Urban Governance Issue in Bhimdutta Municipality, Kanchanpur

Key Words: Urban Governance, Municipality, Citizen Participation, Territorial Cohesion

Introduction:

Habitat III issue number 6 conceptualize Urban Governance as “the software that enables the urban hardware to function, the enabling environment requiring the adequate legal frameworks, efficient political, managerial and administrative processes, as well as strong and capable local institutions able to respond to the citizens needs.” This conception of Urban Governance is discussed for the hereafter described Municipality in Nepal, Bhimdutta Municipality.

Bhimdutta Municipality is located on the former Farwestern Development Region, Mahakali Zone, Kanchanpur district of Nepal. Presently on the Seven (7 no.) province after the promulgation of new constitution on 2072 BS. The city of Mahendragar included by this municipality was initially declared as Mahendranagar Municipality which on later termed as Bhimdutta Municipality by the name of Bhimdutta Panta.

The Bhimdutta Municipality is 9th largest city of Nepal. The population according to census 2011 was 106,666 with the growth rate 2.77 from 2001-2011. The ranking of top cities of Nepal shows the position of this municipality at 7th in 1991, 8th in 2001 and 9th in 2011.

The issues related to the urban governance in Bhimdutta are discussed here to give an ultimate solution to the related problems. The implementation of the different programs may solve the problems but the authorized body is regulated by the Mayor in municipality. The consensus of Municipality and basically the Mayor is most important part in any strategic interventions is taken as a point of departure in this concept note. The entire focus shall be on how the issues put forward are the real issues of the municipality and how the Mayor can be agreed upon the ideas is presented forward.

Key Issues related to Urban Governance:

- Cohesion between indigenous (basically Rana Tharu) and emigrated communities from hilly region (generally Baitadi, Darchula, Dadeldhura etc.) to enhance the development of the municipality has come up as a strong debate after the promulgation of the constitution and still going on.
- Equitable development and services to all in order to divert mindset of division to cohesion.

Problem Identification as an Issue:

The problem of Urban Governance are arisen in the Bhimdutta Municipality in the sector of inclusive community development. The indigenous communities of Rana Tharu are being almost replaced to the extent of exurb area and the core of the municipality is observed to be in control of people from the hilly regions who have been migrated there in the last few decades. This has not been consequence in urban development process until the impression of being replaced from the origin is felt by the indigenous communities. But after the scenario that has been developed in the country since few decades disastrous gap between those two communities (indigenous and migrated) has been widened. As a result of which, this Municipality as a region being the District Headquarter has been suffering different Strikes, Banda,
Conflict and even Battle among the communities. Which eventually is adding to the underdevelopment of the region as a whole in dark.

Since the belief of the author is to create a homogenous and mixed community to enhance economic activities filled with resilient community and eventually the prosperous municipality. I have identified the problem of inclusiveness of such communities and mainstreaming into the development process. This key issue can and only be addressed to some extent (because of many Externalities) by the Municipality if the realization of the issue as such is taken into concern of the Mayor.

The problem can be solved to a larger extent along with the local government election because the importance of both communities for a Mayor as a leader is significantly high. But, in the lack of local government election in Nepal since long, the municipality has become victim of a leader (Mayor) who simply could unite the communities rather divide them through local governance in a strategic way unlike different groups. Seeking the solution under the darkness of this National problem is a challenge felt by an author but the belief of finding a solution is even strengthened due to the seriousness of the problem through the governance of the municipality as such.

**Problems in Relation to the Issue:**

The basics of the statement, any Issue cannot be directly solved but it need to be breakdown into the problem to solve it, is taken as an inspiration by the author in this section. Hence the problem related to the issue in relation to the Urban Governance are discussed as:

- ✓ Inequitable development of the two different communities.
- ✓ Difference in the infrastructure, economic, social, cultural development of two different communities.
- ✓ The externalities that intend to disintegrate the community with the motive of Divide and Rule.
- ✓ Participation in decision making process.

**Problem Identification:**

The real ground problems that are causing the problems in relation to the issue are to be addressed to manage the conflict in order to achieve the equitable development. The identified problems by the author are:

The exurbs for the Bhimdatta Municipality and the population of Indigenous Tharu in the increasing order of distances from Bhimdatta Municipality (Headquarter of Kanchanpur District) are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Territorial VDC in 2011</th>
<th>All Population</th>
<th>Rana Tharu Population</th>
<th>Percentage Tharu</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bhimdutta Municipality</td>
<td>104599</td>
<td>8613</td>
<td>8.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chandani</td>
<td>19550</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dodhara</td>
<td>19703</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suda</td>
<td>21998</td>
<td>4065</td>
<td>18.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daisei</td>
<td>27481</td>
<td>5319</td>
<td>19.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rauteli Bichhuwa</td>
<td>4379</td>
<td>1486</td>
<td>33.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pipalaadi</td>
<td>17679</td>
<td>4245</td>
<td>24.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beldandi</td>
<td>17570</td>
<td>3891</td>
<td>22.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jhalari</td>
<td>24347</td>
<td>4768</td>
<td>19.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From the above data following conclusions can be drawn:

1. As the distance of VDC’s increases from Headquarter Bhimdatta Municipality, the percentage of Tharu population increases.

2. In the later portion of the chart, the curve slopes down showing the population percentage of tharu decreases because the distance of these VDC’s is more nearer to the Attariya (The city of Kailali). Which again shows the repulsive effect on this tharu community with the centre of the city.

3. The result may be as such because maximum of the tharu being involved in the agriculture.

4. Whatever be the reason, the distance of the City and Tharu community is found to be increasing in relation to the Bhimdatta Municipality.
Role of the Municipality:
The indirectly proportional relationship between the distances from the core city headquarter and the percentage of the Tharu community is observed. Which is taken by the author as the main reason behind the conflict arisen in the Municipality (a Headquarter City) of the district.

To reduce the conflict, the distance between these two communities need to be reduced by strategic intervention as discussed below:

1. Prepare programs and implement them to attract the indigenous tharu community to the near of the Municipality.
2. Provide sufficiently encouraging environment to entertain the social, cultural norms and values for indigenous community.
3. Promote the agricultural and other products to enhance the economic conditions of such communities.
4. Involve all the communities in the decision making, skill development programs as they are the stakeholder.
5. Enhance the integrity between two communities for all types of development issues.

Municipality as a local Government needs to intervene in reducing conflict and enhancing interrelations by the political, managerial and social dialogues by people participation.

Hence from the hypothesis and the proof presented above, we can conclude the importance of Urban Governance into the Specific Issue presented here as in the form to convince the Mayor:

- The collective approach of the different communities adds to the development of the entire region and basically the municipality because the analysis shows that the problem is being aroused due to the gap that has been created in between the communities.
- The Community center for the cultural interaction between two communities, libraries, common playgrounds etc. are to be developed.
- Tharu Community is basically seen to be focused on the Agriculture, so the agriculture needs to be scientifically equipped.
- The economic activities in the city is being isolated from the tharu community, so the economic activities, business, industrial involvement of this community needs special attention.
- Ultimate goal is to get a combined effort for the development so in each and every programs and issues the consensus of tharu community needs to be heard.
- The roads connecting the exurb areas are earthen, the buildings belonging to tharu are generally thatch roofed temporary structures, the education level is lower in such community etc. which needs special attention.

From the all things mentioned above, we can get to conclusion for the equitable development needs of the Bhimdutta Municipality for the integrated development of the entire region and basically the municipality in itself. The smartness of the city can be added more over to provide the solutions to the problems in the service sectors from the municipality. The local government (Municipal levell here) elections may come as the solution for the urban governance issues at the conclusion where people send someone on their behalf, for Bhimdutta Municipality. Because governance is completely the issue of leadership.
Sources for reference:

- Central Bureau of Statistics of Nepal, Census 2011 / Kanchanpur District Profile
- Habitat III, Issue Paper number 6
- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bhimdatta