

May 15, 2008

Shri Jaipal Reddy  
Hon'ble Minister for Urban Development  
Government of India  
Nirman Bhawan, New Delhi-11001

Sir,

Voluntary Action Network India (VANI), the apex body of Indian NGOs comprising 19 Network Federations, 237 Organisations, 42 Individuals and with a strong base of 2500 non-governmental organizations spread out in 25 states of India, requests your urgent intervention to amend the Delhi Master Plan 2021 to **include a specific provision allowing Voluntary Sector Organizations (VSOs)/NGOs, which are registered in India or abroad to function from non-institutional areas.**

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)/ NGOs are making invaluable contributions to urban development, from education to health, environment and more. This is something which has clearly been recognized in the Delhi Master Plan 2021\*. But despite this recognition of their role, the threat of sealing is looming large since the majority of these organizations in Delhi, as in other cities; are operating out of premises in residential areas. There is no definition of or specific provision for NGOs anywhere in the Master Plan.

We would like to bring to your kind attention that the current sealing drive against Delhi-based NGOs operating from residential areas and the fact that their offices have no legal standing in Delhi Master Plan 2021 are contrary to:

- a. **The National Policy on the Voluntary Sector** (approved by the union cabinet on May 17, 2006), which promises “creation of an enabling environment for the voluntary sector”;
- b. **Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM)**, which clearly recognizes the importance of civil society and community participation in making things happen; and
- c. **The Bhagidari Movement**, a citizen government partnership that Chief Minister of Delhi, Sheila Dikshit has been championing in the capital

As you would recall, the MCD made an exception for NGOs in the period interim to notification of the Delhi Master Plan 2021. The Monitoring Committee (MC) appointed by the Supreme Court to oversee the sealing drive had ruled in 2006 that NGOs would be allowed to function even if they are located in residential areas.

We believe that if NGOs are to play the vital social role they are playing, then they must be provided for in the Master Plan. It should be possible to incorporate provisions of space and tenure for the NGOs within the existing hierarchy of urban development, so that they may be able to provide appropriate services at every level.

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\* Please refer to Major Highlights of the Plan 20 (j); Chapter 4.2.3.1 (viii); Table 4.3; Table 13.20; Table 13.20; Table 13.21; Table 13.27; Chapter 14.0; Chapter 14.6

In light of the above, we therefore request you to kindly intervene on an urgent basis to ensure that the Master Plan is amended accordingly to authorize NGOs/ VSOs, registered in India or abroad to operate in residential areas across all categories of settlements There is also a valid case for broadening or expanding the definition of “Professional Activity” under the Master Plan to include VSOs/NGOs in the list of permitted activities.

With warm regards, and thanking you,

Yours sincerely,

Paresh Tewary  
Chief Executive Officer