

## An Expert Round Table Brief

### Innovation in Urban Water Services in Indian Cities

Identifying Strategic Public and Private Sector Opportunities

An IFHP/ DA / CPR Partnership

**Venue:** Development Alternatives, New Delhi, India

Wednesday, October 15, 2014

This brief describes the second in a series of Expert Round Table Meetings initiated by the International Federation of Housing in Planning (based in Copenhagen, Denmark). This effort is part of a broader initiative aimed at engaging Indian cities in new and productive ways to improve its urban conditions.

The first Expert Round Table was held in Bangalore on February 17, 2014 with a focus on spurring innovation in urban mobility. This expert round table will follow a similar format in New Delhi with a focus on facilitating innovation in the provision of urban water.

### The Challenge of Urban India's Infrastructure

India is a vast country with complexities that do not lend themselves to easy fixes or simple adaptations of what might work elsewhere. Despite increasing world prominence and continued economic expansion, India's urban development issues seriously constrain it from realizing its full potential at national, regional and local levels.

To understand the full scale of this challenge, India's urban population is expected to increase from 377 million today to over 800 million by 2050<sup>1</sup>, or from 30% to 50% of its total population.<sup>1</sup> This means Indian cities of all sizes are likely to continue experiencing heavy pressure to accommodate growth and improved standards and quality of life.

The broad and ongoing critique of India's urban infrastructure tends to focus on problems of governance, regulation and finance. These problems are real and profound. With some exceptions, these urban infrastructure shortcomings are often addressed and compensated by an active and vibrant formal and informal sector that sees business opportunities in essential services. Unfortunately the cumulative outcomes of these efforts do not scale up consistently enough to provide the clear benefits that come from consistent and predictable service reliability.

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<sup>1</sup> Urban Evidence 2011 – "Urban Dynamics", IIHS

The most convincing positive changes are likely when regional and city scale improvements of public infrastructure can be realized and are visible. This cannot be accomplished without addressing India's prevailing governance and regulatory systems. Because positive change in both these domains is subject to a host of variables (that include deep cultural and political realities), this Expert Round Table will not directly address such reforms at the political level.

Instead, this meeting will focus on identifying strategic adjustments that will allow public and private sector innovations to offer more and better urban water related services.

### **Sustainable Urban Water Services**

Development in urban India is constrained by the poor cumulative quality of its urban infrastructure. In particular, water issues severely affect the environment, citizens and the economy as a whole. Rapidly urbanizing Indian cities are struggling to finance, maintain existing services and add new infrastructure. This is compounded by urbanization rates that are too fast for existing systems to keep up. These conditions compromise quality-of-life and add up to huge economic losses to citizens, their cities and their communities. Attempts to address these issues comprehensively and in an integrated manner are challenged by a range of structural impediments in governance, regulation, finance and management.

Per capita water consumption in Indian cities has accelerated as a consequence of improving living standards, increases in urban population, urban centric industry, surrounding agricultural demands, inefficiencies and the need to overcome the demand shifts occurring on account of climate change. These ongoing conditions mean that the demand for water in Indian cities will continue to outstrip demand into the foreseeable future.

This event is conceived as an Expert Round Table of largely Indian experts on urban water. Participants will represent national, regional (state) and local expertise largely identified by the two hosts Development Alternatives (DA) and The Centre for Policy Research (CPR) in consultation with Arun Jain (IFHP). To help keep the planned discussion applied and pragmatic, the organizers may allow limited attendance by select professional experts and consulting entities representing both the formal and informal sectors.

The lead individuals involved in hosting this event are:

Arun Jain (Instigator)	Board Member, IFHP, Copenhagen, Denmark Urban Designer & Urban Strategist, Portland, Oregon, USA
Ms. Zeenat Niazi & Dr. K.Vijaya Lakshmi	Development Alternatives, New Delhi, India
Dr. Partha Mukhopadhyay & Dr. Shubhagato Dasgupta	Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi, India

## Expert Round Table Discussion Focus

To collectively understand, identify and elaborate how creative and innovative urban water related services (public and private, formal and informal) can be expanded and leveraged through modest and strategic changes in governance, regulation, education, enforcement, finance or management.

Each participant will be invited as either an expert, innovator or decision maker. “Chatham House Rules” will apply, thereby ensuring no individual comment will be attributed. There will be no individual presentations in order to maximize discussion time on three focus questions:

1. **What small interventions will result in substantial improvements to system efficiency across varying water collection, purification and distribution mechanisms?** (i.e. local and regional collection, central and localized distribution, management systems, collection and recycling, equitable pricing, monitoring and management using public and private partner collaboration, etc.). This segment will also include considerations of minimizing leakage, reducing per capita consumption and more reliable delivery mechanisms.
2. **Are there specific targeted interventions that will improve the safety and quality of potable and drinking water?** (i.e. collection and processing, maintaining quality through delivery, pollution and contamination control, managing and recycling, shared civic responsibility, public and private monitoring, reporting and stakeholder involvement, etc.).
3. **How can we keep the cost of water accessible across all income brackets?** (i.e. pricing, need based delivery and costing, revenue generation, source and process management, last-mile delivery, integration of public and private sector capabilities, incentive based discount mechanisms, etc.).

## Involvement

The IFHP welcomes expressions of interest from institutions, corporate entities and individuals who would like to become involved in this IFHP India initiative and related efforts.

Although this expert round table is “by invitation only” there are a few opportunities to host or contribute to related aspects of the event. Since the IFHP is committed to advancing the urban development challenges in India, there will be several upcoming opportunities that directly build upon these expert round tables and their outcomes. This will allow those interested to benefit from and participate in them.

For example, it is the IFHP’s intention to leverage these discussions and other upcoming events on urban infrastructure in hyper-urbanizing conditions into an IFHP international congress in India being planned in the 2015-16 timeframe.

For further information (including a role in this event) please contact:

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## Tentative Program

09:00 – 09:30	Sign in
09:30 – 10:15	<p><b>Introduction</b> Brief on the Agenda of the Day, Ground Rules &amp; Expectations Welcome and Context by Partha Mukhopadhyay, CPR, Zeenat Niazi, DA, and Arun Jain, IFHP</p>
10:15 – 11:45	<p><b>Discussion Round 1:</b> What small interventions will result in substantial improvements to system efficiency across modes? Moderated deliberations</p>
11:45- 12:00	Tea/Coffee Break
12:00 – 13:30	<p><b>Discussion Round 2:</b> Are there specific targeted interventions that will improve the safety and quality of potable drinking water? Moderated deliberations</p>
13:30 – 14:15	Lunch
14:15 – 15:45	<p><b>Discussion Round 3:</b> How can we keep the cost of water accessible across all income brackets? Moderated deliberations</p>
15:45 – 16:15	Tea/Coffee Break
16:15 – 17:00	<p><b>Concluding Discussion</b> Summary and preliminary thoughts on suggested changes to governance, regulation, finance and management that will leverage innovation in the delivery of water in Indian cities.</p>
17:00 – 17:45	Next Steps
17:45 – 18:00	<p>Honors to the participants Vote of thanks Informal gathering/dinner</p>