

**National Policy Forum 2001**

**Report of the  
TASK FORCE ON URBAN GOVERNANCE, 2001**

**CPD  
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# **Report of the Task Force on Urban Governance, 2001**

## **1.0 Introduction**

By the year 2035, more than half the population of Bangladesh will live in urban areas. These urban centers will engage as hubs of economic, social, political, commercial and cultural activity and will be focal points of healthcare, education, finance and governance. The urban sector, therefore, needs to be shaped as economically vibrant, self-reliant, livable, peaceful and environment friendly areas. Such a process will need to focus on good urban governance, through effective participation, transparency, accountability and representativeness. The present Task Force on urban governance aims to provide guidelines for facing the challenge of planned urbanization in Bangladesh and seeks to identify the processes of meeting such challenges.

### **Specific Objectives of the Task Force**

1. To identify the major problems or challenges of urbanization in Bangladesh and to prepare a set of recommendations for establishing an open, accountable, transparent, efficient and corruption free system of urban governance; and
2. To suggest ways and means of achieving the goals and objectives. (i.e., the process of implementing the recommendations).

## **2.0 The Urban Sector**

23.39 percent of the population of Bangladesh today (2001) live in more than 500 urban areas. In absolute term, this amounts to about 28.8 million people. More than half of the urban population (52 percent) live in four metropolitan areas (Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi), about one third in the municipal towns numbering nearly 250 and the rest, about 15 percent, live in the small non-municipal urban centres.

Urbanization in Bangladesh has contributed to the development of the world's 22nd largest mega city, Dhaka, home to about 10 million people in 2001. By the year 2015, Dhaka is expected to rank as the 5<sup>th</sup> largest city with about 19 million people.

### **2.1 Importance of the Urban Sector**

It seems that the importance of the traditional rural sector in the national economy declined, whilst that of the urban sector has increased. Despite the fact that agriculture is still the largest single contributor to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country, its significance in the economy has declined over the years. Due to the relatively higher growth of other non-agricultural activities, Bangladesh has substantially reduced its dependency on agriculture. The share of agriculture has come down from 60.10 percent in 1972-73 to only 19.32 percent in 1999-2000 (BBS, 2000). However, in terms of providing employment, the sector is still very large. The urban sector led by non-agricultural activities (manufacturing, trade, services, etc.) contributes a relatively larger

share of GDP, compared to its rural counterpart. Its contribution to GDP has increased from a low of 25 percent in 1972-73 to over 42.3 percent in 1998-99.

That urbanization process contributes positively to the national economy is a well-established fact. On average it also contributes significantly to enhancing individual household' income. Average household income in the urban areas was found to be nearly double that of the rural areas in 1999 (on an average Tk. 6256 in the urban areas and Tk.3855 in the rural areas). It is, however, also true that while the average income in the urban areas is higher than rural income, inequality is also higher in the urban areas. Over the years such inequality has accentuated itself in the urban areas compared to the rural areas. In May 1999, the Gini Coefficient of income distribution was found to be 0.42 in the urban areas as compared to 0.36 in the rural areas (Ahmed, 2000). In contrast, in 1983-84, the coefficients were 0.37 for the urban and 0.35 for the rural. On a regional basis, it is apparent that regions (former districts) with higher levels of urbanization (or with the presence of a major metropolitan centre) enjoy higher average household incomes. Dhaka, the most urbanized region, had the highest average household income (TK. 7592/ month) followed by Chittagong (TK. 6460) in 1999, when the Bangladesh average was TK. 4813 (Ahmed, 2000). Lower average incomes were generally found in the less urbanized regions (Faridpur, Jamalpur, Patuakhali or Bogra).

This evidence on the macro-economic trends has been highlighted however only to emphasize that urbanization can play a positive role in economic growth, it may also play a negative role by increasing inequality. Urbanization also contributes to positive socio-cultural changes and modernization. Such changes may take place (perhaps with increasing social inequality), improved access to health, education, skill acquisition and information.

As the twenty first century is deemed to be a period of globalization, associated with the move towards free market economy, its impact is also evident in the case of urban Bangladesh (as well as rural Bangladesh). Metropolitan areas in Bangladesh serve as peripheries of metropolitan centres or global cities of the developed world. The products of industries that are set up in our cities are exported to the developed world. This may serve to enhance employment opportunities and eventually national income. However, negative social consequences such as growing inequality crime etc.) in our urban society may provide the downside of urbanization (Islam, N. 2001). "Urbanization in Bangladesh and Future Strategy," in N. Islam (ed.). *Urbanization, Urban Planning and Development and Urban Governance*, Dhaka: Centre for Urban Studies (CUS), pp. 164-172. Due to globalization the fast growing urban centres are growing more rapidly.

The rapid growth of population and consequent landlessness along with other factors of population displacement in the rural areas lead to rural unemployment, which generates a growing number of potential migrants. This seems to be an inevitable process where the urban sector absorbs the surplus rural populace. In fact, urban population growth in Bangladesh, particularly in Dhaka is predominantly due too migration of people from the rural areas.

## 2.2 Forces behind the Emergence of Major Urban Problems

The inter-regional and the inter spatio-sectoral (i.e., rural-urban) disparities in income have taken place due to both economic forces as well as biases in public sector investment policies and practices. In the absence of a viable spatial (or physical planning) policy in Bangladesh, most of the major investments were biased in favour of the Capital City, the two port cities and a few other cities of administrative or industrial importance. The overwhelming preference for infrastructure development was for Dhaka, followed by Chittagong. The results of such a bias are evident today. Dhaka has become a disproportionately large primate city in the country.

The reality of Dhaka's historical primacy (as the largest city and the most centrally located one), has now turned it into a huge agglomeration of a mega city. Almost anybody and everybody in Bangladesh has made Dhaka their ultimate or pen-ultimate destination. It has experienced one of the fastest growths for any large city in the world and still continues to grow at over 5% annually and accounts for as much as one third of the nation's urban population. In terms of accumulated wealth and economic and social investments, Dhaka's primacy is probably much more skewed.

Urban population growth in Bangladesh, particularly the growth in Dhaka, is predominantly due to migration of people from the rural areas. Most of the migrants are poor and hence the urban areas remain numerically dominated by the poor. The migrants have originated largely from the economically depressed areas of the country.

The rapid growth of urban areas, specially of large cities and metropolitan areas, more particularly of Dhaka, is associated with the inability of the city authorities and concerned public sector agencies to effectively manage the affairs of the cities has contributed to the emergence of new problems whilst accentuating many old problems. The role of the private and NGO sector has also not been very helpful in creating a more viable urban community. The ordinary citizens, many of whom are new comers in urban society, have also not been prepared, or even made fully aware of what is involved in building a livable urban environment.

The 'so-called' emerging civil society, remains unorganized, rather fragmented, even divided and has failed to serve as a significant agent of change for building a better urban society. The professional bodies - academic and research organizations, who may be grouped under the common label of the civil society, were also not very active as things were moving from bad to worse. Today, these elements in civil society in the face of a rapidly degenerating urban environment have become a little more active. In addition, the forces of globalization, internal political instability, social conflicts and ideological tensions have also played their role in influencing the urban environment.

## 3.0 The Challenges

Urbanization in Bangladesh poses two different kinds of challenges. The first needs to address the imbalanced structure of urbanization in the country; the second challenge needs to solve the problems of individual urban areas.

### **3.1 Imbalance in Urbanization**

The level of urbanization in Bangladesh is still low, only 23 percent, but the total urban population is very large, nearly 29 million in 2001. This is in fact, one of the largest urban populations in the world. The growth of the urban population in the country has been very rapid during the last three decades (nearly 7 percent annually) and still continues to maintain a high growth rate through a diminishing trend. During 1981-91, compared with the previous decade, the growth of the urban population decelerated to 5.4 percent observed. During 1991-2001, urban population growth has further declined (to 3.5 percent), but still remains much higher than the national growth of population, of 1.48 percent, in 2001 which has also declined compared to the previous decade.

In 1971, the total urban population in the country was 5 million, which by 2001 has increased to 29 million. The average rate of growth over the 30 years was about 6 percent. This indicates that the urban population in the country has doubled every 12 years. The fastest growth was registered during the period of 1971-81.

### **3.2 Intra Urban Problems**

Innumerable problems afflict the individual urban areas. These problems are not just concentrated in the large urban areas; but are also very much visible in small urban centres. However, the dimension of the problems may vary between large and a small urban areas. These major problems include:

1. Deteriorating law and order situation, which is manifest in the escalation in violence, crime and the sense of insecurity among the urban population.
2. Inadequacy of urban utility services (such as supply of water, sanitation and sewerage, electricity, gas, fuel, telephone, solid waste management, etc.)
3. Insufficient transport facilities and weak management of traffic. This situation leads to traffic congestion in most of the cities and towns, particularly in Dhaka City.
4. Inadequate and insufficient education, health and recreation services.
5. Housing problems are particularly serious for those in the lower income strata. The problem manifests itself in the proliferation of slums and squatter settlements especially in large cities such as Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi.
6. The weak economic base of most of the towns and cities. Moreover, due to the bias in public policies, poverty and inequality are common problems in most of our towns and cities.
7. Deteriorating environmental condition in cities and towns, air pollution, water pollution and even sound pollution in the cities and towns are emerging as major concerns. Particularly in Dhaka city, environmental problems have reached serious proportions. Moreover, illegal occupation of open spaces, parks, gardens, lakes, rivers and other water bodies and the irrational cutting of hills and trees has further degraded the urban environment.
8. Various social problems, especially child abuse and oppression of women.

## 9. Problems of the preservation of our socio-cultural heritage.

At the root of all these problems remain one or more mega problems. The absence of urban planning as well as the weak implementation of plans, if any, remains a major problem which aggravates the above crises. Secondly, weak urban governance is another root cause behind such problems. It must be noted here that lack of accountability, transparency and efficiency on the part of those responsible for governance, and the lack of awareness and the absence of organized movements among the common people has further accentuated these problems.

### **4.0 Task Force Recommendations**

The Task Force recommendations on the problems of urbanization may be divided into three different categories. The first set of recommendations are related to trends in urbanization and balanced urban systems in the country. The second set of recommendations suggest how to develop small, medium and large cities, including Dhaka city, through systematic urban planning. And the third set is related to urban governance.

#### **4.1 Urbanization and building a Balanced Urban System**

The distribution of the urban population in the country is highly uneven. A large proportion of the urban population is concentrated in Dhaka, Chittagong and Khulna. This trend needs to be reversed. A balanced disposal of the urban population may be achieved through effective decentralization of administrative, economic (particularly industrial) and social investments to the Divisional and District towns or secondary cities and also to small *Upazila* level centres. The process may be further devolved to lower levels. At the same time, investments within central or fringe locations of larger metropolitan areas should be effectively discouraged. In this regard the functional aspects of our towns and cities should be more seriously reviewed.

To this end all out effort should be invested in keeping the city size modest. For the ones, which have already crossed a sustainable limit, such as Dhaka City, the idea of deconcentration should be imaginatively pursued. Deconcentration in the growth of Dhaka and Chittagong is necessary due to the fact that the authorities in these cities have amply demonstrated their inability to manage such large cities. Since Dhaka's population has already grown to an unmanageable size, immediate efforts should be made to ease the pressure by building a number of well connected new satellite towns and industrial suburbs around the existing metropolis. Another major challenge is to integrate the rural areas with smaller town and the smaller towns with big cities. This can be realized largely by improving physical transportation and communication linkages. People living in the rural areas should also be provide with an urban level of basic social and economic services. The physical growth of villages should also be properly guided so that the faster growing villages can gradually be transformed into smaller townships or may be integrated with nearby towns. The development of 'Compact Townships' or rural towns falls within the above planning concept.

Urbanization should be recognized as an inevitable process, consistent with a worldwide pattern. Urbanization should also be recognized as a challenge, not as a problem. Particularly the government policy makers should accordingly view urbanization as an important component of the development process.

To recognize the importance of urbanization and to promote a desired process and pattern of urbanization in the country, a *National Urbanization Policy* should be prepared as soon as possible. Side by side, a Commission on Urbanization may be set up. This Commission will monitor all developments in the urban sector, prepare policies, plan development of manpower for this sector and examine the possibility of appropriate financing for this sector.

At the national level, the urban sector is administered by two different ministries, the Ministry of Housing and Public Works and the Ministry of Local Government Rural Development and Cooperatives. None of these Ministries have total control over urban affairs within their domain. indeed, none of the Ministries incorporate the name "Urban' or "Urban Development'. Ideally, there should be a separate Ministry with the responsibility of both administration and development of the total urban sector. Urban Development Directorate needs to be fully strengthened to serve its legitimate and required role. Housing and Building Research Institute (HBRI), National Institute for Local Government (NILG), Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) may belong to the new Ministry. It is to be noted here that in the Constitution of Bangladesh where Local Government has been mentioned (Clause 59) should be changed to Local Municipal Government.

#### **4.2 Promoting Planned Growth of Urban Areas**

One of the major challenges in the urban sector is the promotion of planned growth of individual towns and cities, big and small. It is necessary to evolve an institutional arrangement to undertake planning exercises in each city. The physical development of each individual city and town should be planned to embody efficiency, productivity, beauty and environmental sustainability. Efficiency is related to functional aspects of towns and cities to be achieved through physical planning and providing basic urban services with emphasis on equity. Productivity is related to economy of the urban areas whereas beauty is related to the aesthetic aspects of the city. Environmental sustainability is of paramount importance, which can be achieved through realistic planning and governance.

The above-mentioned components of urban planning can be achieved by deploying a planning team in each big and medium sized town. However, creating such opportunity for each city would be time consuming but the process should be started without delay. (One example of having such planning team is the one working in the Dhaka City Corporation).

It is necessary to undertake planning activity for each city and responsibility of such planning should be entrusted with local municipality. If the local municipality is not strong enough to undertake such responsibility, national government through its Urban

Development Directorate or through non-governmental consultants may perform such responsibility.

There should be a broad-based 'Planning Act' for the country, which can be followed as a planning guide by the municipalities and city corporations. All urban planning activities and their implementation should be brought under this Act.

In Bangladesh, people are more or less familiar with 'Master Plan'. Very recently, however, the concept of Structure Plan and Strategy Plan has been introduced. The departure from earlier Master Planning is that such Structure Plans and Strategy Plans are undertaken through the participation of stakeholders. Particularly the people of various strata should be enabled to take part in these planning with such participatory urban planning importance must be attached to the local or neighborhood plan.

Whatever may be the process of planning, the point is that the plan should be strictly adhered to by all concerned. The plan prepared by a participatory process and adopted by the authority (with agreement of all major stakeholders), should be honored. Any violation of plan should be a punishable act. Planning personnel strength should be increased and adequate number of planners need to be produced. To this end, necessary infrastructure at university and college levels should be created to effectively teach and train students on Urban and Regional Planning, Physical Planning and Rural Planning in their area of responsibilities. The importance of a research institutes on the planning aspects of urbanization demands urgent attention.

### **4.3 Urban Governance**

Urban governance may be defined as the well thought out and well-coordinated management of urban issues and problems for promoting the overall development of the urban areas. It implies that there should be adequate commitment, transparency, accountability, coordination, efficiency, participation and control in the direction of urban affairs.

The ultimate responsibility for urban governance rests with the urban local governments i.e. the *Pourashavas* and City corporations. However, in the context of the disposal of administrative and political power in Bangladesh, the role of the central government in urban governance is even more important. At the same time, the responsibility of other stakeholders cannot be underestimated. Such stakeholders include the private formal sector, the informal private sector, NGOs and civil society. Civil society includes various professionals, intellectuals, the representatives of labor organizations, women organizations and many other organized or unorganized people including large conglomerations of *bustee* dwellers.

Although the municipal authority and the central government exercise most of the responsibilities relating to the urban areas, other stakeholders also play an important role in urban development.

### **Criteria for Measuring Good Urban Governance**

In the context of Bangladesh good urban governance may be measured in terms of:

- Decentralization
- Democratic Participation
- Transparency and Accountability
- Control and Leadership
- Rule of Law
- Equity (economic, Gender, etc)
- Efficiency and Power
- Networking
- Coordination

The following measures are suggested for reaching good urban governance:

### **Decentralization**

Local urban governments in Bangladesh (or any other local governments) do not enjoy real autonomy to solve local problems. For financing development activities and resource mobilization the local governments remains dependent on the central government. Similarly, for employing manpower or transfer of their employees serving the local administration, they are dependant on the central government. All the key personnel associated with development work in the Municipal areas tend to be employees of the central government. However, for an effective urban governance, decision making opportunities have to be devolved to the *pourashava* level and also to the ward level; and if necessary, at the neighborhood level too. At the same time, central government employees assigned to the local bodies have to be placed under the administrative discipline of the bodies.

### **Democratic Participation**

Democratic participation of the stakeholders in decision-making and urban development activities is one of the crucial components of good urban governance. In more concrete terms, each city or *pourashava* should be governed through the active participation of the elected representatives. The elected members of the City corporations and *pourashavas* should sit more frequently and their participation needs to be made more effective. The elected body, apart from their Council meetings, should take part in the various subject committees. The subject committees need to be made more effective and their activities need to be rescued from the sharing of patronage dispersed on a partisan basis.

The quality of urban governance can be improved with the involvement of a strong and active civil society. Civil society may help to mobilize public opinion make to more clearly articulates an effective demand on public agencies to formulate urban development plans with public participation, and implement such plans with earnestness and adequate transparency. All such development process is participatory and partnership based. The civil society can also prevail on the corporate private sector to refrain from undertaking anti-people projects or in feloniously encircling public property spruces.

## **Transparency and Accountability**

Transparency and accountability are almost synonymous. Transparency assumes that the government's decisions, whether routine or policy, and activities affecting citizens must be transparent to them. There is effectively no devolution of decision making to the people. Accountability, on the other hand, means that public officials, elected or appointed, are held accountable to the citizens. In Bangladesh today, there is, effectively, no devolution of decision-making throughout the urban local government system, and therefore, hardly any accountability to those nominally being served among the general public. The public at large, generally, appears inhibited in demanding accountability in urban governance even though malgovernance seriously erodes the quality of urban life. The main channel for pointing out inefficiency, mismanagement and the like remains the local newspaper and occasionally the private electronic media.

At present there is hardly any transparency and accountability in the system of urban local governance. The local governments in fact, follow a beauracatic system of decision-making. The local bodies should more actively seek to involve people in the decision-making process, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of their programme. Similarly, the local governments should be transparent to the people in all their development activities, finances, income and expenditure. Other bodies within the municipal area should also demonstrate such transparency and accountability.

## **Control and Leadership**

The municipal governments, particularly the smaller ones, do not have sufficient control and leaderships over municipal affairs. The challenge here is to create appropriate conditions for the municipal authorities to function effectively. At the same time, a vision for the development of a modern, dynamic and sustainable city needs to be inculcated into the perception of the elected persons and officials entrusted with the direction and management of the institutions of local government. Excessive politicization is becoming counterproductive to the process of local government and should be discouraged.

The municipal authorities should enjoy sufficient autonomy to rest them with the power to exercise freedom of choice with regard to prioritizing the municipal development programmes. Without such freedom and autonomy the local authorities may not be able to either take timely decision or build support behind their decisions. The municipal authorities should also have the freedom to select their own employees, undertake and implement plan, finance and mobilize resource and in providing services and necessary security for its citizens.

## **Rule of Law**

Rule of law means the rational implementation of municipal rules and regulations, planning rules and regulations and establishing the rule of law for all its citizens on an equal basis. It is important that the municipal authorities abide by the rule of law and observes its own regulations before it enforces the rule of law on others. On the other hand, pressure from the affluent sections of the people to evade or even violate the law

should be resisted by the municipal authorities. Nor should the local authorities take unilateral action to evict the poor from their basic households since shelter for the poor is their basic human right. The municipal authorities have to ensure that none from the city can be evicted by declaring them unlawful, without providing them with an alternative site for their shelter.

### **Equity (Economic and Gender)**

The municipal authorities should maintain economic social, cultural, religious and gender equity among its entire people by ensuring that economic opportunities such as employment, investment and credit, are enhanced particularly for the less privileged within the municipal area. Occupational rights to pursue gainful informal activities should be recognized. Access to basic minimum services such as water, electricity, gas, etc. for the poor who lives in slums and squatter settlements should be ensured.

Gender inequalities and inequities in cities and towns arising out of the development process remain a matter of much concern. The urban utilities and services are not to serve the poor or made accessible to all urban inhabitants. In the process of development, spaces in the cities and town in Bangladesh set aside for women particularly the poor, remain extremely limited compared with those on offer to their male counterparts. Public spaces such as open fields, public roads, utilities and markets, etc. are usually considered as male spaces. Gender inequity pervades the decision-making process. Urban development and planning, needs to address these various inequities and to take corrective action to economic opportunities for women.

Since, the women are invisible participants in most- urban development activities, it is imperative that women's energies are more fully harnessed as agents of change through providing them active and increasing participation in the local economy and greater access to various urban facilities. A balanced and healthy society will not emerge unless gender inequities are not removed.

### **Efficiency and Manpower**

Efficient urban governance by the municipal authorities is not possible without much more efficient and better trained manpower. The municipalities in Bangladesh lack organizational capabilities to undertake and successfully complete the massive task of urban development. One of the reasons for such a deficiency is the lack of trained manpower resources available to the local authorities. Many of the municipalities remain under-staffed. In practice, urban development should be technically sound more balanced to respond to the demands and requirements of all citizens. Much greater investment should be made for building a cadre of trained professionals within the system of urban governance and management who are specially equipped to manage these local entities and respond to its development challenges.

### **Networking**

A network of all city corporations and municipalities need to be developed within the country. This network can be utilized for exchange of information and experiences

among the municipalities and city corporations, which may help their development activities. Such a network can also be established with some municipalities' outside the country as part of a twinning programme. The main objective of such a network would be gathering experiences of other municipalities abroad. Networks of the mayors/pourashava chairmen, their *parishads* and officials also need to be established.

### **Coordination**

The most critical problem in urban governance is the weak or even non-existent coordination among the development partners. In big cities, in particular a plethora of partner institutions interact in the development process and so coordination remain extremely important. In Dhaka city, for instance, there are more than 16 government/autonomous organizations directly involved, and nearly 30 other organizations indirectly involved in urban development activities. Despite having an institutional arrangement for coordination among the first 16 bodies, real coordination has not yet been possible.

The ultimate responsibility for urban governance rest with the *pourashavas* and the City Corporations. There exists Two major problems that constrain coordination between the city corporations or *pourashavas* and the other organizations in their area. (i) Pourashavas and city corporations are local government bodies directly elected by the people and they officially enjoy an autonomous status. The other stakeholders, on the other hand, are part of the Central government. The local and central organizations do not have similar lines of accountability. The City corporations and pourashavas are accountable directly to the people, while the government organizations are accountable to their own line ministries. As a result, coordination among these entities does not occur naturally. (ii) In a typical bureaucratic system of administration, the government officials are not yet used to the idea of being accountable to the elected peoples representative. Thus, coordination among these entities remains uneasy.

For inter agency coordination within Dhaka City, a high level Coordination Committee was formed in late 1996 at the behest of the Prime Minister, with the Minister for Local Government as the Convenor and the Dhaka City Mayor as the Coordinator. The Committee worked for some time but achieved a limited result and gradually became dysfunctional due to a leadership crisis as well as lack of interest from the government officials. Such barriers to coordination can only be removed by creating a more service oriented government organization. The government officials should be reeducated to serve the people. However, the prime role in such coordination should be played by the municipal authorities. In case of Dhaka City, the problems of coordination can be eased to some extent by giving the responsibility of coordination to the Mayor, who has been elected to serve the people of the city.

The other development has been the formation of a high level Committee for *Integrated Environmental Improvement Guidelines Formulation* headed by the State-Minister for Environment and Forest. This committee has completed its task of formulating some guidelines, but these still need to be implemented. Some obvious difference prevail between these two Committees. The former Committee consists of members representing the Dhaka City Corporation parastatal government organizations. The latter Committee

includes most of these organizations as well as representatives from civil society as well as environmental and urban planning professionals, a laudable innovation.

In addition to City Corporations, a number of development authorities have been established by the Central government to promote physical planning and development for the four largest cities of Bangladesh. There remains a dilemma between these two sets of organization as to who coordinates with whom. In terms of power and importance the chiefs of the City Corporations are the most important persons in their respective cities. On the other hand, the development authorities, as they administer a bigger area than the city corporations, claim superiority over the corporations. As a result, coordination between these two important organization remains as illusive as ever. We feel that the City Corporations should take the lead in coordination as they have accountability and transparency to the people.

In the governance and development process in Bangladesh, the role of donor agencies can hardly be under emphasized at least for some more years, till the country becomes reasonably self reliant. Donors have strong say in many urban development activities, including water, roads, infrastructure and even in urban plan making. Apart from donor agencies, there are NGOs who also play important role in urban areas. At municipal level, city corporations or municipal authorities, NGOs, donors, autonomous bodies, central bodies of the private sector and representatives of civil societies should also be included in the process of development coordination.

#### **4.4 Specific Issues**

In the light of the discussions on principles of urban governance attention should be given on a number of specific issues concerning urban areas. These issues are as follows:

- ***Employment and Poverty Reduction***

Both macro-economic policies and targeted programmes are necessary to improve employment opportunities in urban areas and to alleviate poverty in such places. More emphasis should be given on creation of employment in secondary cities, small and rural towns.

- ***Access to Land and Shelter:***

Efforts should be taken to increase supply of serviced land for various income groups and increase access to serviced land with secure land tenure for the poor and the disadvantaged, particularly women headed households. As suggested in the National Housing Policy, the government should primarily play a facilitator's role in the provision of housing and leave the production part as much as possible to the private sector (both corporate and household).

- ***Improvement of Urban Infrastructure***

Higher investments in improving and extending water and sanitation services are suggested for all urban areas. The need for investment in solid waste management is also emphasized. In these areas the local urban authorities should involve the

participation of NGOs and local communities, while technical support may come from central government agencies. Similar process should be adopted for maintaining and improving the quality of environment. The models now seen in certain wards of Dhaka, Chittagong and Tangail in participatory environmental management, may be reviewed.

- ***Improvement of Urban Social Services***

There is an overriding need to bring about an improvement in the overall urban social services, such as health, education and recreation. In improving the urban social services emphasis must to be given on the role of the private sector, as well as on better-cost recovery. The role of the public sector is particularly felt in guiding the location of social service institutions (like hospitals, clinics and should) within the urban place.

- ***Strengthening Urban Local Authorities:***

Urban Local authorities should be made financially stronger, administratively more efficient and politically more representative and democratic, with scope for greater participation of the people.

- ***Planning Functions for City Authorities:***

All city authorities should have their city planning departments and proper planning functions. Such functions may also include economic and social development as well as physical development programmes Metropolitan cities with corporation status already have their planning and development authorities.

- ***Planned Physical Expansion of Cities:***

Physical expansion of cities should be according to plans or at least guidelines. The need for planning ahead of actual development should be properly appreciated and seriously implemented. However, such a priori plans would be only “Structure Plan” type prepared by professionals with full participation of the local urban authority and the Community. The Structure Plan, would then be followed up by Local Area Detail Plans, also prepared in a participatory process.

- ***Urban Transport:***

Urban plans should provide scope for co-existence of both motorized mass transport and manual or pedal powered transport. Major roads in metropolitan cities should have separate lanes for bicycles, cycle-rickshaws and cycle vans in arterial or primary roads. Alternatively rickshaws should be restricted to local areas and in secondary and tertiary roads and lanes. Pedestrians should be given high priority and road systems planned that way, with sidewalks etc. Rural towns and small towns (Upazila headquarters) should be designed and developed in such a way that motor vehicles are almost totally banned to ply within town limits. In large cities, particular emphasis should be given on the increased role of mass motor transport like buses, mini-buses and metered taxis. Commuter trains should also be introduced. In the long run other advanced mass transit systems like, light trains, underground railway etc. will have to be thought of.

- ***Land Use Control Legislation:***

It will also be necessary to make appropriate legislation for land use control. Such legislation should consider the objective conditions and the reality that majority of the urban and rural population are poor and have low affordability.

- ***Open Space, Greeneries and Water bodies in Urban Areas:***

Urban Plans should provide for adequate open space, greenery and water bodies (rivers, canals, lakes, ponds and tanks). Need for neighborhood parks and playgrounds should be emphasized. There can be clusters of varieties of trees in traffic islands. Legislation have been passed to conserve water bodies, but these legislations require enforcement.

- ***Environmental Pollution Control:***

Strong measures should be taken to implement Environment and Pollution Control Laws. These laws should cover pollution of land, water and air in the urban centre. Noise and aesthetic pollution control in our cities should also be seriously considered. Pollution caused by industrial waste, domestic waste and transport emissions, should be severely dealt with. Planning and services in the areas of sewerage, sanitation, water supply, and garbage disposal need to be greatly improved. Adequate policy and implementation methods may be devised to enhance the coverage and quality of these services.

- ***Urban Development Related Human Resource Development and Planning Education:***

In order to more effectively promote urban development it will be necessary to train an adequate number of urban development professionals (i.e. urban planners and other professionals and para professionals) and to support necessary research activities on various aspects of urbanization, including housing and infrastructural development. Urban Regional / Rural Planning should be introduced as a discipline in all universities and major colleges and should also be part of the high school curriculum. Urban and regional planning as a disciplines needs to be emphasized within the institutions of higher learning in Bangladesh.

- ***City Information Centre:***

All City Corporations, *pourashavas* and city development authorities should each have their aim information centre to educate and respond to the conception of the citizens. The value of such centres is immense. A small beginning has already been made in Tangail with advisory support from the Institute of Housing Studies, Rotterdam. Excellent models of such information centre are at hand in Singapore and Rotterdam.

#### 4.5 **Municipal Finance and Resource Mobilization**

Most of the municipal authorities in Bangladesh are not economically self-reliant. These municipalities are basically dependent on the central government's financial grants. Due to resource constraints as well as lack of transparency and accountability to the taxpayers the process of resource mobilization remains very weak. Inadequately trained manpower, administrative weakness, weak monitoring of the central government, makes the situation worse. To gain popularity, even by breaking the law, officials remain reluctant to raise taxes; as a result, municipal governments suffer from stagnation on their tax base so that their revenue needs fail to keep pace with the needs of an increasing urban population. Monopoly of revenue sources by the Central government severely constricts the revenue base of the municipal government to grow cannot even revise rates of any tax or fees or even service charges with clearance from the relevant Ministry.

It has been observed that the number of small municipalities have mushroomed over the years without any serious evaluation of their economic viability. As a result a number of these municipalities have been exposed to financial crises. In order to enhance the financial capacity of the municipalities, the following policy reforms are indicated:

1. New municipal taxes should be introduced after a careful tax assessments.
2. A professionally competent team should be entrusted with the task of revenue the tax assessments of the municipalities.
3. An independent Appeal Board may be created to hear, appeals against the newly assessed taxes. Effective arrangement should be put in place so that prevailed elites cannot use political leverages to reduce tax assessments.
4. Central Governments grants to the municipalities should be based on certain principles, such as efficiency, own resource mobilization, population, area, needs, etc. The grants should be free from any political influence.
5. Tax assessment and collection procedures should be made easy and flexible.
6. The procedure for revising tax assessments after every five years should be abandoned. Tax assessments should be based on a continuous process of evaluation.
7. Modernize Accounting systems should be modernized and the entire financial management and auditing system computerised.
8. Collection of taxes should be made a serious business which keeps pace with the enhancement of the tax base, collection of arrears, identification of all missing property from tax assessment and moves to punish tax delinquency.
9. Clear guidelines should be framed determining the relationships between the central government and municipal government. The Central government may return a certain amount of the tax money collected from the municipal area, to the municipality so that the municipality gradually become more self sufficient.
10. Serious consideration should be give to the establishment of a centralized/regional property tax assessment body drawn from people from government, municipal government, experts and representatives from civil society.

#### 4.6 Institutional Reform

The major problems in the urban sector, were identified above, and some possible solutions were briefly discussed. A set of recommendations for municipal planning and governance were also presented. However, to implement these recommendations, institutional and structural reforms are necessary. The municipal governments throughout the country are the main agents of urban governance and it is a challenge for them to build an efficient, transparent, accountable and people-oriented development institution. How these objectives can be achieved were discussed throughout this report. However, it remains necessary to strengthen the capacity of municipal governments. To this end, an efficient and trained work force at the municipal level is to be created. Preference should be given to quality rather than the quantity. Frequent elections may help to develop a democratic process at the local level (the Task Force suggests that elections may be held after every four years instead of the present practice of five years) which may make the elected representatives more people-oriented.

In all City Corporations, including Dhaka, such reforms and restructuring would be necessary. To initiate such reforms, the legal framework and ordinances may need to be changed. Similarly, other autonomous bodies such as Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkhya (RAJUK), DESA, WASA, should also undertake reform measures to bring about qualitative change in their operations. Recently, Dhaka WASA has reformed its structure of governance, but this is still not sufficient. The proposed Commission on Urbanization may identify an agenda for reforms on governance of the urban sector. Careful attention needs to be given to ensure representation for the common people in each of the local government authorities, while reform activities are undertaken.

Strong private sector involvement is needed to promote urban development. The private sector is therefore to be given preference, wherever appropriate. Development partnerships between the public and private sector may help to promote rapid development of the urban sector. Adequate institutional arrangement and reform may be necessary to facilitate such a partnership.

#### 5.0 Conclusion: Modality of Achieving Goals

One of the objectives of the present report was to suggest ways and means to implement the recommendations of the Task Force. It has been observed that task forces were set up in the past but their recommendations were hardly implemented by the concerned agencies. Reference may be made to the recommendations of the Task Force on 'Social Implications of Urbanization', included in the report of the *Task Forces on Bangladesh Development Strategies for the 1990s*. Despite the fact that the report included some excellent recommendations, none of these recommendations was implemented by the concerned authorities. The present Task Force, thus, stresses on the following processes of implementation of the Task Force recommendations:

- Civil society must mobilize public opinion to make effective demands on public agencies to perform these duties and responsibilities.
- Effective demands may be made on the public authorities to formulate urban development plans with public participation implement;

- Such plans should be implemented with sincerity between state and civil society and adequate transparency. This may be more possible through effective participation and partnership. Such initiatives by civil society are already we evidence started.

More than one civil society network may be established in order to exchange opinion and information. Such networks may be city specific or extend across many towns and cities. In some cases networks may be international or regional.

The civil society should observe whether the authorities are meeting out the conditions (or indicators) of good urban governance. Civil society may place continuous pressure on the authorities by legal and other means.

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