



## **India Urban Conference 2011: 'Evidence and Experience' Reframing debates about India's urban transformation**

*Conference hosted by Indian Institute for Human Settlements (IHS), Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy, and the South Asian Studies Council at Yale*

**Bangalore, India, August 17, 2011:** IHS, Janaagraha, and the South Asian Studies Council at Yale today announced the launch of the 'India Urban Conference (IUC 2011): Evidence and Experience'. The conference brings to the forefront key challenges that India faces at city, state and central levels in addressing urbanization. The conference has initiated a multi-stakeholder dialogue on achieving inclusive and sustainable urban development. It will also create a platform for India's youth to help shape India's urban future through 'san-kranti': a nationwide student challenge.

The IUC 2011 will use both evidence and experience from cities and sites of innovation, and interrogate eight broad themes, i.e. 'Land and Infrastructure', 'Urban Water', 'Urban Education', 'Urban Health', 'City in Public Culture', 'Urban Governance and Citizenship', 'Financial Inclusion and the Urban Economy' and 'Urban Planning'. This initiative seeks to support and enable informed policy making and promote social action, by opening up a dialogue between stakeholders at the city, state and central levels on these themes.

The conference series opened at Yale University, New Haven, USA in April 2011. This first IUC 2011 conference brought together leading international scholars of South Asia and was titled 'Urban India: Historical Processes and Contemporary Experience'. The second IUC 2011 conference, to be held in Mysore from 17<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> November 2011, is a mega event which aims to bring together nearly 1000 urban stakeholders, inclusive of policy makers, academics, students, civil society and practitioners, and industry stakeholders. The conference series will close with a policy conference in Delhi on 22 November 2011, which will open up a debate on reframing India's urban policy agenda in the run up to the development of the XII Plan.

Commenting on the philosophy behind the conference, Ramesh Ramanathan, co-founder of Janaagraha, says, "Urbanization has reached an inflection point in India. Responding to the challenges and opportunities of urbanization will require massive policy changes, with leadership from the Union Government as well as State governments across the country. It is crucial that these policy deliberations are informed by data - both from academics and practitioners from the grassroots. India Urban Conference is a unique platform that will bring together a range of stakeholders, to debate our urban issues in the context of verifiable data. Our fond hope is that IUC will trigger a wave of fresh research, inquiry and documentation on urban issues in our country."



Aromar Revi, Director of IIHS added, “India’s development, the end of poverty and exclusion will hinge on difficult debates around reframing our notions of the rural and urban; relationships between the citizen, the city, state and centre; alternative trajectories of urban growth and ‘inclusive’ development and the creation of a new generation of changemakers, entrepreneurs and scholars who make all of this possible. The IUC will for the first time create an open national platform for such debate”

Adding to this, Dr. Jessica Seddon, Head of Research, IIHS, said, “This series of events seeks to create the scope for these debates between stakeholders in various levels of government, civil society, and private sectors to begin to take place so that sustainable and accepted resolutions emerge. Urbanisation is a complex process, with economic, social, and environmental elements that influence and are deeply rooted in national development dynamics. We will have to overcome the current administrative and organisational divisions in order to have any reasonable response to the transformation that is already underway.”

Commenting on the India Urban Conference as a platform for promoting multiple-stakeholder conversations, Unna V. Govindarajan, Research Coordinator at Janaagraha, said, “The IUC 2011 is a large event, which will provide a unique opportunity to promote a ‘bottoms-up’ approach to understanding data- and evidence-based discussions of greatest impact to urbanising India, and elevate these conversations to a national forum.”

India’s existing urban population of 375 million is expected to grow to close to 800 million over the next few decades, and its share of the GDP from about 65 percent to close to 80 percent – if the appropriate entitlements, regulation and investment, governance and institutional interventions are put into place. India’s urbanisation presents an important opportunity to simultaneously address challenges of poverty, inclusion, sustainability and deepening democracy. The India Urban Conference (IUC 2011) brings together many of the people and institutions who could make this possible.



### **ABOUT INDIAN INSTITUTE FOR HUMAN SETTLEMENTS**

The Indian Institute for Human Settlements (**IIHS**) is a national education institution committed to the equitable, sustainable and efficient transformation of Indian settlements. IIHS is India's first prospective independently funded and managed National University for Innovation that focuses on its ongoing urban and development transformation. It is a first-of-its-kind, practice and innovation-oriented knowledge institution that seeks to bridge the conventional excellence, scale and inclusion divides. More information about IIHS is available on [www.iihs.co.in](http://www.iihs.co.in)

### **ABOUT JANAAGRAHA**

Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy (JCCD) is an established non-profit organization that works to improve urban India's quality of life, as measured by two indicators: quality of citizenship and quality of infrastructure and services. Janaagraha's work spans advocacy with the Union, to empower urban local bodies (ULB's), and engagement at the grassroots, to deepen democracy. The Janaagraha Applied Research Program (J-ARP), which is anchoring the conference on behalf of JCCD, is a core program whose mission is to generate primary data/ evidence in collaboration with academia, both for internal consumption (for grassroots and advocacy initiatives) and for external publication. More information about JCCD is available on [www.janaagraha.org](http://www.janaagraha.org)

### **ABOUT YALE UNIVERSITY**

The South Asian Studies Council at Yale University is committed to promoting a comprehensive understanding of historical and contemporary South Asia, encompassing Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. As part of the MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies at Yale University, the Council seeks to foster lively intellectual exchange from a wide range of disciplinary perspectives by integrating teaching and research on traditional South Asia with contemporary study of the region. More information about The South Asian Studies Council is available on [www.yale.edu/macmillan/southasia](http://www.yale.edu/macmillan/southasia)

#### **Media Contact**

Ranjani Sinha Roy  
Gutenberg Communications  
[ranjani@gutenbergpr.com](mailto:ranjani@gutenbergpr.com)

#### **IUC Contact, Janaagraha**

Shyam Singh  
[shyam@janaagraha.org](mailto:shyam@janaagraha.org)

#### **IUC Contact, IIHS**

Richa Dubey  
[rdubey@iihs.ac.in](mailto:rdubey@iihs.ac.in)