

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs) ON COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION FUND

a. Why do we need a CPF?

As described earlier, the “idea” of community participation is difficult to realise on-the-ground. Critically, communities lack the platforms to participate and the capacity to engage meaningfully in such platforms. Hence, CPF is meant to catalyse the process of community participation by creating a “Participation Incubator” in some sense allowing communities to experience the process of collective decision-making for themselves and taking full accountability for these decisions on themselves.

b. There have been many instances of community-based projects. What is the relevance of CPF to JNNURM?

JNNURM envisages the establishment of permanent structures at the grassroots for community participation, called Area Sabhas. These Area Sabhas are not meant to be created and dismantled for projects, but remain as continuing participatory platforms for communities. However, due to a variety of reasons, it is reasonable to believe that these platforms will not become established overnight, nor will citizens have the capacity to fully utilise these spaces if such space is indeed provided. CPF, by providing the preparation and capacity building funds for participation, allows communities to begin experiencing participation, and hence prepare themselves through baby steps for the larger, permanent process of participation as envisaged in JNNURM.

c. How will increased community participation help the larger JNNURM goals?

One of the stated goals of JNNURM is that cities define their own goals for themselves, become more autonomous, and more accountable to their citizens. Hence, this is a bottom-up view of urban local governance, whose success will be driven by two critical ingredients: one, the opportunity for all the city's local stakeholders to participate in defining the city's goals (including the poor); and two, the accountability of the city to these stakeholders, as much if not more than to other levels of government, state or central. Neither of these is possible without well-functioning platforms of participation and accountability like the Area Sabha as envisaged in JNNURM.

d. What will be the kinds of projects encouraged in CPF?

Some examples of the types of CPF projects have been provided. While this is not an exhaustive list, clear guidelines established for CPF funding both on what will be funded and also what will not be funded are there. CPF projects need to be local in nature, not too technically complex and relatively quick to implement.

e. Why do we need to have the members of the polling booth/Area Sabha approve the project?

The CPF is meant to prepare communities to participate in long-term platforms like the Area Sabha that are conceived in JNNURM. Also, community participation cannot become divorced from the larger processes of the local government and must in fact strengthen these processes by taking them to the people. Hence, CPF projects are not meant to support any kind of community projects, but only those where the participatory structures are being linked into municipal governance

processes. The polling booth is the smallest footprint for such processes with a clearly defined list of registered voters, thus entailing no confusion about the composition of the community, yielding way to the Area Sabha concept in the future.

f. The requirement for Area Sabhas in JNNURM will take a few years to get established. What will happen to CPF in the meantime? How will people participate when there are no Area Sabhas?

The concept of the CPF is precisely to prepare communities to participate in platforms that are being established. While Area Sabhas will take time to get established, they will be defined around the footprint of the polling booth one or more depending on the nature and extent of the project proposal. Hence, the CPF requirement of having approval from fifty percent members of the polling booth will prepare community members to participate in future Area Sabha structures.

g. Why do we need to have the elected representative approve the project?

As mentioned earlier, community participation in JNNURM is being envisaged as deepening the process of local governance. It is disruptive to establish community participation mechanisms that are not linked into the existing process of local elected government, as has been seen in some early examples in community-based rural development projects.

h. Who will maintain these CPF project assets once they are created?

One of the assessment conditions for CPF projects is clear visibility on the continuing operations and maintenance of assets being created, both from a financial standpoint, as well as from a responsibility standpoint.

i. Will all the money for the CPF project come only from CPF?

One of the mandatory conditions of CPF is that 5% - 10% of project funds comes from the community themselves. The amount could be less for urban poor projects and higher for the general category of projects.

j. This process of over-consultation at the grassroots level is too idealistic. Will people actually be able to discuss, negotiate and agree on anything, let alone a project and then be able to carry it out over time?

It is true that there is a lot of capacity building required at the grassroots, for people to make collective decisions. However, this is why CPF is needed. If participatory processes are recognised as being central to making larger processes of governance work, then communities must begin to experience this participation in small steps. CPF is meant to prepare communities for this process, which is why some funds are being set aside in each project for capacity building.

In any event, if communities cannot come together, they will not be able to submit a CPF proposal. It is not envisaged that CPF will result in an avalanche of proposals within a short period. However, it will catalyse the process and - if well documented and shared across cities - result in communities learning from each others' experiences.

k. What is the role being envisaged for NGOs?

Communities may need local capacity on many fronts. They could seek the support of grassroots NGOs for these issues, in project preparation, ongoing functioning, capacity building and so on. NGOs could play a critical role in ensuring that communities come together and get comfortable in the process of participation on all aspects of the process.

l. Why should the CPF projects be appraised first by the Technical Advisory Group/PAC, rather than the Ministry itself directly?

The terms of reference for the TAG requires it to ensure greater participation and citizen involvement. CPF is envisaged as one of the key tools to make this happen. Given that the membership of TAG is made of civil society representatives, it also creates an institutional process in JNNURM where communities could prepare projects, apply for approval, procure approval and execute these projects completely, through a channel established exclusively for this purpose, starting at the City-level TAG wherever they have been set up and then the National Technical Advisory Group. It must be noted that the role of the TAGs will not be to deal with the release of funds; that is purely a matter for the Ministry of Urban Development.