The last few years have witnessed a major transformation in the character and response of the civil society in reacting to imbalances and gaps in the broad arena of governance. Especially so, in areas where the quality of governance directly impacts on the life of the ordinary citizen like the inconsistent availability and supply of essential services like water, electricity and health care.

What has been the response of the civil society in addressing these issues? Both positive and encouraging, one should add. Like the Swabhiman initiative in Bangalore. Conceived as a movement where every citizen takes pride in her/his city, Swabhiman today represents a highly proactive coalition of NGOs, government agencies, resident groups and corporate bodies.

In different localities, these citizen groups have taken up issues that cover a whole spectrum of civic services, from influencing government policies and systems to maintaining routine services. They have repeatedly demonstrated that with citizen participation in the management of a municipal corporation, it is indeed possible to provide cheap, efficient and reliable services.

What are the kinds of issues that are being taken up? A committed citizenry in Malleswaram, one of the oldest localities in Bangalore, has undertaken the task of designing a budget for the ward, complete with a list of works (drawn up after consultations with different socio-economic groups residing in the ward) that have been prioritised. This innovative experiment when completed, can be repeated in other wards. Concerned citizens can also know how much it would cost the municipal body to lay a square km. of road. More importantly, it will also inform people as to how long the road can be expected to retain its quality. Another group in Bangalore East, Richards Town, has set up a very professional system for handling the complaints of its residents, through weekly meetings, detailed records of minutes and persistent follow-up. The resident group in Domlur has communicated in a very simple manner to its members the computation of property tax as applicable to their locality, thereby completely reducing scope for ambiguity and corruption in assessment. And in several other localities, resident groups have taken up the task of managing their own garbage collection, either by processing it or by ensuring its safe disposal.

All these efforts relate a healthy trend. They demonstrate that citizens are no more willing to be at the receiving end of shoddy and inefficient services. And, slowly but surely, the public has also realised that with proper information, it becomes far easier to demand one’s rights and ensure higher accountability from the service providers. If for example, the residents of a locality are aware of who the contractor for garbage clearance for their ward is, they can ensure better services and more important, haul up the contractor for any complacency in work. The irony here is that the terms of the garbage contract in fact does provide for complaints from citizens; only citizens have so far been forced to remain ignorant of the terms and conditions. Such is the case with almost all the civic services. This brings us to an important question - How far can we stretch the concept of self-help? Only to the extent we can motivate and prod our elected representatives into transforming the system and sustaining it. Only to the extent we are able to fulfil our own civic obligations. Ultimately, it is the system of governing our services that would be able to sustain our democracy.

Meanwhile, may the tribe of concerned, learned “doers” increase. May that ubiquitous common man, so vividly depicted in our cartoons make his voice heard. Hopefully, one day, the patches on his tattered coat will disappear, and his hair will not stand on end. Let us put the smile back on his face.

Anjana Iyer, PAC
Improving Governance: Some Reflections

The experience of PAC in striving to improve the quality of governance in India highlights some of the strategic issues that need to be considered while designing similar interventions. The relevance of these interventions, in turn, depends on the extent to which it can make an impact on the quality of life of the poor, where the state is supposed to play a major role. This concern is particularly serious in urban areas where the pressure on the livelihood system of the poor is increasing at an alarming rate, with continuous migration and lands-strap local bodies. On the one hand, the poor quality of public services can be viewed as a problem of inadequate efficiency and unorganised citizenry. Both these need to be tackled, through local action, like the Swachh Bharat initiative in Bangalore. On the other, sustainable improvement in the quality of governance requires more than structural modifications like the 74th Amendment; it calls for a basic change in the character and operational values to reorient public institutions towards a civil society framework—such an effort would call for directing public attention to more values like accountability and transparency, tackling issues such as corruption, and providing positive reinforcement for initiatives to improve public services.

In order to make an impact on a large scale, it is necessary to draw strength from other institutions and processes of the state, so as to derive adequate leverage for action at both the levels - micro and macro, in tandem. Planning for such a multi-pronged intervention would be more complex than issue-based programmes; an elaborate conceptualisation of the of the arena would ensure greater clarity and focus in the approach and planning of actions.

Context of interventions

The rationale and context of purposeful interventions have to be viewed in the perspective of the larger development process taking place in India. With a history of large scale state intervention, for rural development and industrial growth, the question of tangible impact for improving the quality of life of the poor, looms large. If the state, has not been able to ensure adequate impact, in spite of such large investments over many decades, it is certainly a poor reflection on the quality of governance.

The manner in which the concept of governance is operationalised has an important bearing on how strategies can be formulated from action options open for improving governance.

While facilitating the development of “Civil Society” underlies contemporary political action around this theme, the canvas for action is much larger when the theme is viewed as “improving the quality of governance”. Governance in a pluralist democracy like India, in simple terms, can be seen as the process which seeks to make different parts of society act in a manner that steers society towards “collectively” desired goals. The most questions that emerge are “who is being steered”, “who is carrying out the act of steering”, “towards what goal is society being steered”, and “how is it being carried out”?

Governance in a pluralist democracy like India can be seen as the process which seeks to make different parts of society act in a manner that steers society towards “collectively” desired goals.

At a macro level, governance is often viewed as a set of actions by a coalition of the political elite and the bureaucracy, to steer the larger society towards a portfolio of ends that cater to maintaining the current power structure for the continued benefit of the dominant coalition; “appropriate” use of the democratic processes often take place from this position. But the quality of governance needs to be viewed from below - as governance experienced by the common man (positive and negative), while relating his immediate livelihood system to the larger processes of the socio-political environment. These experiences could be examined in terms of the expectations that the common man has, the sense of satisfaction derived, constraints and grievances held, extent of participation in the steering process, and avenues for action open to him - direct and indirect, towards securing personal goals.

The apparatus of governance can be seen as acting on the common man from three levels. In its most direct form, the state is viewed as provider of basic services and support mandated by the governance apparatus; this includes infrastructure such as roads, power, water, primary education, etc. as well as facilities and programmes for employment and development (IRDP, TRYSEM, etc.). At the next level, the governance apparatus regulates social and economic processes (such as Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, Minimum Wages Act, etc.), so as to protect interests of the common man. At the third level, which is even more intangible in effect, the governance apparatus provides the institutional environment in which social, economic and political action takes place — elected bodies, reservations, taxation policy, etc.

Given this multi-dimensional character of governance, how do we define quality? While there are standards and criteria that can be applied in a
relative sense across states and nations, perhaps it would be more appropriate here to view it as an issue of the inability of citizens to meaningfully access and direct the governance apparatus towards their felt needs. And the problems and constraints experienced by the common man can be related to issues emanating at specific levels, as well as those from combinations across levels. Hence the mandate for action would be process based, and continue to evolve over time as the felt needs change in communities.

**Arena of action**

No matter how noble the cause or significant the impact of an act of governance, the public domain would see conflict of interests over the goals or the method applied. Since the effort to improve the quality of governance is embedded in the larger quest to influence and modify a socio-political system, this **plurality of interests** and multiplicity of stakeholders provides a useful base for initiating the process. The leadership or vanguard role that we see in judicial activism, public interest litigation or the Report Card Studies of PAC are embedded in this aspect of modern society, which provide a platform for organising larger numbers of people to take up an issue by systematically identifying points of leverage - in terms of information that will generate action, of stress points which will respond, and of long term benefits that would accrue to particular stakeholders. And, only when these initiatives get translated into felt needs of the common citizen and provide a rationale for action, that sustainable change can take place.

If felt needs are to be the basis for improving the quality of governance, a shared view of these needs is a necessary base for sustainable action in this regard. While breakdowns and crises automatically create shared understanding and opportunities for mobilisation, sustained action rarely follows. Two factors contribute to this phenomenon - inadequate information of the process that cause the problem, and inadequacy in organising the affected citizens to act in a coherent fashion. But crises usually have a history behind them; the issue at first may affect a small segment of citizens, and gradually creep up on growing numbers. Be it drinking water shortage or human rights, planned interventions do not need to wait till a latent problem becomes a concrete crisis for large sections of the population. Hence grassroots level action to foster a critical awareness of the governance issues, organising citizens groups for action and providing the initial leadership, are part of the larger effort to create a strong foundation for the civil society movement. Thereby, **grassroots level advocacy** will generate a demand system that could play a key role in ensuring that efforts of the governance apparatus is sensitive to citizens needs on a sustained basis.

The improvement in quality of governance goes beyond mere redressal of some citizen grievances; implicit in the effort is the attempt to make the governance apparatus **internalise basic changes** in approach to citizens participation in the system, acceptance of accountability and performance standards, and enhancing competencies to perform their role more effectively. The willingness and desire to make such changes usually follows from strong pressure, from informed stakeholders and/or empowered citizen groups. But the capacity to respond is constrained by the bureaucratic processes which instinctively seek to maintain the status quo as well as inadequacy of exposure and skills to embark on such a major change. Progressive leadership would be a good starting point for a change effort - it would need to be backed up with professional assistance to carry the process to systematically reach all levels of the apparatus.

Prof. Suresh Balakrishnan, PAC

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Interactions with the utility

Calcutta Electricity Board, Public Hospitals and Calcutta Telecommunication Department are the major services contacted by a significant segment of the respondents. Reasons for contact pertained mostly to the faulty functioning of the facility at a basic level of service like erratic water supply, unavailability of basic amenities, etc. Significantly, contacts made by the public have mainly involved personal visits; interaction over telephone and written communication were negligible. The high level of personal interaction indicates a lack of trust in the complaint redressal mechanisms within the utilities.

Key dimensions of agency responsiveness

Overall satisfaction with service providers: Respondents reported higher satisfaction levels with Government hospitals, Water Supply Department, Post Office and Corporation Tax Department were identified as the least satisfactory agencies.

Satisfaction with speed of service: All agencies except Government Hospitals recorded low satisfaction scores with respect to the speed of service. Higher proportion of incomplete transactions were recorded for Water Supply (75%), Police (75%), Corporation (69%), Post Office (66%) and Electricity Board (63%).

Staff Responsiveness: In terms of efficiency and behaviour, Corporation (Tax), Electricity Board and Ration Depot were rated lowly by the citizens.

The speed money problem

Considering all transactions with the utilities studied, only 5 per cent of respondents claimed to have paid speed money. And of these, around 87 per cent paid the sum on demand and not on volition. On an average, Rs. 533 was paid as bribe or ‘speed money’ to the concerned people in the agency. The Department of Telecommunications and Government Hospitals recorded more incidences of bribery than any other utility. In comparison with other cities in which the report card studies have been carried out, the phenomenon of corruption in public services is less widespread. To illustrate, 14 per cent in Bangalore, 25 per cent in Madras and 10 per cent in Ahmedabad had resorted to bribes to get things done; only Pune reported a lower figure of 4 per cent.

Forced investments to cope up with unreliable services

Nearly one in three people in Calcutta own a water pump and an overhead tank. Ownership of underground tanks is also significant (23%). All these point to the inadequate availability of water in the city. Extrapolating the sample results for the larger population, it could be assumed that the total amount spent on investments on coping mechanisms works out to a mind boggling Rs. 1296 crores!

(For further information, contact Ms. Anjana Iyer at PAC)
Making Them Heard: 
A Report Card on public services in Ahmedabad by SEWA members

SEWA or the Self Employed Women’s Association is an NGO committed to improving the quality of life of women in both urban and rural areas. The SEWA movement which began in Ahmedabad in the early seventies has today evolved into a national forum with a membership of over a million and has a strong presence in most urban centres.

Most of the SEWA members in Ahmedabad reside in low income settlements or slums. The availability and quality of public services in these areas leave much to be desired, leading to a high incidence of diseases. Repeated efforts by SEWA to bring the plight of the residents to the notice of the officials failed to produce the desired results. In this context, it was felt that the representation could be made stronger by conducting an objective study which could highlight the problems more starkly. It was here that the concept of Report Cards came in handy.

The mantle for conducting the exercise fell upon another NGO based in Ahmedabad - the Foundation for Public Interest (FPI). FPI got in touch with PAC to help implement the Report Card Methodology to obtain a systematic and validated feedback on various dimensions of public service delivery in Ahmedabad. Members from FPI were provided training by PAC and MBA (who also supervised the conduct of the survey). Around 1200 SEWA members, spread over 12 slum areas, were selected for the survey. Salient highlights of the exercise are briefly stated below:

- Food and Civil Supplies (95%), Corporation Sewage (91%) and Water Supply (88%) were the most used agencies; Corporation and Collectorate (13%), Police (20%) and Health and Family Welfare (84%) were the least used.

- Post & Telegraph (86%), Electricity Board (84%) and Health and Family Welfare (84%) were rated as the most satisfactory services; the dubious distinction of being the least satisfactory service went to Toilets (25%), followed by Water Supply (33%) and Corporation Collectorate (36%).

- Only six per cent of the respondents had contacted an agency. Fifty one per cent expressed happiness with the behaviour of the staff, while 73 per cent expressed unhappiness with the time taken to solve their problems.

- One in three respondents who interacted with an agency had to pay speed money. In 72 per cent of the cases, the money was asked for by the official. The average amount paid was Rs. 289.

But what gave the exercise more meaning was certain ‘spin-offs’ that emerged as a result of the survey:

- A unique forum called “Our City” table was set up at the SEWA office where the members could get all the information required for interacting with any public service agency.

- The findings of the study was conveyed to the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation: the Corporation has responded by starting a project called Parivarjan to improve all the services provided by it in the areas covered by the study. The findings were also shared with the corporators of the study areas.

- Two training programmes, structured around the major findings from the study, were conducted for the leaders among the SEWA members in each of the 12 areas to help them monitor quality of services in their area. Further plans are underway to conduct ‘Report Card Studies’ on an annual basis to monitor progress.

This experience amply illustrates the potency of the ‘Report Card Studies’ to make advocacy efforts more effective and also innovative ways in which report card findings can be used to provoke public service agencies to be more responsive and accountable. But, more important, the strategy also empowers the citizens to interact with the service providers in a more informed manner.

And, information as we all know, is the most effective tool to tackle monopolies.

(For more information on the programme, contact Dr Sita Shekhar at PAC)

Foundation for Public Interest

Foundation for Public Interest (FPI), established in 1975, in Ahmedabad is a development planning action team of dedicated professionals endeavouing to bring in additional investments, attention and expertise to backward areas and poorer communities. The main areas of FPI’s initiatives include: Urban Planning, Water Management, Coastal Development and Disaster Mitigation. FPI exercises its mandate through conducting action research, managing joint projects with local and international NGOs, designing participatory plans and taking up advisory consultations for the state, city and central governments.
WORKSHOPS

National Workshop on Report Card Studies and Advocacy
January 29-31, 1997

In an effort to bring the Report Card Methodology closer to community-based organisations and public interest groups and to help them appreciate the need for identifying action alternatives based on information generated through systematic citizens feedback, a three-day workshop was organised in Bangalore for institutions and networks active in the arena of civic issues. This effort is a sequel to two other initiatives on similar lines, one organised at a national level during June 1995 and the other, a more recent effort during August 1996 for the FEDCOT, a major NGO network in Tamil Nadu.

Workshop objectives

The Workshop was designed to introduce the participants to the ‘Report Card Methodology’ and enhance their conceptual and analytical skills in generating public feedback. The specific objectives of the Workshop were to:

- Acquaint participants to concepts and methodologies related to the theme;
- Help participants define problems and interpret results with this approach;
- Illustrate with cases, strategies to set up pro-active stances and foster creative interfaces with public service agencies; and
- Highlight advocacy strategies to sustain citizens involvement and ensure enhanced accountability, and responsiveness of public service providers.

The Workshop was designed to be highly interactive; sessions were structured around conceptual inputs, case analysis, small group works, field visits and video presentations.

The Workshop had the active participation and involvement of 20 senior and middle level functionaries representing citizen associations, public interest groups, consumer organisations, advocacy units, government and international agencies. The workshop also had three international participants; two from Nepal and one from Pakistan. The participants found the concept and technique of Report Card Studies and advocacy highly relevant to bring about qualitative changes in the process of urban service delivery. The link between Report Card findings and advocacy efforts was also appreciated since the two components facilitate a high degree of complementarity in bringing about systemic changes.

The Workshop was coordinated by Suresh Batakrishnan and K. Gopakumar of PAC.

Learning by Doing:
A Workshop on the Swabhiman Initiative,
February 11, 1997

Swabhiman, the people’s movement for a better Bangalore has completed one and a half years. The movement, which draws in a rich synergy from creative government-citizen forums, has made its presence felt in many areas of civic governance. To enable the participants of this unique and in many ways pioneering venture, to retrospect and reflect on the various experiences and insights, a Workshop was organised on February 11, 1997. The Workshop organised by the Core Group of Swabhiman consisting of 14 government and non-government entities was facilitated by Ms. Anjana Iyer of the Public Affairs Centre. Dr. A. Ravindra, Secretary, Department of Environment, Ecology and Forests, Government of Karnataka and one of the initiators of the movement, presided over the proceedings.

The Workshop provided a forum to articulate many positive ‘learnings’ distilled from the past triumphs and setbacks. Notable among these were many resident groups initiatives that transcended localised problems like garbage clearance to much broader civic issues.

South Asia Conference of Transparency International for Combating Corruption and Promoting Transparency, Integrity and Accountability,
New Delhi,
March 23-24, 1997

Transparency International, the Berlin-based global watchdog on monitoring and combating corruption, added one more member to its vast network by launching a Chapter in India. The Chapter chaired by eminent journalist and public figure, Mr. Kuldeep Nayar is promoted by Lok Sevak Sangh of Servants of People Society. The launch coincided with a two-day conference of South Asian Countries. The Conference laid great stress on strengthening public support and awareness for anti-corruption programmes and strategies. The agenda for action designed by PAC in its recent effort to address the phenomenon of corruption in India was presented in this occasion as a theme paper. PAC’s innovative programme on ensuring transparency in elections - Choose the Right Councillor Programme, came in for special mention and generated lot of interest among the participants.

(For more information on the Workshop and on Transparency International, please contact K. Gopakumar, PAC)
INITIATIVES

This section introduces creative and innovative experiments that reflect proactive efforts of administrators, citizens and NGOs in producing models that need to be disseminated and shared. The initiatives covered in this would attempt to highlight the need for creating mechanisms for people’s participation that hinges around replicability and adaptability. We welcome contributions to this section.

Rogi Kalyan Samiti, Indore: People’s Participation in Managing Public Hospitals

Maharaja Yashwantrao Hospital in Indore, Madhya Pradesh is today operationalising a unique and innovative programme which is fast setting new standards in hospital management. For people who are familiar to the hospital, the turnaround is nothing short of a miracle! The hospital, which at one point of time was considered to be a premier institution for providing medical services in the country, had over the years deteriorated to abysmal levels. Newspaper reports carried horror stories on the appalling conditions, especially the existence of thousands of rats and rodents!

It was the plague scare in 1994 that catalysed the district administration to clean up the hospital by embarking on a Programme called Kayakalp Abhiyan - or operation metamorphosis/rejuvenation. The District Red Cross Society was identified to undertake this task. The mammoth 730 beds hospital along with five other supporting hospitals were evacuated and all the patients shifted to 12 hospitals situated in different parts of the town. The entire complex was cleaned and disinfected; some 150 truck loads of garbage and junk was removed from the hospital.

The whole exercise was participatory in nature and involved the people of the town in drawing up the policy framework for every stage of the operation. Further to this, it was decided to put in place a committee to act as a group of Trustees for the hospital, called the Rogi Kalyan Samiti or the Patient Welfare Committee and another executive committee to manage the day to day functions of the hospital. The Rogi Kalyan Samiti, registered as an NGO, was given complete control over the functioning of the hospital. The Executive Committee meets every week and deliberates on changes and improvements that could be affected on a continuous basis.

To improve the financial position of the hospital, it was decided to introduce user charges subject to certain criteria; funds received are deposited with the Rogi Kalyan Samiti. Apart from funds received from imposition of user charges, the Rogi Kalyan Samiti is also empowered to receive donations in cash or kind from the public. These funds can be used for improving hospital administration, upgradation of facilities and to provide medical care to the poor and needy, free of cost or at extremely subsidised rates as compared to private hospitals.

Today, Rogi Kalyan Samitis have been set up in all the 45 districts of the State. Though most of the innovations like systemic improvements and introduction of user charges are confined to district hospitals, similar efforts are seeping to the sub-district level hospitals also. Perhaps, the most heartening experience has been the highly interactive role played by people’s representatives, local body officials and citizens in bringing about this change. This innovative experiment has brought about many tangible and indirect benefits. A total of Rs. 8 crores has been collected by the Samitis in various districts; daily collections range between Rs. 1,000 and Rs. 15,000 in each hospital depending on the location. The scheme also attracts considerable allocation from the MP’s and MLA’s discretionary funds. The District Red Cross Societies which are working in tandem with Rogi Kalyan Samitis have become quite active.

The experience of the Rogi Kalyan Samitis highlights certain valuable ‘learnings’:

- For one, it is important not only to create institutions for the public welfare but equally so or more to ensure regular maintenance and upkeep, provision for improved facilities, regular review of performance and also to ensure that the morale of the work force remains at optimum level of motivation.
- It is essential to involve citizens to fund and manage various projects taken up to improve civic life; this would force the system to be more accountable to the general public.
- The idea to introduce some amount of user charges in public institutions generates a demand from the beneficiaries to be given better services and professional attention. This also prevents any misuse of the highly subsidised government facilities by people who have easy access to them.

Rationing Kruti Samiti, Mumbai
A Partnership for Improving Public Distribution

The Rationing Kruti Samiti (RKS) is an innovative collaborative venture involving around 40 NGOs and Community-based Organisations, consumers of the rationing system, employees of the Department of Rationing and shopkeepers. The genesis of the movement can be traced to the early eighties when some NGOs working on health issues with communities were confronted by the desperation and anger of poor women regarding irregularity of rations; the majority of complaints related to irregular supply of grains and the rampant systemic corruption. The education and awareness programmes conducted for women on this issue were quite encouraging. However, collaboration on an effective scale commenced only in January 1993, following the large scale relief and rehabilitation efforts carried out for the victims of communal rioting in the city.

The vision of RKS centres around three cardinal concepts:

- Help people have better access to regular and good quality grain
- Facilitate a dialogue between the government machinery, consumer groups and shopkeepers.
- Minimise corruption in the system and make the PDS more accountable and responsive to the people.

The RKS functions at three levels: organisation and action in the form of demonstrations and sit-ins at the city level; organising monthly meetings at both city and area levels in which ration officers, NGOs and citizen groups attend; and developing local vigilance groups. With due support from the Rationing Controller, an healthy and creative interface between community-based organisations and government officials has been institutionalised, the process is increasingly seen as an effective forum for seeking collective solutions.

During the past years, consistent efforts by RKS have led to considerable simplification of the procedure in acquiring ration cards and decentralisation of the process. RKS also has got the rationing department to display samples of foodgrains in hygienic plastic bags to check adulteration. To prevent hoarding and black marketing, RKS enlists the support of the Police to organise raids. More than producing tangible benefits, the movement has triggered off many positive social spin-offs. For one, women community leaders and ordinary residents feel immensely empowered and motivated by the success of the programme. The popularity and success of the movement also gave NGOs and community-based organisations an image of credibility and helped them to broad-base their support.

RKS is collaborating with PAC in conducting a Report Card Study on Mumbai.

Community Development Society,
Alappuzha, Kerala

Winner of the ‘We, the Peoples’ award instituted by the UN in 1995, the Alappuzha Community Development Society, a registered body of 10,304 poor women in the coastal district of Alappuzha (Alleppey) in Kerala, evolved as an offshoot of the Urban Basic Services for the Poor (UBSP) and the Community Based Nutrition Programme (CBNP) which were implemented by the District Municipality with support from State and Central Governments and UNICEF. The
rationale behind the creation of this Society rested on three challenging issues:

- Can there be a system which ensures that help reaches the needy, rather than those with most influence?
- Is it possible to evolve a system wherein all programmes, governmental and non-governmental, converge at the community level so that the multiple needs of the poorest families get addressed in an integrated manner?
- Will it be possible to decentralise the process of decision-making so that initiatives are made at the grassroots?

The first major achievement of the CDS was in designing a ‘Poverty Index’ to identify the poorest families in the society who were at the greatest risk of ill health and malnutrition, using a set of non-income parameters. The Index is a simple tool based on externally observable factors that could be captured by nine basic questions: Does the family live in thatched house? Is the house without a latrine? Does the family have access to safe drinking water? Does the family have an illiterate adult? Does the family have only one or no adult employed? Does the family consume only two or less meals per day? Is there an alcoholic or drug addict in the family? Are there small children (under five years) in the family? Does the family belong to scheduled caste or tribe?. If the answer is ‘yes’ to at least four of the above questions, the families are identified as poor and vulnerable.

The CDS also evolved an innovative and empowering organisational structure. At the neighbourhood level, local community members conduct surveys and identify the poor and vulnerable among them by using the Poverty Index. Then Neighbourhood Groups (NHGs) are formed with one woman from each high risk or poor family as a member. Around 354 NHGs were formed with a total membership of 10, 304. The NHGs also elect its Neighbourhood Committee (NHC) comprising of five volunteers. At the next level are the Area Development Societies (ADS) represented by an elected nine-member governing committee. At the apex is the Community Development Society.

Perhaps the most spectacular spin-off is the incredible success of the Thrift and Credit activity of the CDS which has evolved into the status of an ‘informal bank’. Under this scheme, women themselves manage the weekly deposit mobilisation and disbursement of loans in the neighbourhood communities. The rate of interest, repayment period etc., too are decided by women themselves. The high degree of transparency and participation envisaged in the Scheme have ensured an 100 per cent repayment of loans taken.

**VIDEO**

**Whose Vote is it Anyway?**

English, Colour, 16 minutes

Citizen groups are fast emerging as the cutting edge of local governance; resident groups in many cities are today demanding an active and creative role in deciding matters that affect them individually and collectively. An innovative and radical experiment was conducted in Bangalore for the City Municipal Elections held in October 1996. In a move that signals political maturity and civic consciousness, residents of the city tracked down the candidates to seek a set of relevant information: Do you live in this ward? Do you pay taxes? What is your past record? What are your priorities for the ward? Are there any criminal or corruption charges against you?

This short film captures the essence of the experiment and provides valuable and interesting insights on its concept, strategy and conduct. It shows how information was collected and disseminated through leaflets and neighbourhood newspapers, aided by the proactive and critical support extended by citizen groups. The film narrates an educative and interesting experience and could be used as an effective advocacy tool to stimulate the ordinary citizens to make informed choices in elections and to encourage organised groups to undertake similar efforts.

Both PAL VHS and NTSC versions are available on request. Price (inclusive of mailing) : Rs. 400/- or US$ 30.

Please send payment through bank draft/cheque (add Rs.5 for out station cheques) drawn in favour of Public Affairs Centre, Bangalore, to

**Public Affairs Centre,**

707, 6B Cross Road, Block 3,
Koramangala,
Bangalore 560 034, India
Tel : 5537260, 5520246.
Fax : 5537260
email : gopa@pacbirl.globemail.com
**READINGS**

**Renewing Governance: Issues and Options** by Ajit M Banerjee and K.A. Chandrasekaran (eds.).
Tata Mcgraw - Hill Publishing Company Limited,
4/12 Asaf Ali Road,
New Delhi, 1996.

Two major initiatives taken by the Government of India have necessitated a rethinking on the mode of governance. The issues in perspective are firstly, economic liberalisation under the New Economic Policy (July 1991) and secondly, decentralisation of powers through Panchayat Raj or local self-government institutions (April 1993). This process of rethinking governance impacts on several arenas - functioning of the legislatures, justice delivery system, law enforcement, development administration system, Planning Commission and public sector enterprises. What are the kind of initiatives required to encourage the development and renewal of institutions, organisations and the nation? How can the government reinvent itself? What will a redefinition of the roles and responsibilities at the district, state and centre mean?

The book 'Renewing Governance: Issues and Options' attempts to provide focused and pragmatic answers to these questions. The publication draws in contributions from very eminent personalities representing the civil service, judiciary, industry, non-governmental sector and officials of the parliament secretariat. The compendium covers a wide range of issues and options in the context of economic liberalisation and decentralised people-centred development.

**Survey Research for Public Administration** by David L. Folz.
Sage Publications, Inc.,
2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks,
California 91320.

The ongoing debates on ‘reinventing government’ underscores the fact that citizens are thinking of themselves more as consumers of the government. Governance is increasingly being seen as a participatory process in which citizens play a prominent part in designing, implementing and monitoring public policies. In this changing context, it has become increasingly necessary for the government to respond to the needs of its “customers” by measuring citizen responses to government initiatives. Survey Research for Public Administration gives an excellent introduction to the basics of survey research as they apply to the arena of public administration and governance. The volume is organised around the fundamental stages of the research process: planning, design, implementation, analysis and presentation of data.

The book will appeal to all those who use public feedback for research and/or advocacy.

**Management of Philanthropic Organisations** by Noshir H. Dadrawala. Centre for Advancement of Philanthropy,
c/o Forbes Marshall,
Mistry Mansion, 4th Floor,
107, M.G. Road, Bombay 400 023.

This book covers the historical development of philanthropy, provides vital data and statistics, covers almost all the important statutes and legislations affecting philanthropic bodies and introduces the concepts of ‘leadership’ and ‘effective management’. Recognising the fact that not every trustee happens to be a lawyer or accountant, this comprehensive compilation has been developed and designed to de-mystify the laws governing charities and guide trustees, social activists and professionals to some of the main considerations involved in the set-up and management of philanthropic organisations.
Just Released!
Corruption in India: Agenda for Action, edited by S. Guhan & Samuel Paul,
Vision Books, New Delhi.
ISBN 81-7094-277-2,
Hardcover Price in India: Rs. 280;
International Price: $25.

The extent and spread of corruption in India has become a matter of grave concern for all and threatens its political, administrative and economic fabric. While public awareness on this issue has increased over the years, little progress has been made in terms of developing and implementing remedies that can adequately deal with its magnitude and severity. The initiatives of the government have also been piecemeal and, largely, only in response to public criticisms that have erupted in the wake of periodic scandals.

This book, an outcome of the Public Affairs Centre’s project on corruption, attempts to generate a specific and feasible agenda of action for tackling corruption in India. Four action areas have been identified as the basic building blocks for a national agenda to combat corruption: Reform of the Political Process; Restructuring and Reorienting the Government Machinery; Empowerment of the Citizens; and Creating Sustained Public Pressure for Change. The contributors to this volume include scholars, lawyers, civil servants and activists. The proposed agenda will hopefully stimulate an informed public debate on the subject in the country, and encourage both individuals and organisations, including the government, to initiate action in this regard.

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Dr. K.R.S. Murthy is former Director, Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore.

Dr. G. Thimmiah is Member, Planning Commission, New Delhi.

Mr. P.P. Madappa is a consultant based at Bangalore.

Mr. Manubhai Shah is Founder and Managing Trustee of the Consumer Education and Research Centre, Ahmedabad.

It was sheer joy to have come across ‘Public Eye’. From cover to cover, it provides delightful and thought provoking reading. ‘Tackling Corruption in India’ is very timely and useful and the Report Card Methodology, worth emulating.

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Public Eye has come up quite nicely. However, with so much free mail doing the rounds, only priced publications attract the attention of the target audience. I suggest that you fix a reasonable price for this.

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