

BReUCom Webinar Series

## WEBINAR REPORT

# BUILDING INSTITUTIONAL RESILIENCE

10 September 2021  
11.00 am to 1.30 pm (Indian Time)

*Organised by*



**B\_RE\_U\_COM**  
Building **Resilient** Urban Communities

**Sushant**  
University  
Erstwhile Ansal University Gurugram



## SPEAKER PROFILES

**Dr Vibhuti Sachdev** is the Professor and Dean at the School of Art and Architecture, Sushant University. She qualified as an architect in 1989 from SPA, Delhi, completed her Ph.D. in 1996 from the University of London, and has worked as a conservation consultant, writer, and designer. She has taught at the University of Sussex and written four books and several articles on the subjects of Jaipur, traditional knowledge systems, Indian cities, and Indian modernity. She has worked and written extensively on the city of Jaipur, focusing on its planning, architecture, and craft traditions. Since publishing these books, she has been a consultant on the restoration of the Jal Mahal in Jaipur, was the design curator for the artwork of its pavilions, and the co-curator of the exhibition 'Painted Pleasures'.

**Dr Barsha Poricha**, Technical Head, Centre for Urban and Regional Excellence, is an urban and regional planner from CEPT, Ahmedabad with a Ph.D. in Human Ecology from Ambedkar University, Delhi. Over the last two decades, she has been working on issues of civil society engagement and human development, and her work particularly has been around engaging, developing, and designing inclusive and participatory planning and development mechanisms within governance processes. She also works on issues of gender, youth development, and capacity building to influence and deepen policy discourse and strengthen people's engagement in the urban sector.

**Ms Nidhi Dandona**, Associate Professor, Sushant School of Art and Architecture, Sushant University, is an architect and urban designer with M. Arch from SPA, Delhi. At Sushant University, she is currently heading the Master's in the Urban programme since its inception in 2014. She has been the Secretary of the IUDI DNCR Centre for the last three years (Institute of urban designers India). She has a keen interest in urban extensions of Indian cities, urban conservation & development around heritage in historic city cores. She has presented her research work at various conferences on both national and international platforms.

**Mr Ashish Rao Ghorpade**, Deputy Director, ICLEI South Asia, is an Architect, Urban and Regional Planner working in the development sector since 2002. He has been working with Indian cities and believes that influencing the urban transport and urban built environment for low carbon development can go a long way in making cities more liveable and sustainable. Previously, he also worked for developing a sector status study and futuristic development path for the Tourism sector for the state of Himachal Pradesh and preparation of the Public Financial Management and Accountability report (India) funded by the World Bank. Currently at ICLEI South Asia, Ashish manages ICLEI's urban planning, mobility, and green buildings related initiatives in the South Asian region. Ashish also works as lead representative for urban planning, sustainable transport, and green buildings related initiatives at ICLEI – South Asia.

**Dr Rajesh Tandon**, Founder President, Participatory Research in Asia, India, is currently a UNESCO Co-Chair on Community Based Research and Social Responsibilities in Higher Education. He serves as chairperson of the Global Alliance on Community-Engaged Research (GACER) network, which facilitates the sharing of knowledge and information worldwide to further community-based research and has also served as an Advisor to the Commonwealth Foundation, UNDP, and numerous other international agencies.

**Ms Aruna Bhardwaj**, Associate Professor, Sushant School of Art and Architecture, Sushant University, is currently the Programme Director for M Arch Interior Architecture. She is the co-

founder of Vertex Designs and an Associate Partner at Vertex Inc, for over two decades. She has been involved with conceptualization, design, supervision, and end-to-end execution of various projects, ranging from hospitality, organized retail, commercial & residential, including the prestigious MSMSII Museum at City Palace & Jaigarh Gallery, Jaipur. She is presently pursuing her Ph.D. in Child-Friendly Urban Spaces.

**Ms Pooja Lalit Kumar**, Associate Professor, Sushant School of Art and Architecture, Sushant University, is a graduate of Sushant School of Art and Architecture batch 2000. She is the recipient of a gold medal for her master's in Ekistics from Jamia Millia Islamia. Pooja has more than 17 years of professional experience in conceptualizing, designing, and developing ideas into built form before venturing into academics. Her research interests being Impact Assessment, Sustainability, Community Resilience, Disaster risk Assessment to name a few. Apart from Programme Head of Master's Programmes in SAA, Pooja is currently pursuing her Ph.D. from Jamia Millia Islamia.

**Ms. Samrudhi Bhalerao**, Assistant Professor, Sushant School of Art and Architecture, Sushant University, is an architect and urban designer. She has her Bachelor's Degree from Nagpur University and a Master's Degree from KRVI, Mumbai. She is now pursuing her Ph.D. from Sushant University. Her Ph.D. research interest includes technology-driven urbanism and exploring various trends in urban data visualizations. She has been associated with the school for over two years. She's taught both design and technology courses at the B.Arch and M.Arch courses, and she aspires for a seamless transition between the two.

**Dr. Binti Singh**, Associate Professor, Kamla Raheja Vidyanidhi Institute for Architecture & Environmental Studies, is an author and academician and holds a Ph.D. (in urban studies) and an M.Phil. (in Planning and Development) from the Indian Institute of Technology, Mumbai, India. She is currently engaged in diverse international research programs like Building Resilient Urban Communities supported by the European Union and academic collaborations like PIVOT supported by the Royal Academy of Engineering, UK. She is also Book Series Editor on Urban Futures with Routledge, Taylor, and Francis. As Associate Editor with Oxford Urbanists, she has contributed to various articles. Her articles have also been featured in Domus India and Business World Smart Cities publications. Her research engages with questions on the Built Environment, Resilience and sustainability, Urban policy and governance, and Urban theory.

**Dr. Kaustuv Kanti Bandyopadhyay** is the Director of Participatory Research in Asia, India. For more than 30 years, he has been working on citizen participation in urban and rural contexts. He is an internationally acclaimed researcher, trainer, and facilitator of organisation development and participatory planning, monitoring, evaluation, and impact assessment. Currently, he is the co-coordinator of Asia Democracy Research Networks and serves on the Governing Council of Asia Democracy Network.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- To build resilience, it is vital to keep communities at the centre of interventions. It is important to mainstream resilience into everyday language, policies, infrastructure investment programmes, and city planning processes. The local government should prioritise and conduct resilience activities and define roles and responsibilities for efficient delivery.
- HEI's can build institutional resilience through these three aspects: persistence (be the agent of change for the society), adaptability (new modes of teaching and learning), and transformability (adapt to change).
- Both the primary and secondary actors should be involved in participatory, active, and open dialogues for understanding issues and their roles and responsibilities. This is a useful strategy for informing government at all levels and bridging the gap between informal and formal discussions.
- HEIs can play a critical role in designing a forward-looking curriculum, keeping climate change and resilience at the centre. They must integrate these issues in the curriculum in a meaningful way to make it as responsive as possible.
- HEI can offer short courses for existing practitioners to help them build their understanding around the issue and ways in which they can work towards addressing the issue in their professional capacities.
- There is a serious breakdown of trust between communities, and if one researcher goes into the field, there is often suspicion on the side of the community. It is the role of HEIs to build on this trust and create a mutually respectful and collaborative environment between the institution and the community. Taking students into the community teaches them diversity and exposes them to the complex socio-cultural dynamics of the society they live in.
- Institutions should follow the practice of creating community leaders within the specific community, who can then replicate the social learning process among others, as opposed to an institution, as a sort of rapid multiplication within the community to co-create knowledge with others.
- Workshops, conferences, talks, and awareness building activities should be organised by HEI's for promoting learning.

## THE DISCUSSION

Coping strategies for dealing with climate-related events function at multiple levels: individual (household), community (neighbourhood), or institutional (citywide or beyond). However, in cases of rigorous climate emergencies, effective adaptation strategies go beyond the control of the local community and require implementation at the institutional level. Institutions have a broader meaning and implication in the context of societal values. Institutions are practices and

arrangements, mechanisms and values that persist over time and acquire legitimacy within a given society

Climate adaptation is a relatively new issue for many informal and formal institutions working at the local and national levels. At the formal level agreements, policies and programmes play a vital role in guiding climate action, which is complemented by community, knowledge, practices, and innovations at the local/informal levels. Local institutions shape the effects of climate hazards in multiple ways, such as by influencing how households are affected by climate impacts, shape the ability of households to respond to climate impacts and pursue community specific climate adaptation practices and strategies, and facilitate the flow of external interventions in the context of adaptation. For example: In cases where community has limited appreciation about the relevance of climate change related risks, institutions can play a critical role in communicating clearly the direct and indirect benefits of adaptation and mitigation.

Subsequently, weaker institutions with a lack of preparedness are unable to effectively contribute towards climate adaptation at multiple levels. Limited inclusion and participation of local and informal institutions, poor coordination among various stakeholders, and ineffective decentralisation are some of the challenges that are being faced for building institutional resilience. During climate and environmental change emergencies, the institution that lacks resilience capacities is unable to support communities in accessing necessary resources like water and food, makes them frequent victims of disasters, and further impacts their health, education, and employment prospects. However, climate change cannot be zeroed and thus, require capacity building and strengthening support for sustainable and resilient urban development. According to the Action on Climate Today, programme institutions need various capabilities to tackle climate change, such as foresight, learning and adapting, collaboration, accessing resources, and finding incentives.

While various institutions at the local and global levels are being involved in the capacity building around climate change, higher educational institutions need to systematically involve in the capacity building for climate adaptation. Higher education institutions across the world, especially in developing countries, need to build the capacities of their students for preparing them to address climate change. Climate adaptation strategies need to be imbibed in the “educational conscience” of higher education institutions.

To have deeper discussions on these issues, School of Art and Architecture, Sushant University, Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) and BReUCom with the support from European Union hosted a webinar on Building Institutional Resilience from 02.00 pm to 04.00 pm on 10 September 2021.

The webinar aimed at addressing the following questions:

1. What are some of the practical ways for building institutional resilience to address climate change challenges?
2. How can informal and formal institutional systems collaborate to build resilient in the community and other institutions?
3. How can educational institutions support building institutional resilience through remodelled teaching and research?

## PANEL DISCUSSION

### Understanding Institutional Resilience

The panel discussion was chaired by **Dr Vibhuti Sachdev**, Professor and Dean, School of Art and Architecture, Sushant University, Gurugram. Dr. Sachdev introduced the purpose of the discussion and the speakers of the webinar.

The first panellist, **Dr Barsha Poricha** (Technical Head, Centre for Urban and Regional Excellence, New Delhi), spoke about the BReUCom initiative. BReUCom is an initiative about building community resilience, funded under EU Erasmus. Five years ago, a lot of emphasis and discussion was taking place around the role of HEI's in addressing climate change impacts by integrating the ideas into their curriculum. BReUCom, with the support of HEI's primarily with the departments of Architecture and Planning, aimed at understanding learning and teaching pedagogies and further recognising ways in which urban resilience could be inculcated into the formal curriculums. Alongside, with the support of non-profit organisations, it aimed at creating evidence from the ground, which could be used for influencing this alternative pedagogy. Dr. Poricha, further demystified the concept of climate resilience and how it can be addressed from a trans-disciplinary lens, along with the academic, and civil society perspectives. Institutional resilience is the capacity of institutions to survive, deliver, adapt, and grow no matter what kind of stresses and shocks they experience. She stated, 'Communities are one of the primary pillars of institutions because that's where the adaptation happens'. Several organisations including SPARC and CURE utilise the Social Systemic Approach or the Urban Community Resilience Framework to understand communities' resilience, approaches to deal with climate issues, among others. The systemic approach is the understanding of all the institutions and their interconnectedness with people and spaces. Drawing from the experiences from BReUCom case studies, she suggested some of the practical ways for building institutional resilience to address climate change. This included capacity building at all levels, creating spatial understanding (data and mapping) of the vulnerability, and multisectoral partnerships.

To get a better understanding of the issue, she further shared about the two case studies conducted as part of the BReUCom Initiative.

Socio-Ecological Resilience of Peri-Urban Coastal Areas: Climate Change and its implications on urban peripheries of Mumbai – This study aimed at understanding and illustrating systems and methods involved in ensuring socio-ecological resilience of peri-urban communities of the global south using various techniques of documentation (both digital and analogue) and analysing the effects of climate change-related transformations on three peri-urban land-water edge settlements of Mumbai each with a distinct relationship with the water's edge- Coastal Edge settlement, Settlement on an estuarine island, a settlement on the Riverine Floodplain. The study brought out the importance of expanding the understanding of socio-ecological resilience to include 'everyday resilience' to address the vulnerabilities faced by the coastal peri-urban communities.

Enhancing Institutional and Community Resilience to Climate Change Impacts in the Jodhpur City: Water Stress - This comparative study of 'communities' managing water stress in core city wards with the peripheral wards was conducted and was assessed for the sensitivity, adaptive capacity, and coping mechanism of communities to water stress for arriving at spatial planning strategies to enhance resilience. Institutional arrangements to cope up with the stresses at various levels were also analysed to suggest a suitable mechanism for enhancing institutional resilience for informed

decision making. The study through its scientific analysis brought out that, water stress can be addressed through tacit knowledge and co-production of water.

She stated that to build resilience, it is vital to keep communities at the centre of interventions. It is important to mainstream resilience into everyday language, policies, infrastructure investment programmes, and city planning processes. The local government should prioritise and conduct resilience activities and define roles and responsibilities for efficient delivery.

**Mr Ashish Rao Ghorpade** (Deputy Director, ICLEI South Asia) began his presentation with a brief introduction of ICLEI. ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability is a global network of more than 2500 local and regional governments committed to sustainable urban development. Active in 125+ countries, ICLEI aims at influencing sustainability policy and drive local action for low emission, nature-based, equitable, resilient, and circular development. ICLEI works with cities around climate focusing on five pathways (intersect & come together in various programs) which include low-emission development, nature-based development, equitable, people-centred development, resilient development, and centred development. For working with cities, the organization follows several processes and approaches for different projects – process guidance, CHG inventory tools, guidance on solutions, and supporting cities in preparing projects that can be funded. To build resilience ICLEI, has been using the Climate Resilient CITIES approach, which combines adaptation and mitigation methodology for cities. Drawing from the experiences of working with several Indian cities, he suggested ideas for institutionalising approaches. First, as Indian cities are each unique and different, a context-specific approach should be designed. Second, the systems and institutions are because of people, and thus, a people-centric participatory approach needs to be utilised. Third, cities already have systems in place, and therefore, new interventions can be built around them. This also enables us to focus on what's possible with fewer efforts before targeting the complex solutions Fourth, it is critical to have clarity about the outcomes and goals, time, and available resources. Mr Ghorpade further shared some other logistical and pertinent points for consideration for institutionalising the approach. This included working with various stakeholders across the set timeline, inculcating the priorities of local people, involving citizens, and making them understand the nuances of the interventions, and lastly, connecting national and state-level efforts and existing program. To conclude his presentation, Mr. Ghorpade emphasized the need for involving both the primary and secondary actors in participatory, active, and open dialogues for understanding issues and their roles and responsibilities. This is a useful strategy for informing government at all levels and bridging the gap between informal and formal discussions. Lastly, HEI needs to look at planning and architecture from the lens of climate change and its impacts. HEI can also offer short courses for existing practitioners to help them build their understanding around the issue and ways in which they can work towards addressing the issue in their professional capacities.

**Ms Nidhi Dandona** (Associate Professor, Sushant School of Art and Architecture, Sushant University) focused her presentation on the initiatives of SSAA for addressing the concern of building institutional resilience. She spoke briefly about Institutional resilience, which is the capacity to deliver and enhance results over time, credibly and adaptively, along with the ability to manage shocks and change. It can be built by expanding and replicating local-level successes and by leveraging an institution's social capital to mediate state-society relations. Development co-operation actors are encouraged to identify and build on local knowledge, experience, and sources of resilience. As an HEI, the three aspects which are needed for building institutional resilience include persistence (be the agent of change for the society), adaptability (new modes of teaching and learning), and transformability (adapt to change). Sushant School of Art and Architecture has been conducting a range of projects as part of their Master's level courses, alongside, the

department is involved in several collaborative projects and individual capacity projects. SSAA occasionally also conducts series of lectures, seminars, workshops, and forum for learning and sharing.

Ms Dandona now moved on to addressing the questions raised as part of the webinar – How can informal and formal institutional systems collaborate to build resilience in the community and other institutions? This can be made possible by encouraging out of studio and classroom learning opportunities. As part of SSAA courses, students and faculty are deliberately involved in interactions with communities, authorities, academicians, industry and are given platforms for disseminating their learnings. Students, through these outreach and community programs, understand the issues of community and design strategies and plans in a participatory manner. Through these initiatives, students have been able to reach out to local government and media authorities, educational institutions, saved heritage sites (Save the Boali Campaign) in Gurgaon, promoted pedestrian-friendly streets, and have provided support to the informal communities.

She concluded the discussion by sharing some practical ways for building institutional resilience to address climate change challenges. SSAA tries to go beyond the formal curriculum for engaging with the faculty and students around the climate change challenges. Through collaborations, capacity building workshops, master, and environmental plans students, they understand the grassroots realities and further sensitise themselves towards environment-friendly practices and approaches that can be practiced as part of their everyday professional and personal tasks. Similarly, they are involved in various projects and programs as part of their educational programs to understand the issue from the perspective of planning and designing. One such interesting initiative hosted by SSAA is called Mud Futures - a global, multi-location initiative that brings together various institutions, experts, and practitioners from across the world to discuss its (Mud) origin, transformation, and advancement as a quantifiable property.

Dr Sachdev concluded the discussion, 'All three presentations have highlighted the fact that there is a need to work on the ground and with the communities. Higher Education Institutions in collaboration with other stakeholders. Climate Change is the end of the road and not the beginning of the road. There are a lot of changes that need to be made before we reach the stage of climate change. Climate change is the indicator of a lot of wrong decisions that have been made and continued to be made as part of various urban living processes.'

## **ROUNDTABLE CONVERSATION**

### **Remodelling Planning and Architecture Education for Future Urban Resilience**

Dr Rajesh Tandon (Founder President, Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) and UNESCO Co-Chair on Community Based Research and Social Responsibilities in Higher Education), who was chairing the roundtable discussion, initiated the discussion by stating that the session was going to discuss ideas and practices that make higher education institutions contribute to climate resilience- based planning, architecture, and design, but also how higher education themselves can become more resilient.

***Q: What are some of the practical ways for building institutional resilience to address climate change challenges? How can next generation professionals contribute to building institutional resilience?***



**Ms Samrudhi Bhalerao** (Assistant Professor, Sushant School of Art and Architecture, Sushant University), stated that workshops could be curated where academicians and experts from the industry could be brought together and work with the community. Higher education institutions (HEIs) could provide this platform for different stakeholders to collaborate for building institutional resilience.

**Ms Pooja Lalit Kumar** (Associate Professor, Sushant School of Art and Architecture, Sushant University), stated that building institutional resilience is about having a common vision, which the institute can take forward. Secondly HEIs must learn from their past mistakes and adapt accordingly, to become more flexible and to enhance institutional capacity. Finally, they must work with a strategy and budget their timings, for effective responses.

**Dr Binti Singh** (Associate Professor, Kamla Raheja Vidyanidhi Institute for Architecture & Environmental Studies), spoke of how her institution was already actively involved with building institutional resilience as part of BREUCOM Project, and resilience was at the core of their pedagogy. They developed academic courses around narratives of resilience, as well as Professional Development Programs for mid-career professionals who are in the business of resilience in their day-to-day work, including practitioners, policy makers and government officials, to bridge the gap between academia and the world of practice. Their institute also engages continuously with awareness generation through workshops and webinars with different groups of stakeholders.

**Ms Aruna Bharadwaj** (Associate Professor, Sushant School of Art and Architecture, Sushant University), emphasised the need to do more through building awareness about climate-based challenges within the institution is critical. She also pointed out the increasing need to engage more actively with the immediate community for building awareness.

***Q: Which areas of work are most difficult spaces to work with stakeholders on, and what can we do about it?***

**Dr Kaustuv Bandyopadhyay** (Director, Participatory Research in Asia), stated that two primary roles of higher education institutions (HEIs), among others, are to generate new knowledge and prepare the next generation of professionals. HEIs have a dynamic cycle of education, where generation after generation of young people come and get educated. In terms of urban poor and climate resilience, HEIs need to think about how they can prepare new generations not only with technical expertise, but also to prepare their minds and develop their sensitivity to bridge inequalities between formal and informal communities. How can we come up with adaptive vulnerability assessment tools for assessing these inequalities? How do we bring vulnerable communities to co-create solutions and tap their knowledge base to find solutions which affect them the most? On the issue of ownership and trust, Dr. Bandyopadhyay stated that once trust was built with the community, they were very helpful and open to share their needs and concerns, and what helped the process was their ownership over the data, knowing that researchers were not disappearing with it. He also added that from a participatory approach, one step really helps which is the practice of creating community leaders within the specific community, who then replicate the social learning process among others, as opposed to an institution, as a sort of rapid multiplication within the community to co-create knowledge with others. This horizontal learning within the community is an extremely powerful tool.

**Ms Bharadwaj** criticised the “otherness” associated with informal communities, and these boundaries will only get diluted if we create spaces for knowing, interacting, and understanding each other's needs.

**Dr Sachdev** stated that regarding stakeholder engagement, resistance can come from any quarter. There is a serious breakdown of trust between communities, and if one researcher goes into the field, there is often suspicion on the side of the community. It is the role of HEIs to build on this trust and create a mutually respectful and collaborative environment between the institution and the community. Taking students into the community teaches them diversity and exposes them to the complex socio-cultural dynamics of the society they live in. It also gives them a sense of ownership for the work they do, by making them agents of transformation. Finally, she pointed out that we forget that we are an ancient civilisation with tremendous traditional and local knowledge. When we go to new sites, we study them as if for the first time, but don't consider the immense knowledge that already exists and is practiced in these communities in many ways. HEIs must try and incorporate this traditional and local knowledge in their work. Dr. Sachdev also added that we need newer gestures of trust. Today gestures such as greetings, wishes and others have become emotionless and commercial, without any meaning attached to them. The idea of “sevabhav” or service must be at the centre of research and pedagogy, especially while working with the community.

**Mr Ghorpade** pointed to the importance of working with informal communities in creative ways and ensure that their views are examined and understood. This is because they are often ignored by policy makers and academia, and it is their views which form the crux of the problem at hand. Additionally, he stated that once this kind of engagement takes place, it very much appreciated by the community as well, and this process can make the strategies a lot more effective on the ground.

**Ms Dandona** suggested that the community's response to professors versus students was also different, and students were able to collect data through informal chats with community members in ways that teachers often don't. There is this mistrust amongst the community created due to the exploitation that has happened at the hands of the powerful groups.

Dr Tandon stated that in many parts of urban and rural habitations, people have hugely suffered due to evictions, and conversations about relocation happened with them only after the arrival of the bulldozer. We must acknowledge this baggage they carry, due to their continued exploitation. We must also keep in mind that although they may not have degrees, they have lived and experiential knowledge which is extremely valuable. Building on Dr Vibhuti's comments on ownership, Dr Tandon narrated PRIA's endeavours back in 2005 in Dhumka to create a sense of ownership within the local community of Dhumka, through filming people's oral histories and thoughts about Dhumka. This gave people from all segments of society to come together and rethink the planning of the future of Dhumka, through creation of a shared history by the community. In urban centres today, this sense of ownership needs to be created in the community by bringing in all segments of society. Trust matters in everyday life, across institutions and is important for building social capital. Academic and higher education institutions must help create a platform for stakeholders to come together and develop a shared understanding and mutual trust. Dr. Tandon also stated that HEIs can play a critical role in designing a forward-looking curriculum, keeping climate change and resilience at the centre. They must integrate these issues in the curriculum in a meaningful way to make it as responsive as possible.

Ms Nidhi Dandona, gave the vote of thanks.