Integrating Sustainability Options

Naihati Municipality – A Case Study

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1 Urban Sector Review

1.1 Basic General Data

Geography and Administration

Naihati Municipality is 150 year old Urban Local Body (ULB), established in 1869. It is located in the eastern bank of the river Hooghly, a distributary of the river Ganges in the state of West Bengal, India. It lies 40 km north of Kolkata and falls within the extended urban region of Kolkata Metropolitan Area (KMA). It was developed through setting up of five industries by the British, based on social, economic, geographical and cultural importance which over a period of time, turned into a municipality for governance ease.

Demography and Health

Naihati has a population of 215,432 as per Census 2001, the growth rate being 2.5% distributed among 34,928 households. The sex distribution is: Male – 113777 and Female – 101526. 12.13% are scheduled castes and 0.38% scheduled tribes. There are 28 wards and 113 slum areas having BPL (Below Poverty Line) population of 88,000 approximately. Naihati carries a tradition of cultured people

and enriched thinking. It was the birthplace of concepts like one act play. Drinking water is not safe and there is Iron contamination and other contaminants. Proper sanitation arrangements especially in the slums are unavailable. Sanitary facilities are inadequate in the common places like market, bus stands, schools and colleges. There are cattle sheds in and near the dwelling places which create a lot of health hazards. Referral and quality services for marginalized section of people are minimal

Economy

Naihati Municipality is cosmopolitan. People from different states migrated in search of livelihoods. The economy of this town depended on the mills and factories as Naihati was an integral part of the Barrackpore industrial belt, controlled by the British. For the Naihati Municipality there were two types of rate payers – one the settlement/settlers having holdings/commercial activities and the other were the factories & industries. There was a change in technology and the industries which could not meet the demands became sick and were closed down. The wage/salaried workforce became unemployed and started looking for other opportunities for their livelihood. Purchasing power of the people dropped. Markets started dwindling and the economic activities shrank. In addition, the pressure of migration and a large number of youth seeking work shattered the economy. Once a flourishing economic zone and receiving 80% of its revenues from the industries/factories, Naihati Municipality suffered a severe financial jolt.

1.2 Urban Facts and Figures related to one of the following

Integrated Urban Planning

Area: 11.55 km² and Population: 215,432 as per Census 2001.

- Topography is more or less flat with a gentle slope to the East away from the river Ganges. Naihati is located at 22.9° N, 88.42° E having an average elevation of 15 meters (49 feet). Annual average rainfall is 1,410 mm.
- Highest temp recorded is 43.9°C and the lowest minimum being 6.7°C.
- The town is prone to floods, some areas are prone to prolonged water-logging. Annual average rainfall is 1,410 mm (app.).

- There are many heritage buildings which were of cultural and religious importance. There is also a railway bridge over the River Ganges called the Jubilee Bridge, built during the 1885.
- There are 70 schools in Naihati and 3 colleges the ULB health establishment runs 7 sub centres

1.3 Policy

Observations on policy and conceptual possibilities have been outlined below:

- Sustainable **urban renewal** through replenishment of existing resources.
- **Policy Keystones** for urban renewal - Education and local economic development. Hence capacity building of relevant stakeholders in that direction is to be stressed in every aspect.
- **Policy methodology** - transparent governance, decentralised systems, pro-poor development processes, participatory planning and active citizens' participation, targeted growth.

1.4 Actors and their Roles

Structural systems need to be introduced for effective utilization of resources, implementation of projects, maintenance of the assets, managing local environment, managing basic services, initiating income generating activities and marketing. The current institutional apparatus consists of the following actors and functions. There is significant lack of planning, monitoring and quality review machinery. Broadly the current management structure can be divided into:

Formal: It consists of the Board of Councillors (BOC), Chairmen-in-Council (CIC), Departments, Ward Committees (WC).

Informal: Neighbourhood groups (NHG), Neighbourhood Community (NHC), Community Development Society (CDS), and Bustee Works Management Committee (BWMC).

2 Organisation

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Centre for Built Environment (CBE) is a non-profit society for sustainable development in architecture, human settlement and environment. CBE is voluntary professional organisation with members who are architects, city planners and environmental engineers. It is an umbrella organisation, with members from private, government, universities, institutes, NGOs etc. It is linked with other organisations in India and abroad. The Centre has a variety of programmes – Research studies, education and training, organising lecture series, academic help to students in universities and grassroots NGOs, professional consultancy work, organising seminars and workshops, presentation of papers at international conferences throughout the world, publication etc.

3 Urban Problem

The present situation of Naihati Municipality can be logically segregated into a series of interconnected bottlenecks as mentioned below. These gaps were created by market forces and policy implementation over a period of time as outlined in the Urban Sector Review. The outcome of poor management is inadequate services, under-investment in infrastructure, and lack of resources for maintenance. Rigid adherence to rule books, which discourages innovation and any attempt at responsiveness to consumer/ stakeholder demands. The growth of the ULB has not been matched by a growth of productive employment, because of lack of capital to invest in the required infrastructure and amenities.
There are options for sustainability and reform in the current context. They broadly cover 3 components:

1. Infrastructure, Land use and Environment Development
2. Social and Livelihood development
3. Municipal Institutional strengthening

The intent of this study is integrating and linking all such options in a manner to maximize development efficiency and all renewal processes.

4 Proposal for Change and Improvement

A managerial approach to urban poverty reduction recognises that urban problems are intimately connected to a systemic failure of management. ULB Governance provides a framework that allows civil society to operate and interact with political society; that human rights, including those of the most disadvantaged, are respected and promoted; that basic services are guaranteed, and that security and justice are provided and accessible. It also means that a drive for efficiency includes pro-poor political processes. These enable the poor to organise and to influence decision making, ensure the equitable, as well as efficient delivery and management of services, and guarantee the personal security of all citizens within households and communities alike. The ULB governance approach involves a mixture of formal and informal arrangements – both direct service provision as well as actions to empower people to participate in political processes. The process of ULB development means generation of employment and more remunerative economic livelihoods, through increased investment in businesses and economic infrastructure, which is relevant to business. It includes investments in social and environmental services, including infrastructure, which critically affects urban residents, quality of life. As far as poor people's livelihoods are concerned, ULB moves the focus from vocational training programmes for poor people, to appropriate skill upgradation to match market needs. It involves the development of a pro-poor regulatory environment, engagement with a wide range of players, businessmen, trade unions, trade associations, employers' federations, and the development of a better understanding of the informal sector and how to promote best practice whilst protecting the rights of male and female workers.

The Municipality grows because enterprises choose to concentrate in areas where production costs are lower, support services and markets are accessible, and a diverse and skilled labour force is available. People migrate to the Municipality to take advantage of these employment opportunities, and benefit from improved access to services, and new social and cultural opportunities. In turn, the Municipality supports agriculture. The Municipality provides markets, financial resources and employment opportunities for agricultural producers; a productive

rural hinterland provides the food, materials and labour that urban centres like Naihati Municipality require. To reduce poverty, it requires the development of multi-faceted, multi-layered policies, combining economic growth with pro-poor growth, and engagement in direct actions to meet the real needs of poor men, women and children.

It is clearly evident that there needs to be a **basic integrating factor** between all the tools, methodology and processes for sustainability for any urban local government scenario. An **environment-friendly** society is the best possible solution for sustainable growth since natural resources are a prerequisite for social and economic development. An environment – friendly society represents new ethical and societal values. Hence, **energy** is the core issue between all forms of demand and supply. Energy management forms the basis for infrastructure development, land and environment management, social and livelihood development and even municipal institutional strengthening.

The following are the practical steps for change in the context of urban local government, especially those similar in scale to Naihati Municipality:

1. Improving urban planning
2. Focus on a resource-saving system
3. Adoption of alternative economic growth pattern
4. Targeted policy-implementation

Improving urban planning: Special attention should be paid to strengthen each layer of urban planning. Research on the values of urban planning should be the core of the subject. It is necessary to explore the issues by taking into consideration the characteristics of modern socio-economic development and to re-clarify the real meaning of public interests for daily planning work. The new urban planning framework should reinvent its applicability along the following principles:

1. Sustainability
2. Integrated Planning
3. Integrated with Budgets
4. Planning with partners
5. Subsidiarity
6. Market responsiveness

7. Access to land
8. Appropriate tools
9. Pro-poor and inclusive
10. Cultural variation

Focus on a resource-saving system: A resource-saving system helps to foster a resource-efficient society. A governance system is also a form of expression of public practices. The resource-efficient social system can be broken up into a formal and informal system which broadly covers the following:

Table 1: Resource Systems

Sl	Formal system	Informal system
1	Resource property-right trading system	People's resource use-habits
2	Resource management system	Resource-efficiency consciousness
3	Resource efficient organisation	
4	Relevant policies and laws	

The setup of formal system needs external efforts, requiring legislative or enforcement authorities to impose practices by mandatory means. On the other hand, the formation of an informal system is based on evolving reliance on the internal consciousness of the subjects. Both changes are not the task of a single person, requiring extensive public practices and services. Finally, an in-depth resource saving education is the catalyst to construction a resource saving society.

Adoption of alternative economic growth pattern: The "high consumption per capita" pattern practiced by some developed countries cannot support the realistic situation of "low per capita resources". Therefore the following concepts may be enforced:

1. Innovative development concepts should be adopted t
2. The awareness of saving should be strengthened
3. The development strategy should be adjusted on a timely basis
4. Saving-specific energy consumption should be promoted.

Basing on the above concepts, efforts need to be made to promote a recycling economy and constantly maintain a shift towards it.

Table 2: Economic indicators

Sl.	Existing development economy indicators	Alternative recycling economy indicators
1	High consumption	Low consumption
2	High waste	Low waste
3	High pollution	Low pollution
4	Low efficiency	High efficiency

This is the only way to alleviate the contradiction between economic growth and the resource bottleneck, significant for harmonious sustainable development.

Targeted policy-implementation: The implementation of urban plans is actually a process of executing a public policy, which is a complicated process coordinating various kinds of interests and conflicts. Under the principle of public policies, the solution of all issues of public policies and the realization of all policy targets must depend on the execution of policies. It has been a general trend in urban planning to emphasize the formulation of the plans and ignore its implementation. Maximising policy implementation of urban plans, especially at the local government level hinges around 3 factors:

1. Process
2. Resources
3. Public participation

Table 3: Factors behind policy – implementation

Sl.	Factors	Description
1	Process	Process is the basic property of planning policies. The importance of the concept lies in the fact that it reveals a complete development process of a public policy and that it takes any public policies as a dynamic and changing process.
2	Resources	Resources encompass all conditions required during the process of policy implementation. The resources generally include funds, staff, organisation and authorisation and protection of actual implementation.
3	Public participation	Public participation is the basic methodology of urban planning and a basic value that urban planners should uphold. It is also a necessary system for urban planning to serve as a public policy.

A good amount of implementation success depends on the attitude of the politicians towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). In that respect,

concrete translation of MDGs and the development initiatives of the UN-HABITAT at local level is required.

5 Personal Action Plan

My relation to this project is my professional commitment as an Urban Planner for Naihati Municipality. My social and ethical commitment is one of a change agent inclined towards realising sustainability in this crucial window of time and space. A mission oriented approach is a must for such pursuit.

The process of urban planning, beyond the factors of rationality, technical or aesthetic is determined by the more vital factor of interests. These might be economic, social and political interests. The interest seekers might be a government, an investor or an individual. Hence, there are two important elements here: the interest body and the urban planner. My long term target in the next 5 years as per the Global Planners Network Draft Action Plan is the following:

1. To remove internal and external barriers that exist within planning
2. Form a bridge between science and planning

To realise this initiative, I will adopt the following 10 step circular process, which will span over a period of a year. The actions will repeat every year as a build-up on the previous year's progress.

Table 4: Personal Annual Action Plan

Sl	Steps	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	Designate a lead office and find a champion												
2	Establish partnerships												
3	Find the hooks												
4	Conduct a sustainability audit for the municipality												
5	Analyse the information and develop a draft working plan												
6	Build support for the participation process												
7	Finalise the plan												
8	Implement the plan and do circular financing for the projects												
9	Review and Evaluate												
10	Publicise the benefits and build capacity												

To conclude, we must not forget that it is important not only to plan, but also dream, not only act, but also believe.

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