

Ambitious Agendas. Meaningful Momentum.

Sharpening our focus to deepen
city-systems transformation
across India



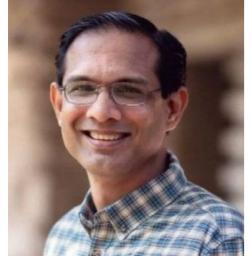


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Note from CEO



DEAR FRIENDS, PARTNERS, AND SUPPORTERS,

Over the past year, Janaagraha has deepened its approach to city-systems transformation with a sharper articulation of our strategy, priorities, and intended outcomes. The work reflected in these pages represents ambitious agendas pursued with intention — and a growing clarity on how transformative urban reform must be conceived, embedded, and sustained.

At the national level, our work has focused on shaping the institutional conditions that enable reform at scale. Through our engagement with the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India, we supported the first performance audits on the implementation of the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act and have since signed a five-year MoU to strengthen municipal accounting standards, place-based audits, and public data ecosystems for accountability. CityFinance, in continues to institutionalise financial transparency across urban India, supporting more credible budgeting, audited accounts, and public disclosure across urban local governments. Our sustained engagement with successive Finance Commissions, including the XVI Finance Commission, is focused on informing grant design and fiscal reform incentives that strengthen accountability and support a more differentiated approach across cities.

Our State Urban Transformation Agenda now manifests distinctly in our focus states. In Assam, India's most climate-vulnerable state, we anchor Doh Shaher Ek Rupayan in ten cities, integrating governance reforms with climate resilience, blue-green infrastructure, and participatory City Action Plans. In Uttar Pradesh, we serve as governance partner for the Aspirational Cities Programme, developing City Action Plans for 100 small towns while supporting road infrastructure development in 17 municipal corporations as part of CM GRIDS. In Odisha, where we have partnered with the state government since 2019, our work spans participatory governance, digital grants management, and organisational development reforms that together strengthen state capacity, financial accountability, and community participation.

Ecosystem partnerships amplify this work. Janaagraha convenes and works alongside bureaucrats, elected representatives, citizens, civil society organisations, industry leaders, and academia to build the coalitions essential for systemic change. This whole-of-society approach helps ensure reforms gain traction across institutions, political cycles, and scales of government.

Across these efforts, we remain attentive to the intersectional outcomes that city-systems ultimately shape. Climate resilience is embedded through walkability, flood mitigation, and climate-responsive infrastructure and service delivery. Public health considerations are integrated through place-based planning, particularly in small towns where access and prevention remain critical. Equity — especially gender equity — is advanced by strengthening women's leadership and voice in urban governance, including through initiatives such as the Councillor Leadership Development Programme and the Women in Public Finance Fellowship.

Beyond programmes and systems, this work is fundamentally about people: those who govern our cities and those who call them home, working together to build cities where everyone can thrive. Your support makes this transformation possible.

Thank you for walking this path with us.

Warm regards,
Srikanth



SANAILA RASHEED FOR UNSPLASH

India's Future is Urban

2025

By 2050, 814 million Indians will live in cities – nearly double today's urban population. Cities already generate over 60% of India's GDP, shaping outcomes in economic growth, social equity, environmental sustainability, and democratic engagement.

60%

CITIES' CONTRIBUTION TO INDIA'S GDP

SHAPING OUTCOMES

- Economic Growth
- Social Equity
- Environmental Sustainability
- Democratic Engagement

2X
TODAY'S URBAN POPULATION

814m
INDIANS WILL LIVE IN CITIES

2050

Over the last 15 years, urban infrastructure investment has grown dramatically. Yet, this investment has not translated into improved quality of life for India's urban citizens.

932%

INCREASE IN BUDGET OF THE MINISTRY OF HOUSING AND URBAN AFFAIRS

21 CITIES EXPANDING THEIR METRO NETWORKS

8.7 MILLION HOMES BUILT UNDER PMAY-URBAN

OUTCOMES

→ Economic productivity lags behind global benchmarks.

1.7% VS 3.9%
INDIA GLOBAL
GDP GROWTH PER CAPITA
FOR EACH % POINT OF URBAN POPULATION GROWTH

→ Equitable access remains elusive.

POVERTY DECLINE 3.4% VS 13.3%
URBAN RURAL

→ Environmental stress is acute.

59% FACE WATER SCARCITY 80% BREATHE UNHEALTHY AIR

→ Democratic engagement is constrained.

61% OF URBAN LOCAL GOVERNMENTS ARE WITHOUT ELECTED COUNCILS for an average of 22 months due to delayed elections

CONCLUSIONS

These outcomes point to a deeper problem.

Investment temporarily addresses visible symptoms — traffic congestion, inadequate housing, failing infrastructure — while underlying governance systems remain weak. Urban local governments lack adequate authority. Planning is fragmented across departments. Municipal finances remain opaque. Fixing symptoms without strengthening these systems means cities cannot sustain improvements; challenges recur across cities and sectors.

India's future is inextricably urban.

Whether that future delivers inclusive prosperity or entrenches inequality will depend on how robust — or fragile — the systems that shape cities are.





ASLAM MAC, VISHWANTH PINDIBONA, DARSHAN PATEL, SHREYAS SANE, SUJIT BANGARSHETTAR FOR UNSPLASH

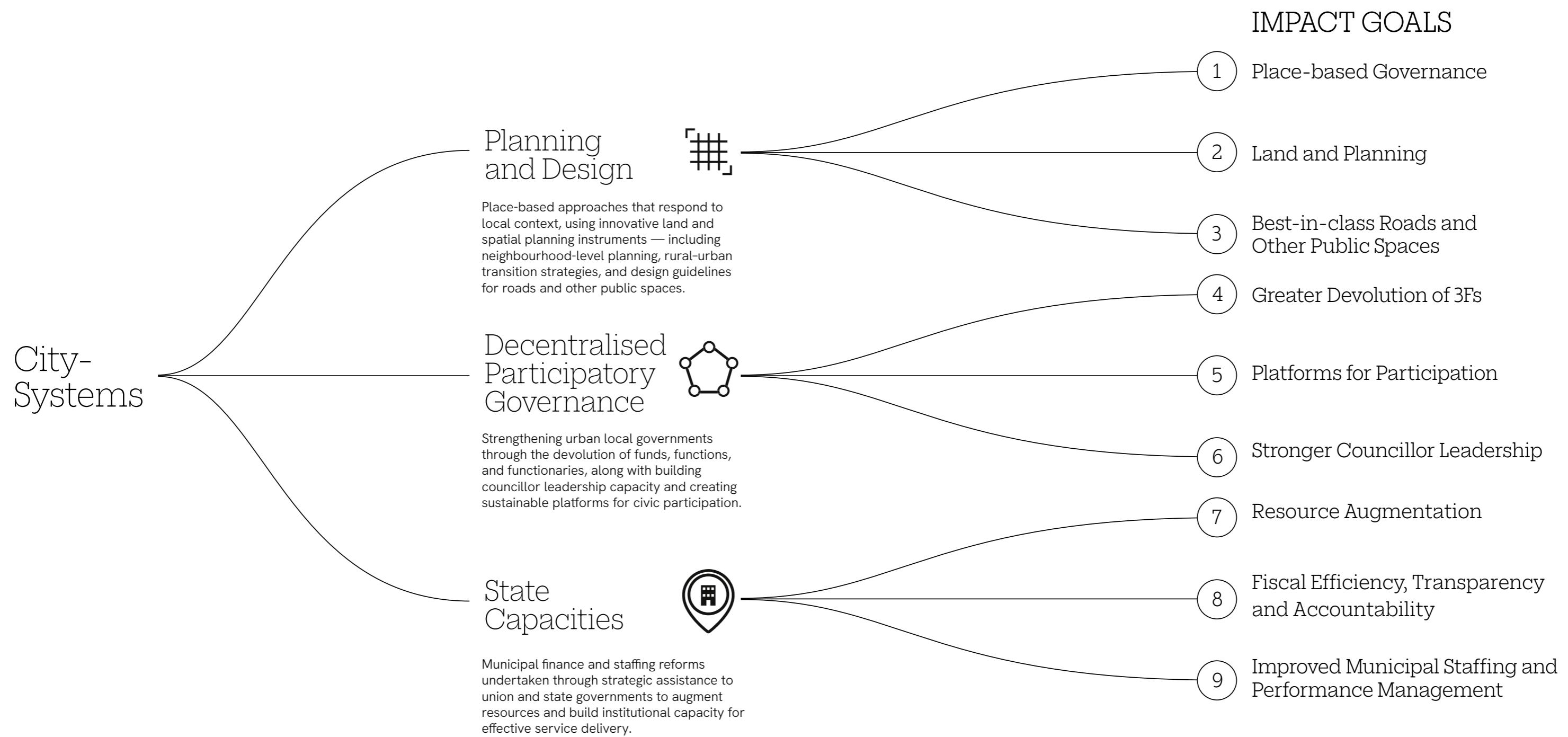
The City-Systems Framework

A BLUEPRINT FOR URBAN TRANSFORMATION

To transform quality of life in India's cities and towns, we must transform city-systems. City-systems are the laws, policies, and processes by which cities are planned, designed, governed, financed, built, and managed.

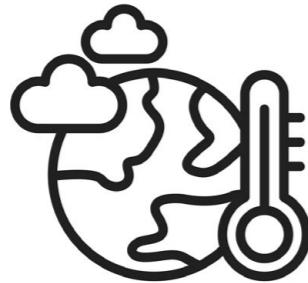
Strong city-systems enable governments to deliver quality services and sustainable change. They determine whether cities deliver prosperity, equity, and opportunity for all.

Janaagraha is working to strengthen three city-systems



This work advances outcomes across three intersectional areas

Climate



Local climate action, walkable cities, flood mitigation, climate-responsive service delivery across waste management, water supply and sanitation, and green public infrastructure.

Health



Accessible healthcare services, community participation in public health, and social determinants including climate impacts.

Equity



Voice and agency for women and the urban poor in city planning, women councillor leadership, and gender-inclusive infrastructure for migrants and vulnerable communities.

Planning and Design



In India's cities and towns, growth frequently outpaces planning, sectors and agencies operate in silos, and design is rarely treated as a means for shaping inclusive, well-functioning public spaces.

Janaagraha's Planning and Design work addresses these structural gaps through place-based governance models, spatial planning instruments spanning regional to neighbourhood scales, and design standards that make roads and other public spaces work for all.

1

Place-based Governance

CITIES MUST BE RECOGNISED as discrete places where citizens live, work, and recreate — not merely as aggregations of sectors. In India, states and the nation are understood as distinct units of governance with empowered elected leaders who coordinate across sectors and departments. Cities are not. No single authority has responsibility for the city as a whole. Agencies responsible for water, transport, or housing operate independently, with sectoral heads rarely accountable to city leadership. Compounding this, a one-size-fits-all approach treats cities with vastly different needs and capacities as identical, leading to fragmented planning, uncoordinated investments, and inconsistent service delivery.

A place-based approach addresses this by governing cities as distinct and integrated units, and planning for them accordingly, rather than as collections of disconnected sectoral interventions. This requires reorienting institutions towards integrated planning anchored in local contexts and needs, and includes considerations of a differentiated approach based on city size and type. This shifts cities from reactive, scheme-driven actions to proactive, needs-based planning that improves prioritisation and coordination.

IN PRACTICE

City Action Plans

10 Cities



In Assam, city governments have developed **City Action Plans (CAPs)** across ten cities under the state government's direction, with Janaagraha providing the reform framework and implementation support. Through structured consultations with communities and local stakeholders, cities identify priorities grounded in lived realities. Municipal Planning Committees — institutionalised platforms that bring together city leadership and sectoral departments — prioritise and approve these plans, enabling coordination across departments and funding streams. This approach moves cities from scattered, scheme-driven actions to a shared direction anchored in local context, demonstrating how place-based governance can work in practice.

Land and Planning

IN MANY INDIAN CITIES, master plans — the core statutory instruments for spatial planning — either do not exist in an effective form or play a limited role in shaping development decisions. Where plans do exist, their authority is constrained across the planning cycle: limited capacity affects plan preparation; links to project implementation are weak; and development controls are inconsistently enforced. These challenges are compounded by the way planning is organised in practice. Sectoral plans for mobility, housing, environment, and infrastructure are frequently prepared independently, with limited spatial integration. Public land is often left vacant or underutilised, remaining disconnected from city priorities and statutory plans. Taken together, these conditions mean that planning rarely provides a clear basis for guiding land use decisions, coordinating investments, or aligning development across the city.

Jana Urban Space Foundation (JUSP), our sister organisation, addresses these gaps by strengthening the institutional foundations of urban planning. Its focus is on building three-tiered planning frameworks and linking statutory plans to project pipelines, land use decisions, and regulatory tools. The intent is to enable plans to function as practical instruments guiding development and public investment, rather than as stand-alone documents.

IN PRACTICE

15-Minute Neighbourhood Initiatives

Intersection of Sustainable Mobility, Public Spaces and Climate Action



Neighbourhood Planning Guidelines

JUSP's 15-Minute Neighbourhoods initiative reimagines cities on the principle that every resident should be able to access work, education, healthcare, mobility, and leisure within a short walk or cycle ride from home through high-quality pedestrian infrastructure. Pilot interventions are underway in Bengaluru's Nallurahalli neighbourhood: upgradation of 4km of footpaths, strengthening first- and last-mile connectivity to the Nallurahalli Metro Station, and rejuvenating a neighbourhood nallah with nature-based solutions for flood resilience.

Beyond Bengaluru, JUSP is applying 15-minute principles to the Manipal Academy campus masterplan and developing Neighbourhood Planning Guidelines for the Chennai Metropolitan Area to enable localised, resilient planning across diverse urban contexts.

Best-in-class Roads and Other Public Spaces

IN PRACTICE

TENDER SURE (Specifications for Urban Roads Execution)

35 Cities



228% ↑

500km

Pedestrian Usage

ROADS in 6 states

Tender S.U.R.E. (Specifications for Urban Roads Execution) represents India's first comprehensive set of urban road guidelines. It sets standard design requirements for continuous footpaths, routes, utilities under the footpath to limit repeated road-cutting, and integrates stormwater drainage into road design. Anchored in 'Build Once, Build Right' principles, Tender S.U.R.E. strengthens lifecycle performance by improving durability and maintenance outcomes. These standards have been adopted across more than 500 km of roads in 35 cities across 6 states, with 228% more pedestrian usage, improved flood resilience, and significantly lower maintenance needs.

Decentralised Participatory Governance



Urban governance in India was designed to bring authority and accountability closer to citizens. In practice, however, the conditions required for urban democracy to flourish — effective devolution, structured participation, and empowered local political leadership — remain poor.

Janaagraha's work on decentralised participatory governance focuses on strengthening these institutional foundations, so that constitutional intent translates into effective urban governance.

4

Greater Devolution of 3Fs

FUNDS
FUNCTIONS
FUNCTIONARIES

THE 74TH CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT ACT (CAA), enacted in 1992, was a pioneering step towards democratic decentralisation. The Amendment envisaged Urban Local Governments (ULGs) as institutions of self-government, to be empowered through the devolution of funds, functions, and functionaries. In doing so, it positioned city governments as the first democratic recourse for everyday urban governance.

Three decades later, significant gaps persist between intent and implementation. On average, states have implemented only about 42% of the 74th CAA. While municipal council elections are mandated, they are delayed in 61% of ULGs across 15 states, often for an average of over 22 months. Even where elected mayors and councils exist, their powers and functions remain severely limited. Only 5 of the 18 constitutionally mandated functions are effectively under city control, with key responsibilities continuing to rest with state departments and parastatal agencies operating within city limits.

The result is a fragmented governance landscape, where responsibility is dispersed, accountability is blurred, and city leadership operates without the authority or control required to govern effectively.

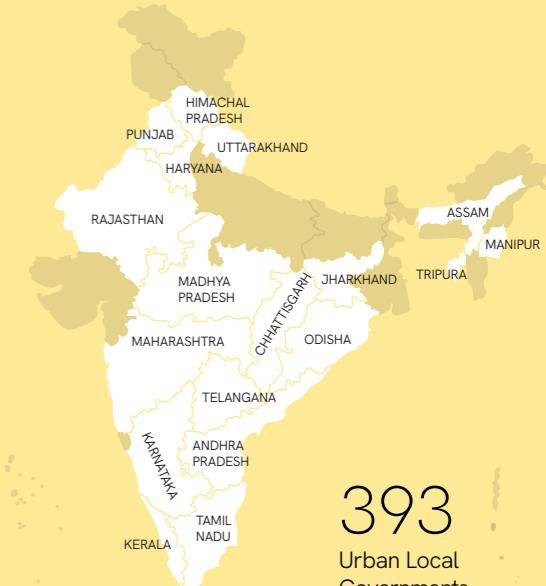
Janaagraha works on the underlying conditions required for effective devolution: strengthening the constitutional framework through evidence-based reform design, building momentum for timely and democratic municipal elections, and engaging elected representatives, constitutional bodies, and champions across the policy ecosystem to advance implementation of the 74th CAA in practice.



IN PRACTICE

CAG's First Audits on 74th CAA

18 States



We supported the design, pilot, and scaling of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India's first performance audits of the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act. Conducted during 2019-2024, the audits covered 18 states and 393 Urban Local Governments. The common audit framework enabled cross-state assessment of how devolution operates in practice — including elections, functions, and key institutional mechanisms.

The audit findings were compiled into a compendium which offers valuable insights and analysis, crucial for policymakers, practitioners, academia, and individuals interested in understanding and strengthening urban governance. It serves as a vital resource to further urban decentralisation and empower ULGs in the country.

Platforms for Participation

EFFECTIVE URBAN GOVERNANCE depends not only on elected leadership and administrative capacity, but also on regular, structured engagement between urban local governments and citizens. When participation is institutionalised, it helps align public decision-making with local priorities, strengthens accountability, and enables neighbourhood-level concerns to be addressed through formal governance processes.

In most Indian cities, these conditions are weak. Functional ward-level platforms are rare — only one of 11 city corporations in Karnataka has operational ward committees — and opportunities for citizen engagement are often ad hoc, limiting the ability of citizens to influence governance decisions that shape their everyday life. Further, India's education system underemphasises civic learning and collaborative problem-solving, skills essential to democratic engagement.

Janaagraha works to strengthen the foundations for participation by creating salience around ward committees as formal neighbourhood platforms, while embedding civic learning in schools and colleges to build the capabilities required for sustained, informed engagement over time.

IN PRACTICE

Ward Samiti Balagas

11 City Corporations

KARNATAKA

Janaagraha conceptualised, incubated, and piloted Ward Samiti Balagas — a citizen collective advocating for the institutionalisation of ward committees. Operating across 11 city corporations in Karnataka, Balaga chapters have coordinated letter campaigns through elected representatives such as MPs, MLAs, and MLAs, submitted requisition letters directly to municipal corporations, and organised public outreach to build awareness of ward committees as formal neighbourhood platforms for local participation. Over time, Balagas have evolved into an independent network of citizens sustaining public demand for institutionalised participation at the local level.

Stronger Councillor Leadership

COUNCILLORS PLAY A CRITICAL ROLE in shaping how government responds to local needs. They represent citizens at the ward level and are often the most visible point of accountability for neighbourhood-level outcomes.

Despite this, however, councillor leadership is largely assumed rather than institutionally enabled. Most councillors enter office with limited orientation to the structures and processes of urban governance. They are required to navigate governance systems, budgets, and mechanisms for citizen engagement, but are given few systematic pathways to do so. These gaps are compounded for women councillors, who — despite comprising 46% of elected representatives — often face additional barriers such as proxy representation, uneven access to information, and constrained participation in public decision-making spaces.

Strengthening councillor leadership therefore requires more than ad hoc exposure or informal learning. It calls for structured, institutionalised capability-building that supports councillors in navigating city-systems with greater clarity and consistency. Janaagraha works to enable these conditions through competency-based leadership development and peer learning, with an initial focus on women councillors.

IN PRACTICE

Councillor Leadership Development Programme

90+ Women Councillors

Janaagraha's Councillor Leadership Development Programme (CLDP) pilots a structured approach to councillor leadership development. It uses practical modules on roles, urban governance processes, municipal finance, service delivery, and communication norms, combined with cohort-based peer learning. CLDP is designed for institutional adoption within government systems and is implemented with state urban departments and training institutions. The programme's focus on women councillors reflects the importance of strengthening women's voice and participation in ward-level decision-making and enabling more gender-responsive priorities in local governance.

State Capacities



The capacity of urban local governments to deliver a good quality of life in cities depends on municipal finance and human resource capacities — not only how much money and staff ULGs have, but the strength of the systems through which public funds are managed, and municipal workforces are enabled.

MUNICIPAL FINANCE CAPACITY depends on the adequacy and predictability of financial resources, and on systems that enable efficient spending and public accountability. Human resource capacity depends on appropriate staffing levels and competencies, supported by organisational design and performance management.

State capacities form the operational backbone of urban governance. Without adequate and predictable financial resources, transparent financial systems, and capable municipal workforces, ULGs remain reactive and constrained in their ability to function. Janaagraha's work aims to strengthen this backbone — building the finance and human resource systems that enable ULGs to govern effectively.

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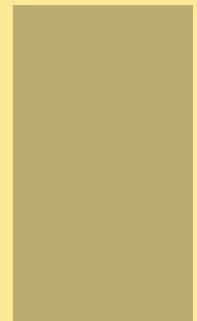
Resource Augmentation

IN PRACTICE

Property Tax Reform

₹39,000 cr.

₹26,000 cr.



FY 2018-19 FY 2024-25

INDIAN CITIES ARE SEVERELY UNDER-RESOURCED relative to the scale of their needs. World Bank estimates show that per capita annual infrastructure spending in Indian cities stands at INR 2,701, against a requirement of INR 7,884. This resource gap is compounded by the inability to raise adequate own-source revenues and the high dependence on intergovernmental transfers, with grants accounting for nearly 56% of total revenues in cities with populations under one million.

This persistent resource constraint has clear institutional consequences. Dependence on transfers limits fiscal autonomy, constrains a city's ability to respond to local priorities, and tilts spending towards short-term fixes rather than long-term strategic investments in infrastructure and service delivery.

Addressing this requires a multi-pronged approach: increasing the quantum of financial resources available to cities; ensuring grants are better designed, managed, and disbursed; enabling systemic reforms that strengthen cities' ability to raise own-source revenues; and in the long run, improving municipal creditworthiness to unlock additional revenue streams including access to credit markets and innovative financing instruments such as land value capture.

India has witnessed significant growth in property tax collection, which increased by 50% from INR 26,000 crores in FY 2018-19 to INR 39,000 crores in FY 2023-24. This growth reflects a sharper focus on property tax reforms undertaken by the union government, state governments, and supported by recommendations from the 15th Finance Commission.

Janaagraha has played a catalytic role in this reform momentum. Over the last five years, we have worked with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs on scheme design and administration support, contributed to the 15th Finance Commission's recommendations and implementation support, and engaged directly with state governments to strengthen property tax systems through actionable frameworks and systemic reforms. Nine states have now implemented property tax valuation reforms, and eight states have enhanced their tax net by leveraging technology to link property tax records with other state department databases.



Fiscal Efficiency, Transparency and Accountability

THE AVAILABILITY OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES alone does not ensure effective urban governance. Across 11 states, urban local governments utilised only 61% of the funds made available to them, reflecting weak budget execution and limited absorptive capacity. At the same time, financial information is often fragmented, inconsistent, or unavailable in the public domain, making it difficult to understand how public funds are actually spent.

The consequence is predictable. When budgets are unrealistic or not used as tools for expenditure management, and when spending cannot be tracked or compared against plans, fiscal efficiency suffers. When financial reports are delayed, non-standardised, or inaccessible, accountability weakens. Together, these failures erode the credibility of budgets, diffuse responsibility for results, and limit the ability of citizens and governments to assess whether public spending aligns with stated priorities.

Improving fiscal efficiency and accountability requires strengthening the full public finance management cycle. This includes realistic and timely budgeting, the ability to track fund flows, expenditure, and outputs through execution, and the publication of audited financial information using uniform standards that enable comparison and scrutiny. These conditions are essential for ensuring that available resources are used optimally and that public spending is subject to meaningful oversight.

IN PRACTICE

CityFinance.in

15,000+ financial statements



CityFinance.in is the country's first national platform providing standardised, timely, and credible financial information on India's cities. Conceived, developed, and managed by Janaagraha for the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, it was adopted by the 15th Finance Commission as the mandated portal for grant disbursal — institutionalising municipal financial transparency across the country. Previously, municipal accounts were unavailable or non-standardised. Today, over 95% of India's 4,300+ urban local governments publish audited accounts in standardised, comparable formats on CityFinance.in. The platform hosts 15,000+ financial statements, administers INR 1.08 lakh crore in Finance Commission grants, and is cited by the Economic Survey of India 2023-24 as an important source for urban finance data.

Improved Municipal Staffing and Performance Management

MUNICIPAL STAFFING SYSTEMS in India are often poorly aligned with the functions urban local governments are expected to perform. Persistent vacancies across sanctioned posts, outdated workforce assessments, and the absence of performance management frameworks mean that staffing levels, skills, and roles are frequently misaligned with service delivery needs.

The result is a gap between responsibility and capability. Even where workforces are available, cities struggle to plan work, supervise execution, or sustain services because municipal staffing is not organised around clear functional roles, defined competencies, or performance accountability.

Improving municipal performance requires reorienting human resource systems towards service delivery requirements. This includes competency-based frameworks that clarify roles and expectations; staffing assessments grounded in functional requirements rather than conventional staffing patterns; and shared municipal services that enable smaller or resource-constrained cities to access specialised skills that cannot be sustained in-house.

IN PRACTICE

Municipal Shared Services Centre

10 States



Janaagraha is pioneering the Municipal Shared Services Centre model across four service types: field services like revenue collection, back-end operations like accounting and payroll, citizen services like certificate issuance, and shared infrastructure like waste management facilities. Recognised by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs through its national guidelines and through funding allocated by the 15th Finance Commission, the model has secured INR 225 crore in first instalment grants in 10 states. This approach offers India's 4,000+ small cities a pathway to improved operational effectiveness.



How we effect change

Janaagraha drives large-scale systems reform through four interconnected pathways that complement and reinforce each other. This systematic approach ensures city-systems reforms are conceived, championed, designed, and successfully institutionalised for long-term change.

Thought Leadership

We conceptualise systems solutions that address underlying issues rather than symptoms, anchoring our work in rigorous policy analysis, evidence-based research, and prototyping lighthouse projects. Our thought leadership informs and shapes transformative urban governance reforms.

Policy Engagement and Coalitions

We enlist champions across the spectrum — bureaucrats and elected representatives within government, along with citizens, civil society organisations, industry leaders, and academia outside it. These coalitions drive collective momentum for change, ensuring reforms have broad-based support.

Reform Design

We provide technical expertise to governments, shaping laws, policies, institutional frameworks, and budgetary allocations. The governance systems we design are built to enable meaningful and sustainable reforms.

Reform Implementation Support

We work alongside union and state governments, offering hands-on support — developing toolkits, delivering training programmes, building institutional capacity, and monitoring projects. This ensures reforms move beyond policy documents to become fully adopted and institutionalised for government-led scale-up.



Who we work with

Janaagraha operates at three levels to drive the adoption of city-systems reform. This multi-tiered approach ensures we work where decisions are made, funding flows, and coalitions can create lasting change. Through this three-level engagement model, Janaagraha ensures city-systems reform gains traction at every decision-making tier — from grassroots engagement to policy design to implementation at scale.

Union Government

Union government and constitutional bodies have the convening power and funding mechanisms essential for large-scale reform. We work with ministries, finance commissions, and constitutional bodies to unlock and streamline funding for key urban agendas. Our role involves conceiving and building reform enablers across policy, data, and platforms while spurring demand from states through incentive mechanisms. We are currently partnering with the 16th Finance Commission, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India, and NITI Aayog.

State Governments

Urban Local Governments often lack the funds, functions, and functionaries they need to deliver quality of life to their citizens. Since local government is a state subject, we partner with state governments — currently Assam, Uttar Pradesh, and Odisha — through our State Urban Transformation Agenda (SUTRA) to address this systemically.

STATE URBAN TRANSFORMATION AGENDA (SUTRA)

SUTRA is a holistic, state-level model for urban transformation that works across city-systems to deliver outcomes in climate, health, and equity. Each programme is customised, articulated, and owned by state governments, and is grounded in the principles of place-based governance.

The model balances projects with reforms — meeting the immediate goals of the state while pursuing long-term city-systems transformation. It aligns multiple funding sources toward common goals, enabling convergence across schemes and departments rather than fragmented, siloed interventions. Central to the model are participatory planning instruments like City Action Plans and Neighbourhood Improvement Plans, and a differentiated approach to governance based on city size and type.

As anchor partner, Janaagraha designs the programme, convenes ecosystem partners, and provides technical assistance for state-level reforms and lighthouse projects.

Ecosystem

City-systems reform requires a whole-of-society approach involving citizens, civic leaders, businesses, media, academia, and civil society organisations. We foster greater understanding of complex urban challenges and their systemic solutions, build coalitions that cut across sectors, and forge partnerships that collectively advance and support the adoption of transformative reforms.



STORIES OF IMPACT

- 1 A Reform Roadmap that Reimagines India's Urban Governance
- 2 CAG's First Audit on Implementation of the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act Spotlights Urban Governance Reality
- 3 How CityFinance.in is Enabling Financial Transparency in 4,800+ Cities
- 4 When India's City Leaders Joined the Urban Governance Dialogue
- 5 India's Most Climate-vulnerable State Chooses City-Systems Thinking

- 6 Odisha's Digital Grants Dashboard Brings Real-Time Transparency to 115 Cities
- 7 How Structured Capacity Building of 3,000 Personnel Strengthened Municipal Performance in Odisha
- 8 Building Democracy from the Ground Up: Institutionalising Participatory Platforms in Odisha's Slums
- 9 Strengthening Participatory Governance in Karnataka
- 10 Nurturing the Next Generation of Active Citizens in Kurukshetra

A Reform Roadmap that Reimagines India's Urban Governance

IN OCTOBER 2023, we published the sixth edition of the [Annual Survey of India's City-Systems \(ASICS\)](#), our flagship diagnostic of urban governance that has tracked city-systems across India since 2013. [ASICS 2023](#) examined all 35 states and union territories, identifying significant gaps in planning, urban design, governance, participation, public financial management, and human resources. It detailed 10 Instruments of Change to address these gaps.

ASICS Annual Survey of India's City-Systems

ASICS 2023

- 35 states, all union territories
- Evaluates the quality of urban laws using the city-systems framework

10 instruments of change addressing gaps in

- Planning and Urban Design
- Governance
- Participation
- Public Financial Management
- Human Resources

Janaagraha's Roadmap for India's City- Systems Reforms

Built on ASICS 2023

Three evidence-based pathways

- Place-based governance responding to local contexts
- Decentralised participatory governance strengthening Urban Local Governments
- Enhanced state capacities in municipal finances and human resources.

Across All
City-Systems



IMPACT GOAL
Across all Impact Goals

PATHWAY/S
Thought Leadership



“

ASICS 2023 is a meticulous and praiseworthy effort. I endorse the ten key recommendations made in the report. They can deepen the principles of decentralisation and devolution in urban governance and revitalise the spirit of the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act (1992).

SHRI HARDEEP SINGH PURI

FORMER MINISTER OF HOUSING AND URBAN AFFAIRS,
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

Janaagraha's [Roadmap for India's City-Systems Reforms](#), launched on 20 November 2024, built on this foundation and sharpened insights from ASICS 2023 into actionable recommendations. The Roadmap presents three evidence-based pathways: place-based governance responding to local contexts, decentralised participatory governance strengthening Urban Local Governments, and enhanced state capacities in municipal finances and human resources. It also articulates a differentiated approach for metropolitan, emerging, and small cities — moving from standardised approaches to place-based solutions.

This framework was presented at our [7th Annual Conclave](#) in New Delhi where NITI Aayog's Vice-Chairperson Suman Bery and CEO BVR Subrahmanyam joined senior policymakers, elected representatives, philanthropists, and community leaders for engaging discussions on systemic reforms. The conclave reinforced Janaagraha's unique ability to bridge policy expertise with grassroots perspectives.

A Roadmap for
India's City-
Systems Reforms



DOWNLOAD

CAG's First Audit on Implementation of the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act Spotlights Urban Governance Reality

Thirty-two years after the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act (CAA) promised to empower India's cities, the reality remains stark: constitutional devolution exists on paper while implementation falters in practice.

The Challenge

What audit findings reveal

The challenges facing urban governance across India and offer policymakers, practitioners, and researchers crucial evidence for strengthening constitutional devolution.

4 OF 18 FUNCTIONS ARE EFFECTIVELY DEVOLVED TO ULGS WITH COMPLETE AUTONOMY

1600/2625 ULGS LACK ACTIVE ELECTED COUNCILS 61/241 MILLION OF URBAN CITIZENS CAN DIRECTLY ELECT THEIR MAYOR

412 DAY AVERAGE DELAY IN FORMING STATE FINANCE COMMISSIONS

42% AVERAGE RESOURCE-EXPENDITURE GAP AMONG ULGS 61% FUND UTILISATION

37% STAFF VACANCY RATE IN ULGS, AGAINST SANCTIONED POSTS



IMPACT GOAL
Greater Devolution of 3Fs

PATHWAY/S
Thought Leadership
Policy Engagement and Coalitions



K Sanjay Murthy, CAG of India and Srikanth Viswanathan, CEO, Janaagraha, along with Subir Mallick, Deputy CAG (Local Government Audit), and Anand Iyer, Chief Policy and Insights Officer, Janaagraha at the signing of the MoU

“

As we navigate the complexities of urbanisation and strive to build economically vibrant, environmentally sustainable, equitable and democratic cities, the findings derived from these audits are more pertinent than ever. By leveraging these findings, our policymakers have a unique opportunity to champion the cause for robust urban governance — equipping ULGs with funds, functions and functionaries, as well as appropriate institutional designs that help them respond to the needs and aspirations of citizens.

I extend my appreciation to Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy, Bengaluru, for their invaluable contribution to the development of this compendium. I hope that all readers will benefit from this.

GIRISH CHANDRA MURMU
FORMER COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL OF INDIA

In April 2025, building on this five-year collaboration, Janaagraha and the CAG signed a five-year MoU. The engagement will focus on three transformative areas: developing a new digital-first National Municipal Accounts Manual and Finance Code; pioneering place-based audits to measure ease of living and doing business in major cities; and creating accessible data ecosystems for accountability.

Through these initiatives, the CAG-Janaagraha partnership will strengthen financial reporting, enhance governance systems, and improve service delivery across India's urban landscape.

How CityFinance.in is Enabling Financial Transparency in 4,800+ Cities

Municipal financial data from annual audited statements and budgets is a critical source of information on a city's fiscal health, financial sustainability, and development priorities. It is essential for evidence-based policy and governance decisions.



IMPACT GOAL

Fiscal Efficiency, Transparency, and Accountability

PATHWAY/S

Thought Leadership
Reform Design
Reform Implementation Support

cityfinance.in

Standardised, timely and credible financial information for **4,332** cities of India

Search for City or State

Search

However, in India, this data has typically been inaccessible and opaque. Audited accounts were often submitted late or not at all. Each Urban Local Government (ULG) followed its own reporting format, and even when prescribed formats existed, adherence was inconsistent. Non-standardised data made comparison across cities difficult. Information was rarely available in machine-readable formats, limiting the ability to analyse data at scale. This kept citizens, policymakers, and researchers from engaging meaningfully with how cities raised and spent public money.

To address this systemic gap, Janaagraha partnered with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs to conceive, develop, and manage India's first municipal finance platform: [CityFinance.in](#). The portal was launched in early 2020 and later adopted by the 15th Finance Commission (FC) for disbursal of its grants. As the public disclosure of audited financial statements was a key compliance requirement of the 15th FC grants, Janaagraha built a paperless compliance platform with seamless approval workflows across three tiers of government. This has enabled 99% of ULGs to submit their grant compliance digitally and led to over 95% of ULGs submitting accounts audited by independent third parties. As part of our reform implementation support efforts, Janaagraha standardised these statements using the National Municipal Accounting Manual, transforming fragmented formats into comparable, machine-readable datasets.

Janaagraha's thought leadership and reform design have helped institutionalise a systemic shift: cities now have internal processes to produce audited statements on time, disclose them publicly, and contribute to a national financial repository.

Transforming Municipal Finance in India

15,000 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FROM 4,300+ ULGS

11,000+ MUNICIPAL BUDGETS CONSOLIDATED FROM 2,500+ ULGS

148 CITIES WITH CREDIT RATING DATA 50 MUNICIPAL BOND ISSUANCES TRACKED

ACTIVELY USED BY
▪ RBI
▪ NIUA
▪ NIPFP
▪ CAG
▪ Credit rating agencies
▪ Investment banks

₹66,000CR RELEASED UNDER 15TH FINANCE COMMISSION GRANTS

CITYFINANCE.IN has transformed municipal finance in India into a transparent, standardised, and accessible public resource — empowering reform, accountability, and data-driven governance at scale.

When India's City Leaders Joined the Urban Governance Dialogue

City leaders — mayors, municipal chairpersons, and councillors — have a deep understanding of urban challenges, ranging from infrastructure deficits to fiscal constraints. Their voices are indispensable to shaping urban finance and governance reforms yet are rarely centred in national policy discussions.

Recognising this disconnect between policy design and ground-level implementation, the 16th Finance Commission convened a first-of-its-kind platform for direct dialogue with urban practitioners.

On 26 November 2024, the 16th Finance Commission partnered with Janaagraha to organise the National Conference of Mayors and Chairpersons at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi. Nearly 60 elected city leaders from 25 states participated, representing the full spectrum of India's urban governance: municipal corporations, municipalities, and town panchayats. The day-long event was chaired by Dr Arvind Panagariya, Chairman of the 16th Finance Commission, with all members in attendance.

Structured across three distinct sessions tailored to different tiers of urban local governments, the conference spotlighted governance, fiscal, and institutional challenges specific to each city type. Leaders exchanged experiences on tied versus untied grants, participatory planning, and innovative practices in revenue generation and service delivery. Dr Panagariya highlighted urbanisation's transformative role while acknowledging migration pressures and resource constraints. The convening revealed contextual differences across city types, systemic delays in fund flows, and promising innovations in governance practices.

We are hopeful that the expertise and lived experiences shared by urban practitioners during the conference will inform the 16th Finance Commission's recommendations for urban devolution.



IMPACT GOAL

Greater Devolution of 3Fs

PATHWAY/S

Policy Engagement and Coalitions



Dr Arvind Panagariya, Chairman, 16th Finance Commission, with members of the 16th FC, select mayors and chairpersons, and the Janaagraha team

India's Most Climate-Vulnerable State Chooses City-Systems Thinking

Assam, India's most climate-vulnerable state, is home to 15 of the country's 25 most climate-exposed districts. With only 14.1% of its population in cities — less than half the national average — the state has a unique opportunity to build climate-resilient city-systems from the ground up, rather than retrofitting existing models.

The Government of Assam's 'Doh Shaher Ek Rupayan' (DSER) programme seeks to leverage this opportunity. Anchored by Janaagraha and Jana Urban Space Foundation, DSER focuses on the development of ten critical cities in Assam (beyond Guwahati) through a twin-track strategy of projects and governance reforms. The programme addresses the ten components of: solid waste management, drinking water and sanitation, public infrastructure, blue-green infrastructure, traffic management, streetlights, urban planning, financial strengthening, human resource rationalisation, and digital and online services. This approach prioritises place-based solutions, climate resilience, and collaborative partnerships to move beyond siloed interventions.

City Action Plans (CAPs) form the operational core of DSER. They are actionable blueprints in which citizens define priorities and aspirations, institutions test feasibility and coordinate departmental response, and cities commit to implementation. This process organises community needs into time-bound interventions. The resulting CAPs are cross-sectoral and grounded in each city's unique context — with defined responsibilities, budgets, and implementation partners.

Key highlights of DSER, to date, include:

- City Action Plans co-created from the ground up in eight out of ten cities, through 300+ stakeholder interviews, 95+ field visits, and engagement with 1,700+ individuals including Self-Help Groups, resident welfare associations, and citizen collectives. Remaining two CAPs are in progress.
- Lighthouse projects demonstrating replicable solutions, including the North Lakhimpur Urban Forest.
- State-wide institutional strengthening through two pioneering bodies ASIUD and AUIDFCL, as well as state-wide reforms in public finance management and organisational development.

Through DSER, Assam is charting a new path for urban development—one where infrastructure projects, governance reforms, and community participation work in tandem. As these initiatives move from planning to implementation, we hope to see Assam's cities emerge as models of sustainable development where economic growth, environmental resilience, and democratic engagement advance together.



IMPACT GOAL

Place-based Governance; SUTRA

PATHWAY/S

Reform Design
Reform Implementation Support



A community-led needs assessment underway in Sivasagar, Assam



Through Doh Shaher Ek Rupayan, we want to guide every city towards planned and structured development. These City Action Plans mark the beginning of identifying the real and specific needs of each city, and this process will be extended to all 104 Urban Local Bodies in Assam... Very often, different departments work in silos, resulting in overlaps and inefficient use of funds. This is why such integrated planning is essential. Janaagraha, with its deep experience in urban planning and development, has supported our department throughout this process. I am confident that each city in Assam will grow in a planned way and evolve into a beautiful and well-managed urban centre.

JAYANTA MALLABARUAH

MINISTER, HOUSING AND URBAN AFFAIRS,
GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM



The Doh Shaher Ek Rupayan initiative of the Government of Assam is pioneering in its approach. For the first time in India, a truly city-centric model of urban planning has been adopted... The City Action Plans reflect the real aspirations of citizens and the priorities of ward councillors and municipal bodies. They are grounded in what citizens want and are not documents prepared from behind a desk.

KAVITHA PADMANABHAN, IAS

COMMISSIONER AND SECRETARY TO THE
GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM,
DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN AFFAIRS

Odisha's Digital Grants Dashboard Brings Real-Time Transparency to 115 Cities

Urban Local Governments (ULGs) across India struggle with delayed fund disbursements and complex fund flows between different levels of government.

Urban Grants Monitoring System

OPERATES ACROSS
115 URBAN LOCAL
GOVTS IN ODISHA

TRACKING OVER
₹3,000CR
ACROSS 4 SCHEMES

Spending happens across multiple agencies through separate financial systems, scattering data in non-standardised formats that cannot be easily compared or consolidated. State decision-makers and city officials are left with no real-time data on how grants are being spent — making it difficult to plan budgets, release funds on time, or improve services. Odisha recognised that transparent, real-time financial tracking could transform how the state's 115 ULGs manage funds and deliver services to citizens.

Janaagraha partnered with Odisha's Housing and Urban Development Department (HUDD) to design and implement the Urban Grants Monitoring System. The work began with comprehensive mapping of 14 key HUDD schemes through stakeholder interviews and document analysis — tracing fund flows and administrative processes from budget allotment to expenditure, identifying IT systems involved, and documenting inefficiencies. These findings shaped the development of a dashboard that tracks union and state grant expenditures, enabling timely fund releases and strategic planning. Priority schemes were identified and integrated immediately, creating a foundation for transparent urban financial management in the state.

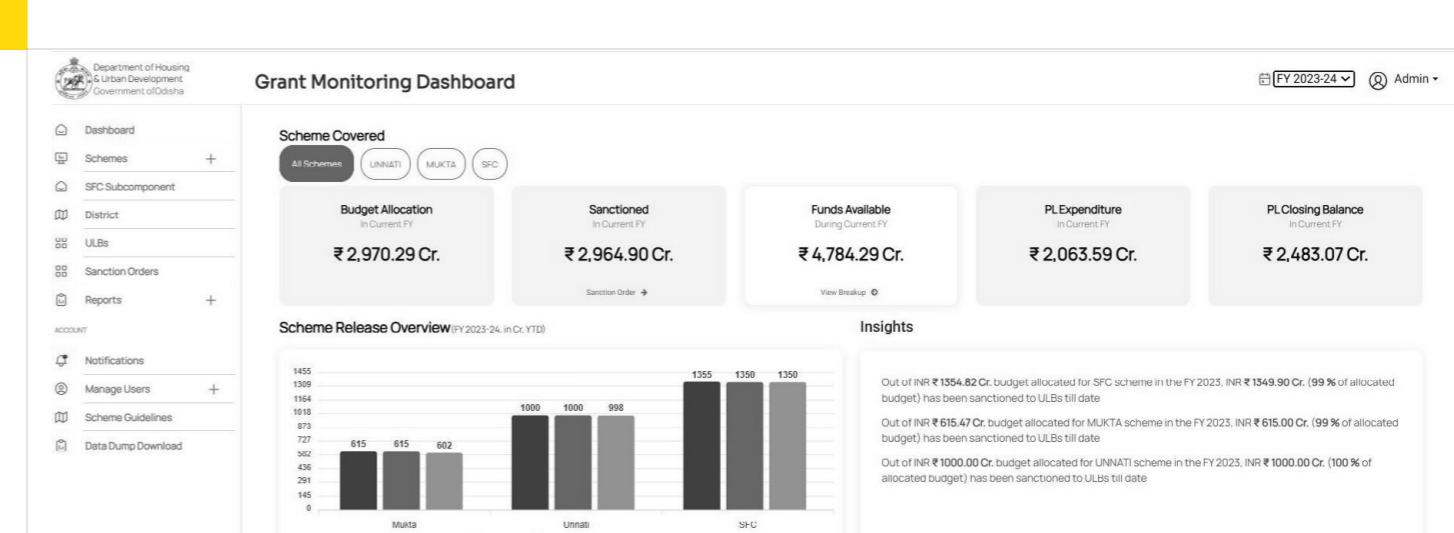


IMPACT GOAL

Fiscal Efficiency, Transparency, and Accountability
Resource Augmentation

PATHWAY/S

Reform Design
Reform Implementation Support



The Urban Grants Monitoring System now operates across all 115 urban local governments in Odisha, tracking over INR 3,000 crores across four schemes. State-level decision-makers can monitor fund utilisation and proactively engage with low-spending ULGs to address bottlenecks. At the city level, commissioners and executive officers now have actionable data to inform their budget decisions and improve service delivery.

Odisha's model demonstrates that transparent financial visibility enables better resource management and establishes a replicable blueprint for data-driven urban financial governance across the country.



The Grants Management Dashboard provides ULG-wise, real-time information on unspent balances for major state schemes, enabling timely fund releases to the ULGs. It also offers an overview of each ULG's fund status by providing real-time information on expenditure, releases, and available funds. It has been a very handy decision-making tool over the past couple of years.

SIKHA BISWAL, OFS

FINANCIAL ADVISOR-CUM-ADDITIONAL SECRETARY,
HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT,
GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA

Laying the Foundation for Performance Management Across 3,000 Municipal Positions in Odisha

India's municipalities face capacity constraints across four dimensions: quantity (inadequate staffing levels), quality (unclear roles and absent competency frameworks), design (inefficient organisational structures), and performance management (no systematic assessment and accountability systems).



IMPACT GOAL

Improved Municipal Staffing and Performance Management

PATHWAY/S

Reform Implementation Support

Building Municipal Capacity

THROUGH

- Organisational design
- Skills development
- Performance accountability

SCALED UNIFIED REVENUE
COLLECTION (URC) WITH
WOMEN SELF-HELP GROUPS FROM

1 city → 4 cities

97 SMALLER ULGs USING
DIGITAL SOLID WASTE
MANAGEMENT TRACKING

ACROSS MAJOR STATE INITIATIVES

- MUKTA (public works)
- FSSM (sanitation)
- SWM (solid waste management)
- WATCO (water-supply)

15 JOB AIDS WITH SIMPLIFIED
PROCESSES AND
CERTIFICATION-BASED
TRAINING MODULES

3,000 MUNICIPAL
PERSONNEL

Operating under optimised
frameworks that:

- Clarify roles
- Build competencies systematically
- Track performance

These deficits impact service delivery and infrastructure projects, undermining the quality of life of citizens. The status quo approach relies on ad-hoc fixes, including assigning additional charges to overburdened staff or contracting temporary support. What cities need instead is structured capacity planning that identifies critical roles for permanent hiring, optimises existing personnel, and makes strategic outsourcing decisions.

Working with the Government of Odisha, Janaagraha addressed the root causes of municipal staffing through a comprehensive approach. We applied a Competency-Based Human Resource Management framework to operations across three major state initiatives — MUKTA (public works), FSSM (sanitation), SWM (solid waste management) — and the water-supply parastatal, WATCO.

We first finalised departmental Key Result Areas for each of the above, then cascaded them to cities and individual Key Performance Indicators for key position holders. This involved mapping 329 activities, identifying approximately 60 unique positions, and developing PRACs (Position-wise Roles, Activities, and Competencies) for each. This differed from the FRAC (Framework of Roles, Activities, and Competencies) approach used in the rest of the country. Since municipal personnel typically hold multiple responsibilities through additional charges, training is better served for the position and all its responsibilities rather than just for individual scheme requirements.

We introduced certification-based training modules and simplified processes through 15 job aids. Innovations included scaling the Unified Revenue Collection (URC) model — which leverages women Self-Help Group members to streamline municipal revenue collection — from one city to four. We also designed a pilot digital tracking system to improve the efficiency of solid waste management across 97 of the smaller urban local governments.

The foundation has now been laid for over 3,000 municipal personnel to operate under optimised frameworks that clarify roles, build competencies systematically, and track performance. This demonstrates that municipal capacity building requires a comprehensive strategy extending beyond hiring numbers to encompass organisational design, competency alignment, and performance accountability. By addressing all four dimensions together, Odisha's cities are now better positioned to build and sustain capabilities to serve their citizens more effectively.

Building Democracy from the Ground Up: Institutionalising Participatory Platforms in Odisha's Slums

Nearly 25% of Odisha's urban population lives in 2,919 slums across 115 cities — that is 1.7 million individuals living in poor conditions with limited access to basic services and excluded from participating in the development of their cities.

In 2018, the Government of Odisha launched the Jaga Mission to transform existing slums into livable habitats and integrate previously marginalised voices. After securing tenure for slum dwellers through in-situ land rights, the Jaga Mission enabled slum upgradation through participatory processes where communities led their own transformation. Janaagraha partnered with the Government of Odisha to institutionalise this participation through Slum Dwellers Associations (SDAs), legally recognised entities integrated into the urban governance structure under the Odisha Municipal Corporation Act as a part of ward committees. Each SDA signs an MoU with its ULG, formalising its role as an implementation partner with authority to manage community assets and oversee developmental works.

To enable SDAs to exercise this authority effectively, Janaagraha launched a statewide capacity-building programme. Master trainers were trained across 30 districts, who then cascaded the training to 10,094 SDA members through 261 batches. These members gained the skills to govern their communities, amplify their concerns and needs, and work with civic authorities to address them. To embed these practices, five comprehensive SOPs were developed. These now guide everything from monthly meetings to asset management and financial literacy. Tech-enabled tools like the Adarsh Colony portal and the SDA Training App further streamlined operations.



IMPACT GOAL

Greater Devolution of 3Fs
Platforms for Participation

PATHWAY/S

Reform Implementation Support



An SDA meeting underway at a community centre

The results show systemic change at scale:

- ~3,000 SDAs established as formal governance platforms
- 9,000+ SDA members trained in participatory governance
- 1,684 of 2,919 slums upgraded and reclassified as Adarsh Colonies
- 2,04,007 families across 1,684 communities gained improved infrastructure and services
- 25% of ULG budgets earmarked for slum development, up from 2-3%
- 800 master trainers (444 women) trained across 30 districts.

SDAs now operate as the fourth tier of governance with real budgetary power. Fear of displacement has given way to the dignity of belonging. Odisha's model stands as a replicable blueprint for inclusive urban governance across India, proving that the most transformative solutions emerge when excluded communities become empowered stakeholders in their own development.

Strengthening Participatory Governance in Karnataka

Once a pioneer of decentralised participatory governance, Karnataka today, like most states across India, faces steady erosion of urban local democracy with significant challenges in fiscal, functional, and participatory decentralisation.

To address these systemic gaps and strengthen participatory governance in the state, Janaagraha pursued three distinct approaches:

1. Evidence Generation

Developed [A Critical Review of Decentralised Participatory Governance in Cities of Karnataka](#), a comprehensive study documenting critical gaps in the implementation of the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act across the state.

Key findings revealed:

- Municipal governments lack control over 15 of the 18 constitutionally mandated functions.
- Elections to municipal corporations face an average delay of 22 months.
- A total delay of 2.5 years in formation of municipal councils and election of mayors.
- 10 of 11 city corporations lack functional ward committees.
- Citizens lack access to council debates, proceedings, and development project information.

Released on 31 August 2024 through a roundtable with constitutional experts and legislators, the report offers recommendations to equip Karnataka's cities for the 21st century.



IMPACT GOAL

Greater Devolution of 3Fs
Platforms for Participation
Stronger Councillor Leadership

PATHWAY/S

Thought Leadership
Policy Engagement and Coalitions



Snapshot from the Karnataka Roundtable on Urban Governance

2. Policy Analysis

Janaagraha's comparative study of the [Greater Bengaluru Governance Bill 2024](#) found that, while a good first step towards establishing a metropolitan governance model in India, the Bill scored 3.35/10 with critical misses on planning, mayoral empowerment, and transparency. We also developed a [roadmap](#) to unlock the Act's potential through actionable recommendations.

3. Citizen Mobilisation

Between 2022 and 2025, as part of the Karnataka Ward Samiti Balaga's efforts, over 5,000 citizens and nearly 500 RWAs and CSOs were engaged through hundreds of meetings across 11 city corporations in the state. These engagements focused on the formation of ward committees and area sabhas as place-based forums for citizen participation.

While the evidence base and policy analysis provided a rigorous, data-driven foundation, the roundtable offered a platform for dialogue between legislators, constitutional experts, and civil society for co-creating solutions. The Karnataka Ward Samiti Balaga too has evolved into an independent citizen network working to create salience for ward committees and citizen concerns.

Together, these three approaches lay the groundwork for sustained reform efforts.

A Critical Review of Decentralised Participatory Governance in Cities of Karnataka



[DOWNLOAD](#)

Analysis of the Greater Bengaluru Governance Bill



[DOWNLOAD](#)

Making the GBG Act, 2024 work for Bengaluru



[DOWNLOAD](#)

Nurturing the Next Generation of Active Citizens in Kurukshetra

Across India, civic participation remains limited, in part because civic awareness and education are not sufficiently nurtured from an early age. While our education system has made significant strides, it continues to underemphasise the essential skills required for democratic engagement and collaborative problem-solving in communities.



IMPACT GOAL

Platforms for Participation

PATHWAY/S

Reform Design
Reform Implementation Support



Students during a live-action project in Kurukshetra.

Government schools, which educate around 65% of India's children, offer a powerful platform for building civic consciousness at scale. Recognising this opportunity, the Kurukshetra district of Haryana launched a pioneering partnership with Janaagraha in 2022, signing a three-year MoU to introduce systematic civic learning across selected government schools in the district.

Under this partnership, Janaagraha's Civic and Social Action Programme (CSAP) was implemented across 50 government schools in Kurukshetra's five educational blocks. Designed to transform students into informed, responsible, and active citizens, the programme combines classroom education with experiential learning through live-action projects and is delivered through a Train-the-Trainer (TOT) model that has equipped 106 government schoolteachers.

Through CSAP, students engaged in live-action projects on water conservation, waste management, climate change, drug abuse, and gender inequality. They conducted household surveys in more than 35 villages across five blocks and participated in community engagement sessions. They also took part in democratic processes through Bal Sabhas, where elected student representatives presented initiatives directly to block and district officials, creating meaningful dialogue between young citizens and governance structures.

CSAP

11,482
STUDENTS ENGAGED

3,858
STUDENTS LEADING

184
LIVE-ACTION PROJECTS

Civic and Social Action Programme established a strong, replicable model for institutionalising civic education across the state

DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION STRENGTHENED THROUGH

10 COMMUNITY MEETINGS

3,500+
HOUSEHOLDS SURVEYED,

DEEPENING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN THOL, KASITHAL, MANGOLI JATTAN

5 BAL SABHAS

THE DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION now prepared to independently expand CSAP to at least 100 schools by 2026-27

The Jana in Janaagraha

130+
team
members

5
offices

10+
locations

“Working at Janaagraha has not only deepened my understanding of city-systems but has also transformed me both professionally and personally. The Culture Codes ‘I care,’ ‘I strive to excel,’ and ‘I take ownership’ have shaped the way I approach both work and life. I started my journey here as an intern, working mostly in the background on data from CityFinance.in.

Over time, I found myself taking on bigger responsibilities — from standardising financial statements of cities to leading digitisation efforts and several other projects which nudged me out of my comfort zone. This shift taught me that caring for the details, striving to improve every day, and taking ownership of outcomes can truly change the way we work.

HARIPRASAD V NAIR
SENIOR ASSOCIATE, MUNICIPAL FINANCE

NEHA REBECCA CHACKO
ASSOCIATE, POLICY AND INSIGHTS

City-systems change does not happen in isolation — it transforms the people driving it. Janaagraha’s seven [Culture Codes](#) are more than workplace guidelines; they are a way of thinking that shapes how our team approaches both professional challenges and personal growth. From interns discovering their potential to seasoned professionals deepening their systems thinking, working at Janaagraha means embracing ownership, patience, and depth in everything we do.

“I Practice Systems Thinking’ and ‘I Practice Urgent Patience’ are two culture codes that guide me. Working on the ASICS report, the city-systems framework constantly shapes how I see the world. It pushes me to focus on root causes whether its regarding poor governance or a fight with my sibling. This thinking helps me anticipate the consequences of my actions, words, and choices. On the other hand, urgent patience reminds me to pause for clarity, adapt when needed and embrace challenges as opportunities to keep learning.

“Working with the Civic Learning programme has profoundly shaped how I see change. Watching Class 6 students in Kurukshetra conduct a water audit, take ownership, and inspire their peers and local government showed me the ripple effect of small actions. Their patience, persistence, and sense of responsibility reminded me of the values we live by at Janaagraha — and taught me to approach both work and life challenges with the same focus, depth, and belief in collective impact.

JITESH PANDEY
MANAGER, CIVIC LEARNING

“Transforming city-systems has transformed me too. I now think in systems, act with urgency but patience, and carry empathy into every conversation — living Janaagraha’s culture codes not just at work, but in who I am becoming. City-systems don’t change overnight, and neither do we. By choosing depth and practicing urgent patience, I’ve grown alongside the communities I work with.

ANKITA KHUNTIA
MANAGER, STATE PROGRAMME - ODISHA



Our Supporters and Partners

Transforming India's city-systems requires partners who think in decades, not years. Our donors invest in reforms that compound over time. Our government partners trust us with policy reform that affects countless citizens. Our civil society allies share our commitment to systemic transformation, bringing complementary expertise that amplifies collective impact. Together, we're building the institutional infrastructure that India's urban future demands — where cities serve every citizen.

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- Sainsons Paper Industries Private Limited
- Silicon Valley Community Foundation
- TPG Capital India Private Limited
- Tree of Life Foundation
- UK Online Giving Foundation

NATIONAL-LEVEL INSTITUTIONS

- Capacity Building Commission (CBC) of India
- Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India
- Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA)
- NITI Aayog
- Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)
- 16th Finance Commission of India

STATE GOVERNMENTS

- Government of Assam
- Government of Odisha
- Government of Uttar Pradesh

CIVIL SOCIETY PARTNERS

- Centre for Effective Governance of Indian States (CEGIS)
- Samyak - Collective Good Foundation
- Dasra
- eGov Foundation
- Karnataka Ward Samiti Balaga

ALLIANCES

- CRA (ClimateRise Alliance)
- National Faecal Sludge and Septage Management (NFSSM) Alliance
- UCAN (Urban Collective Action Network)
- Urban Health Initiative (UHI)





Financial Highlights

Janaagraha is governed under the Indian Trusts Act, 1882. We are registered under FCRA and are compliant with its regulations. We also publish our audited accounts annually. Our commitment to transparency extends beyond compliance — it reflects our belief that accountable institutions create accountable cities.

BALANCE SHEET AS AT	MARCH 31, 2025	MARCH 31, 2024	In INR, Crores MARCH 31, 2023
SOURCE OF FUNDS			
General fund	2.71	2.71	2.71
Corpus/Endowment Funds	9.00	9.00	9.00
Income and expenditure account	20.39	16.07	17.77
Current liabilities	0.33	0.44	0.25
TOTAL	32.43	28.22	29.73
APPLICATION OF FUNDS			
Non-current assets	15.70	14.78	19.83
Current assets	16.73	13.44	9.90
TOTAL	32.43	28.22	29.73
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEAR ENDED			
INCOME			
Income from Donations	30.46	21.36	20.03
Interest & Other Income	2.24	2.98	2.10
TOTAL	32.70	24.34	22.13
EXPENDITURE			
Salaries & Allowances - Personnel Cost	17.26	14.05	12.13
Direct Program Expenses	7.26	7.05	7.60
Admin & Others	3.59	4.70	4.85
Depreciation	0.26	0.25	0.24
TOTAL	28.37	26.05	24.82

1. Book of accounts and financial statements are prepared based on cash basis of accounting.
2. Income and expenditure account balance refers to carry forward donations for the future period.



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