Organisational Approach to COVID-19

The problems we faced, as an organisation, during COVID-19 were threefold in terms of health, finance and project deliverables.

Primarily, we were extremely concerned about the health of all our staff members. The first step we took was to ensure that all staff could work from home since when the first lockdown was announced on March 23, 2020. All staff members were issued circulars that detailed procedures to be followed if they test positive for COVID-19, preventive measures and other instructions. We also ensured regular sanitation of the office premises once work resumed.

Another hurdle we had to overcome was the financial strain that we faced as a project funded organisation. Due to the redirection of funds towards COVID-19, fund release was interrupted for the governmental projects that we had undertaken. In order to combat this situation, all senior staff decided to not draw salaries for two months after which they had to bear pay cuts of 20-30%. Junior and mid-level employees had to take pay cuts between 10 and 15%. We had carefully calibrated pay cuts; keeping in mind maintenance of a reasonable good cash flow.

The third obstacle we had to face was with reference to project deliverables for example, the lack of ability to conduct fieldwork and surveys. However, we followed a very imaginative and intelligent plan where during the lockdown, we focused entirely on desk based research in terms of literature review, secondary data collection, data analysis, etc. We tried to ensure that work does not come to a halt entirely due to the pandemic and continued to work on desk based research.

Q: Being one of the senior members of PAC and now the Chairman, in your opinion, what is the legacy that has been part of PAC since its inception?

A: The biggest legacy of PAC is the idea of ‘citizen’ as the core of all government activities. The Citizen Report Card which it pioneered at a time when there was no established system of assessing citizen satisfaction of services provided by the government, has blossomed into the concept of ‘citizen-centric governance’ and has become popular across the country.

Secondly, PAC’s work has been anchored by the values of transparency, integrity and professionalism. It has grown during the last 25 years as a public policy Think Tank with its work spread across the country with these values intact. With a dedicated work force, its reputation has been built around this value system, apart from the quality of its performance.

Finally, PAC’s belief in the efficacy of public systems to provide or enable provision of public services to the people in developing countries. Our research and other activities are therefore focussed on making government policies and programs work for public good.

Q: As an organisation which has been in existence for over 25 years what do you think have been the key challenges that PAC has faced and overcome?

A: Born in a small residential premises, with a small cash box, PAC’s beginnings were humble. Hence the first major challenge was to raise resources. Thanks to the efforts of its Founder-Chairman, Dr. Samuel Paul, we were able to get a generous grant from the Ford Foundation which served as a corpus for its growth. Building on this base, the institution has witnessed a steady growth, though with hiccups here and there and we are now trying to stand on our own legs.

Secondly, we had to find a proper place to work. For about ten years, PAC functioned from a rented premises and space was becoming a constraint. Keen on moving to our own nest, we procured two acres of land at Bommasandra in 2004 and constructed a building designed to suit the requirements of a research institution.

Another challenge was to move beyond the framework of the CRC and evolve into a full-fledged public policy think tank. We
have gradually extended our frontiers into areas like social audit, urban governance, environmental governance etc. The Public Affairs Index (PAI) initiated in 2016 has emerged as a unique tool to evaluate the government policies and programs of all the states in India. effort to expand the range of our activities and improve the quality of performance continues. The creation of the Centre for Open Data Research (CODR) in collaboration with IIT-B, with the assistance of the state government is a feather in PAC’s cap.

Q: As the new Chairman, what according to you should be the areas that need to continue to focus and what are the new areas that need to be explored?

A: The world has changed enormously during the last 25 years. Mind boggling technological innovations, social media, rapid urbanisation, climate change, environmental disasters and the recent COVID-19 pandemic have had a profound impact on the politics and economies of nations and the way we live and work. Public policies need to be reshaped to meet the new challenges. PAC must view these challenges as opportunities to generate new ideas and invent new tools to facilitate new age policy making and innovative governance. First, it must continue its engagement with the recently initiated Data Sciences and push governments towards data/evidence-based policy making, duly recognising the limits imposed by political decision making.

I would suggest the following new focus areas:

Collaborative Governance: To ensure “policy matters to everyone and everyone matters in policy”. The aim is to bring public and private stakeholders including academia together with state agencies to engage in consensus oriented decision making. This has become crucial at a time when divisive tendencies are on the rise and consensus seems to be eluding the decision makers.

Regulation of market forces: The market is emerging as a big player not only in shaping the economy but in influencing government decisions. A crucial question that arises is, how much free market and how much regulation? PAC can focus on areas such as agriculture, electricity supply, water supply, transport, housing, education and health relevant at the state level.

Implementation Issues: The success of public policies, plans and programs depends a lot on the actual implementation. Identifying the bottlenecks in implementation and finding the right solutions can be an important area of research. Here it would be useful to address the issue of state capacity which can help determine what areas can be left to the market and what must remain with government.

The above are indicative, not exhaustive. The Board of Governors, the Director and the staff can come up with other ideas, keeping the motto of Good Governance in view.
New Initiative

Public Policy Dialogue

The Public Policy Dialogue (PPD) is an initiative to advance the discourse on human development praxis. Specifically, PPD will generate actionable knowledge that can inform policy and practice in niche public governance challenges extant in Karnataka.

Pre-Departure Orientation Training Programme

The first session for 2021 post-COVID lockdown was conducted on 7 January, 2021 for a candidate named Nimitha who is scheduled to travel to KSA as a staff nurse.

Ethical Recruitment

Divya Alex, Programme Officer PAC conducted a training on Ethical Recruitment as part of the IMC-K’s International Migration Familiarisation Programme (IMFP).

Policy Engagement and Communication

Radio Interview

Conversations on issues and advancements in policy sphere

“PAC’s management has been very active in keeping up moral support of staff to develop the sense of confidence...”

S.S Iyer,
Head Administration & Finance, PAC
Summary of Publications

15 Domain Bulletins
11 Project Bulletins
3 CODR
6 Reports
9 Opinion Articles and Commentaries

Publications

Domain Bulletins

Click to read further

4 Gender Speak
4 Education Children &
4 Health & Growth
3 Managing Migration
3 CODR Bits & Bytes

Project Bulletins

Click to read further

3 Boundaries and Beyond
4 Every Woman Every Child
4 Pulse and Capsule

Reports

Click to read further

Opinion Articles and Commentaries

Media is yet another stakeholder that PAC continues to engage by writing articles.

Click to read the articles
Events

3rd Dr Samuel Paul Memorial Lecture

PAC Interview Series
Event hosted by PAC where PAC interviews vivid personalities belonging to all sectors right from Health professor to Education department personals.

Outreach

Team PAC met with Smt. A.M. Laloo, Director, Planning Department, Government of Meghalaya, for Networking and project ideation process

Gurucharan G, Director PAC had a very useful discussion with Conrad Sangma, Chief Minister of Meghalaya

Sangeetha E. Nikkam, Programme Manager visited Chikkaballapur as part of the Social Welfare Development community engagement to evaluate the Land Purchase Scheme

"How can we use resources from the community to be actually involved in mental health related work..." shares Dr. Vikram Patel in an interview to PAC.

"I try to look at the larger picture in terms of development as a Block Development Officer, that all localities might not generally see." shares Monica Kshir, BDO, Mawpat, Meghalaya in an Interview with PAC.
Dr Meena Nair, Head of Research, PAC, was a Panellist in an online Policy Dialogue: Infrastructure, Technology, and Finance for Sustainable and Inclusive Development in Asia beyond the Pandemic.

PAC team made a presentation to the Women & Child Development Department chaired by Shri Peddappaiah R S, Commissioner.

The Health team handing over the registration certificate to Shri Jawaid Akhtar, IAS, Additional Chief Secretary to Govt. of Karnataka, Health & Family Welfare Services and Manjushree, Managing Director, KSMSCL.

The Administrative Reforms Commission, Karnataka had a consultation meeting with PAC team on using data science and evidence based research in addressing the governance challenges and the future reform path.

Team IMCK with Shri. Shubham Singh, IFS, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India during the International Migration Familiarisation Programme.

Sangeetha E. Nikkam, Programme Manager, PAC attended a Capacity Building Workshop on Project Monitoring and Evaluation (PME) organised by CUTS International.
A webinar on “Public Affairs Index 2020 Governance in the States of India” was co-hosted with the Institute of Public Administration (IIPA), Karnataka Regional Branch. The webinar was well received by the audience and attracted nearly 43 participants and was represented by 3 eminent panelists and a moderator, and 3 speakers from the host organisations. This event was organised by Public Affairs Foundation (PAF).

“Thank you for a great course. Great presentation style, clear, empathetic and well-structured with lots of opportunities to ask questions and talk about real life examples, which all made for a really enjoyable and informative course. This has more than met my expectations. A wonderfully practical course - received clear insights on the IMCK project.”

Kavitha Srinivas, K.A.S
District Employment Officer,
Tumkur

“Public Affairs Centre has been a nodal agency for Department of Health and Family Welfare for establishing Karnataka State Medical Supplies Corporation. The team has worked in tandem with the department to achieve the registration within record time.”

Smt Manjushree N, IAS
Managing Director, KSMSCL and Commissioner FSSAI, GoK

“‘The International Migration Familiarisation Programme being held for the nominated officers has given me a greater understanding of the migration lifecycle, especially the process and challenges in repatriation of migrants from the destination country during times of crises. The session has also given me an opportunity to learn about the nuances of the Emigration Act 1983.”

Savita K
Inspection and Verification Assistant,
Karnataka State Unorganised Workers Social Security Board

“‘The Manpower Policy of KSMSCL prepared by Public Affairs Centre is quite extensive and can be adopted as standard document for HR policy drafting of the corporation.”

Shri Jawaid Akhtar, IAS
Additional Chief Secretary,
GoK Department of Health and Family Welfare
**Field Research Officer Opinion**

During the COVID-19 lockdown many activities were halted but PAC was constantly in touch with the communities. The Field Research Officers, continued to interact with the communities in the research projects.

“**We completely relied on Digital Communications as travel was banned, this way we stayed connected to our stakeholders, District level partners & Government officials.**

Since we were associated with Public Distribution Project, we had to motivate the Citizen Monitors to help during the ration distribution time and ensure the timely distribution of food to avoid any lag.”

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**Intern Speak**

PAC believes in encouraging the interns to work on live projects, interact with stakeholders, write Policy briefs and Articles and exposing them to real life experience.

**Yatika Agrawal**
Symbiosis School of Economics, Pune

“My internship with PAC was a wonderful learning experience.

Working on the project was very insightful on the problems faced by construction workers in availing benefits provided by the government under the Building and Other Construction Workers (BOCW) Act.”

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**Shruti Chaturvedi**
Symbiosis School of Economics, Pune

“My internship at Public Affairs Centre turned out to be an insightful experience. It helped me in gaining and widening my knowledge on the conditions of construction workers and other labourers. I am thankful for the opportunity that was given to me to work with amazing people.”

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**Gayathri Naik**
Symbiosis School of Economics, Pune

“The BOCW project gave me a great amount of knowledge on real life issues faced by construction workers and the negative impact of underutilisation of the cess collected. Working as an intern at PAC gave me an amazing new perspective and helped me enhance my research skills.”

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**Sai Sidarth Manikandan**
International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai

“Working on live projects where I could apply my academic coursework was the most interesting part of the internship. My work involved performing literature reviews, data analysis and being part of writing a research paper with health lead. Overall it was a satisfying experience despite the fact that I interned with PAC remotely.”
Social Media Analysis

- Facebook:
  - Likes: 27
  - Views: 622
  - New Followers: 56
  - Reach: 11,693

- Twitter:
  - Total Impressions: 30,802
  - Engagement Rate: 2.56% per day

- LinkedIn:
  - Total Page Views: 2,136
  - Unique Visitors: 599
  - Impressions: 25,441
  - Clicks: 617
  - Engagement Rate: 2.1% per day

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