Action speaks louder than words" not always though. In striving to improve the quality of governance in India, PAC has been trying to combine both, words (= information) and actions, in innovative ways to maximise the effectiveness of the citizen’s voice. Citizen Action Support (CAS) as a functional domain in PAC has been evolving steadily over the past three years, and this has brought PAC closer to the realities of governance at the urban grassroots. “Knowledge is wisdom” and “Information is power”. Using knowledge and information as tools to support the advocacy efforts of civil society groups is the prime objective of CAS.

CAS covers a broad spectrum of activities. Though, initially the focus of its advocacy efforts have been to follow-up on report-card studies, there is an emerging practice to design and conduct programmes which have CAS as the core. Strengthening and revitalising civil society institutions like urban community groups, promoting transparency and informed choices in the electoral process, facilitating multi-sector partnership forums like the Swabhimaana initiative to improve urban management in Bangalore are some of the activities in this direction.

In the process of supporting or initiating citizen action either as an outcome or follow-up of a research report card study or in itself, PAC has grown to understand that collaboration and networking with other organisations and expert groups would make its efforts more sustainable and effective. PAC’s work with Foundation for Public Interest (FPI), an NGO based in Ahmedabad is one of its most fruitful experiences of collaboration. Members from FPI were trained by PAC and MBA (Marketing and Business Associates) to conduct a Report Card on public services in the low income settlements and slums of Ahmedabad. Around 1200 members of SEWA (Self Employed Women’s Association) spread across 12 slums in Ahmedabad participated in the survey. Parivarthan, a project to improve all the areas covered by the study was initiated by Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation as a response to the findings of the survey. This seems to be one of the most notable outcomes.

PAC’s association with FEDCOT (The Federation of Consumer Organisations in Tamilnadu), was the main reason for why the Government of Tamilnadu took the initiative to invite PAC to present the salient findings of the Report Card on Public Services in Chennai. Later on, FEDCOT, whose members were trained in using the Report Card Methodology collaborated with PAC to study the Public Distribution System in Tamilnadu. Citizens Action Group (CAG) was an active ally of PAC in the design and conduct of a study to assess the nature and extent of problems encountered by the poor in their interactions with the public health care system in Bangalore.

Choose the Right Councillor Programme, an experiment to promote transparency in Bangalore Municipal electoral process and to stimulate informed voter choice was a collaborative exercise involving many NGOs and neighbourhood organisations. A similar exercise during the Loksabha elections held in 1996 had Decan Herald, a leading daily in Karnataka, as its partner. More recently a Report Card study on public services and urban poor in Mumbai was designed in consultation with Rationing Krithi Samithi, a federation of NGOs working with urban poor in Mumbai because of which advocacy follow-up is expected to be more effective.

Given the fact that PAC’s scope of work covers the entire nation while its own organisational resources are modest, its strategy of networking and collaboration throws open both, problems and promises for the future. The conscious choice to adopt this strategy, on the one hand, is both complex and time consuming while on the other, it has enabled PAC to bridge gaps in the interface between research and action; widen and optimise the impact by encouraging local participation facilities and mutual learning; thereby building capacity of the institution of civil society.

S. Manjunath, PAC
Graft Scams and Corruption: Is the tide turning?

Not long ago, corruption was looked upon as the latest icon in the pantheon of gods. Well, it exhibited all virtues to be among our makers omnipotent, omnipresent and not easily verifiable. And therefore, any effort to address this phenomenon, be it individual, social or government, was largely seen as quixotic. International aid agencies, global bodies and super powers put on thick blinkers as the Mobutus, Marcoses and Abachas stashed away millions of aid money in tax havens and made a mockery of development efforts. However, if the deliberations at the 8th International Anti Corruption Conference, held at Lima, Peru during September 7-11, 1997 are anything to go by, the march of history is poised for a turn for the better.

Is this a case of misplaced optimism? Trends across the globe seem to suggest a different story. Stronger, determined and effective coalitions consisting of individuals, governments, independent watch-dog agencies and multi lateral bodies are being forged today to combat the scourge of corruption world wide. And more important, in recent years we have witnessed exhilarating instances of peoples' movements sweeping aside corrupt governments in Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America. *Zero Tolerance* with corruption seems to be the new civil society buzzword.

Just to put these trends in a clear perspective, an attempt is made below to examine how these initiatives are impacting at different levels involving different actors.

- **Actions at International and Regional Levels**

The demise of the cold war and the resultant surge of democratisation have resulted in more transparency in international relations. No longer is it possible to justify support to overtly corrupt regimes under the rubric of 'ideological reasons'. Resources in the West, devoted to anti-Communist projects are increasingly getting shifted to law enforcement. Intelligence agencies are quickly discarding their espionage and covert operations role and switching over to address the new security risk: organised crime and corruption. International coalitions and aid agencies have started acting tough on corruption.

Refreshingly, increasing attention is being made on the behaviour of the "rich cousins" in the North. A case in point is the shocking fact of tax deductibility of foreign bribes. Only a third of the 27 member strong OECD (The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) forbid outright domestic tax deduction for foreign bribes paid by their nationals; these include, the U.S., Canada, Britain and Japan. Many European nations including Belgium, Luxembourg, France, Sweden, Greece and Germany still tolerate tax deductibility of foreign bribes.

However, the May 1996 meeting of the OECD members has resulted in many positive steps in the form of a Convention that actively addresses many of the anomalies. The major recommendations, anchoring around the criminalisation of bribery of foreign public officials by member states and abolishing tax deductibility of bribes, are expected to be implemented by the end of 1998.

A major pressure to clean up the act has come from the World Bank and IMF. Ever since the World Bank President James Wolfensohn’s hard hitting speech at the annual meeting of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in October 1996, the Bank has acted obsessively in pushing aid recipient countries to become transparent in matters of governance and economic policy. The IMF Managing Director Michael Camdessus also followed suit by preparing tough guidelines to attack corruption. Recent decisions by the IMF to cut-off a $220 million loan to Kenya and offering a country credit to Argentina, based upon evidence of good governance reflect that there is more to these guidelines than mere rhetoric. The United Nations under the new Secretary General Mr. Kofi Annan drafted a powerful declaration in mid-December 1996 against corruption and bribery in international commercial transactions. All these measures are collectively providing the critical momentum for isolated initiatives to coalesce around a common agenda to root out corruption.

- **Action at the National and Local levels**

The good news is that there now seems to be an unanimous agreement that corruption is the cause and not the consequence of poverty. Data and research highlighting the disastrous effects of poverty and economic growth have been quite prolific of late. A recent empirical study shows that a corrupt country is likely to achieve aggregate investment levels of almost 5 percent less than a relatively uncorrupt country and to lose about half a percentage point of gross domestic product (GDP) growth per year. Moreover, corruption is also likely to distort the pattern of public expenditures; corrupt countries, for instance, spend less on education. Particular emphasis is also placed on the aspect of liberalisation. There is growing evidence that in transition economies, mostly in Eastern Europe, market liberalisation and privatisation have significantly increased corruption. Many advocates of 'free markets' are today wary in pushing the idea of economic reforms when legal institutions are not yet developed.

Experiences from different parts of the world show that stemming corruption is indeed possible and that too in relatively quick time. Hong Kong and Singapore are two good examples of countries that have shifted quickly from being very corrupt to relatively clean. Other success stories include Botswana, Chile, 

Malaysia, Portugal, Bolivia, the Philippines, Poland and Uganda. Good institutions and determined leadership are at the core of most of these successes. Anti corruption bodies, like the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) in Hong Kong and similar institutional variations in Botswana, Chile, Malaysia and Singapore are in the forefront in the fight against corruption. In Bolivia, the reformist Mayor of La Paz initiated a major institutional overhaul of the city’s institutions in the mid 1980’s that set the trend for larger efforts. In Uganda, the Museveni government, which took over the reigns in 1986, implemented a strategy that encompassed reforming the civil service, strengthening the auditor general’s, empowering a reputable inspector general to investigate and prosecute cases of corruption, and implementing an anticorruption campaign. The clean up of the tax inspectorate in Philippines under the charismatic leadership of Judge Efren Planas and the ongoing overhaul of Argentina’s Social Security System (ANES) are more examples of how effective institutional reforms can bring about long lasting effects.

The impetus behind most of these initiatives has been provided by the civil society. To cite one example, a majority of military coups in post independence Africa was fuelled by a public need to fight corruption. Much more stronger initiatives also exist like the Alianza Civica (Civic Alliance) movement in Mexico whose innovative adopt-an-official-agenda monitors how Congressmen, Senators and high level government functionaries use public funds. The onus on civil society will be much more in the future. It has to play a diverse role - critic, catalyst and advocate, in its approach towards the government and the private sector. And it also becomes the critical point in the triad State - Private Sector - Civil Society, in mobilising opinion, facilitating decisions and raising awareness.

The tide is turning. Let us hope it wipes out one of the greatest scourges afflicting humanity today.

K. Gopakumar

PROJECT

CITY NET : A Study of Neighbourhood Newspapers in Bangalore

Neighbourhood Newspaper (NNP) is a relatively new medium of information dissemination. Generally, these are small scale ventures with an exclusive focus on a locality. NNPs have enormous potential in the coming years as they could function as effective bridges between the administration and the community at the ward level. This would certainly stimulate the ward committees proposed to be set up under the provisions of the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act of India. It is generally observed that the readers expect from this forum. The study on Neighbourhood Newspapers in Bangalore was an attempt in this direction. We present below some highlights of our probe (For the full report, please see the section on PAC Publications).

Profile of the Newspapers

Our attempts to trace these forums in the city revealed the existence of eight active neighbourhood newspapers in Bangalore. (See table below)

Certain interesting features could very easily be discerned. For one, all the NNPs are published in English (only one carries a page in Kannada). Part of this may be due to the fact that these forums cater to the upper middle class sections of the society. However, this is in sharp contrast to the trend observed in other cities like Mumbai where a good number of NNPs are published in the vernacular. All these eight NNPs cover about five areas in Bangalore; many of them cover more than one neighbourhood. Most of them were recent ventures (post 1995).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. no</th>
<th>Name of the NNP</th>
<th>Periodicity</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Print Run</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Times of Indranagar</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>JNR Today</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>This Week Jayanagar</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>12,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Star of Koramangala</td>
<td>Fortnightly</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>8,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Banaswadi News</td>
<td>Fortnightly</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Kshema Samachar</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>LINK</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Konanakunte Kaleidoscope</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>English/Kannada</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The staff strength seems to average around four per NNP. Majority of the staff were male; all women employees were part-time. Most of the NNPs comes out as four page tabloid size (single demi, folded to tabloid size) issues. However, some of them do come out with six page issues during festival seasons to accommodate more advertisements.

Profile of the Publishers/Entrepreneurs

A majority of the publishers/entrepreneurs (78%) were male. Interestingly, though some of the NNPs were registered under a woman’s name, they were for all practical purposes managed and operated by men. A majority of the entrepreneurs were under 35 years of age. Educational qualifications wise, four are graduates, two post graduates, one doctorate and one undergraduate student. And, excepting one, all others have different professions (i.e., other than running and managing NNPs). And, more than half of the total NNPs are run as subsidiary ventures, housed in larger establishments. Another interesting observation that emerges is that fifty percent of the sample are from non-Kannada speaking background.

The major rationale for starting these ventures reflects a blend of sharp business acumen and sensitivity to the city’s growing needs. Exposure to similar ventures in other cities in India and abroad also seem to have encouraged setting up similar initiatives.

Running a NNP: The Basics

There is no discernible preference in fixing the periodicity of publishing a NNP, though, from the sample, going in for weekly and monthly print-runs seemed to be favoured over fortnightly issues. Local area news and local grievances were identified by the entrepreneurs as major contents of their newspapers; other regular items include engagements, medical news, fitness columns, and articles on environmental and leisure. Almost all NNPs surveyed depended on advertisements as the major source of revenue. A majority of the entrepreneurs claimed that they received advertisements from their neighbourhoods as well as from outside; most of the outside advertisements were from educational institutions, especially from those in the computer and technology related fields.

In most cases, the entrepreneurs themselves took the task of mobilising advertisements. Some of them do employ a marketing executive for selling advertisement spaces. These marketing executives, often working as full time employees, also perform the role of reporters/correspondents. Part time employees are drawn in as editors and freelancers. News is also tapped through active welfare associations in the area.

A majority of the NNPs is distributed on door to door basis through regular newspaper agents by giving a fixed commission; very few NNPs go for distribution by post.

Is it Viable to Produce NNPs?
The Final Balance Sheet

Finding out the true viability picture from the entrepreneurs proved to be quite taxing! We had to arrive at our own figures based on the information on the revenue and cost components. Since most of these figures were cross checked with other sources like printers and advertisers, the final figure, hopefully, reflects the reality. But before that, here is the viability story from the entrepreneurs’ perspective: Only 22 percent of the entrepreneurs reported that they are making a good profit. The majority claimed that it’s a more or less break even proposition. Some claimed that the returns are quite inconsistent; if one issue makes a profit then the subsequent one may not and therefore, they had to manage the fine act of balancing between the profit and loss situations. However, all entrepreneurs do agree that NNPs eventually turn out to be quite successful business ventures.

(The study on Neighbourhood Newspapers was co-ordinated by S. Manjunath, PAC.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Periodicity</th>
<th>Av. Expenditure/month</th>
<th>Av. Revenue/month</th>
<th>Profit/month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monthly*</td>
<td>Rs. 5500</td>
<td>Rs. 6218</td>
<td>Rs. 718</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fortnightly</td>
<td>Rs. 25,025</td>
<td>Rs. 31,735</td>
<td>Rs. 6710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>Rs. 38,800</td>
<td>Rs. 51,636</td>
<td>Rs. 12,836</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* It should however be emphasized that of the two monthlies surveyed, one (Link) is run as a purely charitable venture and from the information provided is running at a loss.
Corruption in Public Services: The Bangladesh Story

The Bangladesh Chapter of Transparency International undertook a three-tier survey to highlight various dimensions of corruption in public service delivery. Initially, a pilot study was undertaken and then the second phase, a baseline survey of 2500 households, was undertaken. An institutional survey on performance or delivery of public services was conducted in the third phase to obtain information from a provider’s point of view.

Public perceptions on the functioning of critical services are highlighted below:

- **Police**

The most startling findings of the baseline survey revealed that about one-half of the complainants (49.5%) made prior arrangement with the police for disposal of their cases. More than two-thirds (68.1%) of the complainants reported to have made payments to the police for filing complaints as First Information Report (FIR). The survey revealed that 96.3 percent of the total households expressed the view by way of their complete agreement or general agreement with the assertion that it was almost impossible to get help from the police without money or influence.

- **Judiciary**

More than three-fifths (63%) of the households involved in court cases reported that they had to bribe the court officials. Bribes were paid to the court employees by 73.1 of households, followed by 16.3 percent of households to opponent’s lawyer. The survey revealed that almost 9 out of every 10 households (88.5%) agreed or completely agreed that it was almost impossible to get quick and fair judgement from the court without money or influence.

- **Education**

The falling standard in the education sector is clearly highlighted. 74 percent of the households used extra regular method for admission of their children into school. Among the various extra regular methods used, payment of donation was most prominent and used by about 41 percent of the households, followed by the use of political influence (28%) and through private tutors (10%).

- **Health**

The survey revealed that approximately two-fifths (39.4%) of the households reported payment higher than normal registration fees at the outpatient department. The households who had patients seeking inpatient treatment also reported irregularities in admission procedure. Among the extra regular methods for admission into hospital the frequently used methods were: consultation with the doctor at private chamber (20% of the households); payment of extra money to the hospital staff (18% of households); through hospital staff (9%); and through influential persons reported by 9 percent of the households.

- **Municipal Services**

Another sector which has a profound effect on the quality of life is the supply of public amenities. The baseline survey revealed that only about 44 percent of urban dwellers in the country had municipal water supply. About 23 percent of the households reported difficulty getting water supply and of these about 17 percent of the households reported payment of extras money, 16 percent reported repeated visits and 12 percent reported long wait and red tape in getting a water line.
In relation to electricity supply approximately 4 out of every 5 urban households in the country reported to have electricity connection. Just fewer than 30 percent of these households did not face any difficulty in getting electricity connection to their house. The remaining 70 percent of the households faced various difficulties: among the difficulties faced about 33 percent of the households paid money for electricity connection and accessories, 21 percent reported to make frequent visits, 12 percent reported undue delay and 40 percent reported other un stated difficulties.

○ System Loss
32 percent of the urban households stated that they obtained reduced water bill by arrangement with the meter reader. 30 percent of the household reduced the electricity bill by similar means and 47 percent of the households reduced their municipal assessment of holding tax on house and property by arrangement with municipal staff on payment of money.

○ Public Perception of Corruption
Public view was sought on what activities constitute corruption. The base line survey revealed that among the choices put before them, 'misuse of position and power' was perceived as corruption by the highest proportion of respondent (76%), followed by 'negligence of duty' (75.7%), 'activity outside normal procedure' (67.7%), 'while on duty taking money for personal gain' (57.8%), 'misuse of power and fund for personal gain' (56.4%) and 'misuse of fund' (50.6%).

The two main institutions of the administration which came at the top of the league table of corruption are Thana Police Service (97% of households) and the Judiciary (89%). The other public offices in the league table in order of choice were the Sub-Registrar's office, land Record office, Tehsil office and the Scheduled Banks. Furthermore, the Thana Police Service (58%) and the Judiciary (19%) were also identified as the most corrupt public offices. Ironically enough 97 percent of the households also considered the police station as either important or highly important public service organisation!

The survey also sought to capture public perception on the likely causes of corruption: 76 percent viewed that 'desire to get rich overnight' was the main cause, followed by 'moral degradation' (58%), 'lack of accountability' (51%) and 'inadequate salary' (32%).

For further information, contact

Munzoor Hasan,
Transparency International-Bangladesh Chapter,
Insurance Academy Bhaban,
53 Mohakhali, Commercial Area,
Dhaka-1212,
Telephone: 988-4811
E-mail: tib@bangla.net

This column introduces organisations and forums involved in promoting good governance. The objective here is to augment and strengthen the process of networking among individuals and institutions sharing similar views and perceptions and also to facilitate a process of adaptability and replicability of good initiatives.

The Global Urban Research Initiative (GURI)

GURI is a large urban research network with a substantial presence in the developing world. It includes around 48 countries represented by key members of the research community, NGOs, government planners and policy makers.

GURI’s mandate involves the identification, analysis and public discussion of major thematic research and policy issues in the urban field, and the dissemination of this work, particular through publications, meetings, and the building of networks. The network’s focus is to build local knowledge within the development community in order to better inform government policy and international assistance programmes in the field of urban development. GURI’s long term objective is to strengthen the professional skills and institutional position of local researchers, a mission supported by the fact that developing country researchers are uniquely qualified to interpret global forces in their own local context and to transmit their understanding of the local environment to the outside world.

Since its inception in 1991, this unique network is currently in the third phase of work. The first phase (1991-1993) established an urban research agenda for
the 1990s after reviewing the situation and findings of urban research since the 1960s within the network's 12 sub-regions, or country groupings in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Six themes emerged from this extensive review - urban governance, globalisation, the urban environment and sustainability, poverty, finance and the economy of cities, and urban social structure.

GURI's second phase (1993-95), concentrating on the theme of urban governance, involved research teams in all 12 sub-regions of the network holding meetings and writing papers on the subject. This theme also provided the focus for the additional research in Latin America on urban poverty and social policy and in Africa on waste management. The current phase of the GURI project (1996-97) focuses on action research at local/municipal level on selected aspects of urban governance. This will involve community NGOs and the government in the examination of specific cases with local potential for reform.

GURI receives the support of the Ford Foundation, the World Bank, CIDA and IDRC. It is co-ordinated by the Centre for Urban and Community Studies at the University of Toronto, Canada.

(To know more about GURI, contact

Daniel Berman,
Centre for Urban and Community Studies,
University of Toronto,
455 Spadina Avenue,
Toronto, Ontario M5S 2G8, Canada.
Or, visit their interesting web site on the internet at http://www.chass.utoronto.ca)

Seikatsu Consumers Co-operative, Tokyo

The motto of the Seikatsu Consumers co-operative, a hugely popular and innovative forum of ordinary housewives says it all: "We are aiming at a higher quality, sustainable human and environment-oriented life and a right and fair society by controlling our own lives". The Co-operative was awarded the Right Livelihood Award in December, 1989 for its efforts to promote economic efficiency. The philosophy of the Co-operative highlights a unique producer-consumer relation which oversees the production of safe, reliable and environmentally friendly food and miscellaneous goods.

The Co-operative operates basically through a system of advanced ordering and joint buying based on HAN. HAN is a group of 8-13 members which places orders and receives products. The members of HAN spend a lot of time on how to share each product before ordering, because all the products are bought in bulk to facilitate reasonable production and distribution. Orders are placed a month in advance to enable members to plan their consumer life and also for producers to plan for fresh products without any preservatives. Goods are delivered from producers to HAN through Seikatsu Club Delivery Centres. HAN members divide the goods among themselves. This system has proved to be cost effective as it involves no expenses in maintaining shops or stocks.

The principles of developing SC brand products are:
(a) they should be safe and reliable, and nutritious and tasteful in the area of food production and (b) they should be cost effective and not detrimental to the environment when produced, distributed, and consumed. There is an agreement on these principles and relationship of mutual trust between the Cooperative and the producers under contact.

From consumer movement to active politics - the Seikatsu Consumers Co-operative has come a long way. Today, more than 100 members of the Co-operative have been elected to local government offices and are actively involved in making policies to solve environmental problems and social welfare issues. Yet another innovative effort is the establishment of Workers' Collectives wherein workers invest, manage and work. The key focus here is to rebuild local societies governed by people.

For more information contact:

Seikatsu Consumer's Co-operative Union
3-2-8, Miyasaka, Setagaya-ku
Tokyo
Fax: 03-3427-9041
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.

Redefining Development Interventions: A Radical Experiment in Wayanad, Kerala

People based development strategy is today viewed as the best alternative to ensure sustainable and participative development processes. This approach emphasises the need to strengthen institutional and social capacity supportive of greater local control, accountability, initiative and self reliance. However, very few examples exist to illustrate the potency of this approach. A pioneering and in many ways radical experiment called Swashraya Sameeksha (self supporting search) carried out by SHREYAS, a community based NGO in Kerala relates a fascinating story of successfully empowering a rural community to chart their own development trajectory.

SHREYAS, a development NGO affiliated to the Catholic Diocese of Bathery in Northern Kerala, started functioning in 1979. The organisation has 84 registered farmer's organisations, 86 credit unions, 115 tribal self help groups and 145 registered women's organisation in its fold. These micro level organisations function in about 210 villages and cover more than 25,000 families.

The genesis of Swashraya Sameeksha could be traced back to 1989 when SHREYAS initiated a participatory development process in 52 selected villages. The main thrust of this process was to ensure people's participation in the whole development agenda, right from the beginning of the project planning stage itself. Trained volunteers conducted the study in the villages and processed the data; the findings were then discussed with the community members for final analysis. The learnings from this exercise and the involvement of the community prompted the organisation to push the concept of decentralisation in a big way. As the first step, a huge people's convention was organised during February 1994 to discuss the idea of decentralisation with the community. Around 1200 people took part in this massive exercise. Based on the feedback from the community, SHREYAS embarked on a policy of active decentralisation of its units. A similar convention was organised after one year to take stock of the decentralisation efforts. It was at this stage that the idea for a massive village study and participatory planning was mooted.

Swashraya Sameeksha was formally launched in May 1995. As the first stage of the exercise, data collection based on PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) techniques was conducted in 84 selected villages at the level of neighbourhood groups. On an average, around 25-30 households participated at the neighbourhood level. More than 60 aspects of rural life were analysed over 3 days. Data generated at neighbourhood levels were consolidated at the unit level and finally at the central level. Following this, project planning sessions were organised for all villages. Ten facilitation teams covered this exercise; the content and process of each village level planning were documented. All the findings, diagrams and analyses were kept at the villages for future reference. Around 2400 people participated and an average about 50 activities were identified in each village. Efforts are now on to convert each one of these activities into action plans by the micro level organisations.

The whole exercise has unleashed a new synergy in the villages. Rather than being passive recipients of development aid, the community is today seen as proactive partner in development interventions. Analysing, planning, implementing and monitoring their march towards a new era.

For more details, please contact:
Fr. Varghese Muttamana, SHREYAS, Sultan Bathery, Wayanad, Kerala, Fax (91) 4968 20479.

Making Municipal Budgets Participatory: The Experience of Porto Alegre, Brazil.

Municipal budgets are usually equated with top down power concentration, resource waste and corruption. Seven years ago, the City Hall of Porto Alegre in Brazil evolved a system that is fast emerging as a popular and efficient model of preparing municipal budgets. The system, connoted to as Participative Budget, involves an open debate and consultative process to decide on the amounts of income and expenditure as well as where and when the investments will be made, the priorities for the government and the actions and plans to be followed up.

The experience has proved that democratic and transparent administration of the resources is the only way to avoid corruption and mishandling of public funds. Further, popular participation has resulted in efficient spending and also has led to public works and actions that are of high priority to the population. Since its inception, projects decided by the participative budgets represent investments over $700 million, mainly in urban infrastructure build up and enhancing the quality of life.

The Participative Budget is known by 60 percent of the population, according to a public opinion research and millions of people participate actively in the process. Presently all over Brazil, there are at least 70 cities following this system.

Three decades ago, the East Asian countries Hong Kong, Singapore, the Republic of Korea and Taiwan ranked among the poorest in the world. Today, they are the epicentres of growth and development and are perceived to be among the world’s fastest growing economies. And together with Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and Philippines constitute the East Asian miracle. It is therefore not surprising to see politicians, civil servants, community leaders, business persons, academics and development agencies increasingly looking at this region for inspiration and ideas. Especially so, given the fact that at the heart of this miracle lies the story of effective governance which includes the fostering of a broad social consensus among citizens to support and engage in development strategies and the strengthening of the public sector.

The book is based on case study presentations at the International Conference on Governance Innovations: Building a Government-Citizen-Business Partnership, held in Manila, Philippines on October 20-23, 1996. The conference was part of the Canada-ASEAN Governance Innovations Network (CAGIN) Program. Four key areas are identified as essential routes to effective governance: Managing relationships among the government, citizens and business; Incentives in the public sector; Municipal governance; and Strategies to develop capacity for effective governance. Arranged under these four themes, the seven core chapters draw in a rich repertoire of cases and experiments across the globe emphasising actionable and replicable strategies.

India: Economic Development and Social Opportunity
by Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen.
Oxford University Press. Rs 95.

Books on India certainly outnumber the country’s problems! Such is the volume of analytical outpourings that range from the ridiculous to the highbrow. And, occasionally one is fortunate enough to stumble upon a work that takes on a refreshing approach to study an entity that still continues to baffle many analysts. Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen has produced a surprisingly thin volume that attempts to analyse the spectrum of economic development in India from a broad perspective, in which social as well as economic opportunities have central roles. Considerable emphasis is placed on “alternate undercurrents” like role of women’s agency in bringing about major changes in gender priorities and issues, role of basic education in social transformation as well as economic expansion and the transformational role of political and social movements in confronting deep-seated inequalities. The monograph also presents a substantial Statistical Appendix and an extensive reference list for the interested reader.

Grand Corruption: How Business Bribes Damage Developing Countries
by George Moody-Stuart,
1997, 124 pages,
£12 (including airmail worldwide).

Grand Corruption, a term coined by the author, is today perceived to be a major hurdle in the way of combating graft. This book, a personal account by a successful businessman, with a long track record in international development business and presently Chairman of Transparency International (UK), guides the reader through the scale and means of corruption in business dealings between the North and the South. The book emphasises on greater transparency in the conduct of business and the application of rules based on principles of fair dealing that must have universal applicability, if the interests of the people of the developing countries are to be protected. (Copies can be ordered from WordView (TI), PO Box 565, Oxford OX2 6YH, United Kingdom).

Catch us on the Web....
To know more about Public Affairs Centre, please pull in for a brief stop over while you cruise along the internet highway at http://www.his.com/~holycow/pac.
   Samuel Paul  Rs. 30 or US$ 10

   Stephanie Upp  Rs. 50 or US$15

3. Public Services and the Urban Poor: A Comparative Assessment Based on Citizen Feedback from Five Indian Cities
   Sita Shekhar  Rs. 50 or US$ 15

4. Bringing Transparency into Elections: A Field Experiment
   Suresh Balakrishnan  Rs. 30 or US$ 10

5. Bangalore Hospitals and the Urban Poor: A Report Card
   Suresh Balakrishnan & Anjana Iyer  Rs. 30 or US$10

   Samuel Paul & Sita Shekhar  Rs. 50 or US$15

7. Elections to Bangalore Municipal Corporation: An Experiment to Stimulate Informed Choice
   S. Manjunath  Rs. 30 or US $10.

8. Corruption: Who will bell the cat?
   Vikram Sarabhai Memorial Lecture 1997
   Samuel Paul  Rs. 30 or US $10

   K. Gopakumar  Rs. 50 or US $15

10. CITY NET: A Study of Neighbourhood Newspapers in Bangalore
    M.M. Srinath, S. Manjunath 
    & K. Gopakumar  Rs. 30 or US $10

11. A Report Card on Public Services in Calcutta
    Samuel Paul & Anjana Iyer  Rs. 30 or US $10

12. A Report Card on Public Services in Madras
    Samuel Paul & Anjana Iyer  Rs. 30 or US $10

* Please include $2 towards processing charges, for all foreign orders.

Please send payment through bank draft/cheque (add Rs.10 for outstation cheques) drawn in favour of Public Affairs Centre, Bangalore.

CORRUPTION IN INDIA: AGENDA FOR ACTION
Edited by S. Guhan and Samuel Paul
ISBN 81-7094-277-2; 312 Pages, Hardcover, Price Rs. 280 or $25

This book is the outcome of a project on tackling corruption in India undertaken by Public Affairs Centre, a non-profit national organisation based in Bangalore. The volume draws on actionable proposals drafted by an eminent group of scholars, lawyers, civil servants and activists. The proposals on Lok Pal and Prevention of Corruption Act are timely, given the ongoing national debates on these subjects.

- 'An outstanding contribution in the present atmosphere'.
  H.D. Shourie, Common Cause

- 'A topical compendium with some sensible suggestions about how to tackle the issue'.
  Business World

- 'A valuable and timely contribution to a subject that has not received the serious scholarly attention that it deserves...... a must read for all those who are concerned about the problem'.
  Indian Review of Books

For ordering copies, contact:
Vision Books Pvt. Ltd.,
24, Feroze Gandhi Road
Lajpat Nagar III,
New Delhi 110 024
Tel: (91 11) 6836470, 6836480
Fax: (91 11) 6836490

WORKSHOP
International Budget Conference, Washington, December 3-5, 1997

An International Budget Conference was organised by Centre on Budget and Policy Priorities, a Washington based NGO. The Conference was intended to enhance the conceptual and practical skills for budget and tax work carried out by NGOs in different settings. The specific focus of the Conference was on two salient themes: Analysis of budgets and dissemination of findings; and Work on reforming budget institutions and establishing transparent budget processes. Around 30 representatives of NGOs from 14 countries took part in the Conference.

Dr. Sita Sekhar, an invitee to the Conference, presented the PAC's work on Bangalore's Municipal Budgets.

(For further information, contact Dr. Sita Sekhar at PAC)

OUR NEW ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

We are happy to announce that Prof. Suresh Balakrishnan has been appointed as Associate Director of PAC. A graduate of Institute of Rural Management,(IRMA) Anand and a doctoral Fellow of Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, Prof. Balakrishnan was previously Research Coordinator at PAC and Associate Professor at Centre for Management Development, Trivandrum.

We are moving

From January 1, 1998, PAC has started functioning from a new premises.

Please note the change in address:

Public Affairs Centre
578, 16th B Main, 3rd Cross
Block 3, Koramangala
Bangalore 560 034.

Telefax: +91-80-5537260.
Telephone: +91-80-5520246
Internet mail: pacblr@blr.vsnl.net.in
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dr. Samuel Paul (Chairman).

Mr. T.R. Satish Chandran is former Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, Government of India.

Mrs. Anu Aga is Chairperson, Thermax Ltd., Pune.

Dr. Kamla Chowdhry is Trustee of the National Foundation for India.

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.

MAIL BOX

- I am glad to see such interest and work towards bringing a better governance in India. One of the suggestions I have is to create a focus shift towards rewarding or acknowledging positive feats by individuals. I believe that human emotion and pride, if fed and directed in a positive way, leads to a tremendous growth. Hoping to remain in touch with your work in the future.

Ravi Kumar
USA

- PAC’s activities are to be applauded, and tackling public sector ineffectiveness and corruption at the local level are just what’s needed to build broadbased support for reform of the whole of government. Hope you can build up a nation-wide network.

Lawson Smith
Faculty of Business & Law
Central Queensland University
Australia

- I have gone through the July 1997 issue of the Public Eye. I am extremely happy to note the focus and coverage of issues of critical concern to the public.

Dr. G.R.S. Rao
Director
Centre for Public Policy and Social Development
Hyderabad, India.

Editorial coordination: K. Gopakumar, PAC

The publication of this newsletter has been made possible by a grant from the National Foundation for India (NFI), New Delhi.

Public Eye
A newsletter from Public Affairs Centre

Vol. 2 No. 4
October-December 1997

For private circulation only

Designed and produced by
Communication for Development and Learning
Post Box 2405, Hebbal, Bangalore 560 024
Phone: 341 7684, 341 0583 Fax: 341 7684