When Clive won the Battle of Plassey, the East India Company carried away a treasure of £ 800,000. Clive received £ 234,000 as his share of the booty. On his return to England he used the money "to set up in the Parliament a caucus of his nominees, who were to vote as he bade; entered the House of Commons, and engaged in "the tremendous corruption of men's consciences". Impeached before the Parliament, he defended himself with an air of righteous indignation: "when I think of the marvellous riches of that country" and the comparatively small part which I took away, I am astonished at my own moderation”.

The Parliament of free India decided to bury the stinking example set by Clive. In 1951, it expelled one of its members when on enquiry it found that H.G. Mudgal, a Congress MP, had some dealings with the Bombay Bullion Association to canvass support for it in Parliament.

On 24 September 1951, Parliament expelled Mudgal. Nehru told the House that "The purpose of expulsion is not so much disciplinary as remedial, not so much to punish members as to rid the House of persons who are unfit for membership. It may just as well be regarded as an example of the House's power to regulate its own constitution”.

While expelling Mudgal, Nehru had promised that soon Parliament would set up a Committee to lay down norms for the conduct of MPs. Tragically, the promised committee was not set up during Nehru's 17 years in Parliament or later.

Not surprisingly, criminal and corrupt elements have since made their way to the legislatures in increasing numbers. Repeated voices (Lohia, Santhanam, Bhupesh Gupta, L K Advani) raised in Parliament were of no avail, nor so the reports of special committees – Dinesh Goswami, Indrajit Gupta or the Law Commission or the Election Commission. The Supreme Court too passed strictures but left it to the "conscience" of Parliament to do the just thing for ensuring clean politics.

In the early 90s, the Vohra Committee furnished shocking evidence about "the nexus between the criminal gangs, police, bureaucracy and politicians in various parts of the country”.

In November 2000 the Delhi High Court held that for making a right choice by electors of a candidate at the election, it was essential that the past of the candidate should not be kept in dark, as it was not in the interest of the democracy and well being of the country. This was endorsed by the Supreme Court. The political parties suddenly woke up, joined hands to thwart the Court order.

Finally on 13 March 2003, the Supreme Court struck a resolute blow mandating disclosure of criminal, financial, educational antecedents by candidates.

The disclosure norms prescribed were applied by the Election Commission to the recent four Assembly polls. Happily, several State Election Commissions have since extended these disclosure norms to panchayat and municipal elections.

These dynamic developments have provided great grist to the mill of civil society groups such as Association of Democratic Reforms, PUCI, Lok Satta and PAC. PAC has pioneered close monitoring of the elections to the two municipal councils K R Puram and Mahadevapura in Karnataka. PAC discovered disturbing loopholes in procedures which must be plugged for realising the underlying purpose of the Supreme Court norms. Vigil by civic groups is as vital to defend our democracy as the efforts of the Central and State Election Commissions. PAC has shown the challenging role that civic groups must play to ensure clean polity.

Shri L.C. Jain

Shri. L.C. Jain is an eminent thinker, Gandhian and social activist, who held many distinguished positions in his professional career as Chairman, Planning Commission, Government of India and Indian High Commissioner to South Africa.
RESEARCH

THE THIRD CITIZEN REPORT CARD ON BANGALORE'S PUBLIC SERVICES

Bangalore has seen a wide range of civic reforms since 1999. Has this made a difference to its citizens? Public Affairs Centre's third "citizen report card" on civic services in the city of Bangalore highlights the significant improvement in the satisfaction of residents. This citizen report card, authored by Dr. Suresh Balakrishnan and Dr. Sita Sekhar, is based on a survey of over 1700 middle income and poor households in the city carried out jointly by PAC and AC Nielsen ORG-MARG this year. A separate report has been prepared based on feedback from the poor.

Feedback from General Households

Of the nine agencies on which citizens of Bangalore provided feedback, all have received satisfaction ratings above 70%, in contrast to less than 40% in the past. User satisfaction among general households ranged between 96% for BMTC and 73% for BWSSB, BMP and Govt. Hospitals. The improvement is greatest in the case of BDA where citizen satisfaction has moved up from 16% to 85%.

An important reason for this improvement is the significant decline in the proportion of residents encountering problems while using all these services (with the exception of storm water drains maintained by BMP). This improvement is in line with investments to augment capacity, introduction of IT enabled services and other initiatives to improve efficiency of service delivery, that have taken place since 1999. The findings serve to indicate how reduction in intensity of routine problems, translates into fewer interactions with citizens, thereby reducing the scope for delay, harassment or corruption.

The regularity and reliability of services have improved significantly during the period, according to users. Satisfaction with regularity of garbage clearance by BMP has gone up from 16% in 1999 to 75% in 2003, accuracy of billing in BWSSB from 32% to 90%, to give two examples. The reduction in problems described above has been matched by significant improvement in satisfaction with behaviour of staff, where the proportion of satisfied citizens has moved up from 38% to 83%. The satisfaction with behaviour of staff is highest in the case of BSNL (97%). Biggest improvement in this rating took place for BDA, which has now reached 85%. While improved procedures have reduced the possibility of abuse of discretion, most agencies have invested heavily in training their staff. These efforts suggest that the attitude and mindset of staff has significantly changed since the previous report card in 1999.

Citizens of Bangalore also indicated that they encountered corruption less frequently while dealing with these agencies for routine services. Among the much-reduced number of citizens who encountered problems, 11% had to deal with corruption as against 23% in 1999. This is a major achievement in itself. But caution must be exercised in taking this as an all-encompassing indication that corruption has almost been eliminated.

The survey did not focus on experiences with specialized services such as new connections, khat and building permissions, which are seen as pockets of serious corruption. But the findings definitely support the premise that easier procedures and improved efficiency in routine operations such as Self Assessment of property tax by BMP, one time Sale Deed by BDA and the like, have served to reduce harassment and extortion that citizens faced in the late nineties.

Feedback from Slum Households

A separate report card focusing on the urban poor was prepared using feedback from slum dwellers. While slum dwellers also indicated substantial improvement in satisfaction with services, their ratings are significantly lower, with four of six agencies receiving satisfaction ratings above 70%. The ratings ranged between 93% for BMTC and 64% for Bangalore Police. This is in contrast to 1999, when a larger proportion of slum dwellers were satisfied with most services in comparison with general households. However, satisfaction with services has improved in relation to all agencies except BMP, where it remains at the same level.

Feedback from slum dwellers indicates that service quality in terms of availability of water in public toilets and regularity of garbage clearance has improved substantially. Problem incidence has also declined and compares well with that reported by general households. In a number of agencies, satisfaction with staff behaviour among slum households is higher than that among general households.

(For the complete report, please contact Dr. Sita Sekhar at parisad@vsnl.com)
THEME ARTICLE

THE RIGHT TO INFORMATION IN ELECTIONS
A TALE OF TWO KARNATAKA MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Samuel Paul

In the past three months, elections have been held in two city municipal councils (CMC) near Bangalore where affidavits were collected from candidates under the Election Commission (EC) guidelines for the disclosure of information pertaining to their antecedents. It is to the credit of the Karnataka Government and its State Election Commission that they decided to extend the requirement of mandatory disclosure to local elections though the Supreme Court’s judgment on the subject applied only to national and state elections. For civic groups in Bangalore and its vicinity who are concerned about their “right to know their candidates”, the CMC elections provided a unique opportunity to see how the celebrated mandatory disclosures of candidates’ antecedents actually get implemented in elections.

EC guidelines will remain toothless unless they are properly complied with in elections and steps are taken to disseminate the information to the voting public. This hypothesis was put to the test in the two Karnataka towns, K.R. Puram and Mahadevapura, both with a population under 300,000 where elections for their city councils were held in August and October, 2003, respectively. A quick assessment of how the EC guidelines were implemented in these elections was done by the Public Affairs Centre (PAC). The findings of this exercise and the lessons they offer will be of interest to the election commissions and citizens in the states where elections are scheduled to be held in the coming months.

Neglect of the EC Guidelines

The first thing that the PAC team noted in the K.R. Puram CMC elections was the indifference shown by the candidates and the election staff to the EC guidelines. Thirty out of the 170 candidates in the elections did not bother to declare the value of their assets fully or in part. Twelve did not sign the affidavits or did it improperly. One among this group also won a seat! Almost all the Notaries failed to comply with some of their basic rules and a few put their seals even when the candidates had not signed. And the Returning Officers whose job is to ensure that the affidavits are complete and signatures are in place accepted all the affidavits without batting an eyelid. The candidates, of course, did not challenge the affidavits of any of their rivals despite these glaring omissions! Thus our assumption that candidates will be a check on each other’s false or incomplete information was proved wrong.

It is the duty of the returning officers to ensure that affidavits are complete and duly signed and notarised. They should also check whether all the questions have been answered. If the authorities fail to do this, the exercise of collecting information on candidates will lose all credibility, and may be of little use to the voting citizens. The PAC team concluded that the Election Commission’s guidelines for the declaration of the candidates’ antecedents were seriously breached in the K.R. Puram elections. This was the first local election to be held in Karnataka after the new Election Commission guidelines were issued. It is possible that the authorities underestimated the task of orienting and training their staff to comply with the guidelines.

Did the voters have access to the affidavits containing information on antecedents of candidates? That was the purpose of the Supreme Court directive. If the practice adopted by the authorities in K.R. Puram is to be followed in other states, the chances are that voters will not get to know the antecedents of candidates. In K.R. Puram, the affidavits were displayed in the municipal office and the Taluk office. All the 170 affidavits of 35 wards were bunched together and put on the notice board, though voters were interested only in the candidates of their respective wards. There was no publicity on where the information would be available. The citizen’s “Right to Know” that the Supreme Court upheld...

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1 The EC guidelines were issued on March 31, 2003.
2 The PAC Team consisted of S. Manjunath, Anuradha Rao, Guruprasad, C. Vas, and Wilson. PAC has also published “A Voter’s Guide” which is being made available to the Election Commissions and citizen groups in different states.
was unlikely to be realized under these conditions. It is for this reason that the PAC team in partnership with local civic groups mounted a campaign to disseminate comparative information on candidates in several wards in K.R. Puram.  

**Action on the Findings**

The lapses highlighted above were publicized and reported by the Public Affairs Centre in detail to the Karnataka State Election Commissioner (SEC) soon after the election, along with suggestions on how to improve the compliance with the EC guidelines. In a meeting with the Commissioner, PAC proposed the following actions to be taken by the concerned authorities:

- **Election Commissions** should intensify the training and supervision of the Returning Officers and other front line staff. Many of them are deputed from other departments and need to be oriented to the new requirements.

- **Incomplete Affidavits** should be rejected forthwith. Speedy actions should be taken against erring officers, including notaries.

- **Declaration of the value of assets** should be insisted upon. It will help voters to compare candidates if the total value of assets is also declared by them. It is impossible for ordinary people to make sense of multiple categories of assets that cannot be compared or added up.

- **Election Commissions** should, through the press, radio and TV, inform voters of locations where the affidavits relevant to different wards/constituencies will be displayed. Multiple venues such as post offices, ward offices, polling booths and Panchayat offices should be used for this purpose. This calls for a proactive approach to dissemination without which this massive effort in information gathering will be futile.

- **Wherever possible**, the authorities should display the candidates’ information on their websites. Speed of dissemination is important as the time period between the acceptance of candidates’ affidavits and elections is short.

These are actions that fall within the control of the Election Commission to take. Needless to say, civic groups/neighbourhood associations, etc. should mount campaigns to disseminate information on candidates and challenge cases of false and incomplete information.

At the meeting referred to above, the Commissioner agreed to take prompt action against the erring returning officers and the Notaries. Some of his actions were publicised in the press. As for the candidates’ non-compliance, his advice was that voters and civic groups should take them to court.

The PAC findings and proposals have major implications for elections all over the country. The floating of the disclosure guidelines in the K.R. Puram elections can happen anywhere in the country. The Central and State Election Commissions as well as the media and other civil society institutions have to be watchful and proactive if these abuses are not to recur and make the Supreme Court judgment toothless. Concerted efforts by the Election Commissions, the media and civil society groups can help reduce the scope for wilful abuses. Unfortunately, there are very few groups/organizations in the states that are dedicated to the tasks discussed above.

**Response of the Authorities**

The election in Mahadevpura, the second town, took place two months after the K.R. Puram election (see accompanying story). As a result of PAC’s campaign after the K.R. Puram CMC elections, the State Election Commission’s actions to improve compliance with the EC guidelines were tested in the Mahadevpura election. Public Affairs Centre’s analysis of the Mahadevpura affidavits showed that most of the information required were furnished by the candidates this time except for a few missing asset details. Notaries had properly attested the documents and the returning officers had done their job well. This means that the Commission had taken steps towards improving compliance. That even a small but watchful civil society group can stimulate the government to perform better is a hopeful sign.

In Mahadevpura, PAC was also able to get the City Police Commissioner to verify the criminal backgrounds of the candidates in record time. Seven candidates had disclosed their criminal records in the affidavits. Police checks showed that another five candidates also had criminal cases.

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3 The campaign entailed modest costs for printing leaflets for distribution to the people, local transport and related items. A great deal of careful planning and mobilization of voluntary energy were essential as all the work had to be completed within a matter of a few days.
reported against them. But since charges have not yet been framed against them, their disclosure was not mandatory under the EC guidelines.

But there was a downside despite the SEC's increased vigilance in Mahadevpura. Having dutifully collected the affidavits from 144 candidates, no effort was made by the authorities to disseminate this information to the voting public. As before, affidavits were displayed inside some government offices. Voters and activists who tried to collect the information found the returning officers' doors locked during the day and hence had to go home empty handed. This highlights a major factor that can limit the usefulness of the information collected, and it can happen anywhere in the country. Affidavits may be left hanging in some obscure offices, leaving the voters none the wiser! The only hope is that active civil society groups may get hold of the data and disseminate it to the public.

This is precisely what happened in Mahadevpura. With a band of enthusiastic volunteers led by 62 year old Rama Rao of the Shree Sadguru Seva Samsthe, KR Puram (see accompanying story), PAC mounted a campaign to distribute leaflets containing information on candidates. Almost all the 31 wards were covered under this campaign and many voters welcomed this effort. Participants in this campaign were very ordinary citizens, and not high profile persons or intellectuals! It shows what ordinary people can do if they are motivated and trained. For the rest of India too, this may be the only way to educate voters on the antecedents of the candidates. But there are also some risks. The campaign's volunteers were physically attacked while in the area by a candidate's supporters who thought that they were working for his opponent! It underscores not only the importance of being neutral in this effort, but also of the need to make it widely known.

An exit poll of the voters after the elections offers some evidence on how the latter used the comparative information on the candidates. Nearly 55% of the voters had seen the leaflets distributed by the volunteers. A good majority thought that the least reliable data pertained to the assets of candidates. More than two thirds said that they had shared the candidate information with friends and neighbours. Significantly, 85 per cent said that they used the information in their voting decisions. It shows that if the information is provided to the people in a usable form, it has a good chance of influencing their choices in elections. If the affidavits are merely kept bunched in an office, at best some activists may manage to check or analyse some of the data such as evidence of criminality. But the voting public will not get the comparative information on candidates that might have aided them in their choices.

**Lessons and Implications**

There are several lessons to be learned from PAC's campaigns in the two municipal elections reported above. First of all, that there is a law or official guidelines is no guarantee that affidavits disclosing the mandated candidate information will be collected and disseminated by the authorities. Citizen groups, media, etc., need to play a monitoring role and point out lapses and irregularities until proper systems, supervision and transparency are in place. Secondly, the Karnataka experience shows that authorities do welcome this watchdog function by civil society and are willing to make corrections and improve compliance. This is not to say that such positive responses will be automatic in all other states. Much will depend upon the modalities used and the sense of partnership shown by the monitoring groups. Thirdly, despite the best efforts of the election commissioners, it is unlikely that they will be proactive in the dissemination of candidate information in a user friendly manner in time to be absorbed by the ordinary citizens. The election staff are extremely busy during this period and the time available for them to perform their multiple tasks and checks is indeed limited. This means that if civil society groups, media and other non-governmental forums do not intervene to disseminate the relevant information during this limited period, voters are unlikely to benefit from the information so painfully gathered from numerous candidates. Fourthly, if the information in the affidavits is widely disseminated, there is a good chance that significant proportions of voters will pay attention to the information and use it in their voting decisions. Information empowers! At least this is the evidence from the two Karnataka towns. But for this to happen, it is necessary not only to mobilize the needed resources and skills, but also to conduct the campaign in a neutral, open and citizen friendly manner.

(Dr. Sunned Paul is Chairman PAC Bangalore)
IN THE LIMELIGHT

With his flowing white beard, her smile of serene joy on her forehead and starched cotton kurta, Mahadeva Rao Ramana Rao looks more like a man on a pilgrimage tour. But beneath that fragile frame and the calm demeanour lies a steely resolve, a dice-hard patriotism for the country and a spirit that refuses to obey the dictats of an ageing body. Ramana Rao’s fledgling organization - Sri Sadguru Seva Samste (SSSS) - partnered PAC in conducting voter awareness campaigns in K.R. Puram and Mahadevapura constituencies. This 62-year old activist and his band of young followers authored a new script on civic activism in two quiet suburbs of Bangalore by bringing in a refreshing element of citizen involvement and monitoring in the electoral process. A man of few words, Ramana Rao strongly adheres to the dictum – Action speaks louder than words. However, Public Eye managed to get the reluctant speaker to share some inspiring thoughts. Excerpts from a tête-à-tête with Mr. Ramana Rao:

✦ On his organization, the Sri Sadguru Seva Samste

Sri Sadguru Seva Samste(SSSS) was founded in May 2003 as a registered Trust with the following objectives:

- To bring awareness to the citizens on issues affecting their lives.
- To provide self-employment opportunities to women, and
- To help the physically challenged

During the last year and a half, SSSS has conducted legal awareness camps for citizens and a campaign against female infanticide. However, with the recent forays into the electoral arena, SSSS is planning to get involved with a wider array of governance issues.

✦ His personal motivation

After completing my school education from Mysore, I joined the Indian Army as a Havaldar. In my 18 year stint with the Indian Army, which included participating in frontline action during the Indo-Pak wars in 1965 and 1971, I also travelled extensively within the country and got involved in many relief operations. In my interactions with the community in various parts of the country, I began to realize the deteriorating moral standards in society - especially, in issues like corruption. As a soldier, I felt indignant that the sacrifices of thousands of servicemen like me in defending the country are not being recognized by the ruling elite and more disturbingly, proving to be a waste. Therefore, after retiring from the army, I embarked on a personal mission to sensitise the people to the ills afflicting the society at large and try in my humble ways to motivate them to do something about it. Increasingly, I began to feel that information is the key to empowerment and an informed society is a vigilant and active society. And in engaging in awareness generation work, I found a new outlet for my patriotism.

✦ How did he manage to win the youngsters over

We have to understand the young minds and encourage them. They have a lot of potential, energy that needs to be carefully and effectively channelised. What they lack in today's world are role models in society. I think the best way to engage them is to openly share your own convictions and ideas. Give them a tangible programme to work on. I started in a very small way by talking to some friends of my college going grand daughter. The idea caught on and soon we had a dedicated group of highly committed youngsters for the campaign. After the exercise, all young friends were feeling extremely happy and proud that they could contribute something valuable to the society. Today, I have about 50 committed young leaders ready to take on programmes like this.

✦ Comments on the impacts of the campaign

The kind of information that we have provided does make a big difference. Good independent candidates can now feel motivated to contest elections. People will gradually come out of party affiliations though this might take quite a long time. What happened at K.R.Puram and Mahadevapura constituencies can be a lesson for others to follow. For instance, two independent candidates out of 35 have won in K.R.Puram CMC and 6 independent candidates out of 31 in Mahadevapura CMC have registered a victory. Another important lesson that political parties must learn is to field only good candidates. Interestingly, one candidate congratulated me for the information campaign.
that we organized and urged me to do a similar campaign for the coming assembly elections. All in all, it was a very successful campaign. People have all welcomed the new idea and appreciated us. People were happy that so much information was made available to them so that they could judge for themselves as to which candidate was good and sincere and worthy of being elected as their representative.

Future Plans...

Things are slowly changing. People are slowly seeing the logic that if they don’t vote, the political future of the country will be decided by a negligible 30% of the total population. And if they don’t exercise their franchise in a judicious manner, criminals will rule our country. We will be launching a campaign in the context of the proposed revision of electoral rolls. There are many hundreds of names that must be deleted because these people are no more living in the area and many names also wait for inclusion. This leaves room for bogus voting.

WIDE ANGLE

CLEAN VOTE! FIGHTING ELECTORAL CORRUPTION IN BRAZIL

(In this issue, we focus on an interesting initiative undertaken by Transparência Brasil – TBrasil in the field of electoral transparency. The initiative involved an electoral campaign for the 2002 Brazilian federal and state elections. The campaign was designed to stimulate collaboration between media enterprises, private firms, civil society organisations and citizens)

Brazil is the fifth largest country in the world, and guaranteeing nation-wide electoral consistency is enormously difficult. There are 26 states plus a Federal District. A total of around 15,000 candidates ran for office in the 2002 elections. During municipal elections, an average of 30,000 candidates ran for office. Municipal and state/federal elections take place in two overlapping four-year cycles so they are always staggered by two years. In all cases, the elections include the whole voting population.

In Brazil, there is a lack of voter awareness about the risk of electing candidates who do not properly represent their interests and aspirations. This is a broad issue of political conscience, which is also reflected in popular attitudes towards corruption. In the past, Brazilians have frequently elected people who are clearly identified with fraud and the abuse of power. Electing corrupt politicians is related to another important problem: the tendency to regard corruption as an individual moral issue. This tendency not only encourages demagoguery, it also limits discussion of the systemic causes of corruption. This in turn means there is a lack of attention to the need to reinforce mechanisms of prevention and control of corruption. Elections are thus a good opportunity to address the whole issue of political corruption. Vote-buying is also a major problem in Brazil, particularly in the poorer regions. A nationally representative survey conducted by TBrasil after the 2000 municipal elections showed that 6 per cent of the sample reported having been offered money in return for their votes. Finally, the links between the actions undertaken by elected officials and the connections they have with their campaign financiers have only received attention very recently in Brazil. Again, elections present the ideal situation to bring this subject to the fore.

How the Campaign operated...

As a multi-dimensional campaign, Clean Vote used a variety of different methods to convey its message. These included radio spots, street theatre, air balloons, newspaper columns, T-shirts and other “interactive” products. From the outset, TBrasil knew that an ambitious campaign would not have a good chance of receiving widespread attention if it followed the conventional route of simply hiring a PR or advertising agency. Although TBrasil did use an agency, the success of the campaign did not depend on it. This judgement proved to be correct. The contracted PR/ad campaign received little interest or support. If it had depended on it, the campaign would have been ill-prepared and much less successful. Instead, TBrasil was directly responsible for conceiving and producing all campaign materials (printed ads, radio spots, TV spots, stickers, buttons, Internet banners etc.) and for securing free advertising spaces. There was only one exception: three studio-produced TV spots. As the main objective was to maximise adherence, the campaign was explicitly pushed as a “no-owner” initiative (this was the main reason why advertising agencies weren’t interested). Anybody who wanted to use the logo, ideas and materials was encouraged to do so,
provided they followed the campaign's central guidelines (essentially, non-partisanship, a ban on the association of the logo with specific candidates etc.). A number of media outlets were contacted directly by TBrasil representatives to publicise the campaign. This stimulated others to do so as well, suggesting that this low-cost, independent strategy was moderately successful. One positive development was that a local São Paulo newspaper with a circulation of 100,000 not only agreed to run the ads for the duration of the three-month political campaign but also invited TBrasil to produce a regular column which appeared three times per week and was dedicated to raising voter awareness. A similar arrangement with a TV station was promised although it did not materialise. In order to facilitate the campaign, a specially created website was designed to function as a "warehouse" of materials. This was a crucial element of the campaign because it allowed widespread access to materials across the whole territory of Brazil. The site offered access to all campaign materials, including recorded radio and TV spots presented as sound and audiovisual files. This initiative allowed interested television stations to easily evaluate the campaign and request Beta tapes directly from TBrasil.

As part of the campaign, presidential candidates were asked to sign a commitment to implement a set of practical measures to curb corruption. Two of the four leading candidates signed the document, including the eventual winner. Instead of being a negative pledge ("I will not do such and such . . . "), this was a positive commitment ("I will do such and such things in such and such time-frame"). It was therefore immediately and easily verifiable.

Results

TBrasil used a variety of initiatives to promote the campaign to journalists, including an official launch, press releases and direct telephone contact. However, interest in the campaign was mixed. Some nation-wide media outlets provided good coverage while others ignored it altogether. The nature of the initiative made it difficult to provide quantitative or qualitative assessments of its success. For example, it would be impossible to evaluate how many corrupt candidates were not elected as a direct consequence of the campaign. Also, due to the huge number of candidates involved nationally, it would also be impossible to determine how many of them ran on electoral platforms with specific anti-corruption proposals. Anecdotal evidence suggests that few of them did so. On the other hand, there are grounds to believe that vote-buying was a less serious problem in 2002 than it was in 2000. A survey conducted by TBrasil immediately after the election suggested that 3 per cent of respondents received offers to sell their votes compared with 6 per cent in 2000. However, this result must be viewed with caution because of the different nature of the two elections. On the other hand, public awareness of political financing clearly remained unchanged. The issue received minimal attention during the campaign. A much better way of focusing on this issue is to provide public information about who is financing whom. In this regard, TBrasil launched in 2003 another project in which data on political financing is cross-referenced and made accessible via the Internet. Unfortunately, this is not a "real time" tool because campaign financing data is usually available only after the campaign ends. However, it does provide information about specific electoral candidates, parties and donor firms.

Recommendations

The following recommendations apply to a campaign conducted under similar circumstances as the initiative described here, i.e. conceived and conducted by the CSO and not by a third party such as an advertising agency. The average CSO does not have professional communications personnel on its staff. Employing a campaign director on either a temporary or voluntary basis is crucial to establishing a clear focus for all planning and implementation. In general, producing materials internally is much better and cheaper than outsourcing. Depending on the availability of resources, it is feasible to put together a team to take responsibility for this in-house. Finally, ensuring the participation of media outlets is critical to success. This is something that can be accomplished primarily by establishing relations with media owners and/or managers. A common mistake is to suppose that editorial staff have a say in these things. Usually they do not. Instead the decision is often based on commercial considerations. Regarding campaign objectives, TBrasil offers two clear recommendations.

1) Urging voters (especially if they are poor and politically naïve) to challenge candidates about
their finances is not an effective plan. Voters rarely even ask candidates about other quite simple matters that are relevant to their own interests. Even those voters that become interested do not have access to the information that allows them to ask candidates piercing questions about campaign financing. Furthermore, political financing is a highly "intellectualised" subject. Instead, the best way to tackle this issue is to deliver hard information to the public about who is funding whom.

2) In principle, a positive commitment to adopt specific measures seems to be an objective way to ensure candidates keep their promises. Unlike a negative pact ("not to do such and such"), a positive commitment allows observers to challenge elected officials if their promises are not kept. Still, in practice it seems that politicians make so many promises that few people actually believe they have any chance of being fulfilled. Thus the willingness to confront elected officials about sticking to their promises is undermined. There is no way around this phenomenon other than a gradual improvement of awareness.

Reviewing public procurement systems in order to ensure that they are corruption free;

The strengthening of investigative and prosecutorial tools by enhancing expertise in areas such as forensic accounting and engineering in order to cope with complex corruption schemes;

The swift provision of mutual legal assistance in light of the growing transnational nature of corruption, and in this context to exploiting the possibilities of establishing internationally agreed criteria for the repatriation of proceeds of corruption.

In reaction to the concerns identified in the framework of implementing the Action Plan in Asia and the Pacific, and the specific needs identified by participants of the conference, the ADB/OECD Initiative and endorsing countries of the Action Plan undertake to:

Facilitate continuous policy dialogue to support the sharing of experience and knowledge throughout the region, both in the framework of Steering Group meetings, and sub-regional and regional gatherings;

Foster capacity building through targeted training seminars and expert advise;

Provide assistance in the establishment of domestic anti-corruption policies and projects in the framework of reform efforts under the Action Plan;

Assist in adjusting and improving on-going anti-corruption efforts by providing for a benchmarking of existing legal and institutional anti-corruption frameworks and the regular review thereof; and

Actively encourage countries of the Asian and Pacific region that have not yet endorsed the Action Plan to join this regional process.

Work through the Action Plan as a means of underpinning the commitments countries will take in the context of the new UN Convention on Corruption.

(More details on the Conference, including background papers can be accessed at www.oecd.org/daa/asiaconf/RL.htm)

NETWORKING

AIESEC

AIESEC is the largest student organization in the world with a unique and growing network of 25,000 students, located in about 800 higher education institutions in over 80 countries. Since 1948, AIESEC has been striving to empower thousands of youth with the necessary skills and understanding of the forces shaping the world around them, and in the process create a powerful group of future leaders with a strong sense of social responsibility, and a desire to act.

AIESEC was established in India in 1981 and today has a membership base of over 300 young people. AIESEC operates out of regional offices spread over 11 cities and work with several prominent corporations such as Infosys Technologies, The Tata Group, Hindustan Lever Limited and Citibank to name a few.

A notable contribution of AIESEC towards the development sector is the initiation of “The Global Internship Programme.” This unique effort aims at providing solutions to the needs of the NGOs in the development sector by giving them access to a global pool of skilled and motivated interns. Along with facilitating young people from various foreign countries gain experience and exposure to the issues of the Indian society, it provides the much needed link between the vital global pools of society – youth and organizations.

AIESEC provides NGOs with assistance and information on the pool of candidates available, as well as the time and duration for which these candidates can be provided. AIESEC feeds the requirements into its online management system, which is equipped to match the requirements of all the AIESEC customers worldwide. At every branch office, AIESEC screens the candidates by means of a review board prior to recruitment to ensure the eligibility of the candidate. These review boards consist of professionals who have expertise in screening the candidates based on predetermined criteria. After the requirements are entered into the system, it takes between 2 and 12 weeks to generate the best and most suitable candidates. AIESEC then aids the NGO in the selection process by arranging telephonic or online interviews with the shortlisted candidates.

(For further information on the Global Internship Programme, email AIESEC at info@in.aiesec.org or visit their homepage at www.in.aiesec.org)
This pioneering publication from the Centre for Civil Society, Delhi is a compilation of analytical studies undertaken in 25 agencies, boards, corporations and departments of the government of Delhi. The government's performance was evaluated on the basis of the budgetary and physical targets, reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General, evaluations by the Planning Department, and other government commissions and reports. Newspaper reports were considered when they had concrete evidence. Public officials and users of various services were also interviewed in the process. The Handbook has come up with some startling and disturbing findings. To quote a few:

- The Prevention of Food Adulteration Department has 28 inspectors to oversee 150,000 registered food establishments. At one outlet per inspector per day, an outlet would be inspected once in 17 years. The number of inspectors has not changed since 1960.
- The Drug Control Department has 29 drug inspectors for over 5000 drug retailers. The fake drug market is estimated to be Rs. 4000 crore per year.
- The Delhi Transport Corporation employs 12 people per bus and incurs a monthly loss of Rs. 25 crore.
- A study conducted by Social Jurist found that more than 80% of the children who pass Class V from Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) schools do not know how to read or write.
- Over 4 crore of taxpayers' money has been wasted in the Old Age Pension Scheme as 37.5% of the beneficiaries were ineligible.

The Handbook also makes constructive recommendations for improving the quality and effectiveness of public governance.

(For copies of the Handbook, email - css@cssindia.org or visit the homepage of Centre for Civil Society at www.cssindia.org)

The first session of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) ended on Friday (12 December) with endorsement of a broad list of principles intended to guide the future development of information and communication technologies (ICTs), and of a 'road map' showing how these should be put into practice. Included in the first of these is a statement recognising that science has a central role in the development of the information society, and that there is a need to ensure that scientific data remains widely accessible. "Many of the building blocks of the information society are the result of scientific and technical advances made possible by the sharing of research results," says the Declaration of Principles, which was endorsed by representatives from more than 175 countries.

The declaration also makes an explicit reference to the need to promote open access initiatives for scientific publishing as part of support for "universal access with equal opportunities for all to scientific knowledge". The inclusion of this language was a direct result of pressure from open access activists during the preparatory process for WSIS that has been taking place for the past 15 months.

The content of second document – the Plan of Action – also reflects proposals from the scientific community, although this time expressed more broadly in a section urging support for what the document describes as 'e-science'. The plan includes commitments by countries represented at the Geneva meeting:

- To promote affordable and reliable high-speed Internet connection for all universities and research institutions;
- To promote electronic publishing, differential pricing and open-access initiatives "to make scientific information affordable and accessible in all countries on an equitable basis";
- To promote the use of peer-to-peer technology for sharing scientific knowledge;
- To promote long-term collection, dissemination and preservation of essential scientific digital data; and
To promote principles and metadata standards "to facilitate cooperation and effective use of collected scientific information and data".

In practical terms, the governments who attended the meeting failed to agree on any new international initiatives to boost the use of ICTs, particularly in developing countries. In particular, the meeting rejected a number of countries - particularly in Africa - to set up a new international fund to finance ICT developments.

According to representatives from the developed countries, this did not mean that there is opposition to providing additional financial aid in this area. Rather, it reflected a conviction that this is best achieved through bilateral agreements. There was stronger objection in principle from the developed world to a second central demand from many developing countries, namely that control of the Internet should be passed to a United Nations agency to ensure that it operates in an equitable way, and is not dominated by the interests of the developed world. In both cases, the issues have been referred to working groups, who have been asked to study the proposals and report back to the second part of the summit in Tunisia. The failure of the Geneva meeting to agree, or even to consider seriously, either of these two suggestions led to the outcome being widely criticised as a failure by many non-government organisations, and some developing-country participants.

A statement issued by Civil Society, an alliance of development groups represented at the summit, argued that "technological decisions should meet the needs of people, not enrich companies or enable control by governments". At the same time, there was widespread agreement among the 10,000 politicians, business representatives, development workers and technology consultants present that the meeting had provided a valuable opportunity for practical interaction and the emergence of new partnerships and projects.

There was also recognition that both the Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action provide useful yardsticks against which progress can be measured over the next two years leading up to the second half of the summit. In some cases, the goals are explicit. For example, the Plan of Action states that 50 per cent of the world's population will be connected to the Internet by 2015 (although it doesn't say how this is going to be achieved).

In other cases, precise targets have been omitted. For example, although the Plan of Action includes a commitment to connecting all universities to the Internet, it does not stipulate - as various scientific bodies had previously proposed - that this should be achieved within five years. But the fact of identifying goals and targets - whether quantified or not - is being seen by many as an important step. "Now that we have these principles on the table, it is up to groups such as the scientific community to put them into practice," says Mohamed Hassan, executive director of the Third World Academy of Sciences.

"ICTs can be used effectively as part of the toolbox for addressing global problems," Yoshio Utsumi, secretary-general of the International Telecommunication Union, said in closing the meeting, "The summit's successes now give us the necessary momentum to achieve this." The Tunis section of the WSIS will provide the opportunity to see how much of this momentum has been sustained.

To access the Declaration and the Plan of Action go to: http://www.itu.int/WSIS/geneva/docs.html

Source: David Dickson, SaDenet. The Science and Development Network (SaDenet) aims to enhance the provision of reliable and authoritative information on science- and technology-related issues that impact on the economic and social development of developing countries. For more information, visit www.sadenet.net

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