Assessment of Citizen Centres in Tamil Nadu

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## Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BSNL</td>
<td>Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAN</td>
<td>Citizen Action Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>EB</td>
<td>Electricity Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEDCOT</td>
<td>Federation of Consumer Organisations of Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIV</td>
<td>Human Immunodeficiency Virus</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non Government Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>NYK</td>
<td>Nehru Yuvak Kendra</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAC</td>
<td>Public Affairs Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>PDS</td>
<td>Public Distribution System</td>
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<tr>
<td>PHC</td>
<td>Public Health Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>ROA</td>
<td>Retired Officials Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>ROSED</td>
<td>Rural Organisation for Social Education and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>RTI</td>
<td>Right to Information</td>
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<tr>
<td>RTO</td>
<td>Regional Transport Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCORE</td>
<td>Society for Community Organisation and Rural Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIDAR</td>
<td>Social Institute for Development and Rehabilitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSLC</td>
<td>Secondary School Leaving Certificate</td>
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<tr>
<td>SWARD</td>
<td>Society for Women Action and Rural Development</td>
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Acknowledgements

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Our acknowledgements are also due to the coordinators of all the 32 centres visited by PAC for providing us all the information required patiently.

We wish to thank the Trustees of Catalyst Trust for their comments on the assessment.

We would also like to thank our colleague Mr. Wilson Pais for the apt cover design.

While we are indebted to the individuals mentioned above for their contributions, opinions expressed in this report and any errors that remain are solely the responsibility of the authors.

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Executive Summary

Today, there is space for people to meet on the basis of religion, caste, profession or political parties. But there is no space as such to meet on the basis of one’s identity as a citizen. Catalyst Trust, a well-reputed NGO in Tamil Nadu, working in the areas of good governance and citizenship, mooted the idea of starting public spaces where meetings between and among individuals would be on the basis of their identity as citizens, and where these meetings would result in citizens emerging as competent, concerned and responsible social actors. Ford Foundation agreed to support this project.

In this regard, Catalyst Trust, along with its partner and other like-minded NGOs, developed a list of the relevant roles that Citizen Centres would play in society and a particular locality and the minimum basic information and infrastructure that would be made available for an average citizen to have access to. The roles that a Citizen Centre would play included – as an information centre, as a discussion/study centre, as a discourse centre, as a guidance centre, as a monitoring centre, as an action centre, and as a solution centre. Whether the Citizen Centres are performing their roles well is arrived at through evaluations and assessments that are conducted by the centres themselves. However, it has been felt that these internal reviews are not enough to get a detailed picture of what makes certain Citizen Centres successes while others are still struggling to maintain themselves.

Keeping this aspect in view, Catalyst Trust requested the Public Affairs Centre (PAC) to carry out an assessment of selected Citizen Centres in Tamil Nadu. The feedback received from the coordinators and users of these Citizen Centres has been analysed and their ‘voice’ presented through the findings in the report. Direct observations were also made at the citizen centres that were visited by the PAC team.

The basic objectives of the assessment were mainly to understand whether the citizen centres have been performing their roles well, whether they would eventually be able to sustain themselves and the role that Catalyst Trust would need to play in the process.

To carry out the assessment, PAC held meetings with the Catalyst Trust to
understand the background of the Citizen Centres and the role that they play in the different localities where they are located. Two sets of data collection instruments were prepared – a semi-structured questionnaire and a checklist, which were then canvassed in 32 selected Citizen Centres from three selected clusters of Tamil Nadu.

Major findings of the assessment revealed:

- From interviews with the Citizen Centre coordinators -
  - Basic facilities such as water and electricity are available to Citizen Centres but not toilets to that extent. While 12 centres were on owned premises, 10 were located in rent-free premises. Computers were available to 12 centres.
  - Basic information through books and journals sent by Catalyst Trust is mostly available as well as local newspapers. Most centres highlight the day's important events and some even run libraries.
  - Monthly meetings are held regularly by most centres, though not purely in the form of discussion centres, though discourses are reported to be held and guidance given by currently working and retired government officials.
  - Comparatively, lesser number of Citizen Centres (17) play the role of active monitoring centres, though most have reported scrutinising revised electoral rolls, etc. and passing on complaints to relevant officials.
  - Most centres have reported submitting monthly reports and attending review meetings and achieving some tasks especially those relating to electoral interventions. However, not many centres have developed positive relationships with other NGOs in their localities.

- From interviews with citizens –
  - Most citizens living near the Citizen Centres were not aware of the Centre as such but of the organisation running it.
  - There was also a general lack of awareness of the activities
that are carried out by these centres.

- However, visitors to the centres found them useful but suggested carrying out more intensive awareness programmes.

- From observations by PAC Research Team –
  - While most Citizen Centres were conveniently located, size of the premises varied.
  - In most of the Citizen Centres, the coordinators were found to be available while number of visitors at the time of the visits to the centres varied between two to thirty.
  - Reading materials was found to be easily accessible and computers were mostly in working condition.

- Other findings –
  - Almost all the Citizen Centres clearly held Catalyst Trust with great respect, appreciating its constant support and guidance and the flexibility given to them to run the programmes their own way.
  - However, coordinators have also requested for further training as well as continued financial and conceptual guidance. For further improvement, some of the centres have come up with innovative ideas to spread awareness and information.
  - To maintain sustainability, Citizen Centres have requested for continued support for reading material. While older centres reported that could start to sustain themselves, the newer centres, comprising many of those covered in this assessment requested for further financial support for at least another three years.

Conclusions to the study clearly indicate that the centres are functioning very well as information centres as well as study centres, discourse centres and as guidance centres. However they are not strong as monitoring, action and solution centres in most cases.
While awareness among citizens regarding the Citizen Centres is very low, leadership makes a significant difference to the activity level and successful running of the centres. Where the leaders as well as the supporting NGOs and ROAs are proactive, the centres are performing well.

Citizen Centres have come up with novel ideas and innovative approaches to popularise and use the centre to the greatest extent. At the same time, the assessment clearly reveals the dependence of the newer centres on inputs from Catalyst Trust to a great extent. Thus, proper support to these, in the form of continuous training, capacity building and financial backing for some more time could lead to ensured long-term sustainability and growth of these Citizen Centres.

What cannot be ignored is the uniqueness of the project, in terms of its objectives, its scale, and the nature of its partnerships, which should be presented as an example to be replicated far and wide.
1.1 Background

Today, there is space for people to meet on the basis of religion, caste, profession or political parties. But there is no space as such to meet on the basis of one’s identity as a citizen. In government offices, one is treated more as a petitioner or beneficiary rather than as a citizen, while in other public spaces, other aspects such as social and cultural relationships also come into play.

Catalyst Trust, a well-reputed NGO in Tamil Nadu, working in the areas of good governance and citizenship, mooted the idea of starting public spaces where meetings between and among individuals would be on the basis of their identity as citizens, and where these meetings would result in citizens emerging as competent, concerned and responsible social actors. These Centres would reconstruct the identity of “citizens” distinguishing it from other common identities like caste, religion, place, language, profession or party through which people generally tend to view their civic and political role.

In this regard, Catalyst Trust, along with its partner and other like-minded NGOs, developed a list of the relevant roles that Citizen Centres would play in society and a particular locality and the minimum basic information and infrastructure that would be made available for an average citizen to have access to. This Citizen Centre project of Catalyst Trust, is supported by a grant from Ford Foundation.

To achieve this the Citizens’ Centres will function\(^1\) as indicated below.

a) As an Information Centre

To perform their due role in a democracy, people need basic facts and details about governance, their rights as well as their duties. Information relating to these will be collected and made available at the Centre. The basic details that the Citizen Centres would maintain include – voters’ list relating to the polling station in that area; a register of ration cards at the Fair Price shops in that area; Citizens’ Charters issued by various departments of the

\(^1\)As developed by Catalyst Trust and shared with partner NGOs running the Citizen Centres.
governments, both Centre and State; information relating to the procedures followed by different Government Agencies, etc.

b) As a Discussion / Study Centre

The information gathered should be utilised. People, who have got the information, should discuss among themselves, exchanging their views and clarifying their doubts. Such face-to-face discussions are the very breath of democracy. News items in various papers, the editorial, current and topical matters can be issues for discussions, which will nurture the habit of listening to others, who may offer a point of view different from one's own.

c) As a Discourse Centre

The Citizen Centre will also function as a centre where knowledgeable people will learn to deliver discourses to people on various matters. Retired government servants who did exemplary work during their service, school/college teachers, other local learned spiritual leaders could give discourses. These meetings are to be held at least once in two months at a particular time, on a particular day. Though the centres are free to hold meetings as many times as they want to, Catalyst Trust would provide monetary support of Rs. 500/- for six bimonthly discourse meetings towards incidental expenses. Initially, the attendance may be poor. But one need not lose heart. If the meetings are regularly held, attendance will slowly improve and the intellectual and moral level of people will also rise considerably.

d) As a Guidance Centre

The Citizen Centre is also a Guidance Centre. There are a number of retired officers both from Central and State Government who have, during their career performed their duties honestly and efficiently. They have the necessary expertise, freedom and the leisure to share their rich experience and use the same to guide and advise people to tackle their problems referring to their field of experience. They can come to the centre once a month / fortnight / week and render this service. The centre can set apart a particular department for a particular day in a week /fortnight. On that day, persons with experience in that department can give guidance at the Centre.
Thus the Citizens centres will function as a “Civic Clinic” to cure the “civic ills” afflicting society and polity.

d) As a Monitoring Centre
The Citizen Centre is also a monitoring centre. The centre will fight injustice if any, committed in the area, and will also question undue delay or irregularities in the execution of public works or in carrying out public affairs. The centre will also monitor whether basic services like primary education, Primary Health Centres (PHCs), public distribution outlets are functioning in the manner in which it ought to function. While monitoring, it is not enough only to point out mistakes and lapses, but it is also very necessary to point out and applaud good work done. This will enable the centre to get the help and co-operation of the concerned public agencies. The centre will publicise in each local area by appropriate and relevant means.

e) As an Action Centre
The Citizen Centres will not stop with mere talk; it will be an action centre too. The Centre can scrutinize the voters’ list to rectify deficiencies; it can check the accuracy of the entries in the Public Distribution System (PDS) outlets, it can mobilise peoples’ power to fulfil local needs and also remedy violation of citizen’s rights.

f) As a Solution Centre
In short, the Centre will function in such a way that people get the feeling that if they have any problem regarding their rights as citizens, they will certainly get a solution at the Centre.

The great political question according to Aristotle is “how shall we order our affairs together”. In this sense, the Citizen Centres will make the citizens the centre in all social and political activities, providing the space and opportunity for ordering their affairs in face-to-face discussions. The core issue in today’s context is not leadership; it is citizenship. The Citizen Centres will address this core issue and demand more of the citizens to take charge of their affairs themselves collectively.
Some Major Achievements of Citizen Centres

The aim of the Citizen Centre is upliftment of citizens through their own efforts. This is sought to be accomplished through dissemination of vital information and indicating a course of action and directing them through that way. It is with this idea that a set of books relating to citizens' rights and role in a democracy were supplied to the Citizen Centres. Also journals related to, women's rights, self-confidence for the youth, agriculture, industries, science, etc., are being supplied to the Centres. These are being used effectively by most of the Centres.

Citizen Centres are also taking up local issues and deficiencies in services with the concerned authorities and trying to set them right. Notable work in this regard has been done by the Palayamkottai Citizen Centre in Thirunelveli District. This Centre has taken up several local issues and recently through its efforts, an old latrine was totally demolished and in its place, a new building for the library has been constructed. It has also taken up supply of drinking water to certain unserved localities. On both these occasions, a function was held under the chairmanship of the Coordinator of citizens, and the Mayor of Tirunelveli Corporation inaugurated the projects. This centre through its continuous good work has been recognised as the voice of citizens of the locality, so much so that when the local Minister released the Citizens Charter of Tirunelveli Corporation at Tirunelveli, the first copy of the Charter was presented by the Minister to the Coordinator of the Citizen Centre. The achievements of this centre was also highlighted in the monthly journal 'Kudimakkal Murasu', brought out by Catalyst Trust, and other Centres have been exhorted to emulate Tirunelveli Centre. Other centres have also started taking up such local issues with the local authority.

The Tamil Nadu government brought out a Citizens Charter for the Public Distribution System (PDS) indicating the responsibilities of the citizens and the government. Catalyst Trust reduced this to a wall poster and sent them to various Citizen Centres requesting them to bring the contents of the posters to the notice of the local people. Some Centres actually stuck the poster in the ration shop itself; this started yielding results. For example, the Chengam Citizen Centre in Tiruvannamalai District after putting up the poster in the ration shops, got people to protest when a person came with 20 ration cards for obtaining rations. They pointed out the poster and said no one can pledge
the ration card or get rations on a card, which is not their own for unlawfully diverting ration to the open market.

Monitoring the electoral roll revision was also taken up by some centres. Some centres have conducted medical camps, legal education camps, etc., with the assistance of NGOs like Lions and Rotaries. Some of the centres have brought to the notice of the government officers, certain government orders and requested them to implement the orders. Through such actions, civic senses and civic virtue are slowly being inculcated.

Areas of concern and interest for the Citizen Centres

1. Electoral reforms to ensure free and fair elections.
2. Opposing, preventing and eliminating corruption at all levels.
3. Urging the government to amend the Tamil Nadu Right to Information Act to make it more meaningful and to ensure transparency in public administration.
4. To urge the government to bring out meaningful Citizens Charters with specific commitments to citizens to ensure accountable and friendly public agencies.
5. To urge the government to ensure speedy and wholesome disposal of business through proper decentralisation.
6. To help the local bodies so that they function as local self-governing institutions as envisaged in the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution.
7. Protecting human rights particularly the rights of children, women and oppressed people.
8. Protecting the environment to ensure clean land, water and air for all.
10. Propagation of Gandhian values to emphasise honesty, simplicity and efficiency in personal and public life.
11. To improve primary education and primary health and ensure proper, efficient and good service to the poorest sections in these sectors.
12. To promote social harmony by eliminating hatred in society, on the basis of caste, religion or language.
13. Developing human resource particularly among the youth.

14. Through all the above activities, cultivating among the people civic virtues, namely an interest in public affairs and consideration for others' needs and views.

Internal Evaluations and Assessment

Evaluation and assessment of Citizen Centres is carried out through the monthly to be sent by the Citizen Centres and through discussions in the review meetings. Here again 15 centres have lagged behind. The review meetings were originally done with the region consisting of six districts. It was found that this was not very effective and the participation was not up to the desired level. From March 2005 onwards this has been changed to the sub regional level taking up two or three districts at a meeting. All centres have welcomed this, as the review is done literally across the table giving adequate opportunity for participation by the members.

However, it has been felt that these internal reviews are not enough to get a detailed picture of what makes certain Citizen Centres successes while others are still struggling to maintain themselves. Keeping this aspect in view, Catalyst Trust requested the Public Affairs Centre (PAC) to carry out an assessment of selected Citizen Centres in Tamil Nadu. The feedback received from the coordinators and users of these Citizen Centres have been analysed and their 'voice' presented through the findings in the report.

1.2 Objectives

The objectives of the assessment were as follows:

1. To check if the objectives of setting up the citizen centres have been met;

2. To identify any common threads that exist across the citizen centres in terms of their management, profile of users, profile of those who run the centres, location of the centre, etc.;

3. To assess how sustainable the centres are – how long it takes to get them to self-support, what are the factors that would facilitate sustenance;

4. To assess what role Catalyst Trust needs to play and for how long;
5. To assess the replicability of the concept across the state and in other states;
6. To assess if Citizen Centres can over time become part of the Panchayat's activities; and
7. Viability of current centres starting sub-centres that function in similar fashion but which Catalyst Trust does not necessarily support.

1.3 Methodology

1.3.1 Research Design
At the outset, meetings were held with the Catalyst Trust to understand the background of the Citizen Centres and the role that they play in the different localities where they are located.

At the field level, with the help of a preliminary checklist, discussions were carried out with the coordinators and some users of Citizen Centres located close to the city of Chennai. The main objectives were to understand the issues that should be incorporated into the final questionnaire.

1.3.2 Data collection instruments
The data collection instruments comprised of

- a questionnaire to be canvassed among the coordinators of the Citizen Centres; and
- a checklist for observation of the Citizen Centres and general questions to be asked among users and households located in the vicinity of the Centre.

1.3.3 Sampling Design
Thirty two Citizen Centres were visited in three clusters, comprising of the following districts -
Cluster A - Chennai, Kanchipuram, Vellore, Tiruvallur
Cluster B - Trichy, Thanjavur, Karur
Cluster C - Madurai, Tuticorin, Thirunelveli

The total sample size for this study in terms of the number of Citizen Centres
to be assessed was 32 from among the total of 156 Citizen Centres located in the state. The number of Citizen Centres located in each of the districts is as follows along with the sample size for the Assessment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cluster</th>
<th>Cluster comprising of Districts</th>
<th>Total no. of Citizen Centres</th>
<th>Sample selected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Chennai, Kanchipuram, Vellore, Tiruvallur</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Trichy, Thanjavur, Karur</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Madurai, Tuticorin, Thirunelveli</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>47</strong></td>
<td><strong>32</strong></td>
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</table>

The final selection of the thirty-two Citizen Centres was carried out in joint agreement between PAC and Catalyst Trust.

1.3.4 Data collection and analysis

Researchers from PAC carried out the assessment in the selected study areas by visiting each of the selected Citizen Centre and preparing detailed field notes and reports on each of the clusters. Subsequently, the PAC Research Team carried out data entry and analysis, which have been incorporated into the report along with all the qualitative assessments.

1.1 Structure of the report

The report is divided into three chapters. Chapter 2 assesses the feedback on Citizen Centres as per the PAC researchers’ observations as well as the interviews carried out among the Coordinators of the Citizen Centres. Chapter 3 provides the conclusions and recommendations.
Chapter II
Assessment of Citizen Centres – Major Findings

This assessment has been carried out using feedback from Centre coordinators, citizens and through observations by the team as described in the previous chapter. A major part of the assessment focused on the achievement of the objectives set out by Catalyst Trust for the centres followed by the sustainability of the centres. This chapter describes the major findings from the assessment.

2.1. Were the objectives of setting up the centres achieved?

The assessment commences with looking at each of the objectives set out for the centres.

2.1.1. Are the Citizen Centres well provided with basic facilities?

For any centre to be well used there are certain basic facilities that should be available to a user. The assessment revealed that 97% (31 centres of the 32 covered) (refer Table 1) of the centres have water facility, and 91% (29 centres) have electricity and 69% (22 centres) have toilets. All of them have basic furniture thanks to the Rs. 4000/- given as a grant at the beginning by Catalyst Trust. However, many of the centres reported that the amount was not sufficient for the required furniture.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facility available</th>
<th>% of centres with</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilet</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic furniture</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While 41% (13 centres) of the centres are located in owned premises, 24% (8 centres) are located in rented premises. However, the heartening factor
is that 35% (11 centres) of the centres are located in premises provided free of rent by centre coordinators or the panchayats.

About 40% (13 centres) of the centres have computers. Interestingly these computers have been provided by the NGO running the centre in most places. The centre uses these computers to mainly store information. However, they are also used to run classes for interested citizens (mostly youngsters) on basic computer usage as well as hired out at a nominal rate for children to play computer games. This generated some revenue for the centre as well.

2.1.2. Are the Citizen Centres information centres?

One of the main objectives of the centres is to provide information to the citizens of that locality related to their role as citizens. What kind of information is the centre to provide? Catalyst Trust specified that the centres set up a library for citizens to use where there would be information on public services, voter lists, ration card holders lists in addition to whatever information they may need as citizens. Several journals are provided by Catalyst Trust as part of their support in addition to the book 'Thatti kekha Thagavalgal' which is a compilation of Citizens Charters of several public service provider agencies.

Our assessment (as shown in Table 2) showed that 62% (20 centres) of the centres had a copy of the voters' list, and 38% (12 centres) the 'A Register' of the ration shop. All of them had the book provided by Catalyst Trust, books and journals on citizenship and public awareness and public service delivery. Apart from one centre all of them get newspapers in Tamil.
Table 2: Availability of informative material at the Citizen Centres

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informative material</th>
<th>% of centres with material available</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voters list</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A register of ration shops</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizens Charters</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journals</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computers</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application forms for Government jobs</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nearly 91% (29 centres) of the centres reported that they received the books and journals regularly. A list of books and journals is maintained and updated by 90% (29 centres) of the centres. Only 47% (15 centres) of the centres lend books to the citizens and a small 10% (3 centres) issue membership cards. On an average, the centres that run libraries with memberships have around 26 members.

About 84% (26 centres) of the centres highlight the important news in the newspapers as specified by Catalyst Trust. Some write the headlines on a blackboard outside the centre while some others put it on the notice board.

On an average about 27 people visit the centres in a day.
Assessment of Citizen Centres in Tamil Nadu

Fig 1: Library Building of a Citizen Centre (in Mannachanallur Union, Thiruchi district)

Fig 2: Citizens availing library facilities at a Citizen Centre (Mangalapuram Panchayat, Villupuram district)
Fig 3: The book 'Thatti Kekha Thagavalgal', brought out by Catalyst Trust, that is available at all Citizen Centres (Mannargudi, Thiruvarur district)

Fig 4: Participants gathering together at the end of a discourse at a Citizen Centre (Kizh Ambi, Kancheepuram district).
2.1.3. Are the Citizen Centres discussion or study centres?

One of the objectives of the centres was to be a place where democracy can be practiced as a forum for people to hold discussions and debates on relevant issues. The assessment showed that though this kind of activity does not seem to be happening by itself when people visit centres, the monthly meetings that are held at the centres (94%) (30 centres) where about 15 to 20 people gather to discuss matters important to citizens or current topics related to citizenship, are a forum for citizens to discuss and exchange views and information.

2.1.4. Are the centres discourse centres?

Retired officials do participate to a great extent in this activity of the centres. The monthly meetings have officials from various departments mostly retired but sometimes current ones as well. These officials guide citizens on how to approach these departments, what documents would be required, which officials to meet, what forms to fill and how, eligibility to schemes etc. The Citizen Centres play a great role as facilitators in the dissemination of such useful information. As the assessment shows, the monthly meetings are held by the centres on a very regular basis. A range of topics is covered in these monthly meetings – environment, education, democracy, water services, pensions related issues, loans, legal advice etc. Around 35 members of the public attend these meetings on an average.

2.1.5. Are the centres guidance centres /civic clinics?

Several of the centres are either run by retired officials or have retired officials visiting them and guiding them on a regular basis. These officials do provide guidance to visitors to the centre on dealing with public service agencies. In 91% (29 centres) of the centres, there are officials visiting and guiding people.

2.1.6. Are the centres monitoring centres?

In this objective, the centre is not only expected to monitor public services but also build networks and good relationships with officials of the service providers. The idea is to obtain the help and cooperation of the officials at each agency.

The assessment revealed that only 53% (17 centres) of the centres reported monitoring public services in the locality.
Though 72% (23 centres) of the centres reported running campaigns, these were more of health camps and voter awareness campaigns rather than campaigns on civic awareness in general.

2.1.7. Are the centres action centres?

When it comes to scrutinizing the electoral rolls and monitoring electoral rolls revision, 84% (27 centres) of the centres have said they do it on a regular basis. Not much action seems to be happening except in some cases where the leadership is strong and committed on any other civic issues as yet.

2.1.8. Are the centres solution centres?

Though 72% (23 centres) of the centres reported that they receive complaints from the citizens on public services, and these range from local problems related to roads, street lights, drains, water, complaints on the RTO, education department, ration shops, sub-registrar office, old age pensions, gas connections etc.

The Centres have reported that they pass on these complaints to the relevant offices for action.

The interviews with citizens however, showed that things have not reached a stage where people can confidently presume that the centre can offer them solutions when they have a problem related to public services.

On the whole, the objectives of setting up the centres have been achieved to a great extent by the centres. However there is a lot of scope for growth.

2.1.9. Does assessment and evaluation of the centres take place?

About 19% (6 centres) of the centres reported having done an evaluation and assessment of their own functioning. Monthly reports have been given by 88% (28 centres) of the centres. Review meetings have been attended by 97% (31 centres) of the centres. Very few of the centres reported having taken feedback from their users. Hand in Hand, an NGO in Kancheepuram needs special mention here. They went to the extent of getting feedback from a large number of citizens in the locality of their centres. They acted upon the findings from this survey and have improved the services provided by the centres run by them.
Assessment of Citizen Centres in Tamil Nadu

However, this is the first evaluation by an independent agency being carried out on the request of Catalyst Trust.

2.1.10 Are the centres creating networks with other NGOs and Government officials?

The visits to the 32 centres across the state showed that very few of the centres are able to network with other NGOs. While some centres have carried out campaigns in collaboration with other NGOs, others have found them to be competing with them and not cooperating. As for Government officials, most centres have contacts with them at each of the offices at their local level. In the rural areas, the taluk and district officials are contacts while in the urban areas it is the municipal officials.

2.1.11. What are the major achievements listed out by the citizen centres?

Achievements of the centres have revolved around electoral interventions – guiding people on voting and also voting for the right person, information camps on Right To Information etc. They have also resolved problems related to pensions. Some centres that are working with the poor people have helped them get ration cards. Some centres also carry out charity work. Many of the centres have helped citizens resolve problems related to public services.

2.2. Citizen Awareness and Participation in Citizen Centre activities

Wherever the team went to assess a centre, they visited nearby houses and also interviewed people at the centre itself.

The visits to the houses showed that the citizens living very close to the centre were not aware of the centres and what they do. It is likely that since the centres are run by the parent organizations such as ROAs, NGOs etc., citizens may be aware of them rather than the centre itself. Also, since the centres have been in existence for just about 18 months, they still need to be publicized and popularized among citizens. The centre coordinators reported almost unanimously that they use banners, pamphlets and other means such as monthly meetings etc., to build awareness about the centres.

Asked if they visit the centre often, most people said they do visit the centre often. An overwhelming majority comes there to read books, newspapers and journals. Some have reported going to make a complaint too.
All the members of the public who visited the centre reported to be satisfied with the centres’ work.

The suggestions given by the guests are interesting. While many said there is need for publicity about the centre, some said awareness programs should be held regularly. One visitor had a suggestion of having a regular employee at the centre; another said there should be information on government schemes at the centre.

All the users felt the centre can sustain on its own shortly.

Users were not however for the idea of having the centre run by the Panchayat internally.

Very few users volunteered to give financial assistance to the centre but most were willing to support physically.

2.3. Findings from Observations

Most of the centres were conveniently located. While around 7 centres were located in very small premises, 6 were housed in large premises, and 6 in reasonable places.

In most of the centres (18 of them), the centre coordinator was present at the time of the visit. In four however, they were not present. The interaction that people who visited had with the centre coordinator were good at all centres.

The number of people present at the centre at the time of the visit ranged from 2 to 30! But it stood at around 7 on an average.

In all the centres the books were placed at a convenient location for the public. Where there are computers they are in working condition. They are definitely being used too. The premises and the surrounding areas are kept clean every day.

2.4. Dependence on Catalyst Trust

Almost all the centres visited very clearly held Catalyst Trust in great respect and regard. They were especially inspired by Mr. A. K. Venkatasubramanian
and his concept of the Citizen Centres. They admired and were thankful for his tireless and constant support and guidance. They also appreciated the fact that Catalyst Trust gave them the flexibility and freedom to design their own programs for the centres.

Several of the coordinators expressed the wish to be further trained and said that financial and conceptual guidance from Catalyst Trust would be required by them. Most of the centres that had been newly set up (within a two year period) lack the capacity to run these centres on their own and depend on Catalyst Trust for guidance to a great extent. However, those centres that have been set up earlier have shown clearly that they have grown to acquire the capacity to run the centres and come up with innovative ideas. In general though, there is quite obviously a dependence on the Catalyst Trust.

2.5. Innovative Initiatives by Centres

There are interesting novel innovative approaches used by some of the centre coordinators. One takes material and displays it on the ground as he goes for a jog in the park.

One centre gives out newspapers at the start of the day in different lanes so people get to read them at their homes and collects them back in the evening.

Some of the centres use temple festivals and exhibitions to display material about the Citizen Centre activities.

Black boards, notice boards and walls are used innovatively to spread the message.

2.6. Sustainability of Centres

One major concern of Catalyst Trust is the sustainability of the centres once the support (both financial and conceptual) is stopped. A question put to the centre coordinators elicited interesting responses.

To maintain the quality of the centre it was suggested by the coordinators that more books be added to the library, a computer for each centre and the use of these computers for income generation by the centre.
Most respondents among the coordinators have suggested that the books etc., be continued to be given on a regular basis. Even if the financial assistance is not continued they expressed the need for the assistance in this regard to be continued.

There were also suggestions of holding focused meetings, spread the word on the existence of the centres, and also about Catalyst Trust and their role in the running of centres.

Most coordinators felt they could sustain the centre by generating resources once they were established. However most of them felt that they would still need support financially and conceptually for some more time to come. Only those centres that were set up long before are truly self sustaining.
Chapter 3

Assessment of Citizen Centres: Conclusions and Recommendations

3.1. Conclusions

3.1.1. Common threads across Citizen Centres

1. The assessment reveals very clearly that the centres are functioning very well as information centres and to a great extent as study centres, discourse centres and as guidance centres. However they are not strong as monitoring, action and solution centres in most cases.

2. Awareness among citizens regarding the citizen centres is very low. Most people who know about the centres consider them primarily as information centres i.e., reading rooms or libraries.

3. Leadership makes a significant difference to the activity level and successful running of the centres. Where the leaders are proactive the centre is performing well.

4. The idea of Catalyst Trust of using existing organizations to run the centres rather than new ones has been a judicious one. The success of these centres especially where strong organizations are running them is evidence of this fact.

5. NGOs and ROAs are doing well in running the centres but Panchayats are yet to pick up.

6. Expectations from Catalyst Trust are high among the centres. The dependence on the Catalyst Trust is high as a result.

7. All centres hold monthly meetings regularly.

3.1.2. General achievements of the Citizen Centres

1. Community welfare activities such as setting up taps for people.

2. Redress of grievances with the public service providers by many centres.

3. Voter awareness campaigns run by almost all centres.

4. Use of right to information (RTI) and building awareness among people on RTI.

5. Many centres have run campaigns to help people vote for the right
candidate and some have even fielded candidates to provide good candidates in Panchayat and Municipality elections.

3.1.3. Innovative ideas

Several of the centres as described earlier, have come up with novel ideas and innovative approaches to popularise and use the centre to the greatest extent. Display of materials at temple festivals or on walls and notice boards are normally done. One of the coordinators displays the relevant material at the park where he goes jogging. Distribution of newspapers in lanes by turns to make them accessible to all households in the area is innovative too.

3.1.4. Role of Catalyst Trust

The assessment clearly reveals the dependence of the centres on inputs from Catalyst Trust to a great extent. The fact that those centres that have been set up earlier than 2 years ago are fairly independent and sustaining reasonably well with a bit of guidance points to the need for sustained support in financial as well as conceptual terms for longer than two years. Centres that have been functioning for over 5 years are closer to sustaining their own centre than are those of the centres that have been set up recently.

3.1.5. Sustainability

The assessment has confirmed that those centres that have been set up 5 years ago are managing even finances for themselves. However, those centres that have been set up recently, have indicated that they would be able to sustain in the long run provided they are given guidance for another few years.

Financially, the support of Rs. 4000/- that was given at the time the centre was started, by Catalyst Trust has been used by all the centres for buying basic furniture such as a table and a chair and a bookshelf. Most coordinators indicated that this sum was not sufficient to provide the centre with required furniture or basic amenities. They have mostly used their own personal resources to furnish the centre, or pooled in resources donated by members or in rare cases been donated some items by members of the public.

While some of them are being run in premises provided free of rent by the
coordinators, others have been provided minimal space by the panchayat. Most of them are using rented premises.

On the whole the centres are sustainable. The interest of the coordinators and the enthusiasm of the members, growing use by the public, and cooperation provided by retired officials and current officials at different departments would ensure continued existence of the centres.

3.1.6. Replicability of the concept

The concept of Citizen Centres is definitely easily replicable. Several of the organizations – Hand in Hand in Kancheepuram and Retired Officials Association in Tuticorin District, being among the significant ones – have gone ahead and started centres on their own without support from the Catalyst Trust in addition to those they have been running with support. These additional centres, which are significantly large in number are functioning well and follow the same concept. The organizations that have a sound financial standing and those that have good leaders are able to replicate the concept on their own in new locations in their own areas. The concept is useful and easy to replicate and therefore will be easy to replicate in other states as well.

3.1.7. Integration of the concept into the Panchayat system

The ultimate aim of the Catalyst Trust to have these Citizen Centres integrated into the local administration, be it the Panchayat at the village level or the municipal authority at the urban level, is far from being achieved. There are a small number of centres that are being run in Panchayat premises or properties owned by the Panchayats. However, the Panchayat is far from being capable of running such centres as yet. Even response from the users and coordinators of the centres shows clearly that they do not have the confidence in the local administration to run such centres and be of use to citizens.

3.1.8. Spreading of the concept by other NGOs by starting their own citizen centre

As mentioned earlier, there are NGOs and ROAs that have started their own Citizen Centres in some districts. If the concept is publicized well by these organizations there is much scope for it to be improved in coverage.
This is something that Catalyst Trust did not anticipate but is a positive impact of the concept.

3.1.9. Accolades for good performers!

Mr G. Ayyanar, CAN, Tirunelveli, Mr. Boobalasubramaniam ROA Valithikulam, Tuticorin(dist), Dr. V Balakrishnan, FEDCOT, Mannargudi, Thiruvarur(dist), Mr T T Cheran, Thiruvasi, Trichy(dist), Mr T N Sethulingam, Karur, Subbu Thangarajan, ROA Papanasam, Tanjavur(dist), and Mr A. B. Gopalan, Thiruthani, Tiruvalur(dist) deserve special mention for their enthusiasm and efficiency in running their respective Citizen Centres.

3.2. Recommendations

1. Capacity building of the centres in terms of playing the role of monitoring, action and solution centres is required to a much greater level than provided now.

2. Awareness building among citizens on the centres and their role is of prime importance for the centres. New, innovative ideas should be used to publicize and motivate citizens to use the centres. Current strategy of using banners, and pamphlets and posters supplied by Catalyst Trust to a small extent is not at all sufficient to raise awareness among local people. Media blitz with advertisements, larger number of pamphlets, door-to-door campaigns, use of eye catching posters and making of short films that promote these centres and use of public figures to attract crowds are some ideas that can be explored. The financial constraints can be dealt with by either getting costs waived by media, filmmakers, and public figures and sponsorship by a group of prominent citizens or individuals.

3. Documentation of the monthly meetings conducted at different centres on a regular basis with details of discussions that take place at these meetings would go a long way in helping the centres perform better and learn from other centres. Currently, major achievements of the Citizen Centres are highlighted in the monthly journal ‘Kudimakkal Murasu’, brought out by the Catalyst Trust, to inspire and encourage other centres to do the same.

4. Capacity building of Panchayat members and officials is an essential
requirement. Some who have realized the utility of these centres for their political aspirations have taken the responsibility to run centres. However, many of the Panchayats are yet to understand the concept or participate in its activities. Catalyst Trust would be the right organization to take up this kind of training probably with the help of some of the senior coordinators.

5. Continued training, capacity building, and monitoring by Catalyst Trust are central to the success of these centres in the long run. Catalyst Trust would therefore need to look for financial support to sustain these activities.

6. The quarterly review meetings do serve as a forum to share experiences among the centres across the state or region. However the frequency of these meetings has to be greater in number. Apart from serving as review mechanisms these meeting should also provide an opportunity to centres to learn from one another, which is happening to some extent. Though it is logistically difficult for Catalyst Trust to organize these meetings, the centres themselves can arrange to have review meetings more often. They can meet on a monthly basis at the zonal or district level. The monitoring of these centres is also critical to their successful running.

7. The easy replicability of the concept should be exploited and organizations that show interest in expanding the numbers should be encouraged. However, the Catalyst Trust should not go beyond another 50 centres across the state and should focus on improving the performance of the existing ones.

8. Though the sustainability of the centres is not a serious issue, there are steps that need to be taken to ensure sustainability of the centres. The assessment clearly shows that centres that are running for nearly 5 years are very close to being self-sustaining. Therefore it is important that Catalyst Trust provide guidance, training and monitoring services to the centres for a total of five years for the centres to be truly and certainly sustainable in the long run.

Finally, it needs to be very strongly emphasized that what the Catalyst Trust is attempting to achieve is novel as it is radical – raise the stature and capacity of the citizens through their own collective efforts. An exercise of
this kind has not been attempted at this scale; covering the whole state of Tamil Nadu and involving many agencies of different backgrounds, such as ROA, FEDCOT, NYK, SHGs of Women Panchayats and Voluntary Organizations in harmonious partnerships with Catalyst Trust. This is what makes this project unique and an example that should be replicated far and wide.
### Annexure 1

**List of Citizen Centres visited**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Name of the Location</th>
<th>Name of the Co-ordinator</th>
<th>Name of the Agency</th>
<th>Year Functioning from</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Katpadi</td>
<td>Kingsley</td>
<td>ROA</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Karasamangalam, Katpadi</td>
<td>TV Shivasubramanyam</td>
<td>ROA</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Satvachari, Vellore</td>
<td>M. Somasundharam</td>
<td>ROA</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tiruthanni</td>
<td>AB Gopalan</td>
<td>ROA</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Adigattur</td>
<td>K Chidambaranathan</td>
<td>Panchayat</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Thiruvallur</td>
<td>Dilliraj</td>
<td>ROA</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Chennai</td>
<td>Arjunan</td>
<td>Mahatma Gandhi padipayam</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Mavalipatti, Thiruchi</td>
<td>K Jayathirupathi</td>
<td>NYK</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Thandaliputhur, Thiruchi</td>
<td>MPK Duras Raj</td>
<td>ROSED</td>
<td>2005</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Thiruvasi, Thiruchi</td>
<td>TTC Cheran</td>
<td>Panchayat</td>
<td>2004</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Thiruchi Town</td>
<td>M Ravichandran</td>
<td>Nampikkai Nanbargal NGO</td>
<td>2005</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Togamalai, Karur</td>
<td>AA Balasundaran</td>
<td>SCORE - NGO</td>
<td>2005</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>KrishnaRayapuram, Karur</td>
<td>Anbuselvi</td>
<td>SWARD</td>
<td>2005</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Vengamadu, Karur</td>
<td>TN Sethulingam</td>
<td>SIDAR</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
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<td>------------------------</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Rayanur, Karur</td>
<td>RN Rajendran</td>
<td>Thirukkural Arivu Peravai, NGO</td>
<td>2005</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Tanjavur</td>
<td>S Adaikalam</td>
<td>FEDCOT</td>
<td>2005</td>
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<td>Papanasam, Tanjavur</td>
<td>Subbu Thangarajan</td>
<td>ROA</td>
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<td>18</td>
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<td>Mannargudi, Thiruvarur</td>
<td>Dr. V Balakrishnan</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>Thiruvarur</td>
<td>Ramani Arivazhagan</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>Pulivallam, Thiruvarur</td>
<td>Elango</td>
<td>NGO</td>
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<td>22</td>
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<td>C Backialakshmi</td>
<td>FEDCOT</td>
<td>2005</td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>J.J. Nagar, Madurai</td>
<td>James Rajasekaran</td>
<td>Lanjam Kodathor Sangam</td>
<td>2005</td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Shanti Nagar, Madurai</td>
<td>JS Arthur</td>
<td>FEDCOT</td>
<td>2005</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Vilathikulam, Tutikorin</td>
<td>M Boobalasubramanian</td>
<td>ROA</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Veppalodai, Tutikorin</td>
<td>V James Amirtharaj</td>
<td>NYK</td>
<td>2005</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>Palayam Kottai, Tirunelveli</td>
<td>G Ayyanar</td>
<td>Citizens Action Network (ROA)</td>
<td>2003</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>NGO New Colony, Tirunelveli</td>
<td>V. Natra</td>
<td>NGO New colony welfare Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Meenachipuram, Tirunelveli</td>
<td>Mahmutha Amanulla</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>Baluchettychathram Kancheepuram</td>
<td>J.Jansi Rani</td>
<td>Hand in Hand</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>Sirukaveripakkam kancheepuram</td>
<td>J.T. Rexvaz</td>
<td>Hand in Hand</td>
<td>2004</td>
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<td>32</td>
<td>Ambattur - Chennai</td>
<td>S.Mohandass</td>
<td>Lanjam Kodathor sangam</td>
<td>2004</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Annexure 2

Notes on the Citizen Centres visited

Centre 1. Katpadi:

1. **Methods for creating awareness about centre**: monthly meetings, talking about schemes availability, school visits, and banners.

2. **Purpose of visit by users**: mainly for reading and to know about how to approach govt. departments for problem solutions.

3. **What are the issues covered during the meetings** – environment, education, democracy and problems covered at that time.

4. **Campaigns**: eye camp, health camp.

5. **Major Achievements of Centre**: helped good candidate get elected, ration cards issued to poor people.

6. **Suggestion to improve centre**: Need more books, computer, id cards for members, spread awareness on trust activities and its aims

Centre 2. Katpadi - Karasamangalam:

1. **Methods for creating awareness about centre**: conducting monthly parents meeting, banners and writing notes on the centre notice board.

2. **Purpose of visit by users**: mainly for reading and to know about pension schemes, passport enquiry, education department details and setting up of Self Help Groups.

3. **What are the issues covered during the meetings** – water scarcity problems, and problems covered at that time.

4. **Campaigns**: eye camp, awareness about citizen centre, voting for right candidate, health camp.

5. **Major Achievements of Centre**: helped good candidate get elected, ration cards issued to poor people, R.T.O office works done, voter awareness programmes, campaigns on right to information act.

6. **Suggestion to improve centre**: Need more books and regularly without any break, computer, id cards for members, spread awareness on trust activities and its aims, need regular review meetings.
Centre 3. Vellore - Satvachari:

1. Methods for creating awareness about centre: conducting monthly meeting, banners and writing notes on the centre notice board.

2. Purpose of visit by users: people coming to seek knowledge, updating themselves and reading books.

3. What are the issues covered during the meetings – water scarcity problems, pension problems, case against police and problems covered at that time.


5. Major Achievements of Centre: enrolment of voters, widening of road, awareness programme conducted on Right to information campaign, solved pension problems.

6. Suggestion to improve centre: Need more books and regularly without any break, computer, need to establish centres at rural area, have to take 100 villages per year and encourage participation of women.

Centre 4. Tiruthanni:

1. Methods for creating awareness about centre: conducting meetings four times in a month on citizens problems, banners and covering print media and local TV coverage on centre’s activities.

2. Purpose of visit: people coming to seek knowledge, updating and reading books and taking guidance from them to solve public service problems.

3. What are the issues covered during the meetings – it subject wise i.e. pension, how to get loans from banks, legal advice and agriculture-related suggestions.


5. Major Achievements of Centre: collected money for tsunami victims, govt. permission to extend local train to their town, in heavy rain season supplied rice, clothes and blankets for tribal people and collected 117 units of blood from college students.
6. **Suggestion to improve centre:** Need more books and regularly without any break, computer, need to establish centres in rural areas, need more publicity on centre's aims and activities.

**Centre 5. Adigattur:**

1. **Methods for creating awareness about centre:** Dandora on makkal mayyam activities, pamphlets, banner publicity and highlighting news and writing on notice board.

2. **Purpose of visit by users:** people coming to seek knowledge, updating and reading books and taking guidance from them to solve public service problems.

3. **What are the issues covered during the meetings** – taken up subject wise i.e. pension, how to get loans from banks, legal advices and agriculture-related suggestions.

4. **Campaigns:** health camps, eye camps, awareness about citizen centre, voting for right candidate, health camp.

5. **Major Achievements of Centre:** solving all type of citizen problems and guiding people to solve their problems themselves.

6. **Suggestion to improve centre:** Need more books and regularly without any break, computer, need to establish centres in rural areas, need more publicity on centre’s aims and activities.

**Centre 6. Thiruvallur:**

1. **Methods for creating awareness about centre:** conducting monthly public meetings and banners.

2. **Purpose of visit:** to intimate local problems, pension problems.

3. **What are the issues covered during the meetings** : inviting different department heads and giving suggestion to citizens on their problems.

4. **Campaigns:**

5. **Major Achievements of Centre:** motivated people to vote, trained people to meet public service officials and solved arrears problems.

6. **Suggestion to improve centre:** Need more books and regularly without any break, computer, need some high level publicity in Urban area.
Centre 7. Chennai:

1. Methods for creating awareness about centre: conducting monthly public meetings and banners.

2. Purpose of visit by users: to read books and newspapers and lodge complaints against govt. services.

3. What are the issues covered during the meetings – problems covered at that time.


5. Major Achievements of Centre: Removed one wine shop located between the houses, polio camps, eye and dental camp, aids awareness camp. Motivated students to go for further studies (those who stopped their study at S.S.L.C level) and maintaining two garbage collection vehicles.

6. Suggestion to improve centre: Need more books and regularly without any break, computer, need youth participation.

Centre 8. Mavalipatti - Thiruchi

1. Methods for creating awareness about centre: Boards, Notices on aims of the centre, Pamphlets.

2. Purpose of visit: to read books and newspapers and to take advice, and to get different govt. department forms.

3. What are the issues covered during the meetings – to spread awareness among people to solve their problems.

4. Campaigns: medical camp, eye camp and aids awareness camp and tree plantation programmes.

5. Major Achievements of Centre: Solved drainage problems, street light problems and providing all type of forms on people's demand.

6. Suggestion to improve centre: Need more books and regularly without any break, computer, need regular motivation programmes for the youth and more publicity on centre's activities.
Centre 9. Thandaliputhur -Thiruchi

1. Methods for creating awareness about centre: Boards, giving zerox copies of citizen centre’s activities and aims to visitors.

2. Purpose of visit: to read books and newspapers and to take books and to know and update on govt service schemes.

3. What are the issues covered during the meetings – problems covered at that time.


5. Major Achievements of Centre: campaign on electing right person, awareness programme on right to information act.

6. Suggestion to improve centre: Need one full time staff to run successfully, and 500/- per month financial assistance, computer, need regular motivation programmes for youth and more publicity on centre’s activities.

Centre 10. Thiruvasi - Thiruchi

1. Methods for creating awareness about centre: have one big wall with signboards, banners and pamphlets.

2. Purpose of visit: to read books and newspapers and to know and update on govt. service schemes and for suggestions.

3. What are the issues covered during the meetings – local problems and problems covered at that time, important news of that day.

4. Campaigns: medical camp, eye camp and aids awareness camp, Right to information act awareness programme.

5. Major Achievements of Centre: got Electric weighing machine for all PDS shops. And providing newspapers to all streets of their village, campaign on elect right person, awareness programme on right information act, anti corruption campaign and maintaining village level toilets out side of the village.

6. Suggestion to improve centre: Need more review meetings and have good relationship with people and govt officials to aware this programme.
Centre 11. Thiruchi Town.

1. **Methods for creating awareness about centre:** conducting every Sunday meetings, banners and pamphlets. Spreading information about govt. schemes and citizens rights information at places of gatherings i.e. exhibition, koil tiruviya areas.

2. **Purpose of visit by users:** to read books and newspaper.

3. **What are the issues covered during the meetings** – local problems and problems covered at that time, important news of that day.

4. **Campaigns:** eye camp and anti-corruption movement programme.

5. **Major Achievements of Centre:** motivated people to vote and elect right candidate.

6. **Suggestion to improve centre:** Need one or two staff to maintain centre, need one computer.

Centre 12. Kulithali _ Karur

1. **Methods for creating awareness about centre:** giving publicity during all of their locality meetings.

2. **Purpose of visit by users:** to read books and newspaper, and to give complaint on local problems.

3. **What are the issues covered during the meetings:** local problems and problems covered at that time.

4. **Campaigns:**

5. **Major Achievements of Centre:** motivated people to vote and elect right candidate and conducted right to information act and human rights.

6. **Suggestion to improve centre:** It is better-run centre by Makkal Mayyam itself without coalition with other organizations.

Centre 13. KrishnaRayapuram - Karur

1. **Methods for creating awareness about centre:** giving publicity during all their meetings, banners and pamphlets.
2. **Purpose of visit**: to read books and newspaper, and to complain about local problems.

3. **What are the issues covered during the meetings** – local problems and problems covered at that time.

4. **Campaigns**: election, HIV awareness, medical camp, environment and garbage cleaning.

5. **Major Achievements of Centre**: motivated people to vote and elect right candidate, got 97% (31 centres) of pooling, make people aware on govt schemes by educating rural people.

6. **Suggestion to improve centre**: Need one individual office and staff, need more funds and publicity and circulate books directly to rural people.

**Centre 14. Vengamadu - Karur**

1. **Methods for creating awareness about centre**: conducting two meetings every month and using that platform to create awareness on Centre.

2. **Purpose of visit by users**: to read books and newspaper, and for personal counseling.

3. **What are the issues covered during the meetings** – local problems and problems covered at that time.

4. **Campaigns**: school level education awareness programme, HIV awareness and medical camp.

5. **Major Achievements of Centre**: did one awareness camp on child labor, motivated drop out children to go schools.

6. **Suggestion to improve centre**: need more funds and publicity, need material needed by students.

**Centre 15. Rayanur - Karur**

1. **Methods for creating awareness about centre**: Banners, making notes on centres activities on road side walls

2. **Purpose of visit**: to read books and newspaper.
3. **What are the issues covered during the meetings** – how local problems can be solved and what problems at that time.

4. **Campaigns:**

5. **Major Achievements of Centre:** conducted awareness programmes for voters, right to information act awareness.

6. **Suggestion to improve centre:** need house-to-house canvas on centre’s aims and activities, need youth participation for the success of this programme.

**Centre 16. Tanjavur:**

1. **Methods for creating awareness about centre:** Banners, distributing notes on centres, publicity at schools.

2. **Purpose of visit:** to read books and newspaper and complain against local problems.

3. **What are the issues covered during the meetings** – how can local problems be solved and problems covered at that time

4. **Campaigns:** women self help group awareness programmes, consumer awareness at school level, basic needs and right to information act awareness programmes.

5. **Major Achievements of Centre:** Removed unnecessary hoardings at major central areas, stopped cheating of people by lucky coupon attraction programs by shopkeepers, formed district level health advisory committee.

6. **Suggestion to improve centre:** Need district level co-coordinators who can conduct sub-coordinators awareness programmes.

**Centre 17. Papanasam - Tanjavur:**

1. **Methods for creating awareness about centre:** Conducting area meetings, conducting ward wise publicity on aims of centre, inviting experts for lectures to citizens, and banners.

2. **Purpose of visit by users:** to read books and newspaper and complain against local problems.
3. **What are the issues covered during the meetings** – how can local problems be solved and problems covered at that time

4. **Campaigns**: Herbal treatment for poor people.

5. **Major Achievements of Centre**: Reopened one post office, solved problems of re-connection and repayment of false bills by BSNL, and got permission to collect EB monthly bills at centre for citizens’ convenience. Changed damaged electrical post, helping farmers on getting agriculture loans.

6. **Suggestion to improve centre**: need women and youth participation to make a success of this organization.

**Centre 18: Ammapet - Tanjavur:**

1. **Methods for creating awareness about centre**: Inviting different govt. services for advice and suggestions to solve citizens’ problems, banners, pamphlets and conducting meetings.

2. **Purpose of Visit by users**: to read books and papers.

3. **What are the issues covered during the meetings** – all type of awareness programmes like Right to information act, legal aid, fire accident prevention programmes, environment awareness.

4. **Campaigns**: Anticorruption movement, legal aid, primary health camps, environmental.

5. **Major Achievements of Centre**: upgraded PHC in Ammapet, got permission to extend road to 7 km, got one fair price shop, maintaining separate files for each department i.e. PHC complaints, E.B. complaints, Revenue complaints

6. **Suggestion to improve centre**: govt has to give first reorganization to the centre, need permanent place and staff to centre, need financial support and women and educated youth participation is must.

**Centre 19: Mannargudi - Thiruvarur**

1. **Methods for creating awareness about centre**: Conducting monthly meetings with Citizens, inviting govt. officials and getting solutions from
them. Conducting centre's activates and aims awareness programmers at school grounds, demonstrating all of our books to people.

2. **Purpose of Visit by users:** to ask for medical, health, and local problems solutions.

3. **What are the issues covered during the meetings** - problems covered at that time

4. **Campaigns:** medical and veterinary aid

5. **Major Achievements of Centre:** inviting orphans for participation in festivals and celebrations, Independence Day celebrations.

6. **Suggestion to improve centre:** Need more specialist guest lectures for people, need wide publicity on centre's activities, need local television publicity on centre's activities.

**Centre 20: Thiruvarur**

1. **Methods for creating awareness about centre:** providing awareness at all meetings

2. **Purpose of Visit:** report against consumer services.

3. **What are the issues covered during the meetings** - problems covered at that time

4. **Campaigns:** polio drops, blood camp

5. **Major Achievements of Centre:** solved one dowry problem, consumer awareness programmes, conducting all type of family awareness programmes.

6. **Suggestion to improve centre:** need computer for all centres to correspond with govt officials and head offices, and expecting student participation.

**Centre 21: Pulivallam - Thiruvarur**

1. **Methods for creating awareness about centre:** distributing pamphlets of aims and activities of the centre through door-to-door campaigns.

2. **Purpose of Visit by users:** report against public services.

3. **What are the issues covered during the meetings** - meeting on public services and citizens problems.
4. **Campaigns:**

5. **Major Achievements of Centre:** cleared up issue of obstructed land occupied by private candidate and got pattas for poor people.

6. **Suggestion to improve centre:** need computer, books related to all aspects and need one full time employee to monitor centre’s activities.

**Centre 22: Alagar Nagar - Madurai:**

1. **Methods for creating awareness about centre:** has given publicity at all of their consumer meetings.

2. **Purpose of Visit by users:** report against public services, family court problems, ration card, PHC monitoring.

3. **What are the issues covered during the meetings** - meeting on public services and citizens problems, domestic violence, water management,

4. **Campaigns:** on domestic violence and PHC movement.

5. **Major Achievements of Centre:** Motivated women to vote, issued ration cards, health camps, waste management programmes conducted among N.S.S. students.

6. **Suggestion to improve centre:** Need to encourage women participation, provide financial support for participants attending centres activities. i.e. arrange lunch, travel allowance for participants.

**Centre 23: J.J. Nagar - Madurai:**

1. **Methods for creating awareness about centre:** creating awareness in every meeting.

2. **Purpose of Visit:** to read books and paper; report against public services.

3. **What are the issues covered during the meetings** - on public services and citizens problems.

4. **Campaigns:** pulse polio, primary education, asking people to vote.

5. **Major Achievements of Centre:** got one water tap connection, fighting against child labour, find drop out children and put them back in school.

6. **Suggestion to improve centre:** Need social movement to spread
awareness on centres activities, need computer education facilities for poor people.

Centre 24: Shanti Nagar - Madurai:

1. **Methods for creating awareness about centre:** through pamphlets, notes on notice boards, 1000 pamphlets of centre’s aims and activities have been distributed in rural areas.

2. **Purpose of Visit by user:** to read books and paper report against public services.

3. **What are the issues covered during the meetings:** general and current burning problems.

4. **Campaigns:**

5. **Major Achievements of Centre:** water and drainage problems have been solved. Environment awareness, got permission for underground drainage.

6. **Suggestion to improve centre:** need funds and financial support to run centre

Centre 25: Vilathikulam - Tuticorin

1. **Methods for creating awareness about centre:** through pamphlets, notes on notice boards, independence day celebrations, notice boards on all major shops at town

2. **Purpose of Visit by user:** to read books and paper, report against public services.

3. **What are the issues covered during the meetings:** general and current burning problems, discussions on current issues.

4. **Campaigns:** children medical camp, free eye camp, public medical camp.

5. **Major Achievements of Centre:** provided one purified water filter at bus stop, fan and seating arrangement for passengers, helping poor to get welfare schemes. Awareness programmes on right to information act.
6. **Suggestion to improve centre:** need computer, citizenship training for students, need centres boards for their 30 new established local centres, need Makkal Mayyam (view) boards at all of bus centres.

Centre 26: Veppalodai – Tuticorin

1. **Methods for creating awareness about centre:** through pamphlets, notes on notice boards, independence day celebrations, notice boards on all major shops at town

2. **Purpose of Visit by users:** to take guidance on how problems can be solved regarding govt. services and to read books.

3. **What are the issues covered during the meetings** - general and current burning problems, discussions on current issues.

4. **Campaigns:** AIDS awareness camps, how to harvest rainwater, polio drops programme, general medical and blood camps.

5. **Major Achievements of Centre:** giving vocational training, literacy programmes, computer training for youth, has paid school fees for 30 S.S.C students and got permission from education department to start 8th and 9th standard in their location. Announcing important news highlights daily at 6.30 p.m. through the local radio station.

6. **Suggestion to improve centre:** need to motivate youth to actively participate in centre’s activities, need good training for coordinators, and more publicity on aims and activities of centre through print and tele media.

Centre 27: Palayam Kottai - Tirunelveli

1. **Methods for creating awareness about centre:** through pamphlets (have distributed 1 lakh pamphlets during the 2004 parliament election period on electing of right person), banners on conducting of meetings, road rallies, hoardings at bus stops, radio-talks i.e. coordinator talks with people on their problem and their solutions.

2. **Purpose of Visit by users:** to read books and attending to grievances during different department meetings.

3. **What are the issues covered during the meetings** - general and
current burning problems, discussions on current issues. There is meeting timetable for every day, Monday on Co-operative department, Tuesday on police department, Wednesday on Medical and Public health department, Thursday on Development and agriculture department, Friday on Revenue and Survey departments, Saturday on education, PWD and social welfare departments.

4. **Campaigns**: consumer awareness camps, medical camp,

5. **Major Achievements of Centre**: successfully did campaign on electing of right person and to right to vote, Rain harvesting programmes, govt. permission from education department to run classes for LKG to 5th standard only at ground floor (because of fire accident that had happened at Kumbakonam)

6. **Suggestion to improve centre**: have continuous relations with state level govt official to solve problems, need books regularly and all type of books for educating citizens on their rights.

**Centre 28: NGO New Colony - Thirunelveli:**

1. **Methods for creating awareness about centre**: through pamphlets, notes on notice boards.

2. **Purpose of Visit by users**: to read books and get information on public service problems.

3. **What are the issues covered during the meetings**: general and current burning problems.

4. **Campaigns**: police-public meetings

5. **Major Achievements of Centre**: distributed books to poor children, govt permission for approach road and burial ground from local authority.

6. **Suggestion to improve centre**: Coordinator must be knowledgeable person

**Centre 29: Meenachipuram - Thirunelveli:**

1. **Methods for creating awareness about centre**: through pamphlets, notes on notice boards, conducting monthly meetings.
2. **Purpose of Visit:** to provide solutions on family problems (wife and husband problems) i.e. family counseling and to read books and papers.

3. **What are the issues covered during the meetings** - general and current burning problems.

4. **Campaigns:** Campaign on jaundice, awareness programme on need of mother’s milk to child

5. **Major Achievements of Centre:** conducting monthly meeting of police and public,

6. **Suggestion to improve centre:** more meetings on Centre’s activities, spread awareness among poor people on govt. schemes.

**Centre 30: Baluchettychathram - Kancheepuram:**

1. **Methods for creating awareness about centre:** through pamphlets, awareness meetings with new topics.

2. **Purpose of Visit:** to read books and papers, to do computer course and to get application form of different govt. services.

3. **What are the issues covered during the meetings** - general and current burning problems.

4. **Campaigns:** Campaign on taking signature against child labour.

5. **Major Achievements of Centre:** conducting meeting for panchayat members awareness on govt. schemes, running computer centre successfully.

6. **Suggestion to improve centre:** should need more access to books and journals, have to motivate people to centres activities.

**Centre 31: Sirukaveripakkam - Kancheepuram:**

1. **Methods for creating awareness about centre:** On every Friday conduct door-to-door canvassing on centre’s views and providing leaflets on centre’s aims and functions.

2. **Purpose of Visit:** to read books and papers, to do computer course.
3. What are the issues covered during the meetings - general and current burning problems.

4. Campaigns: Campaign for Self Help groups, campaigns against sanitation and road problems.

5. Major Achievements of Centre: Making people to monitor govt. services, giving information about RTI, computer awareness programmes.

6. Suggestion to improve centre: should need more access to books and journals, need trained computer literature staff for training to students.

Centre 32: Ambattur - Chennai:

1. Methods for creating awareness about centre: Displaying information boards at Bus Stand, Railway station, awareness programmes through leaflets and banners.

2. Purpose of Visit: to read books and papers, to get help on application forms of govt. services.

3. What are the issues covered during the meetings - general and current burning problems.

4. Campaigns: Campaign for Self Help groups, campaigns against sanitation and road problems.

5. Major Achievements of Centre: fight against corruption in the city, fight against some illegal fare collected by municipality, put up boards against bribe at corporation office and helping in getting old age pension.

6. Suggestion to improve centre: should need more access to books and journals.
Annexure 3
Questionnaire canvassed among the Citizen Centre Coordinators

ASSESSMENT OF CITIZEN CENTRES

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Name of the Citizen Centre</td>
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<td>Address of the Centre</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Name of the District</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Name of the Taluk</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Name of the organisation running the Centre</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Name of the coordinator</td>
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7 | **Availability at Centre** | **Yes** | **No** |
---|----------------------------|---------|--------|
<p>| Voter list                  |         |        |
| A register of Ration Card   |         |        |
| Citizen Charters            |         |        |
| Books                       |         |        |
| Journals                    |         |        |
| Application forms (various govt. dept.) | | |
| Newspapers                  |         |        |
| Computers                   |         |        |</p>
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<th>Does the Centre have the following basic amenities</th>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Water supply</td>
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<td>Electricity</td>
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<td>Toilets</td>
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<td>Basic furniture (tables &amp; Chairs)</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Type of building</td>
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<td>Rented</td>
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<td>Rent free from</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Have the books and journals been supplied to your Centre by Catalyst Trust?</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Do you receive them regularly?</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Do you maintain the list of books and journals received by the Centre?</td>
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<td>Do you update the list regularly?</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Do you lend books and journals to the visitors?</td>
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15. If yes, do you issue membership cards?

- Yes: 1
- No: 2

16. How many members do you have?

- [Blank]

17. Do you highlight the important news items in the newspapers?

- Yes: 1
- No: 2

18. What are the methods you follow for creating awareness about the Centre?

- [Blank]

19. How many citizens visit your Centre in a day?

- [Blank]

20. What are the main purposes of their visits?

- [Blank]

21. Do you receive any complaints regarding public services?

- Yes: 1
- No: 2

22. What kind of complaints do you receive?

- [Blank]
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<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>How do you deal with the complaints?</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>Do retired government servants and local leaders regularly visit the Centre?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>Do they give advice and guidance to citizens on their problems?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Do you hold monthly meetings for citizens?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>If yes, how many people usually attend the meeting?</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>What are the issues covered during these meetings?</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>Do you monitor the functions of basic services regularly?</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>Do you scrutinize the voters' list to rectify the deficiencies?</td>
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<td>Q. No</td>
<td>Question</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>Do you monitor the electoral roll revision?</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>32</td>
<td>Have you conducted any campaigns?</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>33</td>
<td>If yes, describe them</td>
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<td>34</td>
<td>Have you ever done any evaluation and assessment of the Citizen Centre?</td>
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<td>35</td>
<td>Do you give monthly reports?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Do you attend review meetings?</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>37</td>
<td>How have you spent the capital grant of Rs 4000/- given by Catalyst Trust?</td>
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<td>38</td>
<td>Do you receive any support form local people in terms of</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Furniture</td>
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<td>Books</td>
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<td>Others Specify 4</td>
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<td>39</td>
<td>How is your relationship with other NGOs in the locality?</td>
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<td>40</td>
<td>How is your relationship with Government Officers, Local Bodies and Political Executives in the locality?</td>
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<td>41</td>
<td>Do you take feedback on your services from citizens?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Yes 1</td>
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<td></td>
<td>No 2</td>
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<td>42</td>
<td>What are the steps you have taken or will take to continue the Centre on your own?</td>
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<td>43</td>
<td>List out the five major achievements of your Centre?</td>
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<td>44</td>
<td>Give your suggestions for improving the Centre...</td>
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Annexure 4

Checklist for Observation and Feedback

CHECKLIST FOR OBSERVATION AND FEEDBACK FROM USERS / NON-USERS

Observation

Is the Centre conveniently located?
What is the size of the Centre?
Was the Coordinator present at the time of visit?
How many visitors were there at the time of visit to the Centre?
What kind of interaction were the visitors having with the Coordinator?
Are the books and journals conveniently placed?
Is the computer in working condition?
Was it being used?
Are the premises clean?
Are the surroundings clean?

Users

Do you visit the Centre often?
For what purpose do you come to the Centre?
Are you satisfied with the Centre?
Do you have any suggestions for improving the Centre?
Do you think that the Centre would be able to sustain on its own?
Do you think that the Centre should be part of the Gram Panchayat office?
Would you be willing to donate money/provide any other support to run the Centre?

Non-Users

Are you aware of the Citizen Centre in your locality? If Not, give a small brief about the Citizen Centre and its activities.
If Yes,
Why have you not visited the Citizen Centre?
Do you think that the Centre is doing useful work?
How do you think the Centre can be useful to you?