EASE OF LIVING INDEX AND ITS COMPONENTS

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Abstract

Ease of Living Index has attracted wide public enthusiasm and provided an opportunity to Urban Planners, Municipal Authorities and also public as a large baseline data for wider public debate. It is expected that the baseline data would fulfill the demands of cross section of the people who are aspiring for a better quality of life from the city administration. This is a unique exercise and is based on an open and participatory assessment of the cities along with physical audit of urban metrics in a -transparent manner.

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) launched the 'Ease of Living' Index in January 2018 to help the cities systematically to assess themselves against global and national benchmarks and encourage them to shift towards an 'outcome-based' approach to urban planning and management. Another highlight of the Ease of Living framework is its strong link to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The assessment covers several metrics critical to track progress towards the SDGs in an urban environment. Pune ranks best among 111 cities in the government's Ease of Living Index in 2018.

Keywords: Ease of Living, Smart Cities Mission, AMRUT, HRIDAY, Swachh Bharat Mission, PMAY, Sustainable Development Goals.

Introduction:

Ease of Living Index has attracted wide public enthusiasm and provided an opportunity to Urban Planners, Municipal Authorities and public as a large baseline data for wider public debate. It is expected that the baseline data will fulfill the demands of cross section of people who are aspiring for a better quality of life from the city administration. This is a unique exercise and is based on an open and participatory assessment of cities along with physical audit of urban metrics in a transparent manner.

By 2050 India is projected to add 416 million urban dwellers to the world's urban population and would be home for about 58% of the total global population. This trend would bring with it several opportunities, challenges and intensified competition among cities to attract talent and resources to create healthy and liveable cities. The Government of India, through its various missions such as the Smart Cities Mission, AMRUT, HRIDAY, Swachh Bharat Mission, and PMAY, among others, combined to make Indian cities healthy, attractive and sustainable, and to improve the residents' quality of living.

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) launched the 'Ease of Living' Index in January 2018 to help the cities systematically to assess themselves against global and national benchmarks and encourage them to shift towards an 'outcome-based' approach to urban planning and management. It covers 111 cities that are smart city contenders, capital cities and cities with population of 1 million plus.

Another highlight of the Ease of Living framework is its strong link to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The assessment covers several metrics critical to track the progress towards the SDGs in an urban environment.

What do we mean by Ease of Living Index?

By 2050 India is projected to add 416 million urban dwellers to the world's urban population and will be home to about 58% of the total global population.

Structurally, urbanisation is advantageous to India on several fronts. Urban areas contribute approximately 62-63% of India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which is estimated to reach 75% by 2030. McKinsey research estimates that cities could generate 70% net of all new jobs by 2030. It presents an opportunity to reduce social inequities which are much less pronounced in urban agglomerations compared to rural areas, since hierarchies are driven more by economic (rather than social) standing in cities. It also serves as a natural focal point for the adoption of new technologies and innovation en-masse. Additionally, it creates large markets with critical mass for a variety of goods and services, catalysing the overall economy.

Enhancing ease of living in cities needs evidence-based growth strategies that are inclusive and put the aspirations and well-being of all citizens first. To this end, city managers need to be equipped with information that will help them to understand the characteristics of their city along with various dimensions of ease of living, which provides a starting point for designing interventions.

Objectives of the Ease of Living Index:

The key objective of the Ease of Living Index is to:

➤ Catalyse actions to achieve broader development outcomes including the Sustainable Development Goals;

➤ Serve as a basis for dialogue between citizens and urban decision makers.

➤ Assess outcomes achieved from various urban policies and schemes; and

➤ Generate information to assist evidence-based planning;

Calculating the Ease of Living Index:

The Ease of Living Index captures the breadth of the quality of life in the cities across focusing 4 pillars and 15 categories using 78 indicators, of which 56 are core indicators and 22 are supporting indicators. The core indicators measure those aspects of ease of living which are considered 'essential' urban services. The supporting indicators are used to measure adoption of innovative practices which are considered desirable for enhancing ease of living.

Each city is given a score between 0 and 100. The Index construction follows the Dimensional Index Methodology. This method computes the scores for each indicator with reference to 'maximum within the comparison group' or 'absolute benchmarks'. These absolute benchmarks were derived from national or international standards. Where neither international nor national benchmarks exist, the city with the best performance in its group (relevant population range) is treated as a benchmark and the marks awarded to other cities (within the relevant population group) are calculated proportionately. The score that a city receives is based on its performance on each indicator under that pillar, and the level of importance i.e., the weight assigned to each pillar and indicator. The pillar weights are as follows: Institutional (25 points), Social (25 points), Economy and Employment (5 points), and Physical (45 points). A core indicator carries 70% weightage while a supporting indicator carries 30% weightage.

The 2018 Ease of Living Index assessed 111 cities in India and the key insights from the exercise are presented below:

The top cities on the Ease of Living Index show mixed representation across population groups. The top 20 cities comprise of 3 cities with population under the 0.5 million band, 4 cities between 0.5 - 1 million, 10 cities between 1 - 4 million and 3 cities over 4 million population. This mixed

representation is true of the pillar level ranks as well. The scores themselves show an interesting distribution, with the four quartiles separated by 12, 5, 8 and 15 points respectively, showing appreciable clustering in the middle ranks (the maximum difference in the score between cities in the top 25 percentile contains 15 marks, while 25th to 50th percentile carries 8 marks). However, overall the scores are quite close, indicating that cities are getting increasingly competitive in improving their urban quality of life (refer Annexure C for detailed scores of the cities). Apart from being a tool for comparative benchmarking and assessment, the Ease of Living Index could potentially trigger actions at various levels, some of which are outlined below:

1. Enhance the quality and comparability of data collection;

2. Improve cities' decision making and ensure efficient allocation of resources based on gap areas;

3. Identify best models for achieving the desired transformation in ease of living, by enabling learnings across cities over time; and

4. Improve the quality of electoral discourse and improve accountability of elected representatives at the city level.

Overview of the Assessment Framework:

MoHUA has developed a conceptual framework that defines ease of living as well as its key elements. 'Ease of Living', as defined by the Ministry, is underpinned by concepts of healthy communities, economic development, environmental sustainability, and social capital and cohesion. It is intrinsically linked to physical amenities such as water supply, solid waste management, and presence of parks and green spaces etc., and socio-economic and cultural aspects such as cultural offerings, career opportunities for citizens, economic dynamism, safety and security.

The 'Ease of Living' Index has 78 indicators classified across 15 categories and organised under 4 pillars.

Pillars:

The Ease of Living Index is structured according to 4 pillars - Institutional, Social, Economic and Physical that represent the broad conceptual elements that define ease of living.

Pillar 1: Institutional

In order to provide better living conditions for their citizens, cities require efficient and effective institutions that will help them to deliver improved services and manage urban infrastructure in a sustainable manner. By leveraging technology, including ICT-enabled solutions, cities can foster

economic growth, improve urban quality of life, and create opportunities for participatory urban development.

Pillar 2: Social

Tracking progress of the categories under this pillar will enable cities to monitor the availability and accessibility of education and healthcare facilities for its citizens. It will also allow them to ensure that the city has a safe and secure environment in addition to foster the existing culture and strengthening the identity and sense of belonging to the city among its residents.

Pillar 3: Economic

For a city to achieve inclusive growth, it should focus on enhancing the economic prospects of all businesses and improve the revenue buoyancy of the urban local bodies. This is an essential ingredient for enhancing the quality of life of its citizen.

Pillar 4: Physical

The physical pillar, which is representative of the city infrastructure and urban service delivery, is the one that has the largest direct impact on the ease of living in a city. The pillar encompasses categories related to housing, access to open spaces, the supply of water and electricity, sanitation and pollution. It aims to measure the actual service delivery performance of the city and also the extent to which cities are implementing policies that work towards making them more sustainable.

These four parameters were further broken down into 15 categories.

- The four parameters include
    - **Institutional** (Governance),
    - **Social** (Identity and Culture, Education, Health, Safety and Security),
    - **Economic** (Economy and Employment),
    - **Physical factors** (Housing & Inclusiveness, Public Open Spaces, Mixed Land Use & Compactness, Power Supply, Transport & Mobility, Assured Water Supply, Waste Water Management, Solid Waste Management, and Reduced Pollution).

Scaling of the Parameters:

- Institutional and Social Parameters carry 25 points each, Physical Factors have weightage of 45 points and Economic Factors 5 points totalling to 100 mark scale on which cities were evaluated.

Creating the Ease of Living Index:

Implementation of the Ease of Living Index involved the following key steps:

Step-1 (Indicator Development and Refinement): Indicator development. Final list of indictors (with details on collection protocols)

Step-2 (State and City Level Engagement): Training and deployment of the state and city-coordinators. Organising National/State Level Workshops City Level Reconnaissance Meetings

Step-3 (Data Collection): Creation of online tools to collect data. Data Collection, Citizen Surveys, Creation of data collection protocols for primary data collection

Step-4 (Data Verification): Formulation of secondary and physical audit protocols Audit of secondary data provided by cities. Finalisation of datasets

Step-5 (Scoring and Ranking of the Cities): Indices development and visualisation. Preparation of assessment report.

Overall Rankings:

India's Most Liveable Cities in 2018:

The Ease of Living Index was formulated with the ultimate goal of being able to rank the cities on the quality of lives led by their citizens.

Table 1
Top 10 Performers and Bottom 10 Performers in Ease of Living Index 2018

Ease of Living Index 2018			National Average: 35.64/100		
Top 10 Performers			Bottom 10 Performers		
Rank	City Name	Score	Rank	City Name	Score
1	Pune	58.11	111	Rampur	17.00
2	Navi Mumbai	58.02	110	Kohima	18.13
3	Greater Mumbai	57.78	109	Patna	18.67
4	Tirupati	57.52	108	Bihar Sharif	18.84
5	Chandigarh	53.16	107	Bhagalpur	20.40
6	Thane	52.27	106	Itanagar	20.81
7	Raipur	50.58	105	Pasighat	20.83
8	Indore	50.16	104	Kavaratti	21.04
9	Vijayawada	49.27	103	Saharanpur	22.21
10	Bhopal	49.11	102	Silvassa	22.71

Source: Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), 'Ease of Living Index 2018'.

Out of the 111 cities that were assessed in the premier Ease of Living Index, Pune (Maharashtra) has topped the rankings, with Navi Mumbai (Maharashtra) coming in the 2nd place followed by Greater Mumbai (Maharashtra) placed 3rd rank. The remaining cities in the top 10 (in order), include: Tirupati (Andhra Pradesh), Chandigarh (Chandigarh), Thane (Maharashtra), Raipur (Chhattisgarh), Indore (Madhya Pradesh), Vijayawada (Andhra Pradesh) and Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh).

Table 2
Pillar Wise Rankings in Ease of Living Index 2018

Pillar Wise: Top Ten Cities							
Institutional		Social		Economic		Physical	
Rank	Name of the city	Rank	Name of the city	Rank	Name of the city	Rank	Name of the city
1	Navi Mumbai	1	Tirupati	1	Chandigarh	1	Greater Mumbai
2	Tirupati	2	Tiruchinapalli	2	Ajmer	2	Pune
3	Karim Nagar	3	Navi Mumbai	3	Kota	3	Thane
4	Hyderabad	4	Chandigarh	4	Indore	4	Chandigarh
5	Bilaspur	5	Pune	5	Tiruppur	5	Raipur
6	Kochi	6	Greater Mumbai	6	Itanagar	6	Tirupati
7	Ahmadabad	7	Amaravathi	7	Pune	7	Navi Mumbai
8	Pune	8	Vijayawada	8	Ludiana	8	Bhopal
9	Vijayawada	9	Indore	9	Thane	9	Bilaspur
10	Visakhapatnam	10	Vasai-Virar	10	Vijayawada	10	Visakhapatnam

Source: Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), 'Ease of Living Index 2018'.

The top positions in each of the sub-indices are occupied by the top 5 cities in the overall rankings: Navi Mumbai scores the highest in the Institutional sub-index, Tirupati occupies the highest score in Social sub-index, Chandigarh ranks first in Economic and Greater Mumbai scores highest rank in Physical sub -index. Due to its high weightage, the Physical sub-index influences the overall ranks the most.

As the highest ranking city in the Ease of Living Index, Pune is also amongst the most consistent overall performing city across all pillars - it is among the top 10 cities in all of the four sub-indices. Navi Mumbai appears among the top 10 cities in the 3rd and 4th of the 4 sub-indices, while Greater Mumbai is present among the top 10 in the 2nd and 4th sub-indices.

Middle size cities with population in the range of 1-4 million perform overall, the best with significant over representation in the top 10 and top 20 ranks. Conversely, smaller cities (with population less than 0.5 million) underperform on an aggregate basis. This trend could be attributed towards a combination of factors-critical size for attracting investments, economic

activity, large infrastructure spending, as well as a fundamental gap in effective data collection and management.

Significance:

The index aims to help cities attain liveable city status, get them more investments and improve tourism. It also seeks to serve as knowledge base for taking policy decisions and for planning. It also marks shift to data driven approach to urbanisation and promote competitive spirit among cities.

Conclusion:

The ministry of housing and urban affairs has launched its Ease of Living Index ranking 111 Indian cities inhabited by more than 130 million people. The exercise itself is a welcome admission of the fact that India's urbanisation process might have unleashed its own set of problems. There is nothing wrong in encouraging healthy competition among agencies which manage our cities. If such rankings can encourage broader citizen participation it will be even better.

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