Alchemy (from the Arabic al-khimiya meaning 'cast together') was at best seen as the science of Chemistry and at worst the art of deceit. Hence the ancient alchemists were held in awe and disdain throughout history. The alchemists pursued three main objectives: the first and perhaps the most infamous, was to turn any metal into gold or silver, the second was to find a universal remedy for all diseases and prolong life and the third, was to create human life. Interestingly, these pursuits have shaped and continue to shape the trajectories of progress and development - think about the exalted notions of material progress, longevity and the human genome! It is then no wonder that many developing countries caught in the whirlpool of poverty, conflicts and deprivation are increasingly invoking the modern day alchemists to find an elixir for all the evils haunting them.

The metaphor of the alchemist is a powerful symbol in the semantics on the discourses on development and governance. This intriguing search for an elixir (and for an alchemist to prepare the concoction) dates back to the post World War II era of planned development. The elusive elixir was conjured to be "productivity" or the primacy of growth in the 50s and 60s, "State action" or primacy of policy in the 70s, "sustainability" or the primacy of holistic in the 80s, "participation" or the primacy of devolution in the 90s and the current mantra of "accountability/transparency" or the primacy of governance. Elixirs have a charismatic power of attraction and a hypnotic effect on consensus. For one, they neatly convert the multifaceted problems into simple, sleek solutions. For instance, problems like rampant corruption, electoral malpractices, weak social controls and poor public services can be conveniently packaged under the rubric of "governance" and hence, any tinkering done on the governance architecture is by default expected to take care of all that is packaged under the governance umbrella.

The resurgence of civic activism in recent years and the increasing realization that the alchemy for good governance is often located in the shared experiences and contextually driven home-truths have brought in a new twist to the alchemy fable. Two contrasting (in spirit and practice) approaches seem to collide in the path to good governance. On one hand is a techno-deterministic model, emphasizing an expert based, professionally managed and universal norms dictated practices. On the other, is a people-centered model exploring endogenous and culturally relevant practices and approaches. This contrast can be best depicted in the ongoing battle against poverty and the progress on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). A major lesson learnt during the last five years since the MDGs were adopted is the primacy of country ownership and the inclusive character of reforms. Countries which took the MDGs as an opportunity and created their own blue-prints, alongside opening up spaces for wider participation seem to be faring much better in addressing poverty and strengthening the governance framework. The prophetic warnings of Ivan Illich against the universal blueprints for development that rang out loudly in the late 1960s - 'underdevelopment' is the surrender of social consciousness to prepackaged solutions - echo ominously in the contemporary narratives of governance. The key to sustained good governance is the real empowerment of communities. A search for the alchemist within.

"Wanting to reform the world without discovering one's true self is like trying to cover the world with leather to avoid the pain of walking on stones and thorns. It is much simpler to wear shoes." – Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching.

Gopakumar Thampi
NETWORKING
STRENGTHENING CIVIL SOCIETY NETWORKS

In the contemporary discourses on good governance, citizens’ voice is often seen as a critical lever to effect changes. Decision-makers in government, academia and advocacy are increasingly recognising the potential of citizen participation in making the State more responsive and accountable. It has also been observed that when citizens’ voice is transmitted collectively through a network of civil society organisations, it is possible to make the agencies perform better and provide a more responsive and responsible governance. Public Affairs Centre’s consistent efforts over the last ten years to strengthen civil society institutions with tools for improving governance transparency and public accountability underscores the primacy to build up a groundswell for networking and collective action. PAC’s latest endeavour in this direction was the organisation of a Capacity Building Workshop on Civic Engagement in Bhubaneswar, Orissa, in March 2005.

The Orissa initiative

Building on the interest generated by the release of the Millennial Survey on Basic Services in the state, PAC in collaboration with the Centre for Youth and Social Development (CYSD), Bhubaneswar explored various avenues to facilitate civic engagement and mobilize public participation for good governance. As a first step, a Citizen Report Card study on select urban services in Bhubaneswar was completed as a collaborative project and released on 22 November 2004. A capacity-building workshop was organised thereafter.

The workshop at Bhubaneswar

The workshop was organised in Bhubaneswar from 1 to 4 March 2005, to sensitise members of civil society organisations on issues of good governance. The capacity building workshop was expected to:

- create a network of civil society groups working to improve delivery of basic services by local governments
- enable this network to have adequate exposure and awareness to take up specific activities that engage the service providers and
- encourage local research and training institutions to participate in this effort, and anchor follow up projects in the region.

More than 18 civil society organisations across the state, including CYSD, participated in the workshop. The four-day workshop used a mix of lectures; video films and group exercises to enable participants explore civic engagement initiatives. The participants were provided with a workshop kit, which was a compilation of selected readings on various issues and problems of governance.

Overview of the Modules

A set of 12 modules was adapted to suit the needs and requirements of civil society in Orissa. The key focus of the modules was improving the quality of governance by strengthening civil society in its interface with the state. The modules aimed at imparting knowledge on key issues related to governance, those affecting good governance, and the problems faced by the civil society in dealing with the state. A number of tools at the disposal of the civil society were critically examined to see their usefulness and effectiveness in bringing about a change in local governance. Some of the potent tools and concepts explored in this regard included: the significance of the Right to Information (RTI), giving an overview of the RTI movement in India and what civil society in Orissa can do to work towards strengthening the RTI legislation, tools to analyse municipal budgets, improving citizen’s participation in elections, the concept of benchmarking public services, with a special focus on Citizen Report Cards, and the role of Citizen Charters in improving standards of public service delivery. The modules aimed at motivating the participant organisations towards practicable ideas and plan to effectively demand better governance in their respective region and work towards implementing an effective plan of action within a stipulated timeframe.

In the group discussion that followed, local groups came up with suggestions and ideas to bring about transparency, accountability and responsiveness in local government.

(For further information on the workshop, contact Mr. Cyril Vas at PAC)
MEDIA ADVOCACY

MEDIA FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

In the context of shrinking space in the mainstream media for the marginalised, community media, such as community radio, video and grass-root newsletters are making headway. But in India, it still has a long way to go... says SOHINI BAGCHI

Access to information has been universally acknowledged as a vital ingredient for social change. For most people in developing countries, it is the rapidly changing media that provide the information by means of facilitating communication and debate and provide mechanisms for the formulation of identity and the creation of community. However the wave of democratisation that opened up media space for diverse players in the early 90s resulted this flag-bearer to undergo a radical metamorphosis. Today, media occupies a space that is constantly contested, put through not only organisational and technological restructuring, but also economic and political constraints and commercial pressures.

According to eminent journalist Ajit Banerjeea, "While globalisation affords several opportunities for enhancing communication and information based channels, many of these channels remain outside the realm of access for the 'common person'." The two tiers of media, that is the public (government) and private are already a legitimate part of media processes in India. But, the information age has not, until now, substantially demonstrated the democratisation of media — an important requisite if freedom of expression and citizenry participation is to be grounded in firm reality. Henceforth it is felt that, a third tier - that of community media - needs to be legitimised. Creating such alternative media systems is not easy. It needs sustained effort, funding and interest. But, once achieved, it could create a 'public sphere' in the real sense, where people-centric, decentralised and democratised media will become true voices of people, community and the nation.

These experiments are taking place across the globe, including South Africa, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and some parts of Latin America. Even India in recent times have seen the growth and evolution of several such initiatives such as the Right to Information, Disclosure, and the participation of civil society as vital catalysts in accelerating the pace of governance and social change. Increasingly, citizen movements and campaigns - both in rural and urban spaces — have resonated with these objectives.

In this context, a two-day workshop titled: "Media democratisation and governance" recently organised in Bangalore, by Voices and Praxis, two popular non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working in similar areas, which underscored the importance of Community communication in social change, needs a special mention. The interactive workshop explored citizen-led movements in community communication as well as discussed forms and mechanisms of community communication, such as community radio, newsletters and video through different cases across the country. It also underlined the need to synergise information with communication in accelerating and scaling social change. Some of the important issues highlighted in the workshop, makes one contemplate not only on the current media scenario and the need for strengthening the public domain, but also bringing community into the centre stage.

As Ashish Sen, Director, Voices, pointed out, "This calls for a closer and more interactive link between media and development in the country, which in turn warrants an appraisal not only of processes in the existing media traditions, but also widening the scope and legitimacy of media democratisation in the country. This, in turn, demands a review of the notion of access." Sen feels that access without inclusiveness could be akin to information without communication and would rather impede the development and governance process. While the crux of the problem in several instances might lie with a reluctant state, civil society needs to get its act together.

Further it was strongly felt that the need to synergise the Right to Information and the Right to Communicate (as enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) and integrate it into community media advocacy agendas is equally vital in today's knowledge-based
society. "If the denial of information aggravates the poverty gap, information without communication could be a dead wood. Producers of information need to be able to communicate it in a manner they deem appropriate", said Arvind Kejriwal of Parivartan, a Delhi-based NGO working on Right to Information, highlighting the need to blend new media and traditional media effectively. The workshop would definitely help in enhancing an understanding of the issues and constraints in finding a space in mainstream media terrain for the marginalised to articulate their voices and also act as an eye-opener to expand the scope of community media and strengthen its legitimacy in the country.

---

**SPECIAL REPORT**

**SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY INITIATIVES IN ASIA**

Conceptually, social accountability (SA) is an approach towards building responsiveness and accountability in government that relies on civic engagement, i.e., in which it is the ordinary citizens and/or civil society organisations who participate directly or indirectly in exacting accountability. SA mechanisms are hence demand-driven, and operate from the ‘bottom-up’. These include, for example, citizen participation in public policy-making, participatory budgeting, independent budget analysis, public expenditure tracking, citizen monitoring of public service delivery and projects or sub-projects that directly affect them, citizen advisory boards, lobbying and advocacy campaigns, etc. At present, the knowledge and learning on these mechanisms stems from a handful of pioneering case studies, such as Porto Alegre in Brazil, budget analysis by IDASA in South Africa, Citizen Report Cards by the Public Affairs Centre in India, etc. However, what is found to be lacking is a broader investigation of approaches and initiatives from across the world, and in depth analysis of the key elements of different tools and mechanisms when applied in different contexts. It is only with such an analysis that the generic elements of different methodologies can be better understood, as well as the modifications, risks and critical success factors that arise or are needed when applying these in different sector and cultural contexts (e.g., in Africa, where a particularly strong demand for support on these topics has been identified) or when scaling up from a local to a national level.

In view of this, a joint team from the Community Empowerment and Social Inclusion (CESI) group of the World Bank Institute (WBI), the Participation and Civic Engagement Group of the Social Development Department (SDV) is collaborating to undertake a stock-taking exercise of experiences with different social accountability mechanisms.

From March to August this year, the Philippine Centre for Policy Studies at the University of the Philippines has been commissioned by the World Bank Institute to conduct a stocktaking exercise on social accountability in Asia. The process included requesting the contact information of any individuals, organisations, advocacy groups, training institutes or government agencies, undertaking social accountability related projects and initiatives in Asia and the Pacific, and documenting the initiatives in a template prepared by WBI. Out of the 75 initiatives (government and civil society initiated) identified, information was collected on 53 initiatives in the templates. In this context, the World Bank Institute has approached Public Affairs Foundation to take the initiatives documented in the templates and verify the information and develop 15 case studies.

As an interim step to create a dialogue among the selected initiatives, PAF in collaboration with the WBI organised a three-day workshop in Bangalore from March 21-23. The workshop had participants from different Asian countries including Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Vietnam; teams of observers from Ukraine and Ethiopia also attended the workshop.

---

**MARCH 21**

**WORLD BANK INSTITUTE & PUBLIC AFFAIRS FOUNDATION**

---

**April 2005**
The participants not only shared their experiences on social accountability, but also brought to light some systematic research on enabling initiatives. Interesting cases on participatory budgeting, gender budgeting, citizen participation in public policy, public expenditure tracking, monitoring of public services and role of ombudsman in social accountability were presented at the workshop.

(For further information, please contact: Ms. Karen Sirker of the World Bank Institute at k.sirker@worldbank.org or Dr. Gopakumar Thampi of Public Affairs Foundation at pafindia@vsnl.net)

---

**STRAIGHT TALK FROM THE PEOPLE’S OMBUDSMAN**

Lok Ayukta of Karnataka Justice N. Venkatachala

"In India Lok Ayukta is the state’s ultimate mechanism to deal with accountability thereby ensuring that the grievances of its citizens are properly redressed. This ombudsman-like authority is meant to enforce ethics and accountability in governance by investigating allegations of corruption, misadministration, favouritism and abuse of power by public servants, right up to the office of the Chief Minister," explained Lok Ayukta of Karnataka Justice N. Venkatachala at the workshop on ‘Social Accountability Initiatives in Asia’. He also chaired a session in the workshop titled: ‘Role of Ombudsman in Social Accountability’. Sporting a new hat on his latest achievement — after trapping the State Minorities Development Chairman, Mr. Mohammed Obudullah Sheriff, while accepting bribes —Justice Venkatachala confidently asserts, "The cleansing operations of the Lok Ayukta have enriched the exchequer by 10 billions this year and a lot more could be gained if public servants become responsible. The need of the hour is to curb corruption among government officers who have used public money to become powerful."

On the occasion, Justice Venkatachala also welcomed all the delegates and said that India is a model democratic country because the basic feature of the Constitution was to provide equality to all. In that sense, Karnataka is fortunate to be the first State in the country to establish, the institution of the Lok Ayukta in 1983, with the purpose of improving the standards of public administration."

It is perhaps for the first time since its establishment that the Lok Ayukta is beginning to deploy its potential, driven largely by the commitment of the individuals who are running it. Needless to say, in recent times, the Lok Ayukta has been imbued with a new vigour, as reflected in the growing numbers of cases which are constantly getting public and media attention. He remarked, "Social Accountability is vital in developing countries and institution like this can fulfill the aspirations of ordinary citizens for a fair and effective governance."

- Sohini Bagchi

---

**E-Ombudsman!**

Now the public in Karnataka can lodge complaints with the Lokayukta and provide information about corrupt practices they experience through e-mail to the Lokayukta Registrar or Public Relations Officer and Vigilance Officer at the following e-mail addresses: kla-reg@kar.nic.in, kla-pro@kar.nic.in, by downloading the complaint forms from the website www.kar.nic.in/loKayukta. The website was created on 29 December 2002 for people to lodge/register their complaints through the internet without having to personally go to the Office of the Lokayukta. The rationale behind launching the website is to bring about awareness and transparency in governance. This apart, the Lokayukta publishes its day-to-day progress in investigation against public servants and others and the status of the complaints on the site.

For more details, contact:

**LOKAYUKTA**

124, 1st Floor MS Building, Bangalore-560 001 Phone: +91-80-22257638 e-mail:kla-reg@kar.nic.in, kla-pro@kar.nic.in website: www.kar.nic.in/loKayukta.
ELECTIONS

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN RURAL GOVERNANCE

With the belief that people’s participation brings in increased accountability and responsiveness in the process of governance, building capacities of the local community and strengthening their voice has become a key area of concern. In order to extend people’s participation in rural governance in Karnataka, through Panchayati Raj Institution (Local Self Governance), the state legislative assembly has made amendments to the Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act and also introduced various schemes and awareness programmes in the last two years. The government has also made amendments to strengthen ‘Gram Sabha’ (village collectives), to exercise its powers in monitoring the functioning of gram panchayats. This provides an opportunity for the civil society organisations across the state to explore the options for creative interventions in order to align with and improve the governance at the local level.

‘Parinamakari Panchayati’ (Effective Local Governance) : An overview

In the light of the recent Panchayat elections held on 25 and 27 February 2005, Public Affairs Centre (PAC), launched a unique campaign called ‘Parinamakari Panchayati’, to strengthen the electoral process in rural areas by enhancing the quality of panchayat polls. In view of the above objectives, PAC conducted a capacity building workshop on strengthening Panchayat Raj on 11 February 2005 with various local partners working at the grass root levels in 20 Panchayats, spread over 8 districts in Karnataka. Partner groups from Mangalore, Shimoga, Guruvalayanakere, Mysore, Bangalore Rural, Bidar, Udupi and Davanagere participated in the workshop.

The objective of the programme was to build the capacities of the partner groups working at the grass root levels in enhancing the quality of panchayat polls. In this context, PAC formulated a four point agenda, which includes:

- verification of voter’s list
- scrutinizing of affidavits of the candidates contesting in the election
- training women candidates on filing nominations and
- organising public meetings called ‘Mukhamukhi’, to facilitate interaction with candidates and voters.

The representatives of these groups were trained to carry out these activities, based on the four-pronged agenda, along with the local groups in their respective areas. An information kit was developed to help them in executing these programmes. During the discussion, the groups shared about the activities that they had already undertaken. Different groups also reported about the interference of political parties in the GP polls. The groups agreed to carry out these programmes in as many Gram Panchayats as possible and decided to meet again later to share their experiences and learning.

Learnings from the exercise:

PAC organised a one-day workshop on 18 March 2005 with ‘Parinamakari Panchayati’ partner groups. In the evaluation session, the groups shared their experiences and learning with each other, which was moderated by PAC.

Verification of voter’s list: Groups from Mangalore, Shimoga, Guruvalayanakere, Mysore, Bangalore Rural, Bidar, Udupi and Davanagere carried out the verification of the voter’s list in their local panchayats. It was found out that a large number of eligible voters were not registered on the voter’s list. Instances of double entries were also common in most panchayats other than Davanagere district, which had little discrepancy. For example, Sadhana group, which surveyed 11 villages in Cholanayakanahalli Panchayat, reported as many as 117 cases, where the names of deceased persons still appeared on the voters list in that area. Similarly, Okkuta from Mangalore found that though the registrar of death had communicated a number of death cases to the department, the deletions were not effected on the list. Almost all the groups had difficulty in carrying out the survey, as the voter’s list was not arranged streetwise in villages. It was also found out that due to insufficient publicity during revision process, eligible voters did not participate.
Training women candidates on filing nominations: Prior to the elections, Spandana in Shimoga and Honnali taluka trained about 250 women Self-Help Group (SHG) members belonging to 3 different panchayats. This training spurred interest among many SHG members and they contested the elections. Women found it very useful as it encouraged them to actively participate in politics. In Udupi district, Consumer Forum trained members of about 30 SHGs in Kalayanapura village panchayat. Of them, three women contested and one even won the elections. During the training programme, it was noticed that their awareness level was very low. Further, there was insufficient information on filing nominations. Hence Prag Jyothi in Bidar and some others took up the initiative to train women candidates to file nominations for the polls. It is worth mentioning that the Nagarika Seva Trust (NST) of Dakshina Kannada, which started an awareness programme for women candidates, showed a very positive result among the winning candidates, a whopping 59 winning candidates happen to be women as against 15 men.

Scrutinizing affidavits of the candidates contesting in the election: The exercise involved scrutinizing the affidavits to see the accuracy of filling in process, to know the profile of the candidates and to publicise the information to help voters make an informed choice. However, regrettably, the groups experienced a major setback in obtaining the affidavits of the candidates from the concerned panchayats, Taluka offices and Deputy Commissioner’s offices. Only three groups from Davanagere, Bidar and Udupi succeeded in obtaining the affidavits, after much toil. Authorities refused to give copies of the affidavits to the groups in all other districts and were apprehensive about sharing such information, despite a clear statement in the handbook for Returning Officers that copies of the affidavits have to be given to public on request. In fact, the officers who underwent training on Right to Information were also reluctant. Further officials were non-courteous to the groups who approached them to obtain the information. Because of these constraints a thorough analysis of the candidate’s affidavits could not be carried out.

‘Mukha-Mukhi’, to facilitate interaction with candidates and voters: The objective of holding a public meeting with all the contesting candidates in a village was to stimulate a demand from the public for information on the past achievements and decide on the future plans for a particular village. Almost all the partner groups were able to organise Mukha-Mukhi in their respective panchayats. The over all response from the public as well as candidates was encouraging. The promises made by the candidates in this public meeting were recorded for follow-up. In Davanagere, candidates have even requested a training program on Panchayat Raj, after the meeting.

Follow-up activities:
Following the session, a brief presentation on Parinamakari Panchayat campaign was made to Mr. Nandakumar, Secretary, State Election Commission (SEC), Karnataka to update him on the different initiatives taken up by each group in various districts. He was also briefed about the problems encountered by the groups while executing the programs in their panchayats. Further, he informed the group about the forthcoming initiatives and appreciated the efforts of the participant groups in the campaign. He also sought suggestions from the groups to improve the system further. Some of the suggestions mooted in this regard are:

1. There is a need to improve the information communication during the revision of electoral rolls to increase the participation by eligible voters
2. Revision processes should also focus on corrections and deletions apart from inclusions to reduce anomalies on the rolls.
3. Orientation and better incentives should be provided to the designated officials for revision process.
4. Electoral rolls at all the polling centres should be displayed prior to three months of the elections to avoid confusions.
5. Information from the registrar of deaths should be updated and incorporated to the voters list at regular intervals
6. Helpdesks should be set up at Panchayat offices to guide less educated, women candidates for filing nominations
7. Intense training programme should be imparted to the Returning Officers before elections to get them familiarised with their functions
8. There is a need to introduce EVMs for GP elections and more number of sensitive booths
should be installed with video cameras for preventing booth capturing / rigging. Further Ballot paper numbers are to be covered with removable stickers in order to ensure secret balloting
PAC compiled the suggestions from participating groups. The Centre will forward these suggestions to the State Election Commission for further action. PAC also plans to draw an activity map for future programs and communicate it to the groups for their comments.

(For further information on the campaign, contact, Ms. Poornima DG at PAC.)

ROVING EYE

TRAINING TO BOLSTER PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTE

Training centres on strengthening Panchayat Raj Institutions is still a rare concept in India and has a long way to go. However closer home in Mysore, Abdul Nazir Sab State Institute of Rural Development is an unique example of an institution, working towards sensitising and training people on strengthening rural government. The Centre designs training programmes for elected members of Panchayati Raj Institutions, officers of various development departments, representatives of voluntary organisations and bank officials. Further it conducts training and research activities and assesses its impact on different groups.

The Government of Karnataka has constituted a Managing Committee with Additional Chief Secretary, Government of Karnataka as its Chairman, representatives from Government of India and NIRD, Hyderabad and comprises of 14 members. The recent Satellite Based Interactive Communication System needs a special mention, as it is an integral system of providing training and communication support for the developmental activities. The Centre accelerates effective implementation of development programmes by maintaining uniformity in all the Taluk head quarters.

The first round of training has already begun from April 2005. For more information, about the programmes, log on to: http://kar.nic.in/rdpr

AN ACT OF CHARITY

To promote the spirit of volunteerism among Indian youth, i-volunteer is organising a summer internship programme for six weeks called 'Indian Fellow' (IF). Besides sensitising the candidates on the various issues of development and challenges faced in the development sector today, IF also aims to reinforce the role of youth in the development process. For further information about the programme, starting in May 2005, you can contact: sujata@volunteer.org.in

BACK ON POPULAR DEMAND

Holding the State to Account: Citizen Monitoring in Action
Author: Samuel Paul
This book describes a pioneering citizen monitoring initiatives in Bangalore, India, that stimulated the improvement of the city’s governance. It generated a ‘Report Card on public services’, which is an innovative way to gather systematic feedback from citizens on a variety of services to rate their quality and effectiveness on a citywide basis. The book focuses on the report card findings and their potentials to enhance public accountability and also provides a manual on the design and use of report cards.

Civic Engagement for Better Governance: A Guide to Good Practices from India
Edited by Suresh Balakrishnan and Manjunath S.
The book is an attempt to showcase and disseminate some of the best-known civil society initiatives in India, so as to motivate other civic groups to adapt and replicate these practices in their own specialised ways for local actions. The book is an outcome of ‘The National Conference on Civil Society Initiatives for Better Governance’, organised by Public Affairs Centre in May 2003.

(For more information about these books, contact: Ms. Sohini Bagchi at PAC)
SPECIAL FEATURE

COMBATING GLOBAL POVERTY: A NEW BLUEPRINT UNVEILED

In the most comprehensive strategy ever put forward for combating global poverty, hunger and disease, a team of 265 of the world’s leading development experts has proposed a package of scores of specific cost-effective measures that together could cut extreme poverty in half and radically improve the lives of at least one billion people in poor developing countries by 2015.

The recommendations of the UN Millennium Project, an independent advisory body to the UN Secretary-General, are laid out in the report Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The UN Millennium Project's report was released as the Asian tsunami disaster focused global attention on the need, scale and effectiveness of aid to the world’s poor. The enormously generous response to the tragedy sent a powerful message that ordinary citizens in wealthier nations do in fact support such aid—if they clearly see the need and if they believe the funds they provide will reach and help the people in need. The Project's plan addresses these legitimate concerns—and shows that targeted investments in essential public services such as health, education and infrastructure make poor communities less vulnerable to such disasters and to the hardships of disease, hunger and environmental degradation. The Project report leads off a yearlong series of global initiatives aimed at making the Goals a reality, including a report to UN member states from the Secretary-General in March, which will draw heavily on the Project’s recommendations. With world leaders gathering at the G8 meeting in July and again at the UN in September to accelerate progress towards the Goals, 2005 has become the key year for mobilising international support for the fight against poverty and disease.

Some Project highlights and key recommendations:

- **A practical plan**: In 2000, world leaders met at the UN and agreed to cut extreme poverty in half by 2015. The Project’s research shows not only that this still can be done, but also how it can be done, in rigorous technical detail.

- **Affordable**: In the first detailed costing exercise of its kind, the Project experts conclude that the Goals can be achieved with an investment of just one half of one percent of the incomes of the industrialised countries—well within the international aid targets the wealthy countries have already promised to meet.

- **Governance matters**: Policy reform at the local level and a national commitment to helping the poorest of the poor are essential if the Goals are to be reached.

- **Expanded trade and private capital**: These are the key to sustained growth in all developing nations—but the poorest countries cannot take advantage of trade and investment opportunities without first getting help in building essential public infrastructure like roads, ports, clinics and schools and raising the health and skills of the labour force through investments in disease control, education, nutrition and job training.

- **Fast tracking for success**: Project leaders strongly recommend that assistance be targeted immediately to countries already recognised as both needy and able to use aid effectively, starting with “Fast Track” countries already deemed eligible for debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative and nations singled out for help by the US government's New Millennium Challenge Account.

- **Too big for government alone**: The Report argues that the challenges of growth and job creation on the one side and service delivery to poor communities on the other require a broad partnership involving the public sector, civil
society and the private sector. Inclusiveness is the key to success. So unless women’s groups and civil society organisations are brought into the economic and political mainstream, the goals will remain unobtainable.

- **Quality aid:** While an increase in the quantity of assistance is vital, better quality aid is equally important. Project task forces lay out careful blueprints for efficient, effective investments in public health, education, and economic development—and argue persuasively that a “front-loading” of these expenditures now will ultimately save billions of dollars—and tens of millions of lives—over the long term.

- **“Quick Wins”:** Developing and developed countries should immediately undertake a series of “Quick Win” actions that could save millions of lives at modest cost, from providing free school meals and small diesel or solar power generators for hospitals and schools to antiretroviral AIDS medicines and US$5 antimalarial bed nets.

The Project drew on the contributions of a veritable “who’s who” of development thinkers and doers that included **Ernesto Zedillo**, former President of Mexico; **Mari Pangestu**, Minister of Trade, Indonesia; **MS Swaminathan**, World Food Prize Laureate; **Amina J Ibrahim**, National Coordinator for Education for All at the Federal Ministry for Education, Nigeria; **Pedro Sanchez**, winner of the MacArthur Genius Award and World Food Prize laureate; **Agnes Binagwaho**, Executive Secretary of the National Commission to Fight AIDS, Rwanda; **Awash Teklehaimanot**, Director of the Malaria Program at Columbia University; **Yolanda Kakabadse Navarro**, President of the World Conservation Union; **Albert M Wright**, Chairman of the Africa Water Task Force, **Yee-Cheong Lee**, President of the World Federation of Engineering Organizations, and **Calestous Juma**, former Executive Secretary of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. The Project’s work includes 13 separate, extensive reports by specialized task forces in subjects ranging from education to malaria to hunger.

The report calls for a major overhaul of the international development system, which it broadly found to be too often unfocused and inefficient. Only about 30 cents of each dollar of international aid actually reaches on the ground investment programs in poor countries aimed at extreme poverty, hunger and disease, the Project’s research shows. By pooling aid and spending it locally and strategically, assistance would be more effective and less expensive, Project experts argue.

Reiterating the role of external financing to fill the gap in providing debt relief and technical assistance to poor countries, project leaders call for “a decade of bold action” with the following guidelines:

- Developing countries should adopt ambitious national development strategies to achieve the Goals, with specific policy reforms and detailed assessments of the required investment needs and financing options.
- High-income countries must open their markets to developing country exports and should help the poorest countries raise export competitiveness through investments in infrastructure, trade facilitation and science and technology.
- Donors should increase financing of these critical regional projects, the Project says.
- The Secretary-General should strengthen coordination among UN agencies to support the Goals at the international and country level.
- To achieve the Goals, aid from industrialized countries should rise to 0.44 percent of the industrialized nations’ GNP in 2006 and reach 0.54 percent of GNP by 2015—less than the global target 0.7 percent of GNP reaffirmed by world leaders at the Monterrey conference on financing development in 2002.
- The project’s calculations do not include many essential areas requiring assistance to developing nations outside the framework of the Millennium Development Goals, including future major infrastructure projects, increased spending adjustments to climate change, post-conflict reconstruction, and other geopolitical priorities.
- In absolute dollar terms, the authors urge wealthy nations to disburse $135 billion in development aid in 2006—an increase over existing commitments of $48 billion, equivalent to about five percent of global military spending. By 2015, annual aid levels should reach $195 billion.
- This additional aid should include an initial $5 billion rising to $7 billion per year by 2015 to promote science and technology for the poor, focusing on health, agriculture, energy, environmental management, and climate research.

(The full report can be downloaded from [http://www.unmillenniumproject.org](http://www.unmillenniumproject.org))
JAKARTA EXPERT MEETING IDENTIFIES MEASURES TO PREVENT CORRUPTION IN TSUNAMI ASSISTANCE

An expert meeting on Corruption Prevention in Tsunami Relief concluded on 7 April 2005 in Jakarta with participants recommending a set of principles to prevent corruption in delivering relief and reconstruction assistance to tsunami afflicted areas. The two-day meeting, organised jointly by the Asian Development Bank, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development Anti-Corruption Initiative for Asia-Pacific, and Transparency International, was hosted by the Government of Indonesia in Jakarta.

Participants stressed that it was only the start of a long-process of fighting corruption and promoting transparency in disaster relief operations beyond the post-tsunami reconstruction efforts. They thus called upon the three organising institutions to initiate a policy on managing corruption in humanitarian relief that provide applicable solutions for use in disaster affected communities. Addressing the responsibilities of each stakeholder group in curbing corruption in tsunami relief and reconstruction efforts, recommendations deriving from this meeting include:

- All stakeholders involved in tsunami assistance must ensure transparency and accountability in their operations, in particular in the management of the financial flows. For this, up-to-date information must be actively made available to any interested party. Further, they should coordinate their respective operations and provide for independent oversight of project implementation.
- As the affected people's ownership of the relief and reconstruction process is essential, operations should build on their leadership, participation, and commitment to ensuring the best use of assistance. Relief operations must therefore contribute to the strengthening of local institutions, transfer of technical skills, and should promote policies aimed at preventing corruption.
- Donors should coordinate with governments and among themselves to avoid duplication of assistance schemes. They should also establish uniform procurement rules, maintain and publish clear books and records, and provide assurance of full internal and external controls. They must further make a careful assessment of the local conditions so that allocated resources match the needs.
- Governments must involve affected people and civil society in decision making, ensure information dissemination, and provide easily accessible corruption reporting channels combined with effective mechanisms to encourage and protect whistle blowers.
- Non-governmental organisations play an important role in monitoring the relief and reconstruction process and in reporting any suspicion of corruption to authorities. They need to closely coordinate their activities with governments, donors and among themselves, while ensuring the maximum involvement of all groups of affected people in priority setting and decision making.

Opened by the Indonesian Minister for Administrative Reform, HE Taufik Effendi, the meeting was attended by more than 60 senior representatives from governments, civil society and private sector from the six most affected countries - India, Indonesia, Maldives, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, and Thailand - and representatives from 16 key donor agencies and international organizations involved in tsunami reconstruction efforts. Dr. Gopakumar Thampi of the Public Affairs Foundation was an invited expert presenter at this meeting on the theme of Monitoring & Evaluation.

(More details on this issue can be obtained from: http://www1.oecd.org/daf/asiacom/tsunami.htm)
A new e-learning course has been recently launched by Public Affairs Centre (PAC) together with Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI). The self-learning course has been designed to help users – citizens and institutions - in carrying out a Citizen Report Card (CRC).

The Citizen Report Card (CRC) is a dynamic tool, which collects and uses citizen feedback on public services to make improvement in service delivery. Pioneered by Public Affairs Centre, this approach is an international best practice to improve public services. It is based on the premise that feedback on service quality, collected from communities with the help of a sample survey, provides a reliable basis for communities and governments to engage in a dialogue and partnership action to improve the delivery of public services.

The e-learning course has 10 modules, which focus on the conceptual, technical, management, and implementation aspects of the CRC process. The course is interactive and includes assessments at the end of each module.

The interactive course is meant for members of local government, civil society organisations, developmental agencies and consortiums. It is useful for the government to benchmark service quality and identify gaps and corrective action, in a participatory and transparent manner. At the same time, community organisations may implement CRCs to collect objective information on services, and advocate for improvements or solutions to problems. Likewise Stakeholder Consortiums may use the approach to develop a consensus on issues, identify priority actions, and monitor improvements. It is also useful for development agencies, interested in benchmarking service quality and monitoring changes to provide support to local actors who are carrying out a CRC.

On completion of the course, users will be able to assess whether the methodology is relevant in their locality, design a survey instrument, implement it by collecting feedback from users, generate survey findings and produce the main CRC report, and finally advocate for improvement in service delivery. The system is cost-effective and easily accessible across the globe, depending on the technical expertise of the organisation and the local setting. The course is available at: www.citizenreportcard.com. The printed version and CDs of the online course are also available.

(For further details on the course, contact Dr. Sita Sekhar at PAC)

Public Affairs Centre (PAC) is a non profit non-governmental organisation committed to improving the quality of Governance in India. Towards this end, PAC undertakes research studies, provides citizen action support and advisory services, and facilitates networking for the creation of sustainable fora.

TO KNOW MORE ABOUT PAC, PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT http://www.pacindia.org

If undelivered, please return to

Public Affairs Centre
422, 80 Feet Road, VI Block, Koramangala
Bangalore - 560 095, India
Telefax : 25537260 / 25520246
25525452 / 25525453
E-mail : pacindia@vsnl.com

Public Eye
A quarterly publication from Public Affairs Centre
Editor : Gopakumar Thampi
Associate Editors : Cyril W. Vas
Sohini Bagchi
April 2005

Printed at: Image Graphics, Bangalore