organizations with little involvement by officials or politicians for the town that is being planned. Key personnel from the state government also participated and contributed, including the principal secretary for town planning and officials from the TCPO.

d. Preparation of a high quality base map

Using geo-coded satellite imagery (PAN)⁽⁵⁾ purchased from the National Remote Sensing Agency (NRSA), a good quality map was prepared. The

5. The acquisition of an IKONOS image was difficult as this needs defence clearance; also, CARTOSAT was not available commercially at the time, hence a PAN image with 5.6 metre resolution was used for base map preparation.

Box 1
Memorandum of understanding



छत्तीसपट्ट CHHATTISGARH

M.O.U.

284525

प्रथम पक्ष - आयुक्त नगर पालिक निगम, राजनांदगांव (छ.ग.)
द्वितीय पक्ष - प्रिया संस्था, छत्तीसगढ़

प्रिया छत्तीसगढ़ एक पंजीकृत सिविल सोसायटी संस्था है जो विगत 03 वर्षों से इस निकाय क्षेत्रांतर्गत नगर विकास में जनभागीदारी के तहत सहयोग प्रदान कर रही है। संस्था के साथ जन भागीदारी से नगर निवेश योजना तैयार करने का प्रस्ताव प्रस्तुत किया गया है। जो कि नगर निगम के लिए उपयोगी होगा। इस संदर्भ में नगर निगम राजनांदगांव द्वारा प्रिया छत्तीसगढ़ के निम्न शर्तों के अधीन नगर विकास योजना (Zonal Plan) बनाने के लिए एम.ओ.यू. संपादित करती है :-

- (1) प्रथम पक्ष द्वितीय पक्ष को नगर विकास योजना तैयार करने हेतु कोई आर्थिक सहायता/ पारिश्रमिक प्रदान नहीं करेगा।
- (2) द्वितीय पक्षकार राज्य शासन द्वारा निर्धारित/निर्देशित मापदण्डों के अनुरूप कार्य संपादित करेंगे।
- (3) प्रथम पक्ष द्वितीय पक्ष को योजना हेतु सभी आवश्यक सहयोग प्रदान करेगी।
- (4) द्वितीय पक्ष द्वारा तैयार किये गये योजना को प्रथम पक्ष लागू करने हेतु जनहित में पूरा प्रयास करेगी।
- (5) द्वितीय पक्ष को योजना तैयार करते समय बाईं के पार्षदों/जनप्रतिनिधियों से व्यक्तिगत संपर्क कर उनके सुझाव को महत्व प्रदान करते हुए योजना तैयार करेंगे।
- (6) द्वितीय पक्ष को निगम के निर्वाचित जनप्रतिनिधियों को पूरा सम्मान प्रदान करेगी।
- (7) प्रथम पक्ष की ओर से नगर निगम के अधिकारी/कर्मचारी अपना पूरा सहयोग द्वितीय पक्ष को प्रदान करेंगी।
- (8) प्रथम पक्षकार के पास एम.ओ.यू. के निष्पादन के संबंध में सर्वाधिकार सुरक्षित रहेगा।

(द्वितीय पक्षकार)

(प्रथमपक्षकार)

Shalika
14/11/15
प्रिया संस्था,

[Signature]
आयुक्त

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छत्तीसगढ़

नगर पालिक निगम, राजनांदगांव

cadastral (*khassa*) map with plot-level details was digitized and overlaid onto the satellite image. The linear features were updated and corrected with the satellite images. Once the draft base map was prepared, ground checking was undertaken to verify the details and improve the accuracy.

Having a detailed, clear base map for the whole urban centre helps all stakeholders understand its physical base and growth and helps stimulate ideas and discussions. The insights gained from a detailed map with ground features on a scale of 1:8,000 were shared with all stakeholders and proved a useful means to catalyze civil society involvement in the process. The maps and drawings showed property boundaries, a building typology, settlement densities, watersheds, public utilities and land use.

This provided a physical base from which different groups could identify their homes and settlements and express their concerns, and the base map was exhibited at strategic locations in the towns. People’s concerns/ issues were also mapped and recorded by development professionals at various facilitation points.

e. Data collection, awareness generation and stakeholder consultation

The backbone of participatory town planning is public consultation, which can capture community-level views of the town and its development roadmap. Extensive public consultations were held in both towns. Public awareness of the planning process was created through distributing pamphlets, issuing press releases and through advertisements on the local TV channels. In both towns, there was an active process to encourage participation. A procedure was set up to allow all citizens to voice their concerns and suggestions either by post or by phone. People were also contacted through informal household visits and their views were recorded.



FIGURE 3A
Base map of Rajnandgaon

Prepared by PRIA.

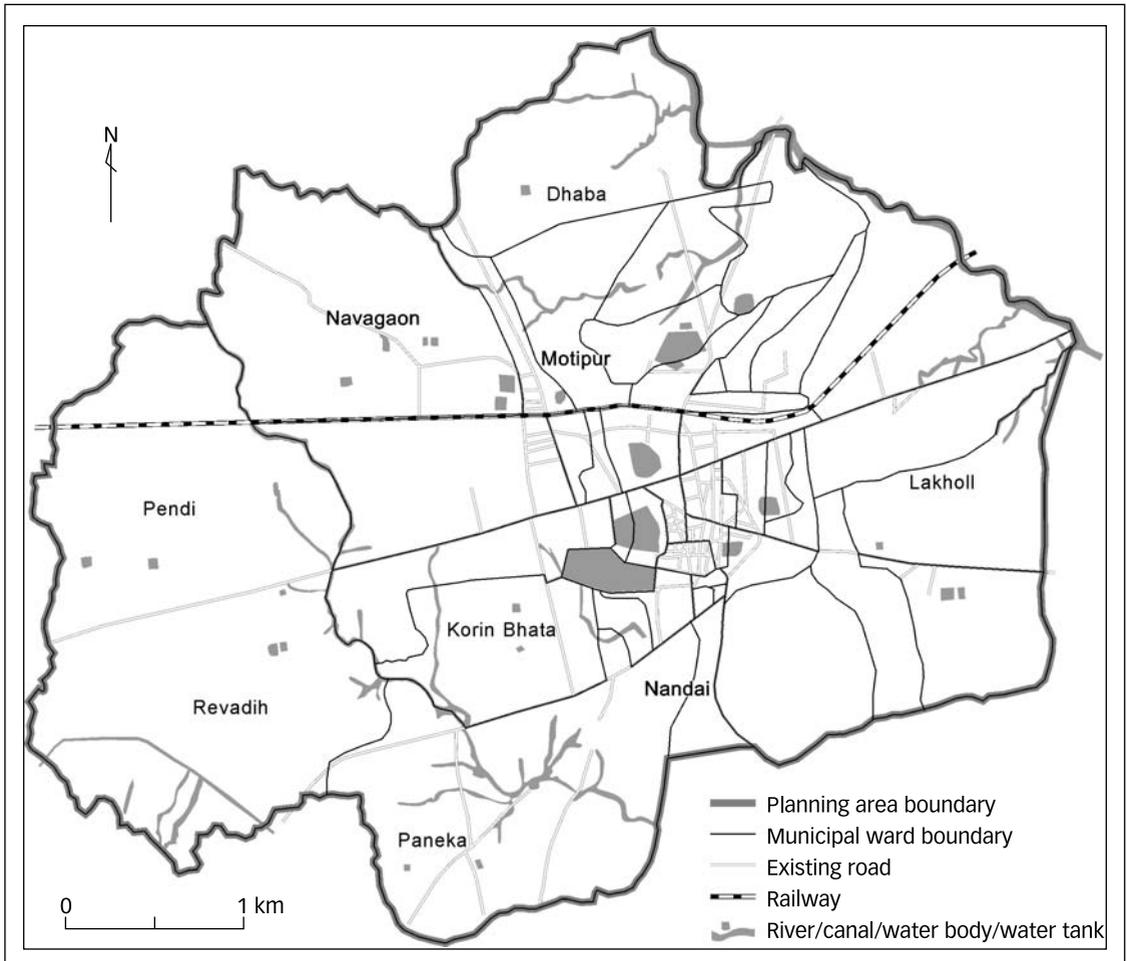


FIGURE 3B
Base map of Rajnadaon showing greater detail

Adapted from original base map by PRIA.

This focus on getting the views of individuals from marginalized sections and informal groups was to draw in the opinions of those who do not have a tradition of active engagement in planning. There was also a more formal process for civil society participation as 20 stakeholder groups such as local community organizations, officials, market organizations, traders, unions and informal sector organizations were identified and consulted through semi-structured interviews. Other important stakeholders were also identified from the fields of academia, the media, politics, health, public works departments, transport and youth groups and efforts were made to seek their opinions, especially with regard to specific sectoral issues that were their main concerns.

In the second phase of consultation, the towns were divided into clusters each comprising a few wards and public meetings were conducted

Box 2**Some problems experienced during stakeholder consultations**

- Unrealistic community expectations
- Difficulty in involving citizens/groups with apathetic attitudes, or those less articulate
- The powerless felt inadequate to making any difference in the planning process, or for that matter in bringing about any change

in smaller groups. This was a more intensive approach, with meetings lasting half a day and held at nodal locations in the clustered wards. The process also facilitated the exchange of information between all parties – not just information from the planning authority to others. Particular attention was given to supporting the contribution of groups who are not usually reached by public participation strategies, for example home-based workers, cobblers, rickshaw pullers and *dalits*.⁽⁶⁾

f. City development strategy workshop

To synthesize the public consultation and to develop the vision for the city, the representative groups of stakeholders were invited to take part in a city development strategy workshop in both the towns. The workshop agenda was to:

- present the base maps and data to stakeholders to validate the inputs received so far;
- develop a vision statement;
- conduct a SWOT analysis (Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats);
- discuss strategies for future development; and
- identify sources of revenue for projects.

The stakeholders were asked questions about contentious issues likely to need mediation and negotiation. Active dialogue between various groups helped to reconcile differences within the agreed rules and timetable. The role of the facilitator (PRIA) was to simplify the technical jargon to allow meaningful local participation. The role of the catalyst planners was not to provide answers but to facilitate the process and make available mechanisms through which locally suitable solutions would emerge.

g. Preparing and developing conceptual plans

Based on people's suggestions and feedback from the city development strategy workshop, a draft conceptual plan and a draft development roadmap were developed for each of the towns. The main contents of these drafts were: a preliminary road network; land use zoning; building control regulations; and areas of future expansion of the towns. The conceptual plan was then presented to the stakeholders in a second workshop. Objections and suggestions from the stakeholders were invited by forming working groups that were headed by a local stakeholder, who gave recommendations on their subject area such as water supply,

6. *Dalit* is a term given to those who fall outside the caste system and traditionally have been barred from all but the most menial jobs – they were formerly known as untouchables.

drainage systems, roads and traffic, the environment, industry etc. to be incorporated into the development plan.

h. Preparation, presentation and submission of a draft plan

Based on the collated data from the working groups, a draft development and zoning plan were prepared for each of Rajnandgaon and Janjgir. In each town, this draft plan was shared with the district administration, municipal staff, elected representatives and local stakeholders. The district-level government departments dealing with various service provisions were asked to provide their comments. The idea of the workshop was to integrate the plans of various concerned departments such as electricity, industry and public works at the town level.⁷⁾

Finally, the plan was shared with the state government, with representation from both the TCPO and the Department of Urban Development. The state government appreciated the work as this was the first zoning plan ever to be prepared in the state, and with public participation. Thus, this process set a precedent for participatory planning, which the state government is showing keen interest in replicating.

With regard to the legal process, the draft plan was formally submitted to the respective municipalities. The document was routed through a council meeting where the municipality's elected body approved the plan, and a copy has been sent to the state government for final publication and sanction under the State Town Planning Act.

The existence of an older master plan, prepared 20 years previously, enabled any contentious issues, for example defining land use in the city, to be minimized. Sharing with the people at every stage of planning meant their confidence was gained and provided various platforms for them to register their discontent; it also brought much greater transparency. Moreover, there is provision under the State Town Planning Act to publish the draft plan and allow a month for objections and suggestions. This provides enough space to settle disputes at the local level.

Meanwhile, efforts have been made to create a city-level forum to act as a pressure group on the municipality to implement the plan, once it gets final approval. The group includes influential citizens who have a voice in city affairs, and people from academia, the media, politics and business. Some of the proposals, such as by-pass roads (which come under the Public Works Department), have already been initiated.

At the organizational level, PRIA has started to address various issues one by one. For each town, a detailed study of municipal finance was carried out that included an assessment of current and potential investment capacity to implement the plan and to find out whether these projects can be linked to the municipal budget. In addition, efforts are also being made to create neighbourhood (*mohalla*) committees to keep track of development activities within each ward. A study and survey of slum areas has also been initiated with a view to measuring citizens' levels of satisfaction with regard to municipal services through the use of a report card. The findings from the report card survey are then used to organize people to negotiate with the municipality for better services. The preparation of a detailed project report on solid waste management has also been initiated, which was one of the proposals in the town plan. Once the town plan is ready, there will be continuous efforts through the district resource

7. All the utility departments prepare their own plans independently, and this lack of coordination implies a waste of resources and much inconvenience for the population.

centres to integrate the projects with different government schemes, in a planned fashion. This would lead to the phased implementation of the projects identified. All these interventions should converge to help create the city-level infrastructure that is needed to support the implementation of the participatory town plan.

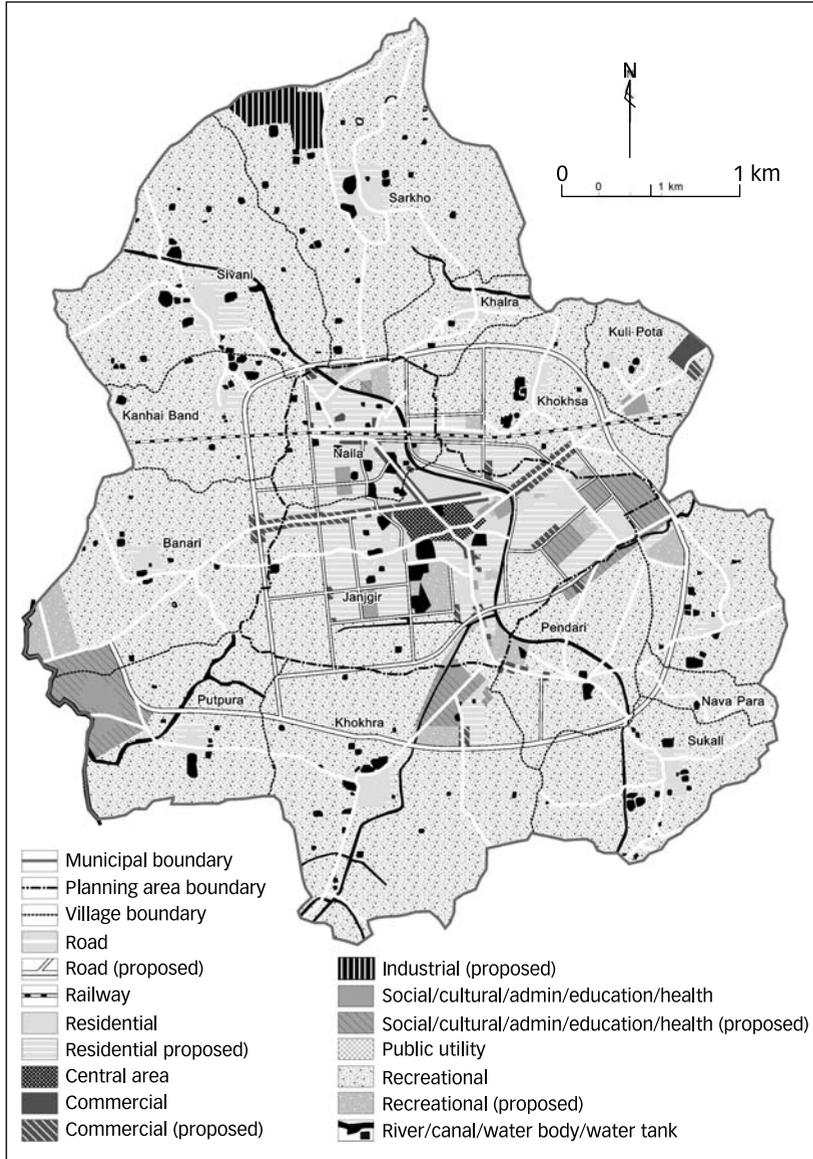
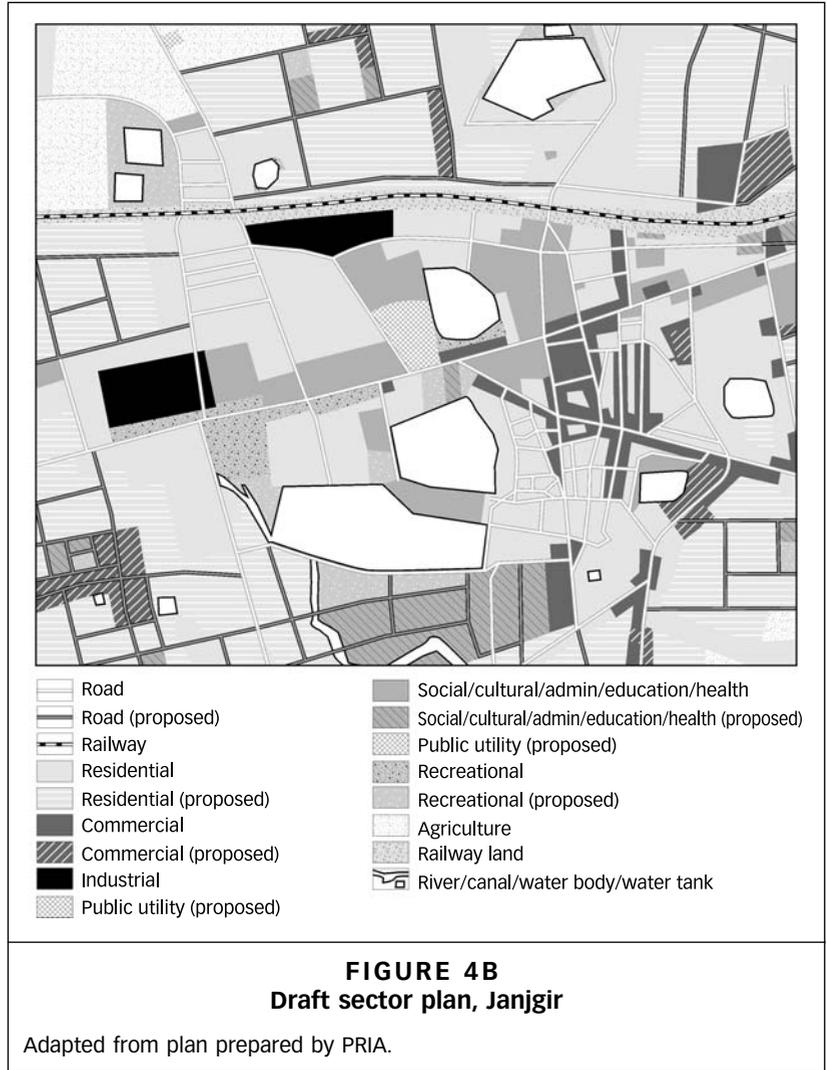


FIGURE 4A
Draft development plan, Janjgir

Adapted from plan prepared by PRIA.



VI. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

This initiative to promote participatory town planning has both tangible and intangible achievements. Some of the important ones can be summarized as follows:

Developing a partnership approach. The participatory urban planning process brought a new partnership approach to the development planning process in the two towns. The integrated partnership model has helped to generate a realistic plan that is demand based and has proved to be effective, as all the urban stakeholders identified and prioritized the issues to be addressed. Each component of the plan was envisaged by the community and made operationally feasible by drawing on resources that had been identified and prioritized. The planners helped to de-mystify

the town planning process. They also collated the people's needs in a legal format and built the capacities of the municipal stakeholders to understand, implement and monitor the plan.

Bridging the missing link between planners and citizens. This process helped to establish the link between planners and implementors i.e. the two state government urban departments (environment, and housing and urban) and the municipalities. By involving all the key stakeholders in the plan preparation process, inter-departmental cooperation was also supported. Local government capacities were built so that they could participate in the plan preparation process, understand the need to bring about municipal reform and effectively discharge their implementation role. The partnership development approach between the coordinating agencies was facilitated by learning and capacity-building processes and by building relations that were mutually supportive.

Proactive development planning initiatives by urban local bodies. Through a consultative process, the professional planners and the municipal authorities identified projects that drive the planning process, as against the conventional approach where it is planning that drives the projects. This also established a practice of developing realistic plans. Another significant aspect was the integration of the plans and projects with municipal budgets. This was to curtail a dependency on external resources, enabling municipal governments to implement the projects as prioritized.

The municipalities were faced with a lack of funds and heavy loan repayment burdens. The detailed reviews of each municipality's finances showed the lack of funding available from internally generated revenues – and how this paralyzed the development works. Capacity building of urban local bodies to identify and raise revenue through internal and external resources was undertaken. Tapping resources from a new federal government initiative, the Urban Infrastructure Development Scheme for Small and Medium Towns (UIDSSMT), was also suggested. A systematic structure and procedure was agreed on through which the urban local bodies could review the plan every year and make appropriate modifications.

The proactive participation of the marginalized citizen groups and communities in the city planning process was effected, whereby their interests and aspirations were addressed. Their capacities to organize and articulate their concerns to shape development processes for their benefit were built.

The state government has begun a similar process that shows a comparable proactive approach. The master plan revision of the state capital Raipur shows a new willingness to include public participation, by inviting stakeholders to a city development strategy workshop and through a series of meetings with different stakeholders to finalize the master plan.

VII. LESSONS LEARNT AND KEY CHALLENGES

There is a need to deal with urban departments with overlapping functions. As mentioned earlier, two parallel state-level departments deal with urban development issues. Our aim was to involve the municipality as a local government institution but it was not clear which

department we should engage with. It took a lot of negotiation and much discussion with the departments to eliminate the ambiguity, and the solution was to engage both of them, each with specific roles.

The absence of supportive legislation limits community and civil society engagement. Existing state legislation (municipal as well as town planning Acts) does not adequately recognize the potential contribution to urban planning of citizens and their community organizations and the larger civil society. Their valuable contribution to the planning process and subsequent implementation process is missing. Governments need to acknowledge local people's knowledge and work in close collaboration with the communities in all aspects – information procurement, planning, prioritizing, implementation and monitoring. Support for the process by senior-level bureaucrats, politicians and senior planners helps take it forward and influence policy.

The participatory process as a challenge. At times, planners, local leaders and municipal officials are all apprehensive and resentful about participatory approaches. In part, they see this new process as a reflection of their failure. They may fear that this process is a challenge to their authority, which may result in their losing power. There is therefore a need for constant dialogue and for building the capacity of the local authority and citizen leaders concerning the process and its benefits. Everyone who is involved needs to be coordinated and informed through the structured platform of a resource centre at the state and district level.

For effective implementation and sustainability, the plan should be based around local knowledge and information and should reflect the community needs and priorities of all socio-economic groups; it should also be fundable and largely dependent on local resources, which in turn would reduce pressure on scarce government resources. Participatory plans also have more possibilities for delivering effectively as they are developed with community ownership and the various implementation stakeholders gain access to each other's skills and resources, thus reducing the need–demand gap. The participatory process also ensures that the community becomes the guardian of the assets created (physical infrastructure), and maintains these rather than disregards, misuses or vandalizes them.

Rising expectations of citizens. One of the challenges faced during the process was people's rising expectations. During various consultation forums, people came up with suggestions that went far beyond any possibilities for implementation. It is very difficult to shift the discussion from a "wish list" to justified needs that can be addressed. There is no harm in ambitious ideas but the limits on resources must be recognized. Given the size of the two urban centres where the plans were developed, various kinds of infrastructure are not economically viable. Each urban centre needs to have a competence and capacity within its government to ensure good infrastructure provision and, in turn, help attract new investment.

Phased implementation strategy. The community interest is always in visible tangible development results. The participatory process raises people's expectations and it is therefore imperative that the plan includes an investment strategy that identifies resource needs, potential areas for tapping local resources, and the role of each partner in the short, medium and long term. It is also important that all implementing actors are comfortable with the process (with disputes and contentious issues

being resolved) and the phasing strategy, for them to contribute and complete the targets.

Inclusivity of existing structures and their capacity building.

There is an obvious need to work with existing structures and mechanisms throughout the planning and implementation process, whether they are government or civil society structures, including neighbourhood committees (*mohalla samitis*), ward committees and other civil society groups (*sabhas, swatchtha samitis*). An element of capacity building, with its creation of new competencies, results in stronger bonds of partnership and in effective implementation.

VIII. CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

Participatory urban planning can support strong local democratic processes and the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act that gave sweeping powers to local authorities, especially in planning and development, has enhanced the possibilities for the same. It does so by ensuring the involvement of citizens at all levels. But it is evident that in practice, the conventional urban planning approach offers very little scope for citizen participation. Advocates of the conventional approach may claim that there is participation in that local elected politicians review the plan – but this elected body generally lacks the knowledge to be able to review it or understand its full significance (as it relies heavily on technical data). Participatory urban planning, by contrast, focuses on developing the plan through collaborative partnerships and continuous dialogue between planners, government officials (at state and municipal levels), elected representatives and the community. It seeks to integrate all these groups' knowledge, skills and resources and prepare a plan in which all groups have an interest and have a sense of ownership; also to have a concern for investment, as any decisions affect this.

The success of the process depends on effectively facilitating the mobilization and sensitization of the stakeholders for effective participation. It is critical that they understand the benefits of the town plan and its implications. NGOs and other civil society organizations can have key roles in supporting grassroots mobilization, in documenting and sharing their knowledge and in training the various groups to contribute to the inclusive process. The capacities of all the partners in the planning and implementation process should be strengthened.

Town planning in Rajnandgaon and Janjgir has demonstrated a participatory planning approach. One key concern now is how to scale up. For mainstreaming such a process in other urban centres, there is a need for continued dialogue and advocacy. There is great scope for institutionalizing participatory interventions through the National Urban Renewal Mission scheme and the Urban Infrastructure Development Scheme for Small and Medium Towns at the national level.⁽⁸⁾ Both lay stress on the preparation of a city development plan and a comprehensive vision document that indicate the direction in which a city would grow. The city development plan specifies a process of city assessment (opportunities, strengths, weaknesses and demand gap), future perspectives and visioning, strategies for development and the preparation of a city investment plan. There is extensive stakeholder and civil society consultation envisaged in the first three stages of the scheme. The participatory approach

8. The Indian government initiated a new programme under the National Urban Renewal Mission scheme in December 2005. The Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) focuses on large cities and includes 63 cities for infrastructure renewal; the rest of the towns are covered under the Urban Infrastructure Development Scheme for Small and Medium Towns (UIDSSMT) and the sub-section Integrated Housing and Slum Development Programme (IHSDP).

described in this paper would be a good reference point with regard to the consultative processes needed for preparing city development plans. According to the latest media reports, as many as 130 projects relating to infrastructure upgrading in various cities under the National Urban Renewal Mission scheme are awaiting clearance from the Indian government's Urban Development Ministry. Before these projects are sanctioned, it is important that the ministry ensures that a participatory process has been adopted before city development plans are developed.

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