Public Affairs Centre (PAC) has completed five years of its existence this year. Though not by design, this year has also seen the issue of the second report card on Bangalore’s public services (p.2). The convergence of these two events provides a useful backdrop for a quick review of PAC’s progress and relevance.

The first report card on Bangalore was the result of a personal initiative and occurred months before the establishment of PAC. In fact, the dissemination of the report card and the interest it created among many friends and institutions were the primary factors that eventually led to the creation of an independent organisational base to expand this as well as other ways to enhance public accountability in our country. The rest is history. Public Affairs Centre was registered as a non-profit society in Bangalore in June 1994.

In retrospect, it is clear that my report card work would have quietly ended with its publication but for the modest organisational base that was created in 1994. PAC built on and refined the methodology, extended the work to other cities, and organised support for follow up citizen action. It studied city budgets to understand resource constraints and initiated dialogues with public agencies on a variety of issues that were central to the enhancement of their accountability to citizens. The common thread that runs through these seemingly diverse interventions is improving the quality of the country’s governance.

Five years is too short a time to judge an organisation’s impact. None of us were naive enough to believe that a small group’s research and campaigns would remedy longstanding governance gaps overnight. Instead, the endeavour was to awaken the interest of civil society institutions in using knowledge to address key civic issues and to mobilise the power of citizens to demand more responsive actions from the public agencies concerned. Judged by the response of citizen groups as well as government agencies in several places, one can say that a lot of experimentation and learning are taking place. These are the necessary steps that can prepare the ground for major reforms. PAC’s initial focus on cities reflects the belief that conditions are ripe in urban areas to blend knowledge, mobilisation and civil society action.

Let me use this occasion also to acknowledge the support and contributions to PAC of several organisations and friends. PAC would not have survived but for the timely grants provided by the National Foundation for India, the Ford Foundation, ICI, HDFC, Thermax and several others who donated funds also for its various campaigns. PAC’s small, but dedicated and talented staff deserves our congratulations for their fine work and our best wishes for the years ahead.

Samuel Paul

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BACK TO THE FUTURE: BANGALORE REVISITED THROUGH REPORT CARDS

Fast Rewind: August 7, 1993. Bangalore wakes up to a new era of citizen participation in governance. Eight civic agencies in the city find themselves being scrutinized and critiqued by the residents. The citizens’ Report Card on civic utilities makes a sensational debut. The media goes agog with this new ‘voice’. Public feedback as a potent accountability mechanism is tested out in India for the first time.

Fast Forward: October 1999. After five years, civic agencies in Bangalore are put to test once more. Have they improved? What about corruption? How satisfied are the residents of Bangalore with the civic agencies? The city is being revisited through the ‘Report Cards’ to explore these issues and more.

Read on...

The great Norwegian dramatist Henrik Ibsen once remarked that “Truth changes at least once every eight years”. We decided to test this idiom after waiting for a shorter span of five years. Since its debut in 1993, the concept of Report Cards has proved to be a simple and widely replicable tool for making monopoly service providers more responsive and accountable. The potency of this approach has been demonstrated by various ‘Report Card’ studies undertaken in the cities of Ahmedabad, Calcutta, Chennai, Delhi, Mumbai and Pune. The approach has also found positive resonance with many civil society institutions like the Foundation for Public Interest (FPI) and Self Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) in Ahmedabad; the Federation of Consumer Cooperatives-Tamil Nadu (FEDCOT) and CATALYST TRUST in Chennai; and, The Rationing Kruti Samiti and Apnalaya in Mumbai.

PAC has also prepared specialised Report Card studies on key sectors like Public Hospitals, Public Distribution System and Small and Medium Enterprises. International recognition for this approach has been encouraging; PAC’s Report Card work has been prominently reported, to name a few, in World Development Report of the World Bank, in Transparency International’s reports and Asiaweek. This approach is also being integrated into Public Administration Reform projects in Vietnam and Ukraine with PAC’s active involvement.

This Report Card on civic services in Bangalore is the first time when the approach is being used as an effective benchmark to monitor progress over time. The study had two overriding emphases. One, to highlight various qualitative and quantitative dimensions of public service delivery, across agencies and Two, compare the performance of agencies over time, using the data obtained in 1993 as the base.

The Methodology: This report is based on the findings of surveys conducted among slum (839) and non-slum (1036) households separately in Bangalore. The sample has been selected ensuring representation to all categories of citizens by geographic location as well as income.

Agencies covered: Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB), Bangalore City Corporation (BCC), Karnataka Electricity Board (KEB), Bangalore Telegraphs (BT), Ration Shops, Police, Public buses, Regional Transport Office (RTO), Public Hospitals (PH) and Bangalore Development Authority (BDA).

How satisfied are residents in Bangalore with the quality of Public Services?

Presented below are the scores in terms of percentage of respondents satisfied for general (non-slum) and slum households respectively. It must be noted that the higher levels of satisfaction in the case of those residing in the slums is due to two factors: One, the general expectations about the services are low and two, to reduce complexity, a two point scale was used (in place of the standard 7 point one) to elicit responses which may have forced people to be either fully satisfied or dissatisfied.
General Households

- In general the level of satisfaction ranges between 14% and 67%.
- Bangalore Telephones is rated the best with 67% respondents satisfied. Ration shops (52%) and KEB and BCC (47% each) follow.
- BDA is rated the worst (14% satisfaction)

Slums

- The satisfaction levels among slum dwellers of Bangalore are greater than those among the general households.
- The score ranges between 25% and 83% across agencies.
- Slum-dwellers are most satisfied with the quality of services provided by public buses (83%). Primary schools (74%), Public hospitals (73%) and the Electricity board (73%) follow closely behind.
- The service rated the least satisfactory is that of the Police (25%).

How responsive are the Service Providers?

General Households

- Problem resolution is generally low with Telephones being the most efficient with 47% and Ration shops and Public buses the least with 1% resolution of problems for non slum households.
- Staff behaviour was reported to be the best for Public Hospitals (61%); Officials of BDA were rated the worst in this regard (8%)
- Public Hospitals score again for being the most efficient in terms of time taken to solve and attend to problems with 65% expressing satisfaction in this regard. And the least efficient? BCC gets the unenviable crown with just 15% of the respondents expressing satisfaction.
- Availability of the staff at their seats – Hospitals score a HAT-TRICK with 71% of the respondents expressing satisfaction; BCC finishes the last with just 15% satisfied clients.

Slums

- For slum-dwellers the problem resolution is very low (in single digits) across all agencies except the Police (11%) which is also not a very encouraging number.
- The employees of Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (Public Buses) are reported to be the best behaved by the urban poor (59% expressing satisfaction). Police personnel are the worst rated in this regard (17% reporting satisfaction)
- Satisfaction with the time taken to attend to and to solve the problems is observed to be the highest for public schools (59%); BWSSB gets a shocking feedback in this regard with no respondent expressing satisfaction. Ration shops also get a low rating with 9% expressing satisfaction
- While 60% of the respondents found the staff at public hospitals in their seats, only 34% reports in the affirmative for KEB

Extent of Corruption

Paying bribes is no longer a hush-hush affair. The respondents were quite candid to illustrate the 'graftonomics' of getting basic services. Here are some snippets.

General Households

- On an average 22% have paid a bribe to get their work done at some public agency or the other.
- The average amount paid as a bribe is Rs. 1673.00
- Corruption is most rampant in RTO (57%) and Municipal Corporation (52%)
- No incidence of bribery reported from Ration shops.
- Very low incidence of corruption in KEB (9%)
- The average amount paid as a bribe is highest in BCC (Rs. 3759) and the least for Telephones (Rs. 245)

* Public Eye * Vol. 4 No.3 July - Sept. 1999
Table 1

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The steps taken by agencies to improve services. However, the interesting finding has been that corruption still remains widely prevalent and in fact has increased in five of the seven agencies probed. The scenario is depicted in Table 1.

And now for the Slum Side story...

Satisfaction

▼ There has been a general decline in the satisfaction levels across agencies.

▼ The exceptions are BCC and KEB, which have shown an increase.

▼ The major decline in satisfaction is with the police.

▼ The incidence of corruption has gone down in general across agencies.

▼ The average amount paid, however, has gone up in the five years by nearly four times.

Bribery - then and now!

The corruption indicators | In 1994 | In 1999
--------------------------|---------|---------
Percentage of respondents who paid a bribe | 32 | 25 |
Average amount paid | Rs.355 | Rs.1245 |

(This Report Card Study was coordinated by Dr. Sita Sekhar, Research Consultant at PAC)

Slums

☆ Corrupt officialdom does not discriminate between the rich and the poor! There is as much if not more bribery involved in the dealings of slum-dwellers with public service agencies as there is for other citizens.

☆ One fourth of the respondents reported having paid a bribe.

☆ The average amount paid has been Rs.1245/-, which is quite a large sum for a slum resident.

☆ More than half the slum residents have said they have paid bribes for obtaining a Khata or Birth/death certificate from the Bangalore City Corporation.

☆ Over 50% have also paid bribes to obtain services at public hospitals. The average amounts are around Rs. 300/–.

☆ The police have also been paid bribes by 46% of the slum-dwellers. The average amount paid is Rs. 419/–.

☆ The least corrupt agency for slum-dwellers is BWSSB (2%).

☆ It is to be noted that these bribes have been extorted from the slum households in most cases.

Have things improved in recent years?

General Households

☆ More than half the respondents indicated that there had been an improvement in the quality of services provided by all agencies, though it was only to some extent.

Slums

☆ Over 60% of the respondents have indicated that there has been an improvement in the quality of services for all agencies but only to some extent. The greatest improvement is reported in the BMTC and hospitals, and the smallest in the Police.

Feedback from the General Households

Overall feedback narrates two key lessons. The general increase in satisfaction in many ways reflects
The first serious step to establish the institution of Ombudsman in India came with the introduction of the Lok Pal Bill in the Lok Sabha on May 9, 1968 as a direct sequence to implement the recommendations of the Administrative Reforms Committee, headed by Morarji Desai, set up by the Government of India on January 5, 1966. The Committee had strongly recommended the setting up of two institutions, the Lok Pal at the Centre and the Lok Ayukta in each state. The Bill was finally passed by the Lok Sabha on August 20, 1969. However, while it was pending in the Rajya Sabha, the Lok Sabha was dissolved and the Bill consequently lapsed. Though the Bill made entries again to the Lok Sabhas during 1971 and 1977, it lapsed due to the dissolution of the Parliaments. Another one was introduced on August 26, 1985 only to be withdrawn by the government itself in November 1988. The Lok Pal Bill introduced by the National Front Government on December 29, 1989 also lapsed with the dissolution of the Lok Sabha in 1991.

Recently in a significant development, the Indian Chapter of Transparency International - a global initiative against corruption, announced the setting up of a 'People's Lok Pal' to investigate into charges of corruption in high places. This initiative reflects a civil society endeavour to establish a federal Ombudsman in India, especially in the light of a paralysis of political will to act along similar lines. The Commission will be backed by a Citizens Vigilance Committee consisting of seven lawyers. This Committee shall process any complaint, backed by a duly sworn affidavit, that may be received from any individual or institution aggrieved against any MP, Union Minister or Governor. The Committee would report its findings to the Ombudsman Commission, which would in turn give a verdict on the evidence presented. If the Ombudsman Commission finds the case to be substantiated, the Vigilance Committee would then seek to file a public interest petition before the High Court or the Supreme Court for further criminal investigations.

(For further information on the People’s Vigilance Committee, please contact:

Transparency International - India, Lok Sevak Sangh,
Leipat Bhawan, Leipat Nagar – IV, New Delhi 110 024,
Email: rsbansal@del2.vsnl.net.in)
THEME ESSAY

NATIONALISM & DEMOCRACY IN INDIA:
EMERGING FAULTLINES

DR. K. GOPAKUMAR,
PUBLIC AFFAIRS CENTRE

Time and again one keeps hearing about the ‘national’ in Indian context as a fairly clear and unified concept. However, Indian nationalism has always been defined, provoked and sustained in relation to the ‘other’. The words spoken by the Venetian nationalist demagogue in Michael Dibdin’s powerful work ‘Dead Lagoon’ recurs in this context: ‘There can be no true friend without true enemies. Unless we hate what we are not, we cannot love what we are. These are old truths we are painfully rediscovering after a century and more of sentimental cant’. As the nation completes the 52nd anniversary of Independence, the spectre of a fractured national identity looms ominously ahead. And as the country gears up to elect the 13th Parliament, this spectre conveys frightening portents.

Evolution & Contradictions of the Nation-State

The word ‘nation’ comes from the Latin word nasci meaning to be born. Thus we all belong to one nation or another. Our nationality is ascribed to us; very rarely can this be acquired like citizenship. The link between nation and state is however very interesting. Till a century back, nation and state existed as separate entities. Thus, in the Middle Ages, the poet Dante identified an Italian nation in terms of a common language. He wanted Italian to be the literary language of all Italian poets. Dante also wrote about politics and very clearly stated his ideal form of government. But he never linked these two together. Nation was a cultural phenomenon and government a political one.

However by late Nineteenth century, there emerged a clear link between the nation and the state. A link provided by the potent philosophy of nationalism, which stated that ‘Every nation has the right to its own state’. This idea has found powerful echoes in twentieth century politics. However, the concept of a nation-state stands challenged today. A major fallacy entertained by Western intelligentsia has been to assume that the international arena of a retreating 20th century will be occupied largely, if not exclusively, by nation-states or nation-states to be. However, an appraisal of the political map would reveal that the territorial boundaries of the state and the ethnic frontiers of the constituent nations rarely coincide. Iceland, metropolitan Portugal and Norway stand out as rare exceptions. In many cases one may find the state is larger than the nation; that is the juridical limits of the state extend well beyond the areas settled by its Staatvolk—the ethnic group that created the state, is largely identified with it, constitutes the bulk of its elite, and is the source of the predominant culture. Examples of this kind include France, the classical nation state of political textbooks. France, contains adjacent to its outer limits, German speaking Alsatiens; Italian speaking inhabitants of Eastern Riviera and Corsica; Catalans and Basques at the either end of Pyrenees; Celtic Bretons; and Flemings south west of the Belgian frontier—amounting altogether to nearly one tenth of metropolitan France’s citizens. There are also cases when the boundaries of the nation exceed the territorial limits of one state. For instance, there is the Hungarian State. But there exist nearly 3 million Magyars from the motherland spread over Transylvania, Southern Slovakia and Vojvodia, not to mention hundreds of thousands in the New World who are of Magyar descent.

The ongoing genocide in ex-Yugoslavia is a grim reflection of this fallacy. As long as the oppressive authoritarian regime thrived, the genie of sub nationalism was bottled under the united territorial nationalism clamouring for independence and democracy. Once the ‘enemy’ vanished, the genie was unleashed with disastrous consequences.

Emergence of Nationalism in India

An ‘Indian’ identity or consciousness first emerged in the context of the freedom movement. This identity was purely a political construct and not a cultural referent. Though, during the course of the freedom struggle, this political identity drew upon cultural, religious and mythological symbols and images, they remained secondary to the main theme—freeing the country from the coloniser. The key point to note is that the freedom movement created a powerful, all embracing identity of being an Indian.

The creation of the Indian State however complicated things. To start with, the post partition
period witnessed one of the biggest population transfers in recorded human history. While approximately 9 million Hindus and Sikhs came to India, about 6 million Muslims left India. Thus national became imbied with religious overtones. This also meant that those who opted to live in India has now the obligation to observe allegiance to the State of India, irrespective of their emotional, cultural or religious linkages with those outside it. Parallel to this process was the integration of Indian states, which proceeded to move along creating identities among speech communities (those with language as the base) as opposed to faith communities (those with religion as the base). It is useful to recollect here that on Independence, India was divided in to 27 states which were combinations of pre-independence units and had no specific relation to the underlying cultural geography of India. In fact a special Commission set up for the purpose had warned that defining states by language would be a threat to national unity. Arbitrary states were preferred because they provided no constitutional platforms for language based separatists. But soon the realisation sunk in that this arbitrary division provided no basis for a popular politics that could aid in the integration of the country. Thus in 1955, a States Reorganization Commission conceded the need for the states to more closely match the cultural geography of the country and produced a new federal structure of 14 language based states. This structure has since then been further refined. But this came at a cost. While the cultural identities got successfully expressed through political demands, the centripetal force of nationalism weakened.

The major lesson emanating from post independence India’s efforts at grappling the issue of nationalism is that cultural and regional commonalities have come to dominate the issue of one’s identity. And many times the expression of these identities takes on overt political demands. Culture is the ‘national’ in India today and cultural affirmation, a viable mobilisation and political strategy. A cursory glance at some of the major confrontations of particularistic nationalisms with the Indian State highlights this trend.

Rethinking Nationalism

Thanks to the Kargil skirmish and the ‘contested patriotism’ of the Italian born President of the Indian National Congress Mrs. Sonia Gandhi, the word ‘national’ has already dominated the current election scenario. And thanks to the continuing practice of caste and religion-based politics, ethno-nationalism will once again raise its ugly head. What is the way out? Will these dispersed sub-nationalisms pose a threat to the legitimacy of the Indian State? Can a fresh consensus be created on designing a new sense of national identity bereft of any overt or covert religious symbolisms? One useful lesson learned from other societies is the efficacy of delinking nationality from citizenship or to demarcate identity from equality. When the emphasis is on citizenship and Rights and Duties, a sense of common identity can be created. In fact, a successful case in this regard is the United States, where the term national and citizen are often used in the same sense. Yet another strategy could be to regain some of the moral highgrounds we lost after the freedom movement.

One dangerous trend noticed in recent times is the recall of history and historical episodes to emphasise the national. It should be borne in mind that these episodes may be rediscovered, reconstructed or purely fabricated. The constant reference to Rama Rajya as an ideational stage by proponents of Hinduuta is one example when a particular past is brought in to the nation’s consciousness as a potent political strategy. The violent convolutions of this are evident from the attack against minority communities and also in cultural fascism like the outrageous reactions against Deepa Mehta’s film Fire. However, what these ‘cultural advocates’ need to keep in mind is the fact that prior to the formation of the Indian State, various religious and cultural groups co-existed peacefully ensuring that their collective self-interest did not threaten the principle of co-existence. And it is this civilisational history that today is wilting under the onslaught of a recent political history riding on a wave of ethnic conflicts and competition.

So what form should nationalism take today? Ideally, one which stresses ‘self awareness’ as opposed to ‘self consciousness’. An awareness that about 350 million of us struggle to find one square meal a day. Or, the fact that corruption has permeated every fibre of our institutions. An awareness that rule of law is often found only in textbooks. Not to mention the fact that 23 million boys and 36 million girls aged between 6-14 have not seen the insides of a school. Let us celebrate this awareness by addressing these huge inequalities and anomalies. Let a national identity emerge out of this awareness - an identity that hinges around social sensitivity, moral integrity and civic consciousness.
CYBERCHAT

CYBER HOUNDS – THE AMAZING
WORLD OF SEARCH ENGINES

Before the arrival of the World Wide Web (WWW) in 1993, the Internet had already achieved a substantial size. Searching for information comprised the enormous and exhaustive task of connecting to each server and finding the requisite information on it. However, things changed radically in April 1994 when two doctoral students at Stanford, David Filo and Jerry Yang, developed a universal database using which one could find information in a quick and simple way. Consequently, the world’s first search engine Yahoo! was born.

Today there exist a variety of search engines, each with their own individual characteristics. Between all of them they would possibly cover almost a major part of the information on the Web at any given time. However not a single search engine can claim to cover all of the information on the Internet.

How Search Engines Work

Search engines are composed of databases that comprise indexing schemes, a query processor and robot programs called spiders or crawlers. When you go to a search engine, what you can see are the former two components, as for the spiders, they are hidden from view. These are designed to track down Web pages, follow the links they contain, and add any new information they encounter to a master database or index. The records in these databases consist of the uniform resource locator (URL) or more simply, the address, where the web site or page is located, the title of the page and the key words for that page along with a short summary of the site in a few lines. To search, you have to enter keywords. The query engine picks up your request and tries to find the desired information from millions of page recorded in the index. After which the results are displayed.

Some Search Engines to take you there!

Yahoo! (www.yahoo.com)

Yahoo! was born in 1994. It was the first and still the most popular search directory on the Internet today. Yahoo! is technically not a search engine but a directory. It is often referred to as the grandaddy of directory-based web search tools. What has set Yahoo! apart from other search engines is its hierarchical approach to organizing the information that is available on the Internet and the World Wide Web. Its directory and classification system are far more detailed than those offered by rival services. If your search request fails in Yahoo! it is automatically routed to AltaVista, for further search, and only on negative results from AltaVista do you end up getting a failed search.

AltaVista (www.altavista.com)

AltaVista is generally considered to be one of the most powerful and comprehensive search engines available. It became the top search engine, since its inception in 1995 with its massive databases and its powerful search facilities. AltaVista gives out results best with complex searches, while in simple searches, it returns thousands of documents without a confidence level. AltaVista offers, a full range of advanced search options in addition to simple Boolean operations like AND, OR, and NOT, case sensitive searches, date ranges, wildcards with key words, weighted key word search.

Excite (www.excite.com)

Excite is a powerful search engine that’s easy to master, along with the ability to quickly zero in on the best web sites. Excite’s search engine uses a method called concept based searching that allows you to enter your queries in plain English, without worrying about exact key words and special punctuation. This also enables excite to hunt for ideas rather than the exact words.
HOTBOT (www.hotbot.com)

You’ll love the ease and speed with which you can search using HotBot. The home page offers properly divided categories and sub categories. Instead of typing in queries with special punctuation marks, you can click on drop down menu selections and radio buttons to conduct even the most complex searches.

INFOSEEK (www.infoseek.com)

The search capabilities of Infoseek rival those of powerhouse AltaVista, but the interface is so clean and simple that even the first time users can often find what they are looking for with ease. Infoseek looks at the full text of each page before providing results to the seeker. Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT, NEAR) can’t be used although the service does support several good field terms and the use of (+) and (-) signs for including and excluding words.

LYCOS (www.lycos.com)

Lycos bills itself as “Your Personal Internet Guide” whose mission is to take the confusion and chaos out of the Internet. That’s the gentle avuncular side of the search engine’s persona. The less sympathetic side suggest that you “get Lycos or get lost”. A search engine with an attitude! Lycos offers a lot of content, like news, site reviews, links, a people finder, and an ability to search for images and sounds. Lycos offers a catalogue of multimedia files, which lets you find multimedia files on the Internet. It also offers categorical access to the most accessed sites on the Internet presumably the top sites.

askjeeves (www.askjeeves.com)

This search engine offers the easiest way to search. It does an “English search”, that is you just have to ask a question in plain English and click on its ‘ask’ button. Not only will it list out the answers but will also provide you various links in pull down menus from other search engines.

More and more search engines are now incorporating Web directories and are characterizing themselves as “portals” or “hubs”. They have various categories that are further divided into sub categories. All you have to do is to click on any and search within them. As a result, searching is becoming a relatively easier process than before.

So, click on the Modem and let’s Yahoo!

- Rati M. Bhatt

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BIBLIO

Corrupt Cities: A Practical Guide to Cure and Prevention


Municipal corruption is a problem of growing concern around the world. When city governments become systematically corrupt, they don’t work—and, the authors argue, neither do the usual strategies for municipal reform. Klitgaard, MacLean-Abaroa, and Parris provide numerous examples of corruption that goes far beyond “greasing the wheels.” Procurement scams pad officials’ pockets and allow unsafe public works. Corrupt tax administration favors both the rich and the tax collectors. City permits proliferate, not in order to protect the public but to gather bribes.

But the authors are anything but pessimistic about the prospects for change. Their fascinating case studies depict seemingly hopeless problems but turn out to be the starting points for successful reforms. The authors describe three stages:

1. Diagnosis. How to assess the types of corruption and their extent, and how to involve citizens and employees in the search for workable solutions.

2. Strategy. How to analyze corruption as a crime of calculation and as a function of corrupt systems rather than (just) corrupt individuals—an economic approach that suggests new ways of curing and preventing corruption.

3. Implementation. How to carry forth efforts at cure and prevention, including organizing an anti-corruption campaign, involving citizens, experimenting with incentives, and more.

“Preventing corruption,” the authors contend, “can help raise city revenues, improve service delivery, stimulate public confidence and participation, and win elections.” CORRUPT CITIES shows how it has been done, even in the most adverse settings, and how it might be done again.

For further inputs, a bibliography of reference materials is provided in the document.
New releases from PAC!

- City Finances in India: Some Disquieting Trends.
  Sita Sekhar & Smita Bidarkar.
  Rs. 50.00 or US$15.00

Using data provided in the municipal budget documents for five cities in India namely Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Chennai, Mumbai and Pune, this seminal work compares resource mobilisation and utilisation, allocation patterns, trends in important sources of income and expenditure across cities and provides useful lessons.

- Voices from the Capital: A Report Card on Public Services in Delhi.
  Sita Sekhar & Suresh Balakrishnan.
  Rs. 50.00 or US$15.00

Based on the Report Card Methodology of grading civic services, this report focuses on the feedback of residents in the Capital City of New Delhi on various qualitative and quantitative dimensions of public service delivery.

  K. Gopakumar.
  Rs. 50.00 or US$15.00

This document is part of the effort to share the work that went into the Workshop more widely. The materials provide readers with insights into the work with Report Cards and advocacy.

For ordering the PAC Publications write to:

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E-mail: pacindia@vsnl.com

CAMPAIGNS

Getting rid of ‘Elec-SHUNS’

Decreasing voter participation in elections is a widespread malady. And if elections occur too frequently, the apathy and indifference increases. However, abstinence from exercising the very basic tenet of democracy is not going to help the cause much. The onus for change and reform can happen only when the citizens are alert and use their power of franchise in an informed manner.

PAC in association with other civil society institutions carried out a series of campaigns to bring the voters back to the polling booths. These interventions sparked off considerable interest in the media with most major dailies widely publicising the initiatives. A brief outline of these campaigns are discussed below:

- Launching a Citizens’ Manifesto

PAC in association with like-minded NGOs and Public Interest Groups released a Citizens’ Manifesto urging all political parties to commit themselves to a set of issues that matter the most to citizens and provide a responsible, accountable and transparent government. The manifesto emphasises a set of eligibility requirements – proven track record of community service, submission of property/income tax returns, no standing criminal or corruption charges, be a resident of the constituency and follow the code of conduct laid down by the Election Commission. The other points highlighted are: Legislation to
give citizens the Right to Recall their representatives; Enactment of a Right to Information Bill; Revision of Property Rates; Curbing corruption to attract investments and evolving performance standards for public enterprises; Optimal utilisation of central funds for anti-poverty programmes and; Constituting an Ethics and Conduct Committee.

The Soul O’ the Poll Contest

In an innovative attempt to get people to express their feelings about elections and to shed their apathy and vote, PAC in association with the Swabhimana Initiative organised a cartoon contest for the residents of the city on the theme: Elections 99. The contest evoked a good response and the judges had a tough time deciding the winners from over 75 entries. Mr. Ayan Guha, a research student at the Indian Institute of Science bagged the first prize. Dr. T. Govindaraju and Mr. J. Srinivasa won the second and third positions. The prizes were sponsored by Titan Industries Ltd, Adlabs Private Limite, ICICI Bank, Koramangala Branch and Public Affairs Centre.

Protesting Against a Draconian Bill

PAC in association with the Bangalore Environment Trust, CIVIC Bangalore and the Urban Waste Expertise programme has urged the Governor, Mr. Khursheed Alam Khan, to withhold his consent to the hastily passed Karnataka Town and Country Planning (Amendment) Bill, 1999. In a Joint Memorandum, the parties drew the attention of the governor that the proposed provisions will enable unscrupulous elements to construct buildings without plan in open spaces such as parks, playgrounds, tanks etc., and get them regularised using the provisions of the Act.

As we go to the Press, we are happy to inform our readers that the Governor has send the Bill back to the Legislature for reconsideration and review.

Badges for School Children

In an effort to reach across to the parents, 100,000 school children in the city wore badges which had a simple but powerful message ‘Vote for my sake’. The badges were sponsored by Public Affairs Centre, Swabhimana and the Karnataka Ownership Apartment Promoters Association.

In addition to these, PAC in association with Swabhimana used mass media conduits like Cable Television, Billboards and Newspaper Advertisements to reach across to a wider cross-section of people.

(For further information on these, please contact S. Manjunath / Smita Bidarkar at PAC)

Vintage Car Rally

On August 29th, voters in Bangalore witnessed a unique call-to-duty to exercise their votes from some very old four-wheeled ‘residents’ of the city. Public Affairs Centre in association with Swabhimana, both non-profit NGOs, organised a Vintage & Classic Car Rally to urge all eligible voters to cast their votes on September 5th. The Rally, coordinated by the Karnataka Classic & Vintage Car Club, was flagged by Justice M.F. Saldhana. The vintage ‘guardian angles’ of the city beamed across messages encouraging people to exercise their franchise.
This issue we focus on poverty related resources.

   An excellent site to access documents and information related to poverty. The site also enables you to register free to the PovertyNet newsletter.

   A brand new web site launched on September 8, 1999 by the United Nations Development Programme to "tap the growing power of the Internet to help eradicate extreme poverty". The NetAid web site presents information on anti-poverty success stories, ways through which individuals can take action to help end extreme poverty, and the NetAid concerts in New York, London and Geneva.

   Check in here and with a simple click of the mouse you can donate food (at no cost to you!) to the United Nations World Food Programme.

Check out the new Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative web site at http://www.worldbank.org/hipe. With the recent public attention on the HIPC Initiative, the World Bank has made a vast amount of information on the subject available on the web, including a summary of the 1999 HIPC review. The revamped HIPC provides everything there is to know; history, present and future of framework, progress reports, statistics, and country-specific debt sustainability analyses. Some of the documents are also posted in French, Spanish, Portuguese, and German.

The principal objective of the HIPC Debt Initiative is to bring these countries’ debt burdens to sustainable levels to ensure that reform and poverty-reduction efforts are not put at risk by continued high debts and debt services.