There is a great deal of media hype these days about India as the next superpower. Some people seem to think that India is already a superpower. The media buzz is most pronounced in television channels and business newspapers. Indian and foreign business leaders and analysts are often seen making predictions on this subject. Sometimes, India is compared with China, and a case is made that the former's long term prospects are even brighter than the China's. Needless to say, the feel good factor is most evident among Indians, and even the NRIs are now proud of their country.

Is this mere media hype? A ploy to get more Indians to invest in stocks and mutual funds, and travel abroad? That may be rather uncharitable. It is a fact that the Indian economy is showing some signs of growing strength. Its political institutions and territorial integrity seem to have stood the test of time. The proportions of the very poor have declined notably in the last two decades. India's exports have grown at a fast pace, and its foreign exchange reserves have increased steadily. Its economic growth rates have accelerated in recent years. Most importantly, the rates are higher than those of most other countries, the great exception being China.

But when you look closely at these statements, it is clear that the focus of the discussion is on the economic growth front. It is indeed an achievement that the country's GNP has grown at an annual average rate of about eight per cent in the last four years. Compared to the three per cent growth rate of three decades ago, this is a quantum jump. India's trade with the rest of the world also has expanded and business shows a great deal of confidence that it can take on the competition. Liberalisation policies have certainly unleashed entrepreneurship in the country in a big way. Even the small scale sector is booming despite the gradual removal of protection through reservation. A wide range of consumer goods is available in the country, and signs of prosperity, especially among the educated, are there for all to see.

But many of those who cannot wait to see India emerge as a superpower are not seeing the full picture. That there is significant lopsidedness in the growth picture they paint is not obvious unless one looks beneath the surface. Fast economic growth rates can be brought down just as fast when serious imbalances are present in the system. In other words, rising growth rates can be sustained only when other forces that have not benefited from growth do not slow down the process. To illustrate, most of the growth stems from the services sector, leaving behind agriculture and rural areas in the lurch. Growth is also concentrated in some states and regions. Major disparities of this nature and the income inequalities that follow will create strains in the system that can eventually put brakes on the growth process.

An equally important barrier to sustaining economic growth and social harmony is the lack of progress on the public governance front. Government is still a major player in the economy. If it fails to create an enabling environment for economic activities to flourish and to control corruption and the misuse of public resources, economic growth will not be sustained for long. This is not to say that Government is not doing anything to improve public performance and accountability. But the pace and intensity of reforms leaves much to be desired. Sometimes, Government takes two steps forward and three steps backward. A case in point is what happened to the Right to Information Act in recent weeks. A government that was applauded for this progressive reform was attacked by civil society for its not so subtle attempt to restrict access to certain file details. Luckily, the Government withdrew its plans to amend the Act and restrict file notings. It simply underscores the uphill nature of the task of reforming public governance.

Though there is some exaggeration in the claim of India's superpower status, it may well succeed in becoming an economic powerhouse in the years to come. But as long as the imbalances and gaps pointed out above remain, the country will remain a powerhouse under strain and will not be able to achieve its full potential.
RESEARCH

SETTING A BENCHMARK

A Citizens’ Report Card on Public Services in Hubli-Dharwad

- How well have the major public agencies in the second largest municipal corporation of Karnataka, namely Hubli-Dharwad, served their people?
- How satisfied are the citizens with their services?
- What are the major problems people come across?
- What areas of service should these agencies improve?

To answer these questions a Citizens’ Report Card (CRC) was carried out in the twin cities of Hubli-Dharwad, which, as a single entity is the largest corporation in Karnataka after Bangalore. This was a clarion call towards the effectiveness of Citizen Report Cards! Not only were they being carried out independently and in partnership with other representatives of civil society such as NGOs, but also in response to government requests. In this case, the request came from the HDMC Commissioner, who had imbied the usefulness of this tool during his stint in Bangalore and was eager to apply it as a benchmark in his place of work. It is important to emphasize here, that Public Affairs Centre (PAC) carried out the study with its own funds to maintain objectivity, but with a partner who was willing, in spite of being the service provider, to take the ‘pats’ and the ‘slaps’ of the CRC findings publicly.

The CRC was based on a survey of over 800 slum and general households in the twin cities. The fieldwork was carried out by Market Probe India under the supervision of PAC.

Citizen feedback on services was provided separately to the 3 service providers:

HDMC: for drinking water, sanitation (sewerage/drainage, garbage clearance & public toilets), roads, streetlights and property taxes.
HESCOM: for electricity
NWKRTC: for public transport.

The findings were then released at a public function in March 2006 and covered widely by the media and attended by officials and civic groups. Bearing in mind differences in expectations, the findings were presented independently for slum and general households. The Municipal Commissioner made a public announcement about the actions he plans to take based on the CRC findings.

The key findings of the CRC comprised the following:

HDMC
- Satisfaction levels differed between general (Chart 1) and slum (Chart 2) households and also among the services used.

Chart 1: Overall Satisfaction with Quality of HDMC Services - General Households

While more than 60% respondents from the general households expressed complete satisfaction with property tax services, this is less than 15% in the case of services related to drain and roads.

Chart 2: Overall Satisfaction with Quality of HDMC Services - Slum Households
Among the slum households, complete satisfaction with property tax was 80%, while again this was less than 15% in the case of drains, roads as well as garbage disposal.

- About 63% of the general households had a problem with roads, 58% with garbage clearance and 53% with drainage. Problem resolution was highest for drinking water at 58%, followed by streetlights and property taxes at 25% each. Resolution at other services was very low.

- For slum respondents, the highest problems faced were regarding roads (67%) followed by drinking water at 65% and garbage clearance at 58%. Resolution was highest in the case of drinking water at 55% and public toilets at 50%. Resolution for other services was low.

- Citizens from general households in Hubli-Dharwad have rated staff behavior in HDMC as low. Complete satisfaction is generally low especially for roads (6%) and garbage clearance (9%) while dissatisfaction is high (50% and 47% respectively)

- Among slum residents, ratings for behavior of staff were low as well, with dissatisfaction being high for roads (57%), garbage clearance (57%) and drainage (50%)

- With regard to changes in the last one year, respondents indicated a high level of improvement in the services of HDMC with 82% general households and 46% slum households saying there had been an improvement.

- The recent demolitions were overwhelmingly declared to be a good initiative by the citizens of Hubli-Dharwad (82% and 83% amongst general and slum dwellers respectively).

- Though awareness of the control room was very low amongst slum as well as general respondents, the time taken to solve problems through the control room has steadily come down across departments.

HESCOM

- The incidence of problems with regard to HESCOM services was low at 5% for general and 4% for slum households. However resolution was also found to be low for general households (0%) and reasonable for slums (29%).

- Both general and slum respondents rated staff behavior as reasonably high at 50% and 57% respectively.

- 84% of citizens reported an improvement over the last one year, with regard to the services of HESCOM.

NWKRTC

- Around 24% of general households and 20% of slum residents faced problems with NWKRTC.

- Amongst those who had complained, in the general households, no resolution was reported while 11% households from slums reported resolution.

- Over 80% of all residents rated the behaviour of drivers and conductors as very high (over 80%). But the behaviour of office staff was found to be highly dissatisfactory (67% and 68% respectively amongst general and slum residents).

- Around 66% of the respondents reported improvement in the services of NWKRTC in the past one year.

The following charts show overall satisfaction of the respondents with the three service providers covered in the survey.

**Chart 3: Overall Satisfaction with the Service Provider General Households**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provider</th>
<th>Completely satisfied</th>
<th>Partly satisfied</th>
<th>Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HDMC</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HESCOM</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NWKRTC</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As the charts indicate, respondents from both general as well as slum households have expressed complete satisfaction with the services provided by HESCOM, more so among the slum respondents.

As per the CRC approach of involving the service providers in the process, separate presentations were made to the three service providers, one day prior to the public release of the CRC findings, to apprise them of the findings of the CRC survey. The service providers were also requested to provide their feedback regarding the findings did they agree with the findings, did they find the findings useful and would they like to use the feedback for reform measures? Or, have any related reform measures already been carried out?

It was interesting and encouraging to note that all the three service providers were found to be in agreement with the findings (though HDMC proclaimed that they agreed to it only up to 70%). They found them useful and had also carried out recent reform measures to improve their quality of service delivery. In the case of HDMC, during the CRC survey, citizens were also asked to assess the recent reform measures that they had carried out - such as demolition of unlicensed structures, cleaning and widening of footpaths, establishing a complaint helpline and government-citizen partnership in the form of NGO core groups to interact with the various HDMC departments to monitor and evaluate service delivery activities. It was found that most of these aspects had found favour, with citizens being aware of these reform measures.

After the public release of the findings, which included an interactive session between citizens and the service providers, a separate meeting was held between Public Affairs Centre and the representatives of HDMC, HESCOM and NWKRTC to discuss further action measures. Though the involvement of the public was appreciated, PAC also suggested that the service providers draw up certain feasible standards, in order to work towards the preparation of a Citizens' Charter. The service providers have agreed to meet again with PAC six months down the line to reassess actions taken so far.

(The CRC was carried out by Dr. Sita Sekhar, Dr. Meena Nair and Dr. Venugopala Reddy. For further details, please email pacresearch@gmail.com).

Public Affairs Centre hosted a dinner at the Bangalore Club on May 22nd 2006 to celebrate a decade of service and to thank and appreciate all those who have supported, inspired and worked with us in our joint mission of improving the quality of public governance in India. The growing national and international recognition that PAC has received in recent years owes much to the active and positive role that Friends of PAC have played. We look forward to their continued support in the decades ahead.

The evening’s programme began with a brief overview of PAC’s progress presented by Dr. Gopakumar Thampi, and a salute to all those who have made this happen. Dr. Samuel Paul, Founder Chairman of PAC, Mr. Ajay Kumar Singh, Commissioner of Police, Bangalore City and Ms. Doris Raj, an active representative of a Resident Welfare Association, spoke on the occasion. This was followed by dinner.

The camaraderie at the gathering was contagious as a cross section of society came together to celebrate the event. Citizens from all walks of life, members of Resident Welfare Associations, senior officials from the Government of Karnataka and the Lokayukta of Karnataka were present together with the staff, directors, partner NGOs, auditors and friends of both the PAC & the Public Affairs Foundation.
**ELECTORAL REFORMS**

"Vote or Vanish"
Citizens' campaign for informed and participatory polls during forthcoming City Corporation elections

Public Affairs Centre (PAC) and Swabhimana have been in the forefront of enhancing transparency, accountability and citizen participation in elections since 1996. PAC and Swabhimana have organized various campaigns on this, during the Bangalore Mahanagara Palike elections in partnership with the various resident welfare associations across the city. The Bangalore Mahanagara Palike is completing its present term and elections are due to be held during October-November, 2006.

PAC and Swabhimana have now designed a campaign to be launched soon along with the resident welfare associations in many wards. The campaign encompasses a three-pronged approach viz, 'reform', 'advocacy' and 'citizens' motivation'. The following are the major plans proposed for the forthcoming elections:

- **Advocacy with State Election Commission (SEC)** for easy-to-understand information regarding candidates, by way of a summary sheet to the affidavit
- Ensure easy access to information regarding candidates in every ward office / polling booth
- Try and increase voter turnout substantially during the BMP elections using a multi-media approach
- Monitoring the poll expenses and the code of conduct
- To pressurise the political parties to select capable and upright candidates

These plans were presented to the resident groups in a workshop organized by Swabhimana, in which nearly 30 groups participated. It was encouraging to note that all the participant groups agreed to join hands with PAC-Swabhimana in carrying out the campaign activities during the election.

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**GLOBAL AWARD FOR SAMUEL PAUL**

The World Bank's Jit Gill Memorial Award (2006) for outstanding public service was presented to Dr. Samuel Paul, founder-chairperson of Public Affairs Centre, Bangalore at an awards ceremony held at the Preston Auditorium, World Bank Headquarters in Washington. This new international award was recently established by the World Bank to recognize the contributions to public governance by distinguished leaders from all parts of the world. Dr. Paul was honored for his pioneering and innovative ideas such as the "citizen report card" on public services, and campaigns for electoral transparency that have made an impact not only in India, but also in many other countries. Dr. Paul is the first civil society leader and first Asian to receive the award. The other two winners are Hon. Jana Dubovcova, District Court Chief Justice, Slovak Republic and Mr. Joseph Rugumyamheto, former Permanent secretary for Public services Management Tanzania.

The Bank's press release says that the three winners were selected after an extensive process of screening numerous nominations and a rigorous process of due diligence. The release further adds that the Bank envisions the awards as a source of inspiration for member countries and staff to recognize and encourage outstanding public service innovations. The awards were presented during a Bank wide annual conference attended by senior officials and invited scholars and media.
Korea’s answer to Corruption

Heard of K-PACT? Its Korea’s answer to the menace of corruption in public life. Corruption is such a gigantic evil that any individual or organization, no matter how powerful, cannot fight it alone. It has to be a collective effort to tackle the problem. There is a call to every citizen today to join hands with other citizens to fight this menace together. All Together More Transparent is the slogan of the Korean pact for the future.

The Korean pact on Anti-corruption and Transparency signed by a wide range of social sectors stands out as unprecedented in the world. Public officials, business people, politicians and civil society leaders voluntarily came together and resolved to make Korea a transparent and advanced country.

Lee Hak-Young, the Chairperson of the Council for the Korean Pact on Anti-Corruption and Transparency expects three things from the Pact:

1. an improvement in international confidence
2. a reduction in anti-corruption expenses, and
3. new opportunities for an advanced society

Lee rides with an optimistic note when he says that the war on corruption has begun by horizontal cooperation, not by hierarchical control. For him anti-corruption trend is not an option but an obligation.

Irregularities and corruption

A society without any irregularities or corruption would be ideal. But all people indulge in breaking the law to derive maximum personal gratification. Politicians, bureaucrats, and businessmen collude to make huge personal profits. As a result project funds are siphoned off, public money goes into private pockets, economies are crippled and societies jeopardized. Opportunism brings down development to the lowest ebb and corruption brings down a state. Irregularities and corruption are not just a matter of conscience. Even a tiny act of corruption can ruin the whole society and cause irreparable damage to a country. Many a great civilization has fallen because of corruption.

How can irregularities and corruption be eliminated?

Irregularities and corruption can be rooted out only with the building of a totally transparent society. Korea has given the lead towards a corruption-free society. In 2002, 38 Korean NGOs actively formed the Citizen’s Solidarity for Legislation of Corruption Prevention. In 2005, 148 Korean civil leaders appealed to the public, to the political and private sectors and to civil society for making a pact on anti-corruption and transparency. This was backed by economic circles which suggested organizing the Social Pact National Council. The political circles too were supportive of this move.

Many developed countries across the globe such as Sweden, Finland, Netherlands, Ireland and Germany have taken serious steps to curb corruption. In fact, the Republic of Ireland made a remarkable economic turn around by overcoming corruption.

In 2003, the United Nations signed the Convention Against corruption. Thus corruption was treated not just a local matter but a transnational phenomenon that affects societies and economies. If corruption needs to be effectively rooted out from all international societies, then what is absolutely essential is cooperation by all the countries and a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach. Furthermore, technical assistance and strengthening capacity by institution building also will be highly important and necessary to fight corruption.

Korea the 10th largest economy was ranked 40th out of 159 countries in a Corruption Perception Index (CPI) in 2005. Corruption was perceived as the biggest stumbling block to Korea’s upward march to join the ranks of advanced countries. It is interesting to note that 90.8% of Koreans felt that K-PACT was needed.

K-Pact recognizes the need to establish necessary systems for creating a transparent society. They are:

- Internal Informant Protection Law,
- Improvement of Governance Structure
- Strengthened Accounting Transparency
- Encouragement of Citizen Participation
- Reinforced Ethical Code of Conduct
- Political Funding Law
- Information Disclosure Law

K-PACT has four major sectors:

1. Public Sector
2. Private sector
3. Political Sector
4. Civil Society Sector

1 Together Transparent, vol. 1, K-PACT Council
2 ibid.
How do the various sectors operate?

For the successful implementation of the K-PACT, the K-PACT Council has been set up. The Council:

- Helps the participating parties cooperate more closely with each other
- Checks and evaluates the performance of each
- Spreads awareness of the K-PACT through education and promotional activities
- Develops the K-PACT in response to the rapid changes of society.

Salient features of K-PACT

- Voluntary commitment of all major parties to the K-PACT to the establishment of an anti-corruption system
- Growing citizen intolerance of corrupt culture and increased citizen awareness of their right to demand a certain level of morality from high officials
- Each Sector's clearly marked out steps to implement the pact
- Citizen's charter for transparent society

Korea's uniqueness in fighting corruption consists in their new approach which is a transition from the previous efforts. Before the K-Pact, Korea's approach was similar to Hong Kong and Singapore in which the initiative to wipe out corruption came from the public sector. The public sector efforts can be effective for small countries like Hong Kong and Singapore where the public sector has great influence over the private sector and civil society. But for Korea which had quickly matured through the processes of democratization and centralization, a single faceted approach was bound to be less effective. For Korea, the active participation of various actors such as the private sector and civil society was found to be necessary for a focused struggle against corruption.

The new approach is based on the cooperation of the four sectors-public, political, private sectors and civil society who have a common interest in overcoming corruption and making Korea a transparent society. The most important thing for Korea, however, is to bring about a transformation of a socio-cultural environment which has been corruption friendly so far. K-PACT has adopted the "Citizen's Participation Charter for a Transparent Society" in an attempt to take on a three dimensional approach for both the improvement of laws and systems and the transformation of a socio-cultural environment.

Conclusion

If followed with rigorous application and unparalleled commitment Korea is bound to emerge as a clean society in the near future. The Preamble of the K-PACT has put it succinctly: "... by noticing the importance of voluntary and cooperative efforts from public, political, private sectors and civil society to overcome chronic corruption and to realize a transparent society, also by regretting fallacious general practices and our awareness, we commit to Korean Pact on anti-corruption and transparency through legal and policy improvements to mature into an advanced society."

The commitment of Korea’s People resounds through the Citizens Charter. "... We, the people of a nation which achieved remarkable economic development and democratic progress, will not overlook challenges from corruption anymore. We will actively practice the following to make great strides in advancement through the construction of a clean, transparent society." The Korean Pact on Anti-Corruption and Transparency is no doubt paving the way for a global civil society. In the words of President Roh Moo-hyun at the Anti-Corruption Pact Signing Ceremony, "It may be the first time that key representatives of society, business people, politicians, leaders of civil society, and public officials, voluntarily sat down together to root out corruption". It goes without saying that what we need today globally and nationally is such private-public dialogue to find solutions to ailments corrupting the entire society. Such pacts will go a long way in 'becoming a turning point to gather people's power and develop our society all the more'.

The K-Pact among many other things has brought out publications for wide distribution in order to raise awareness of the K-PACT. The theme is very well presented through a pictorial book which has a message so simple and direct. K-PACT is a sustainable movement for transparency to advance into a developed society through participation and agreement among civil society, the public, political and private sectors to overcome corruption.

For greater details on K_PACT, visit http://www.pact.or.kr/English

-Cyril Vas

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5 ibid
6 ibid.
8 ibid
9 ibid.
Networks Impact of PAC's Capacity Building Workshops

Public Affairs Centre, in carrying out its mission of building capacity of civil society organisations, conducted a series of workshops on Good Governance across Karnataka state. Members from local NGOs, prominent citizens from Lions, Rotaries, Jaycees etc attended these workshops. Separate workshops were also held for Youth and Gram Panchayat members. The Youth inspired by these workshops committed themselves to fight corruption in both private and public life. The newly elected Gram Panchayat members who did not know their rights and responsibilities, gained a lot from these workshops. NGOs realized the importance of working for good governance even as they were all engaged in social development.

PAC has conducted twenty workshops between 2002 and 2006.

For NGOs 11
Youth 3
Gram Panchayat members 4
On Right to Information 2

2. Participants in PAC workshops

In 2002 27
2003 270
2004 220
2005 284
2006 113
Total 924

PAC sought feedback from the various organizations that had participated in the capacity building workshops. The following is a summary of their comments:

The workshops have been instrumental in creating awareness on governance issues. The participants perceived many of these issues as totally new and very useful.

The workshops have empowered the participants to use the tools learnt from the workshops in a variety of ways as the examples below show.

An NGO in Gulbarga started imparting training to Village Education Committee (VEC) members and other community based organisations (CBOs) on good governance.

In Jamkhandi of Bagalkot district, the NGOs used the Right to information Act to stop malpractices in the management of the special schools run by the government for children in 6-14 age group who are working in various factories, hotels, etc. The contracts to run these special schools were awarded to NGOs who paid the highest amount of speed money to the official in charge. No norms were followed by the concerned authorities in awarding the contracts to NGOs. The matter was brought to the notice of the higher authorities and finally it resulted in the resignation of the corrupt officer in charge.

In Udupi district, the Youth made use of the Right to Information Act and quickly repaired a road, which had been neglected for years. The youth also collected information on irrigation projects in the panchayat areas.

Furthermore, the youth in Udupi district all demanded citizen charters from the Regional Transport Officer (RTO) in Udupi.

The youth of Bidar district very enthusiastically collected signatures and forwarding them to the Chief Secretary as a mark of protest against the application fee of Rs. 100, which had been initially fixed by the Government of Karnataka. The reduction of the fee to Rs. 10 was a great success to the united efforts of civil society. The Youth also joined the Election Watch Committee in Bidar formed under PAC's initiative.

In Mangalore, Dakshina Kannada district, NGOs have formed an election Watch Committee as an offshoot of PAC's capacity building workshop. The Committee succeeded in putting a stop to the violation of election code of conduct during the 2004 General Elections.

In Bidar and Gulbarga districts the participants who attended PAC’s workshop formed election committees. They have been actively cooperating in all the PAC-led election campaigns.

To sum up, PAC has the support of the partner NGOs in the districts which participated in PAC's capacity building workshops. They have been greatly co-operative in other PAC-led programmes and campaigns. In the Quil Corruption Contest organised by PAC, the highest number of entries were from those districts where PAC had strong partner support thanks to the workshops.

-Cyril Vas

Jan - June 2006
ROVING EYE

FM radio a hit with Kerala fisherfolk

Billed as the first of its kind in the country, broadcasts from FM Radio Alakal (waves) for the fisherfolk community have become a hit in Kerala.

Radio Alakal has earmarked one-hour slots in the morning, afternoon and evening aimed at the fisherfolk community. The radio was launched May 1, thanks to the efforts of the Kerala Swathantra Matsu Thozhilali Federation (KSMTF), the South Indian Federation of Fishermen Societies (SIFFS), IndianDisasters.org and the Society for Promotion of Alternative Computing and Employment (SPACE). SPACE, promoted by the Kerala State IT Mission, provides technical support to the project.

(Source: Indo-Asian News Service)

A Ticket to a Better Education: Philippines Education Voucher Scheme

Philippines public schools have been riddled with high teacher-pupil ratios and poor infrastructure facilities. In spite of having the advantage of an English speaking population and an enviable literacy rate of about 93 per cent, they have been slower in building their knowledge economy status as compared to their Asian counterparts. This is largely attributed to the degrading quality of public school education in the Philippines.

In the recent years to address the demand for good quality education, the supply of private education has increased. While public school education is free, private elementary and high school education in the Philippines can cost anywhere between 2000 to 5000 pesos per year.

A large number of Filipino children who cannot afford better quality private education continue to slum with free public education.

To bridge this disparity in the quality of education between the haves and the have-nots, the government has proposed the Education Voucher Scheme. The scheme seeks to provide financial assistance to public elementary school graduates who desire to pursue their secondary education in private schools of their choice. The Department of Education has red-coded public schools that have a large intake of students but limited classroom size. These schools will be designated to identify 25 children each, who are in the top 50 per cent of the class and express a desire to change their school. The financial status of these children will have to be not more than the poverty threshold as defined by the government.

The scheme is intended to solve the problem of excess enrolment in public schools and thus better the quality of public education. The Department of Education in Philippines has earmarked 100,000 voucher grants for the scheme. This will be distributed across 4000 public elementary schools. The vouchers have an upper cap of 4000 pesos and beneficiaries will have to bear differences between the tuition fee of the selected school and the voucher grant.

The government is also ensuring that graduating beneficiaries make an informed choice. They will be given a list of private recognized schools to choose from. The list will also carry their respective fee structures. So as to not impinge on the liberties of private education providers, the beneficiaries will have to fulfill the criteria for selection in the private school on the basis of their grades and elementary school leaving report. If unaccepted they will have to seek out another private school. However, the scheme requires that consenting private schools allow the scheme committee to monitor the progress of voucher beneficiaries.

The Education Voucher Scheme does not specify the incentives for existing public elementary and high schools to improve performance and that may be its inherent flaw. Probably, the government hopes to address quality improvement in these schools through the subsequent fall in teacher-pupil ratios. However, as a first step in improving access to better quality education for its weaker sections, it stands out as a concerted and committed action.

(Source: Eduwatch, Centre for Civil Society, Delhi. www.ccsindia.org)

Appointment of Prof. K.R.S. Murthy as Director of PAC

Prof. K.R.S. Murthy has been appointed Director of Public Affairs Centre with effect from May 2, 2006 in place of Dr. A. Ravindra, who will continue as a member of PAC's Board.

Prof. Murthy obtained his Doctorate in Business Administration from the Harvard Business School and his Masters in Management from Sloan School, MIT. He worked in industry for nearly a decade, before taking up studies in management. After his doctorate, he served the field of management education and administration for 25 years, during which period he taught at the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad and at the Boston University. Dr. Murthy was also Director of the Institute of Rural Management, Anand and the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore.

Jan - June 2006
Comprehensive Mobile Health Services in Remote Outreach

SMILE FOUNDATION launched 'SMILE ON WHEELS', its national level multi-centric mobile hospital programme in New Delhi on June 19, 2006. Ms. Sheila Dikshit, Chief Minster of Govt. of NCT of Delhi inaugurated the programme and handed over the keys to five partner organizations of SMILE Foundation. She also flagged off the mobile vans at Delhi Secretariat. Five vans were flagged off in the first phase of

Smile-on-Wheels with projected health coverage for 7.5 lakhs people in 249 identified villages across five Indian states. Each van will cover the vicinity of 20-50 kms from its center and will visit 2-3 villages a day on a regular basis. SMILE Foundation proposes to have 30 such mobile hospitals across India through credible NGOs in coming two years, covering around 40 lakhs deserving population. For more updates, kindly visit. (http://www.smilefoundationindia.org/w_e_smile_on_wheels2.htm)

BIBLIO

Who Benefits from India's Public Services?
A People's Audit of five Basic Services

Samuel Paul, Suresh Balakrishnan,
Gopakumar K. Thampi, Sita Sekhar & M. Vivekananda

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More burden less comfort
Citizens not happy with Public Services

The vast majority of people in India depend on the state for many essential services. Citizens as the ultimate beneficiaries of these services are in the best position to give a feedback on the delivery, quality and responsiveness of each service they use. But unfortunately the service providers never ask them for their feedback. Such a feedback would certainly provide deeper insights for the planning of public policy. There exists a rich fund of information with the users of services, which if tapped properly, can help many reforms in various sectors of public services. In the words of Salil Shetty, Director, Millennium Campaign, UNDP, New York, "this book offers a rare insight on how citizens at the receiving end of public services view them".

The authors of this book have provided unique benchmarks on five basic services, such as drinking water, healthcare, primary education, public distribution system, and public transport. The findings of this nationwide study have been published in several parts, prior to this book. 'Public Eye' has carried short reports on the findings in its various issues since June 2002.

The study is unique in its perspective on the citizen's viewpoint and in its use of 'satisfaction' as a measure of the people's assessment of essential public services. In a review of the book, the Financial Express says "the findings of the survey are a must-read for all those interested in the role of the state in the welfare of its citizens." (The Financial Express, July 9, 2006).

Based on user feedback from 37,000 households drawn from both rural and urban areas, this first independent nationwide study brings out the comparisons across 24 states with regard to access, use, reliability and satisfaction of citizens on basic public services. Despite citizens' willingness to pay more for better service, half the country's population is denied access to safe drinking water and less than half have easy access to healthcare facilities.

Hailing this book as "a path-breaking study in assessing the quality of India's important Public services", The Hindu observes that, "something more valuable and unique than previous evaluations by government organizations and academic and non-governmental bodies has been attempted in this book'(The Hindu, July 4, 2006).

According to The Financial Express, "the survey has the potential to trigger off grassroots citizen activism on why Indians don't get the public services they pay taxes for". The Former Union Finance Minister and Leader of the Opposition, Dr. Manmohan Singh in his address at the public function to release the survey findings said that "the survey will stimulate a productive debate, identifying areas which offer scope for improvement - both in the formulation of policy design and in improving the quality of the service delivery system". He further added that, "the study has far reaching implications for the planning of our public policy and the social and economic development of our country".

If the valuable suggestions offered by the authors of this unique and path-breaking study are taken seriously by the planners and policy makers, better days will not be far away for the citizens.
Holding the State to Account
Lessons of Bangalore’s Citizen Report Cards
Samuel Paul
ISBN: 81-88816-07-8
Rs. 60 or US $15

This paper presents the findings and lessons of a civil society initiative in Bangalore, where actual user feedback was used to produce “citizen report cards” on the city’s services and stimulate public agencies over a period of a decade to improve service outcomes. While citizen monitoring may be the only option to an indifferent government, there is no reason why the latter should not seek user feedback and benchmark its services when its internal monitoring is weak or incomplete.

Electoral Disclosure in Karnataka:
A reality check
Samuel Paul, Poornima D.G. & Anuradha Rao
ISBN: 81-88816-05-1
Rs. 60 or US $15

In 2003, the State Election Commissioners had resolved to implement the voters’ right to information in all local body elections. Post this resolve, the first ever local body election in South India, was the K.R.Puram CMC election in August 2003, which provided a unique opportunity to systematically assess and document the implementation of the disclosure laws. PAC’s analysis of the affidavits filed by 150 candidates in the fray for the K.R.Puram election highlighted the indifference of the candidates and the Returning Officers to the directives of the Karnataka State Election Commission. The effects of PAC’s advocacy were however, evident in the October 2003 election to the Mahadevapura CMC, which was characterised by a greater compliance with disclosure laws. PAC’s findings and recommendations have major implications for future elections across the country.

With the objective of enhancing the quality of panchayat polls and in order to promote informed participation by voters, PAC embarked on a four-pronged campaign called ‘Parinamakari Panchayati’ (effective local governance). The problems identified during the campaign were brought to the notice of the State Election Commission.

Karnataka’s Citizens’ Charters:
A Preliminary Assessment
Anuradha Rao
Rs. 60 or US $15

The study reviewed a handful of Citizen Charters in Karnataka to ascertain whether the charters conform to the universally established principles of a citizens’ charter and whether the criteria mentioned in the charter are actually being implemented in offices in Bangalore.

The review highlights that citizens’ charters have been prepared in the absence of clear guidelines, compensation provision and strong motivation at the highest levels of government. The citizens’ charters are drafted mechanically and put in place as a mere response to external pressures. In its present state, they will neither contribute to improved services nor to the control of corruption. Concerted efforts by the government in this direction, in association with civil society organisations, can result in a more responsive and citizen-friendly governance.

Benchmarking Bangalore’s Public Services:
What the Third Citizen Report Card Reveals
Sita Sekhar & Manisha Shah
Rs. 100 or US$15

This is the third in a series of Citizen Report Cards (CRC) carried out in Bangalore, which began in 1993. The first and the second CRCs showed low confidence levels in service providers. However, the current CRC, carried out in 2003, indicates perceptible improvements in service delivery as reported by approximately 2000 households in Bangalore.

The sample comprised of citizens belonging to various sections of the city (slum and general households).
Deepening Democracy
A Decade of Electoral Interventions by Civil Society Groups
ISBN: 81-88816-08-6
Rs. 100 or US$15

This document provides a sweeping view of PAC's electoral interventions over the years, tracing its history from a small citizens' initiative in Bangalore to a nationwide movement for electoral reforms. Over the years, PAC has endeavored to intensify the involvement and interest of citizens in the electoral process, and to stimulate informed choices in the selection of candidates. PAC has initiated several regional and national campaigns, both independently and by networking with like-minded organisations.

The dissemination of relevant information, the application of innovative tools, and the creative use of media have been some of the key strategies used. Encouraged by the positive response to PAC's first-of-its-kind campaign, carried out by citizens and the government alike, civil society groups across the country began to experiment with electoral reforms. This effort has developed over the years to encompass a range of programmes, such as the cleansing of electoral rolls, studying the backgrounds of candidates and disseminating this information, advocacy with political parties against nominating persons with criminal backgrounds, and motivation campaigns to increase voter turnout. The impact of these initiatives is partly reflected in the reforms pertaining to various electoral issues over the last five years.

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 WEB SITE AT http://www.pacindia.org

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The Sixth Annual Public Affairs Lecture

The Sixth Annual Public Affairs Lecture was delivered by Smt. Sheila Dixit, Hon. Chief Minister of Delhi on "Citizenship and Good Governance" on Friday, 24th February 2006 at St. Joseph's Boys' High School, Bangalore. Smt. Dixit spoke about the emerging new paradigm world-wide for government organizations---that of an 'enterprising government', a government which responds to what citizens want in a more market-oriented way, provides good quality services and products, and listens more closely to citizens. The reform steps include: public-private partnership empowering citizens and clients, minimizing rules, measuring outcomes, redefining clients and customers, decentralizing authority, and employing competition/market-oriented government.

She stressed that if democracy has to take roots it has to be broad-based and participatory. People-the ultimate beneficiaries-should be part of the scheme of governance, right from the planning stage to execution and supervision. She described in detail the Bhagidari movement launched by her government.

On this occasion, Smt. Sheila Dixit also released the book 'Who Benefits from India's Public Services?' A People's Audit of Five Basic Services. (p. 10)