

## **Participation in Urban Development and Governance**

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**Abstract:** This paper presents an empirical justification of participation of common people in different factors of administration through the policy of decentralization. The background structure of the paper mainly based on the developing country oriented social structure. Through this paper, we can also understand the heterogeneity in the administrative structure. Under this differentiate structure this paper tries to understand the extent of participation of the common people in the administrative decision. In the conclusion part, here in this paper, we try to define the term “Citizen Participation” through the idea of redistribution of administrative power among the civic society for getting an affluent society.

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### **I. Introduction**

One of the discussed items on administration among recent scholars is “**participation of common man in urban development and governance**”. The policy of decentralization is very much related to such discussion because only decentralization can bring the people or urban dwellers closer to the process of decision making in civil governance. It is rightly believed that this basic rationale of decentralization can easily push the government, mainly at local level, to develop the authority of power and control towards strengthening the engagement of citizen/urban population in the process of governance.

Decentralization is a definite process of administering the locality, and its success depends on the meaningful participation of common people in different factors of administration. We expect decentralization to bring decision-making authority closer to the people/citizen more precisely to the beneficiaries of the decision. We use this rationale to push government, mainly in developing countries, to develop central power and authority towards strengthening civic engagement in local government processes. According to Dany Ayida, a governance expert, who shared his field experience in central and West Africa at a recent presentation at the world bank <sup>(1)</sup>, meaningful civic participation in a decentralized setting depends on various factors, including: a) vitality of the public sphere or political environment; b) the culture and political history of the country; and c) the capacity and incentives of both civil society organization and local governments to interact and interface meaningfully with one another.

First, let us discuss what we mean by civic participation in decentralization and local governance. Ideally, decentralization would develop government functions and authorities to the local level, allowing citizens to elect their representatives to manage local affairs. We typically expect that moving government closer to the people will ease interaction and information flow between citizen and government. This process theoretically aids in formulating a development agenda that corresponds to local needs and opportunities while improving transparency and accountability in public service delivery.

Based on the field realities Aydia experienced in six francophone African countries (Benin, Burkina, Faso, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, and Togo), and he concluded that, despite the fact that decentralization is picking up momentum in these countries, there hasn't been a comparable increase in civic participation and government accountability as a result. Ayida further claims he has not witnessed any natural interaction evolving between civil society and the local governments. On the contrary, it has been donor's interests and funding that appear to be the driving force in bringing civil society and government together. This according to Aydia has, unfortunately –led to only episodic interaction between the two parties, without adequately enunciating deep social, economic and political challenges. Moreover, the tradition of chieftaincy and feudal culture, combined with low literacy rate (as low as 89% in rural areas) are seen as severe obstacles to the effective participation of citizens in local governance processes.

Ayida's presentation was followed up by a brainstorming session, where a general consensus emerged that civil engagement in decentralization has not been adequately internalized or institutionalized among both government and civil organizations. Donor engagement has remained project based and is not equipped to deal with fundamental problems associated with local politics and culture. On the other hand, opportunities do exist, despite these shortfalls. Rather than taking an open-ended generalized approach to strengthening civil engagement in local governance processes, the project-based support from donors can be turned into the issue based civic participation with specific need based sectoral targets and outcomes (e.g. whether drugs have reached the health clinics or whether a teacher is attending classes, Physicians attend their chambers for attending patients etc). Basically, the issue identified should be driving force and an incentive for both the

demand and supply side to meaningfully engaged with one another and improve the quality and standard of public services.

In terms of tackling illiteracy and local power dynamics for meaningful civic participation, new technological innovations are expected to assist the devolution process, increasing citizens' access to pertinent information. One of the participants also pointed out that facilitating skills are important in the galvanizing participation of illiterates in government affairs. Similarly, building reform coordination and alliances around specific issues and cultivating a spirit of competition among and between civil society actors and government entities (including traditional chieftaincy) is expected to create incentives for all parties to interact and engage effectively in local governance processes.

Observations of people such as Dany Ayida, especially those with solid field experience, are invaluable as strategies and processes are refined in the field of decentralization and local development and beyond.

The tendency of social people of getting participation in the governance and social developmental works are not something new. It was rooted back to the time of city polis during the time ancient Rome and Greece administration. So this urge for the democratization of community development efforts and governance of community affairs are very rudimentary as well as these are elementary demand and situation for establishing human freedom. A typical democratic man wants to perceive the state as a basic embodiment of free society, where the ruler will rule the people.

With this understanding we can critically look at the features of Municipal Governance in West Bengal:

**The characteristic features or municipal governance in West Bengal are as follows:**

- ✦ The state Government constitutes Municipalities after taking into consideration the public opinion of the concerned areas.
- ✦ Municipal areas are divided into several wards mainly depending on the population size of the municipality
- ✦ The term of the municipal board is fixed to 5 years.
- ✦ Each ward is represented by a member being elected directly by the people of that ward.
- ✦ One-third of the total seats of a municipality is reserved for a woman.
- ✦ Seats are proportionately reserved for the weaker section viz Scheduled Caste (SC), Schedule Tribe (ST) of that municipality.
- ✦ The councillors elected directly by the people constitute the Board of Councillors, which governs Municipalities.
- ✦ Municipal elections are conducted at a regular interval of 5 years under the direct supervision of the State Election Commission, which is a statutory body.
- ✦ Mayors/Chairpersons of the municipal bodies are directly elected by the councillors.
- ✦ The corporation and municipal towns are governed by a cabinet form of local self-government through the mayor in council/Chairman in council model in the ULBs.
- ✦ Mayor/Chairperson runs the municipal administration with the assistance of their respective council members.
- ✦ Chairman of the corporation conducts the business in the meetings of the corporation.
- ✦ There is borough committee in municipal bodies having more than 0.3 million population & in the Municipal Corporation to ensure further decentralization down below the municipal level.
- ✦ Respective municipalities appoint their officers and employees with the approval of the state government.
- ✦ The state government may appoint officers in the municipalities from its own cadre of officers to support the municipal administration.
- ✦ There are municipal Accounts committees in the municipalities to keep vigil on municipal accounts.
- ✦ The Municipalities are required to conduct an internal audit.
- ✦ The Municipal bodies are to perform obligatory and discretionary functions in the arena of providing Civic service, development planning & the other socio-economic spheres enumerated in the 12<sup>th</sup> schedule of the Constitution of India.

But this theoretical proposition has to a large extent ascended down with the implementation of "Representative Democracy". It has obviously put political barriers of engaging oneself with the daily functioning of the Government. It is often alleged that even in any powerful and participatory democratic cultural the role of adult citizens reduced to voting in a periodic election and recording their passive consent of the people once in every five years. Since then they again put under the chain of Administration.

Under this situation, the community participation through Panchayat, Municipality or Corporation in the developing countries has gained considerable enthusiasms among the people of different sectors like Urban and Rural. This institution has made the way of participation of the people in general with the developmental activities of Government in delivering goods and services. Thus recently the general thrust of the government of developing countries is to prepare the process of increasing participation of people in the process of Governance and administration. Even various constitutional amendments and statutory changes have recently been adopted

to ensure and facilitate the participation of people and power and responsibilities of community-based institutions.

But the typical problem of developing countries is their heterogeneous social structure. As we live and experienced in our society, it is divided along the lines of caste, class gender and so on, which is obviously not congenial for the equal and democratic participation of the entire community. It may only ensure the participation of a section, which appears to be traditionally numerous and established in the society, while other remained ruled as usually by the powerful section of the society.

It creates visible barriers to the active empowerment of common citizen through participation in governance and administration. This division or participation antipathy creates a feeling of disregard among a section of the society. It also taps the energies and resources of an individual within the community. But on the other hand, the spontaneous participation of the community ultimately enables the Government to eliminate deficiencies in the Community and among the people.

The same proposition also holds good for the urban sector which also does not comprise a homogeneous community. Each city and towns have a different history of their origin and cultural habit, which are different from other towns or cities. Different studies have shown that each town or cities are shaped by distinct primordial loyalties, economic disparities, and social culture. Thus to bring them under a common acceptable social ambiance and culture, the Government is required to create or from an appropriate “group of neutral “ organizational structure for expressing interest of a different segment of the society on their needs and demand.

There are five different modes of community participation. Of which most of them are state-initiated modes, but apart from that there may also be such initiative which stems from spontaneously of the social man. But that too also accepted and utilized by the state for understanding and satisfying the social demands.

- Constitutionally mandated Ward committee
- Statutorily dictated Beneficiary Committees, work under the supervisions of ward committee;
- Programmatically determined state planning for the betterment of middle and lower middle-class people; such as “Swarna Jayanti Sahari Rozgar Yojana(SJSRY)”; these are generally formed and adopted by the state to provide basic need of the urban poor(UBSP)
- An activity based program like Bustee workers Management committee under KMDA area, Ward education committee etc.
- Spontaneously evolved citizen’s forum, Sports club, Residents Committee, Social club etc.

This entire program emerged as an extension of Urban community development program launched during 1958. Later to increase the participation of common urban dwellers, VII Five years plan introduced some related program like providing basic services to the urban poor. The aim of this program was to increase the standard of life pattern of urban poor and Middle-class people. Special care was also given to the improvement of woman and children. The Urban Local Bodies were given the overall responsibility for implementing the program. The fund was provided by the State Government under “plan Head”. These “Bodies” were taken care of forming different neighboring Groups with the inhabitants of poor people of a particular area. At the top of all those committees of the group, there was “Community Development Society (CDS)”, where the councilors were members.

In the year 2005, Government took a new initiative for urban renewal through “Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM). The program was initiated by the Central Government for urban renewal. It requires the preparation of “City Development Planning”(CDP) for which the consultation with the community was made mandatory. The technical advice for preparing urban planning was given by the National and State level Technical Advisory Bodies. These Bodies were asked to ensure the participation of the community in preparing an urban development plan. The mission of the program was to provide assistance and to motivate the citizen in urban development. Ward committees, Area Sabah’s and voluntary technical groups were the areas through which the participation was expected to be assured. The prime aim of the central government was to constitute two-tiered structure for community participation: 1) Area Sabah, 2) Ward committees. The plan was to use Area Sabah as “door Committee” and ward committees as “Statutory body”, Representative of “civil society” from the ward accommodated in the ward committee as members.

Historically it is true that India after independence started to take up different method and programmers related with pro-poor social development to reduce the increasing trends of social disparities. The Urban Community Development (UDP) was one of the schemes, launched for the purpose of reducing the poverty. This program was launched in 1958, with the assistance of Ford Foundation. The major thrust of the program was to improve the life of the poor people of the urban area through involving them with different activities of the community. Two ideas were the motor force of this program: 1) Community development, and 2) participation of people with the programs. It had obviously some positive effect on the slum dwellers and the people of lower middle class. The success of such program laid the government to take up programs like “Urban basic services for the poor”(UBSP) in 1985. The main focus of this program was to bring the participation of the

poor directly with the activities of ameliorating their living condition and standard of social existence. These programs gave special emphasis on woman and children to open up the access to the social services. The Urban local Bodies (ULB) was given the responsibilities of implementing the program successfully. Again the late nineties decade, Swarna Jayanti Sahari Rojgar Yojana (SJSRY) was launched through ULB. The trust of this program was to find out the possible way of involving the community with the developmental program. The ULB, being the nodal agency or authority of implementing the program, build up three-tier committees, comprising women members belonging to the poor class. Nodal agency ULB, formed committees in different localities with women belonging to the below poverty line, which was called "neighborhood groups"(NHG), and these committees were asked to select their own representative, who would act as "Resident Community Volunteer(RCV)".RCVs of different localities elected their ward local bodies called "Neighbor Hood Committee (NHC)".At the top of the NHC(comprises with four members)there was Community Development Society (CDS), where the counselor was also the member. The woman association was empowered to look especially on two thrusting areas: a) the community development, b) individual development. The NHC was responsible for implementing the plan and to monitor the implementation of their demands and observations. They were also responsible for training up the women to develop their skill as well as to make necessary arrangements for providing necessary funds through bank loans or by making 'credit and cooperative societies with them. A hierarchy of responsibility was set up in the following manner: Neighborhood committee (NHC) was to report their progress to "Community Development Societies" (CDS).The primary plan was prepared by the Community Development Societies(CDS), vetted accordingly by the Urban poverty Eradication cell(UPEC).This actually aimed to empower women in two related ways; 1)It include women to decide their way to improvement, and 2) it enables them to play a vital role in determining the plan for their locality. After this a new program initiated by the central Government for urban development; "Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) in 2005.The primary thrust of the mission was to implement renewal program for urban sector, ensuring participation of community with it. To get the benefit of the mission each community were required to prepare a "city development plan" (CDP), after consulting and assessing the need for the community and actual beneficiaries of the mission. The JNNURM also put up a definite guideline for getting assistance through it. As per guideline, formations of two groups were essential: a) National Technical Advisory Group (NTAG) and b) State Level Technical Advisory Group (STAG).These groups act as an advisory group to the national and state level steering committees and Urban Local Bodies (ULB) regarding transparency and accountability, It was also empowered to monitor the process participation and involvement of community with the mission and its work. To ensure this guideline the community Programmers were virtually bound to form Ward Committee (WC) and Area Sabah (AS).Actually, this two-tier community structure was made as per the design of a "Model Nagara Bill". The bill tried to ensure the representation of all local residents and registered voters, of one or more than one (but not exceeding five) polling booths, as a member of the area committee.The member of the area committee will select or elect one representative to the Ward committee of the respective Ward. As per the direction of the bill, at least two third of the members of Ward committee shall have to be the member of area committee. This system was implemented to ensure the democracy at the grass root level of the urban sector. The aim of 74<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the constitution was to create space for wider and deeper democratization through enhanced participation of registered voters and social members in determining the plan and program of local development. It tried to ensure such participation through area committee and Ward committee, etc.The amendment breaks a new ground by providing an institutional framework for the citizen to actively participate in their own administration and development through a two-tier system of local governance-the municipality and the ward committee. The former is an elective body at the level of the municipality consisting of elected representatives of the people (councilors) and the later is nominated body at the level of the ward.The observation of K.C.Sivaramakrishnan on 74<sup>th</sup> amendment is very relevant in this context, he opined that, it provide a framework to enable a participation of citizens in urban governance.It contains an enabling mechanism for decentralization from the city council to its ward and neighborhood.

The experience of decentralization of administration in West Bengal is no doubt happy and positive. This state has a long tradition of participatory democracy and administration both in urban and rural sectors. Even before independence, there were urban local Bodies. Even these bodies carried the tradition of participating in National freedom movement during the colonial period.Even before implementation of the 74<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendment, there was borough committee in Calcutta Corporation. Thus after promulgation of the amendment, the corporation proceeded further by making the formation of ward committee mandatory for all municipalities irrespective of their size and population.Even we have, in West Bengal, the system of representation of Community Development Society (CDS) in ward committee. This was implemented for the inclusion of civil society in the development program and for the development of the life pattern of slum dwellers.The CDS is a statutory committee in west Bengal, which is again unique in the state. Being a statutory committee the CDS ensures the representation of physician, educationalist, social workers etc, in it. This has made this body truly representative body of city life.

One thing here should be mentioned. West Bengal is basically a “politically influenced” state unlike other states in Eastern Region. So the nomination of the members of these committees is also influenced and dictated by the politics and political partisanship. Even then it enables the urban people to take an active part in the developmental process lunched under different heads. The basic aim of any ruling party in West Bengal is to make a link with the Ward Committee and Municipality so that their political aims are fulfilled. Thus the ruling party wants to interfere into the issue of forming the beneficiaries of any program, because that may serve their purpose of keeping and extending the support base in the society for the benefit of vote politics. Even in some cases, it has been found that in the ward committee, the numerical representation of women was not as per the norms. All these happen due to the interference of politics and party loyalties among the member.

It is further interesting that some of the sponsored programs of Central Government like “ **Kolkata urban basic services for the poor**”(KUSP) are implemented by the **urban local bodies(ULB)** with the help of **Kolkata metropolitan development authority (KMDA)**. Being the nodal agency the KMDA prepared plan and estimate for such programs. Very recently the state government has extended the area of such program beyond the jurisdiction of KMDA. In those areas, ULB has included poor and slum dweller beneficiaries with the program. Here KMDA may act as a contractor agency for implementing the plan and program.

In spite of this governmental effort, still, we are witnessing spatial neutrality a younger generation from such developmental programs. Even they are not coming forward to take part in the governance of urban sector. Sadly enough, even after more than a decade and a half of the 74<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the constitution, the urban citizen are still to realize that there is a constitutionally mandated structure in the form of Ward Committee for ensuring community participation. The idea of WCs and their meeting are rarely focused in media which is one of the major sources of information for the urban.

The beaten controversy over “citizen participation”, “citizen control” and “maximum feasible involvement of the poor “, has been waged largely to encourage a more enlightened dialogue, a typology of citizen participation is offered using examples from three federal social programs: urban renewal, antipoverty and Model Cities. The typology, which is designed to be provocative, is arraigned in a ladder pattern with each rung corresponding to the extent of citizen’s power in determining the plan and /or program.

The idea of citizen participation is a little like eating spinach: no one is against it in principle because it is good for you. Participation of the governed in their government is, in theory, the cornerstone of democracy a revered idea that is vigorously applauded by virtually everyone. The applause is reduced to polite handclaps, however, when this principle is advocated by the have not’s define participation as redistribution of power.

There has been much recent documentation of why the have-nots have become so offended and embittered by their powerlessness to deal with the profound inequalities and injustices pervading that daily lives. But there has been a very little analysis of the content of the current controversial slogan: “citizen participation “ or “maximum feasible participation.” In short: what is citizen participation and what is its relationship to the social imperatives of our time?

Our answer to the critical what question is simply that citizen participation is a categorical term for citizen power. It is the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future. It is the strategy by which the have-nots join in determining how information is shared, goals and policies are set, tax resources are allocated, programs are operated, and benefit like contracts and patronage are parceled out. In short, it is the means by which they can induce significant social reform which enables them to share in the benefit of the affluent society.

### **References**

- (1) Dany Kolma Ayida: Resident Director of NDI; Democratic Republic of Congo. He gave his lecture in a public presentation on 27<sup>th</sup>. April, 2006, in a conference called ‘National Endowment for Democracy’. His lecture was on “Building Democracy on the Ruins of Post colonial Dictatorship”.