ECO-CITIES IN INDIA: Vrindavan Experience

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Background

- **Eco-cities, as a demonstration project**
  - **Introduced in 2002 by Central Pollution Control Board,**
  - **Funded by Government of India, Ministry of Environment and Forest (Tenth 5-yr. Plan)**
  - **Technical support GTZ/ASEM**
  - **Local partner Vrindavan Municipal Corporation**
  - **Partners in implementation – local NGOs & CBOs**

Background

- **Project focuses on:**
  - **Improvement of**
    - **Environment**
    - **Visual quality**
    - **Traffic management**
    - **Tourism /pilgrimage & job creation**
  - **Capacity building of stakeholders**
  - **Project impact documentation**
  - **Net working of participating cities**

Background

- **First Phase**
  - **6 towns**
    - Kottayam (Kerala), Puri (Orissa), Thanjavur (TN), Tirupati (AP), Ujjain (MP), Vrindavan (UP)
  - **Funding**
    - Euro 1 million (Rs.50 million) per town on 50-50 cost sharing
  - **Sub-project**
    - Achieving Action in Waste Management (AAWaM)

Eco-cities Initial Experience

- Projects submitted for funding were piecemeal
- Not conceived in an integrated manner
- Did not address the project focus
- Expert Committee rejected the projects and asked for preparation of the Eco-city Development Plan followed by Detailed project reports within its framework

Vrindavan Eco-city Experience

Main Focus

- To highlight the participatory manner in which the Eco-city Project has been conceived and has attracted NGO , CBO, and public participation, and
- To share experience

Vrindavan Eco-city Experience

General Characteristics

- 145 km. south of Delhi on the bank of River Yamuna
- 56,000 population, **4.56 sq. km area**
- Temple town
- Rich heritage – 5,500 temples dedicated to life of lord Krishna and Radha; gardens and man-made water tanks
- 10 km long *parikrima* path

Vrindavan Eco-city Experience

General Characteristics (contd)

- Pilgrims & Tourist
  - **10, 000 daily, one million on birthday of lord Krishna (Aug-Sep)**
  - **Total: 3.31 m. with 16,000 foreign tourists in the year 2003**

Vrindavan Eco-city Experience

Issues

- **Land: majority of land owned by temple trusts**
- **Condition of buildings: 200-300 years old, made of good quality red sand stone, require conservation**
- **Roads & Traffic: Narrow roads, no foot paths, mixed traffic, poor traffic management**
- **Infrastructure: poor drainage, water supply only for one hour in the morning,**
- **Pollution: river and ground water contaminated, riverfront neglected, noise pollution at the entrance of temples very high due to music from audio cassette and CD shops**

Vrindavan Eco-city Experience

Eco-city Development Plan

- Prepared by IIT, Kharagpur for the core area of the city (accommodating most of the important temples, gardens and tanks, and 15,000 population)
- Technical assistance (professional fee) by GTZ/ASEM

Vrindavan Eco-city Experience

Eco-city Development Plan

- Plan objectives
  - **Green Vrindavan**
  - **Clean Vrindavan**
  - **Improvement of physical infrastructure**
  - **Revival of historic ambiance**

- Public consultation on the Draft Plan through Eco-city Workshop at Vrindavan and attended by public, NGOs, CBOs, officers of local administration

Vrindavan Eco-city Experience

Eco-city Development Plan

- Public consultation outcome
  - **Plan objectives and proposals appreciated**
  - **Need for effective implementation emphasised**
  - **Additional projects suggested**
    - **Entrance gate**
    - **Bare-footed pedestrian-friendly surface of the *parikrima* path**
    - **Multi-purpose elements**
    - **Formation of Local Project Coordination Committee comprising people of Vrindavan and municipal members to oversee preparation and implementation of the eco-city projects**

Vrindavan Eco-city Experience

Eco-city Development Plan

- Public consultation outcome….
  - **Existing green cover not to be destroyed**
  - **Historic importance, cultural traditions and heritage to be preserved**
  - **Projects suggested in the Draft Plan were prioritised by the people**
    - **Town-level priorities**
      - **Transportation, roads, solid waste management, drinking water, public toilets, parking, drainage, street lighting, landscaping, signage, environment management**

Vrindavan Eco-city Experience

Eco-city Development Plan

- Final Eco-city Development Plan provided the following details, for identified projects, in an integrated manner:
  - **Actions and guidelines for DPR preparation**
  - **Project outcome (expected)**
  - **Partners in development and investment**
  - **Approximate cost**
  - **Cost recovery and management system**

Vrindavan Eco-city Experience

Eco-city Development Plan

- Plan was presented to the people (Local Project Coordination Committee) and the Expert Committee who approved the same
- Plan was given wider publicity and served as tool to attract wider participation of a variety of stakeholders

Vrindavan Eco-city Experience

Partners in Development and Investment

- In less than one year the following NGOs/CBOs came forward with committed investment to participate in the making of the Vrindavan Eco-city:
  1. Banke Behari Trust (CBO) , improvement of surroundings around Banke Behari Temple – investment Euro 36,000, - GTZ/ASEM provided service of an architect, - status DPR approved

Vrindavan Eco-city Experience

Partners in Development and Investment

2. India Heritage Foundation (CBO) for parikrima path – first phase 2 km. - committed investment Euro 0.4 million – status project approved
3. Braj Foundation (CBO) for restoration of Brahma Kund (Tank) – Euro 70,000
4. Centre for Environment Education (NGO) for
   - **study of solid waste management and identification of sustainable strategies and appropriate technologies including awareness programme**

Vrindavan Eco-city Experience

Partners in Development and Investment

5. **Vrindavan Municipal Council**
   - **Comprehensive road improvement**
   - **Parking**
   - **Restoration of public parks**
6. **General public (World Env. Day 2005 experience)**
7. **Others include**:
   - **Friends of Vrindavan**
   - **Food for Life**
   - **UNDP-GEF**

Vrindavan Eco-city Experience

Situation in October 2008

- **CEO of Vrindavan Municipality transferred**
- **Setback to implementation efforts**
- **India Heritage Foundation withdrew commitment as MoU between ULB, local administration and UP Govt. could not be signed due to unclear procedure**

Vrindavan Eco-city Experience

Lessons Learnt

- Eco-city Development Plan acts as a potent tool for informing people and other stakeholder about:
  - **The problems, prospects and projects that will improve the quality of life of the city in a sustainable manner**
  - **Prospective projects where they can participate and invest**
  - **Technical requirement and approach for DPR formulation by NGOs/CBOs and others**

Vrindavan Eco-city Experience

Lessons Learnt

- To achieve better participation of people:
  - **All information and discussion should be in local language**
  - **People should feel that they are the final decision makers and all plans are for their assistance in making decisions**
  - **People are reluctant in expressing their views in large gatherings and, therefore, they may be organised in smaller groups for fair, frank and intense discussion and decision making**

Vrindavan Eco-city Experience

Lessons Learnt

- Role of municipalities should be to lead by demonstration and facilitate public participation
- Continuation of support by the political party in power and administration plays a very important role in planning and implementation of projects particularly through participation of NGOs and CBOs.

Vrindavan Eco-city Experience

Summing up

- Considering the results at Vrindavan and other cities, like Tirupati, covered under the Eco-city Project, this participatory approach to planning and development seems to be replicable.

Thank you