

Research Paper

Municipal Framework for Ease of Service Delivery to achieve Sustainable Local Economic Development

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Abstract— ‘Development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’. This most widely accepted definition of Sustainable Development was given by the Brundtland Commission in its report Our Common Future (1987). Sustainable development is focused on efforts towards building an inclusive, sustainable and flexible future for people and the earth. Cities are the drivers of local economic growth and must adopt a dynamic approach towards the evolving ecosystem for inclusive development. The local government must provide for better infrastructure, health, hygiene, housing, education and employment. This would help in efficient utilization of available resources and reduce the overheads in service delivery. For Sustainable Local Economic Development at Municipal level, it is important to build on inter-departmental synergies and pooling of resources including interlinking the budgetary provisions. The paper is discussing about framework of the Ease of Service Delivery in Municipal Corporation which helps in Sustainable Local Economic Development.

Keywords—Municipal Framework, Ease of Service Operation, Delivery, Compliance & Monitoring, Citizen Service Reforms, Municipal Sandbox.

1. Introduction

Developing countries, especially a one like India, requires economic development and sustainability to move together to support the growth trajectory of the country. Economic growth has traditionally been attributed to the accumulation of human and physical capital and the increase in the productivity and creation of new goods arising from technological innovation[1]. But, sustainable development may involve improvements in the quality of life for many but may necessitate a decrease in resource consumption[2].

1.1 Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is an organizing principle that aims to meet human development goals while also enabling natural systems to provide necessary natural resources and ecosystem services to humans. The desired result is a society where living conditions and resources meet human needs without undermining the planetary integrity and stability of the natural system [3][4]. Sustainable development endeavors to achieve harmony among economic progress, safeguarding the environment, and enhancing societal welfare. Making policies, missions, or goals to further human, planetary, and economic development is essential in the modern period [5].

1.2 Sustainable Local Economic Growth

Economic development is a complex and multidimensional process. Although it is commonplace to equate economic development with a high level and/or growth of per capita income, there is a growing consensus among economists and policymakers that development is much more than that. Economic development leads a country high performing at all the financial criteria. It will add to the performance as social development rises. It shows that economic and social development goes parallel[6].

Achieving sustainable local economic growth will require increase in the labour productivity. As a crucial responsibility of government and government institutions, the public service should deliver services that a society requires to maintain and improve its welfare. To do this, government institutions require organizational structures and suitably qualified people who must be supported to deliver the services they are responsible for (Whitaker, 1980)[7].

1.3 Service Delivery

Promoting people's involvement in service delivery stands as a widely embraced approach to expand the scope of urban service provision. This approach not only places emphasis on

grassroots democratic governance but also augments the significance and attractiveness of the initiatives and schemes being executed by urban local governments. As urban councils implement their policies on service delivery, it is important that they factor in the socioeconomic conditions under which they are operating.

Issues such as thresholds of societal poverty, levels of unemployment, local economic development, foreign direct investment and inflation have a bearing on the ability of urban councils to realize their mandate of service delivery. Over the past few years all of these issues have been known to negatively impact local service provision. It is therefore important that urban councils are innovative and proactive as they deliver the much needed community services against the constraints of limited resources. In implementing service delivery, it is crucial that local government is guided by a set of core values. The Municipal Corporations or urban local bodies are the first responders or service providers at the local level and hence should be the focus of the efforts to improve the service delivery. Hence a municipal framework that identifies the challenges at local level and provides ease of doing business through ease of service delivery must be considered.

2. Related Work

The literature review focuses on the definition of service and service delivery through the years and the evolving concept of services.

Ogunna (2004:2) reiterates that the desire to satisfy the public through the implementation of public policies, enforcement of laws, and realization of public welfare culminates the effective public service delivery [8].

Rao (2005) seems to be of the same opinion when he defines services as intangible activities performed by machines or persons or both for the purposes of creating value perceptions among customers. He further stresses that since services are intangible activities, or benefits produced by the service provider and in association with the consumer, their quality results in perception and value assessment by the consumer [9].

OECD (2010) indicates that services can be categorized in a number of ways including, the type of entity providing them, the type of user and the nature of the services provided. The categories of services according to OECD (2010) include private services, public services and collective or joint services.

Afeez Kolawole Shittu (2021) stated public services from a holistic view are those services funded by the money accrued through taxation from the general public and for the benefits of the public. These are organized services responsible for managing and controlling the resources of the state on behalf of the general public who are actually the owners of the resources. These services are run and controlled by either the elected or appointed government offices. The management of these services could be federal, state, or local government

depending on the country. At the same time, some services such as health and education which are regarded as public service may sometimes be overtaken by either public, private, or voluntary sectors depending on the country concerned and type of services provided [10].

Public service delivery becomes paramount because it represents the fundamental structure of nation-building, it serves a tangible link between government and citizens to the government, and it also promotes the values of nations to the citizens and finally serves as a bond between the state and citizens (Walle and Scott 2009) [11].

Service delivery is constrained by many challenges. They include challenges of finance, coordination, capacity, governance, inadequate council decisions, organizational instability, insufficient oversight and accountability and a lack of adequate regulatory support (Ndevu and Muller, 2018) [12].

These challenges can be addressed through a municipal ease of service delivery framework also considering sustainable local economic development.

3. Procedure - Municipal Framework

A municipal corporation is the legal term for a local governing body, including (but not necessarily limited to) cities, counties, towns, townships, charter townships, villages, and boroughs. The term can also be used to describe municipally owned corporations [13],[14],[15].

Among all urban local governments, municipal corporations enjoy a greater degree of fiscal autonomy and functions, although the specific fiscal and functional powers vary across the states. These local governments have larger populations, a more diversified economic base, and deal with the state governments directly. These local bodies are subject to detailed supervisory control and guidance by the state governments. The delivery of public services such as business incorporation, getting a building permit, obtaining an electricity connection, property tax, providing water supply, sanitation, civic infrastructure, health, primary education and many more is an obligatory duty of the municipal corporations.

The World Bank Report 2020 on Doing Business measures the service delivery processes and also collects and publishes data on regulation of employment as well as contracting with the government on a national level. State level action plans are developed based on the ease of doing business report annually. The percolation of the reforms at the municipal level is imperative in the improvement of the overall performance of the state. Currently, a specific framework addressing ease of service delivery at the municipal level is yet to be developed.

A municipal framework for Ease of service delivery based on the following four components may be essential:

- 3.1 Municipal Governance
- 3.2 Municipal Service Reforms Action Plan
- 3.3 Knowledge Management – Business Intelligence System
- 3.4 Enablers of Municipal Ease of Doing Business

3.1 Municipal Governance

Cities are the drivers of local economic growth and must adopt a dynamic approach towards the evolving ecosystem for inclusive development. The local government must provide for better infrastructure, health, hygiene, housing, education and employment. Thrust of all efforts should focus on Municipal Governance which can be achieved through Building Enabling Environments including:-

- Ease of Operations
- Ease of Service Delivery
- Ease of Compliance
- Ease of Monitoring
- Continuous Improvement in the components of ICT based solutions
- Strategic Alignment of Internal Resources utilizing City Ecosystem

3.2 Municipal Service Reforms Action Plan

Components of Municipal Ease of Doing Business would include its Service Reforms Enablers, Single Window System, Citizen Service Reforms and Monitoring Compliances - (Regulatory Reforms) as follows:

3.2.1 Service Reforms Enablers

Alignment of department functions with SDG Goals is one of the key enabler. Municipal Corporation provides for civic amenities and citizen services. The SDGs are the foundation for Sustainable Local Economic Development of a city. Considering the diversity of the development scenario and that of the States and UTs, national leadership and coordination is important for steering the achievement of SDGs. NITI Aayog and the Union ministries have come together in several ways to address this necessity. Based on the 17 SDGs, GOI has setup National Indicator framework (NIF) for SDG monitoring to assess the performance of the Indian cities.

Dr. Rajiv Kumar Vice Chairperson, NITI Aayog, in his message for SDG INDIA INDEX & DASHBOARD 2020-21 stated that “SDG-focused initiatives and their progress monitoring are more relevant than ever in today’s world. When the world has charted the course to build-back-better after the global pandemic that has disrupted development progress on many fronts, it is crucial to embed the principles of sustainability in the rebuilding efforts.”

For visible impact at municipal level, this framework aims to relate the department’s routine functions with the 17 SDGs for sustainable local economic development of City by assigning relevant Sustainable Development Goals to each department. This will enable building synergies in functioning with other departments with similar Goals, wherever possible including budgeting and service delivery with easy access to information – Department guidelines, SOPs, Supporting documents, related department, inter-

linkages with departments. Operations manual to be drafted to work on the linkages between departments with related SDGs.

3.2.2 Single Window System

Single window system for multiple service have to implemented at corporation for various services like - Issuing Construction permits, New business permission for - Health License, Trade License, Advertisement & Hoarding License, S&E registration, Factory permits, Event & Film Shooting permissions. For resilient service delivery model, it is critical to bring all civic services to be under the scope of Single Window System with inter-departmental knowledge sharing technologies. The scope of Single Window system needs to be extended for information and knowledge sharing for interlinked permissions. This would facilitate a consolidated reform with use of latest IT tools like provision of digital signatures, block-chain with ease of use across devices like – desktop, laptop, mobile devices with authenticity, transparency and security measures.

3.2.3 Citizen Service Reforms

Reforms pertaining to each service offered by corporation like issuing business permit/ license, Construction permit, water connection, Hospital Service& Patient management (HMIS), Education, Water connection & related services, tenders, trenching permission, tree trimming services, waste collection, public toilet, payment services – Property Tax, Water bill, business fee/ charges

User friendly online module to book civic services like Booking of slots of Swimming pool, Theatre, Hall, Garden facilities, Sports Complex, Heritage tour, Parking, Citizen safety Services, Disaster Management, Fire Brigade services, Ambulance services, Shelter Homes, etc

3.2.4 Monitoring Compliances - (Regulatory Reforms)

All inspections to be captured in the GIS based building unique Identification number (UID) linked module for all the relevant departments and real-time remarks uploaded and update in the system. This will help the regulating department to take timely action in case on non-compliance and help in efficient utilization of available resources. The department interlinked data will help in working out “Inspection Reforms” by efficient allocation of resources for risk based inspection of permits/ licenses issued like Fire Compliance inspections, Encroachments monitoring, etc.

3.3 Knowledge Management – Business Intelligence System

Functioning of corporation’s departments are independent w.r.t to the other departments, however the target end-user is the same. The volume and complexity of relevant information is ever increasing, and we need to handle it effectively.

3.3.1 Knowledge management system would include:

- Representation of available information
- organization of data for decision making(collation of available knowledge base),

- acquisition of information/ data for knowledge building (upgrading/ acquiring knowledge/ new references/ information/ research based on current issues),
- usage of all available information – data analytics
- Evolution of knowledge for informed decision making/ planning.
- Addressing challenges in terms of complexity of knowledge/ information and tasks in disseminating knowledge for effective implementation at ground level.

3.3.2 Resource Management includes:

- Pooling need based under-utilized or unutilized resources/ properties of related departments
- Optimal utilization of physical resources and human capital for Quality Service Delivery
- Pro-active approach to manage available resources for efficiency in operations
- Sharing inter-departmental data for seamless service delivery

EODB initiatives by regulatory bodies pose equal responsibility on business community to comply with the laid out norms for effective implementation of reforms. Else, it is observed that to ensure implementation of one regulation, another regulation/ crosscheck needs to be drafted, which goes against the spirit of EODB. To implement and sustain such initiatives, support from all quarters and stakeholders is required. It is evident that any change process is initially met with resistance.

3.4 Enablers of Municipal Ease of Doing Business

3.4.1 Information Technology

In 2020, the Strategy for National Open Digital Ecosystems (NODE) has taken a central position in the government's interventions across various sectors. Adopting emerging technologies to facilitate citizen service delivery. Some of specific measures would be great enabler for the implementation of municipal framework like:

- Online service delivery
 - Create single sign on for each citizen
 - Link all the online services to the “single sign-in”
- Identify & Link all software in use by various departments
 - Inter departmental data sharing
 - Integrate all services (G2B & G2C) on a common platform
- Move towards fully digital governance
 - Adoption of latest IT tools
 - Dynamic data dashboard on portal
 - BI Reports
 - Mobile App

3.4.2 Capacity Building

Corporation which delivers citizen services supported by the non-engineering functions in the area of Healthcare, Education, Business licenses and back-end support functions like finance, accounts, administration, HR, training amongst others.

Capacity building for good governance and sustainable urban development is reliant on knowledge, skills, and attitude. As urbanization is an ongoing dynamic process and cities are experiencing rapid growth in size and complexity, capacity enhancement is susceptible to swift depletion. The impact of evolving processes, technologies, and innovations can erode the effectiveness of knowledge and skills based on older models. Therefore, the necessity to continually update and transform capacity building into an ongoing process is evident.

The purpose of capacity building is to improve the functionality, performance and service delivery of local government.

For Capacity building may be considered in following aspects:

- Improved governance
- technical knowledge
- Programme development through fundraising
- Managing human resources
- Skills training

3.4.3. CivicTech Business Incubator – The Municipal Sandbox

- The formation of CivicTech Business Incubator to facilitate design thinking and Municipal Sandbox to understand civic issues and ideation around it to arrive on workable solutions. This would provide implementable solutions to civic issues for visible impact and enhance improve citizen experience. For example, As part of its business incubation centre project, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has prepared a start-up hub and innovation policy that will back entrepreneurship models with solutions to local civic problems [16]. With this Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation established its own CivicTech incubation centre to address the civic issues.
- Zonal Innovation Tech centres under Incubator to act as Municipal Sandbox
 - Municipal Sandbox as Innovation facilitators integrating broader ecosystem to strengthen civic infrastructure
 - Digital and Physical Components of Municipal Sandbox
- Street City labs / Education Labs, Slum Rejuvenation, “Block chain technology” – for civic services and its regulatory duties can be tested out at sand box.
 - Block chain technology holds the potential to be a remarkable catalyst for Municipal Corporations in delivering civic services and fulfilling regulatory obligations. This technology has the capability to redefine the landscape of public service delivery and operations, introducing heightened efficiency, flexibility, and transparency into the equation.
 - Blockchain technology will empower cities to explore novel ways of collaborating with local businesses, while also fostering investments and enhancing efficiencies in various domains, including transportation, energy, and voting.

- Beyond the scope of city operations, blockchain holds the potential to reshape the manner in which businesses are regulated, investments are structured, and the processes of wealth creation and exchanges are innovated.
- Furthermore, cities stand to gain not only from heightened efficiencies that lead to reduced costs, but also from amplified economic integration and increased levels of participation.

4. Conclusion and Future Scope

Designed to tackle the challenges confronted by Municipal Corporations in maintaining uninterrupted civic services and fostering seamless interdepartmental coordination, a municipal framework for ease of service delivery adopts a four-pronged strategy of coordination, innovation, digitalization, and asset management. This comprehensive approach empowers corporations to monitor their progress, pinpoint service delivery gaps, and devise inventive solutions. Notably, this framework facilitates prompt issue resolution for both citizens and corporations, fostering stronger government-citizen communication. It's essential to underline that this framework is primarily aimed at serving citizens, rather than catering exclusively to businesses.

This framework offers a distinct advantage by establishing a clear delineation of departmental roles, responsibilities, and requisites, in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals. By incorporating measures such as a unified citizen login, user-friendly online platforms, and capacity-building initiatives for officials, the framework further propels local-level service delivery enhancements, driving sustainable economic growth.

Authors' Contributions

Author-1, Dr. Satish P. Rewatkar has done the secondary researched on the past work done, contributed to the comprehensive review of related work, including the literature review, identifying relevant studies, and analyzing existing frameworks and approaches to service delivery and economic growth. and provided theoretical insights. He provided expertise in municipal governance, economic development strategies, CivicTech Business Incubator and policy implementation. Also drafted the first manuscript for the paper along with the introduction. He has collaborated in the organization and structuring of the manuscript, ensuring a cohesive flow of ideas and information.

Author-2, Smt. Shashi Bala has played a crucial role in the conceptualization and design of the municipal framework for ease of service delivery and sustainable local economic development. She has drafted the framework of the paper. She studied and prepared the Municipal Framework for Ease of Service Delivery to achieve Sustainable Local Economic Development.

She provided expertise in municipal governance, economic development strategies, and policy implementation. Additionally, she led the effort in collating and analyzing

relevant data, and she has contributed extensively to the formulation of the framework's key components, including Municipal Governance, Municipal Service Reforms Action Plan, Knowledge Management, and Enablers of Municipal Ease of Doing Business. Furthermore, she actively participated in the critical review and revision of the manuscript to ensure its coherence and accuracy.

Both authors conscientiously engaged in the thorough review and refinement of the manuscript, aiming to enhance its clarity, coherence, and precision. This meticulous process was undertaken to ensure that the final document adeptly conveys the innovative approach proposed. The culmination of their joint endeavors is evidenced in this paper, a testament to their shared dedication, expertise in municipal governance, urban development, and sustainable economic growth.

The contributions of the authors are emblematic of their mutual commitment to advancing discussions on sustainable local economic development and efficient service delivery. Their unwavering dedication is evident in their pursuit of efficacious strategies that not only elevate the living standards of citizens but also lay the groundwork for prospective growth.

Both authors assumed pivotal roles in conducting research, formulating concepts, and crafting diverse sections of the paper. Their collaborative exertions harmonized to create a comprehensive exploration of the municipal framework for ease of service delivery and sustainable local economic development.

Upon rigorous review and editing, both authors endorsed the final rendition of the manuscript, solidifying their joint investment in the document's content and quality.

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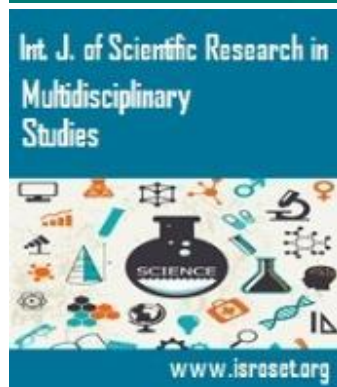
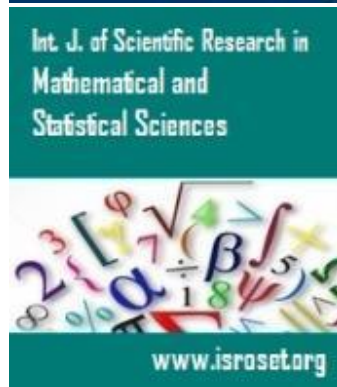
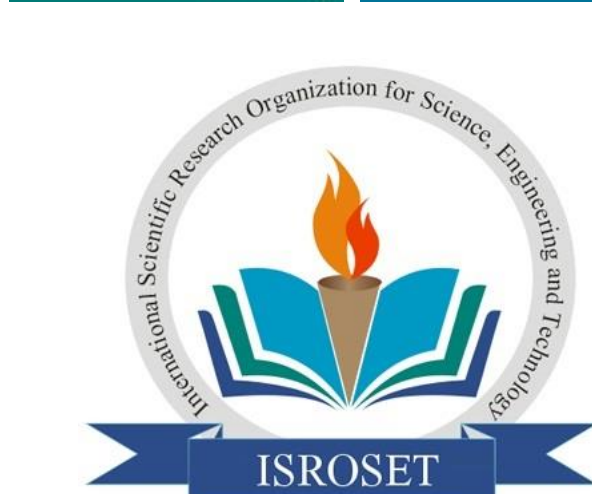
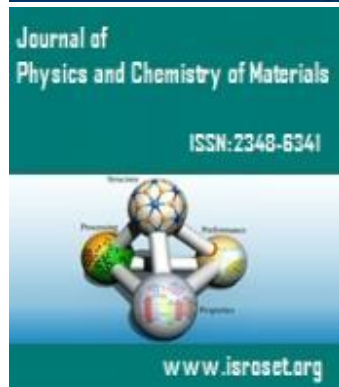
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Dr. Satish P. Rewatkar holds a Ph.D. in Marketing from R.T.M. Nagpur University and earned MBA degrees in Finance and Marketing Management from C.P. and Berar College, Nagpur in 2008. He has authored approximately 15 research papers published in renowned national and international journals and conferences. With over 15 years of experience, his background encompasses marketing, teaching, research, and administrative roles. Presently, from last 9 years he serves as the Dy Chief of Business Development and City Marketing in the Business Development Department at the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation.



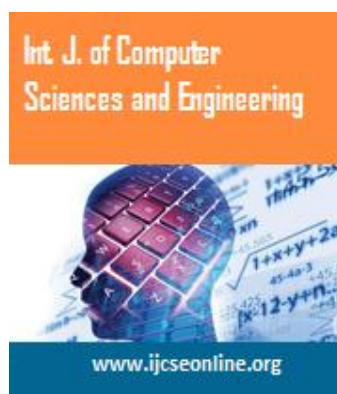
Smt. Shashi Bala holds a postgraduate degree in Economics with a management specialization in marketing. With a career spanning over 25 years, she has gained extensive expertise in diverse areas such as Business operations, Marketing, Administration, and Urban Governance. Her extensive experience also encompasses issue-based organizational interventions and development. For the past nine years, she has been closely involved in spearheading initiatives related to Ease of Doing Business, facilitating business permissions, implementing Single Window systems, and shaping associated policies to streamline regulatory reforms at the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation. Presently, she serves as the Chief Business Development within the Business Development Department at the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation. Additionally, she holds the role of Director at SMILE Council (Society for Mumbai Incubation Lab to Entrepreneurship Council), an esteemed Civic Tech Incubator established by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation. Moreover, she plays a pivotal role as the focal point for Mumbai's designation as a UNESCO Creative City of Film.





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