

## **Youth Sabha 2**

The second Youth Sabha was on "Safe and equitable access to public spaces" organized on 01<sup>st</sup> October 2020, 3:00 pm onwards, gave us many new insights on how the youth of the city envision public spaces and what can be done to make them inclusive and accessible for all. The session showed active participation from more than 120 young residents including 20 persons with special abilities. The discussions brought out exceptional ideas and concerns. Some of the key takeaways are:

### **Provisioning based on local needs**

It was highlighted during the discussion that the use, types and design of public spaces change according to the changing contexts/ areas, socio-economic constructs, local needs etc. Thus, to ensure an equitable and need based provisioning, it's important to ensure local participation in the planning of such spaces taking into account the needs of all the residents with representation from all genders, age groups etc. Women representation and ownership in local shopping areas, public places and markets can add to making these spaces more accessible for all. Different local solutions can emerge from different urban fabrics in the diverse settlement typologies of Delhi. This can also be strategized while proposing redevelopment/ in situ upgradation of urban villages, resettlement colonies etc.

### **Introducing technological aids into design of public spaces**

The youth pointed out how technology can be leveraged in many ways to make everyday use spaces as well as recreational use spaces in the city accessible for all. The participating youth with disabilities pointed out that besides ensuring the universal accessibility of built environment, technological elements like regular announcements at transit hubs, improved directions and evacuation during emergencies, a dedicated helpline number etc. can support them towards navigating the city independently. Communication through voice induced apps or software tailored to the specific disabilities.

With the increasing technology adaptability, the youth highlighted that technology can also be used to capture data on use of these public spaces recording aspects like the increased time of activities, the catchment area, monitoring the encroachments and maintenance etc. This can also help in enhancing the perception of safety in these public spaces.

### **Treating streets/ mobility networks as public spaces and improving them**

With concepts like "Walk to work" and focus on Pedestrianization in Delhi, the youth in the city emphasized on viewing streets as public places where people will end up spending time. Thus, redistributing and redesigning the streets to accommodate more pedestrians, cycle paths and elements such as street infrastructure, seating areas, green islands that would present opportunities to socialize. Besides this will also ensure the streets remain active and safe for all.

### **Data backed regeneration of public spaces**

The dearth of data on the public spaces in Delhi and the urban local bodies responsible for their maintenance and upkeep makes it difficult for the residents and local organizations to participate and put across their concerns or suggestions. Thus, recommendations were made on having a data inventory for the public spaces, and all types of inclusive and accessible infrastructure all over the city including their uses and footfall. Such data can help in analyzing which areas don't have access to public spaces, which public spaces need to be regenerated and which organizations are responsible for the management of each space.

**Disaster Management** plans for a city needs to account for persons with disabilities and children as major affected stakeholders for effective mitigation strategies.

This sect of stakeholders appraised the need for larger and more intense sessions for public participation with participants from more walks of life. The green areas of Delhi as of today are not equitably placed, for example NDMC is greener than say areas such as Shahdra. There are far more accessible public spaces in the middle income areas and high income areas, leaving behind the low income areas. There is a need to improve existing public spaces, as much as the need to provide for newer ones ahead.