A another year has gone by. One is left with the unpleasant task of sifting the good from the bad. Record the highs and lows and arrive at the annual balance sheet. If there is one common factor linking the major events of 1998, it is the all pervasive spread of incompetence. Whether it is in the management of the economy or protecting the credibility of institutions, 1998 can certainly be termed as the Year of Incompetence. As the world gets ready to battle the Millennium Bug that threatens to derail all major traffic along the Information Supertrack, we in India are facing a horde of Millennium bugs which are destroying our economy, rotting our polity and tearing the fragile social tapestry. This is the battle ahead of us. A struggle against powerful vested interests, largely apathetic administration and the genie of homebred fundamentalism. All we can muster for our side, in what promises to be a long and protracted war, is the indefatigable spirit of small but highly motivated groups of individuals. Which way will the battle go? Relax, history backs us. Or, so I hope. But first, a profile of the BUGS...

1. Dithering Government: Federalism is a much-exalted phenomenon. It is perceived to reflect the true spirit of democracy. It provides spaces for all to express their voice and facilitates a conducive atmosphere to arrive at a common good. But of late, we have found out that it comes with an unwelcome baggage. The baggage of incompetence and inability to take decisions. And stick to the ones already taken. Be it a hasty backtracking from a budget decision or the humiliating move to reinstate the Director of Enforcement or the pending Land Bill, 1998 saw the will of the government in taking decisions touching an all time low. One really wishes we had a political equivalent of that wonder BLUE PILL doing the rounds in the West!

2. Alienated Polity: Sometime back, a retired Secretary to the Election Commission of India was heard giving a new definition to the concept of democracy in India. Democracy, he said, 'is FAR the people, BUY the people and OFF the people'. Many of us felt amused at that time. Today, it echoes as a prophecy come true. 1998 saw the image of the Indian politician taking a nosedive. The performance of the elected representatives was deplorable to say the least. The arrest of a powerful political broker in the Capital unearthed a dirty world of political sleaze and mafiadom. A recent book on corruption in India by noted journalist Chandan Mitra puts down the unofficial estimate of the parallel economy in India to the tune of Rs. 33,000 crores - a figure roughly equivalent to the GDP of India. The elections to the Assemblies in four states delivered a powerful body blow to the ruling party at the centre. At the same time, the resounding victory of the incumbent Government in Madhya Pradesh proved that good work will be rewarded and recognised.

3. Rising Fundamentalism: The series of bomb blasts that rocked the quiet town of Coimbatore early this year brought home the horrifying truth that terrorism has acquired a national character. Events that followed strengthened this. As the Union Minister for Communication Mr. Jag Mohan noted in a recent article in the Indian Express (December 11, 1998), presently out of the 535 districts, 210 are affected by terrorism or ethnic strife or caste conflicts. The attacks against minorities in many states are on the rise. A moral brigade in Maharashtra wants the names of the central characters in a film changed to those of another religion. The spectre of religious fundamentalism looms ahead.

4. The Sad State of Primary Education: The Constitutional promise of providing compulsory primary education to all children by the year 1960 remains unfulfilled. The performance in literacy is the worst in the world. And by the year 2000 we will have the dubious distinction of having the world's largest number of illiterates. To top this, government spending on education declined from 4 per cent in 1991-92 to 3.27 per cent in 1995-96 and the pupil-teacher ratio worsened from 43 in 1990-91 to 46 in 1995-96.

This then, is the state of the State as we step in to the last year of the second millennium. Who then are the heroes of 1998? There are many takers; The innocuous ONION for the Opposition; POKHRAN for the government; TENDULKAR for the cricket crazy and AMARTYA SEN for the intellectuals. A glance at this list will tell you why we are called a land of rich diversities...

EDITOR

Public Eye ♦ Vol. 3 No. 4 Oct. - Dec. 1998
We present below some highlights from the study:

**Are Revenues growing in Proportion to the Growth of the Cities?**

The analysis shows that in all the five cities revenues have been growing over the years. Ahmedabad and Chennai lead in this regard with an annual growth rate of 17%; Mumbai and Pune followed with 16.5% and 16% respectively. Bangalore recorded the least growth with 12%. The picture looks startling if the figures are adjusted for price changes to arrive at the growth rate in real terms. Chennai, Ahmedabad, Mumbai and Pune record annual growth rates in real terms at 8%, 7%, 6% and 5% respectively. The corresponding figure for Bangalore is a shocking 1%

The composition of actual revenue income shows interesting patterns across the five cities. (See Table below).

While the local governments in the western cities of Ahmedabad, Mumbai and Pune generate a large part of their revenue from taxes levied by them, the southern cities of Bangalore and Chennai depend on either grants or share in taxes to a great extent for revenues. Again, while the western cities secure nearly two thirds of their revenue through Octroi, property tax forms a major source for the southern cities. Another interesting finding along this theme is that for a rapidly growing city like Bangalore, the rate of growth of property tax was a nominal 2% (in real terms).

**Where does the Money go?...**

Analysis of the trends in revenue expenditure reveals that the same has grown across the cities over the six year period, with Mumbai posting the highest annual growth rate of 17% and Bangalore, the least with 12%; in real terms, however, the respective figures are 6% and 1%. Grants and administrative expenditure form the largest chunk in Ahmedabad. In Bangalore, the major chunk goes to Health. Mumbai Corporation spends the highest on Public Works. While Pune spends the most on Education, Public Health gets top priority in Chennai.

An examination of the trends in capital expenditure reveals that Chennai and Ahmedabad have made...
phenomenal progress in this regard showing a 30 and 24% growth respectively. While Pune has recorded a growth rate in capital expenditure to the tune of 15%, Mumbai shows a low growth rate of only 3.3% in the last couple of years. Bangalore, once again, has the ignominy of recording a low growth rate in real terms of just 2%.

The expenditure incurred by the Corporation on paying salaries to their employees represents a large chunk of the total expenditure.

The study highlights the fact that while salaries have increased remarkably overtime, there has been hardly any expenditure on either equipment or supplies.

The study brings into sharp critical focus, a host of pertinent themes like efficiency of collection mechanisms, broadening resource mobilisation strategies and the need to initiate more scientific approach towards planning and resource allocation.

(This study was co-ordinated by Sita Sekhar and Smita Binkarkar at PAC. The full report of the study will soon be published.)

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**ADVOCACY TOWARDS BUDGET PRIORITIES**

Budgeting is part of everyday life. Every day we make choices and trade-off alternative ways in which we can spend a limited amount of money. Whether we are buying food for the family or purchasing a car or house, we plan how much we are able to spend against how much income we expect to earn over a certain period of time. In the same way, the annual government budget is a plan of how to balance expected tax revenues (government income) against expected expenditures over the coming financial year.

The budget is the most important economic instrument of the government. It reflects the country’s socio-economic policy priorities by translating policies and political commitments into expenditures and taxations. In this way, the budget emphasises constraints and trade-offs in policy choices. This means that the government’s budget decisions affect our everyday lives and our future. It influences where we work, what transport we use, what health care is available to use, and what education our children have. Government budget decisions will affect our choice of home, our personal safety, whether we have clean water and sanitation, and electricity.

Vision 2000: Eroding Institutions and Shrinking Social Spaces

As we prepare for the countdown to the next millennium, certain potent trends in the political and social environments provide reasons for immense concern. Not that these have been totally unexpected. But, it is the intensity and unchecked progress of the same that rings alarm bells. Three aspects stand out in this regard as most critical: the growing complexity in managing a pluralistic nation-state; the erosion of cohesive social foundations and the slow but steady criminalisation of politics.

Complexities of the Nation-State

At the outset, it must be made clear that the concept of a ‘Nation-State’ is an imported one thrust upon many nascent post-colonial states by the colonial masters. A classic case is the African continent where European powers agglomerated more than 10,000 different tribes into just a few dozen colonial states. The Indian State (as used in a contemporary sense) too is an artificial and recent creation. Prior to the colonial invasion, numerous cultural and social groups existed within a broad socio-political spectrum with a lot of fluidity and interactions among them. The concept of a ‘state’ in a purely territorial sense evolved with the advent of the British rule in India. It metamorphosed into the notion of a ‘nation state’ with independence. And in true style of all modern nation states, post-independent India also sought to iron out the diversities, mostly by employing the coercive power at its disposal rather than acknowledge and preserve the time-honoured codes of peaceful co-existence. Thus, it was left to the architects of modern India to carry out the arduous task of maintaining cultural plurality, while converging on the ideal of a sovereign secular state. However, instead of producing the desired outcome, this approach only succeeded in generating conflicts (often violent) between ethnic/religious identities and the supra-identity of the secular Indian State.

Erosion of Cohesive Social Foundations

Social harmony could be likened to a fragile tapestry. One small tear could end up in ripping the delicate patterns to shreds. Unfortunately, a long history of cultural coexistence of communities is today subsumed under a dark political history of communal conflicts and clashes. Two trends have contributed towards this: the seeping in of politics into religion and vice versa and harping on imagined identities to mobilise the community to occupy power niches.

In essence, both these approaches seem to stem from the darker recesses of power politics. The divide and rule tactics of the British highlighted the potency of parochial politics. Being quick learners, our political masters lost no time in practising this nefarious strategy to perfection. Minority vote banks and majority politics soon became the new mantras for electoral success. And more worrying, one group’s success spawned a dozen clones. While some of them chose to articulate their demands within the democratic framework as laid down by the constitution, others took the militant mode of staging low-intensity guerrilla wars against the state and the civil society. The ‘disturbances’ in Kashmir, Punjab, Assam, Nagaland and the more recent disturbances in the south reflect the growing intensity of social tensions and communal discord. The gradual weakening of traditional social structures in the villages also helped in widening the social cleavages. If one adds to this, the ongoing efforts to emphasise social and religious differences as a conscious strategy to mobilise sentiments and passions, we get a potential powder keg waiting for the tiniest spark to explode.

Criminalisation of Politics

Political cultures are evolving entities. Though, the process need not necessarily be one from bad to good, as the Indian case highlights. The political culture in India could be categorised under three trends in the post-Independence era: State Power, Money Power and Muscle Power. First, was the strong authoritarian process initiated by Mrs. Indira Gandhi. Though, ostensibly this was done to make the Centre strong, in reality it made all democratic institutions weak. Committed bureaucracy and a toothless judiciary were the major victims in this phase, the highlight of which was the 21-month flying with total authoritarianism under the 1975-77 Emergency. The next phase was directed under the baton of ‘Liberalisation’. This phase brought in money to politics and established a new axis of power - the politician-bureaucrat-industrialist coalition. The result was a never-ending saga of scam and graft. The third phase is noteworthy for two developments - the rise of regional parties and the influx of criminals into the political process. The former reflects the spirit of true federalism and the creation of ‘governance spaces’ for members of all sections to voice their concerns and have a say in decision making. However, the antecedents of some of these regional forums are questionable and their links with extremist outfits highly suspicious. This is where the whole question of national security runs into impediments. Especially so, when the Centre itself is dependent on these regional forums for sheer survival.

Criminalisation of politics is a subject all political entities talk about a lot, but seldom takes corrective action. The case of the largest state in India, Uttar Pradesh, best exemplifies this trend. There were 85 MLAs with criminal records in 1985, 50 in 1989, 103 in 1991, 150 in 1993 and 180 (out of 425) in 1996. In the last general elections, 520 candidates who contested in this state (roughly around 16% of the total
candidates) were known history sheeters. The trend in other states is not much different.

Is there any light at the end of the tunnel? Are we heading into a vortex of civil anarchy and state atrophy? The answer would perhaps lie with the ability of the people in differentiating reason from rhyme, facts from sentiments and rediscover the social spaces for peaceful coexistence. As citizens we have an obligation to demonstrate by our actions and intentions that there is a lot more than mere participation in the electoral process - something that embraces civic spirit, respect to the rule of law and more important, the power to create our destiny. A great deal would also depend upon the political elite to overlook the short term pay-off and work for a long-term solution. Not to mention the fact that the institutional framework needs to get strengthened and ensure that the basic tenets of democracy are not violated.

K. GOPAKUMAR
(An earlier version of this article had appeared in the Sunday Edition of the Deccan Herald dated February 22, 1998)

WIDE ANGLE

The ‘Kaliassery Model of Development’
Global Lessons From a Local Initiative

The people’s campaign for decentralised planning in Kerala has by now attracted world-wide attention. However, the genesis of this path breaking development intervention could be traced to a small village in North Kerala called Kaliassery. This quiet village was the incubator for a radical project on participatory development in the early 1990s. This project was marked by a set of innovative features: Local initiatives to create exhaustive resource mapping, formulation of short term and long term micro level development plans, systematic researches, presence and involvement of volunteers and continuous efforts to create effective institutions, stand out among these. The major efforts made and lessons emanating from this project can be discussed under four heads: Research Interventions, Planning Efforts, Projects Implemented and Institutional Developments.

Research Interventions
- Resource Mapping: Under the joint collaboration of Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad, Centre for Earth Science Studies and the Kerala State Planning Board, an extensive resource mapping exercise was carried out in April 1991. The entire effort was carried out in nine days by 70 volunteers.

A Budgetary innovation from Sedona City.....

Here’s yet another example of a local government innovation! The city of Sedona in the United States has adopted a Flexible Capital Budget Plan to meet the city’s requirements within the limited availability of funds. The Flexible Capital Budget provides a process for the City Council and the community, on an annual basis, to determine the city’s priority capital projects and fund those projects based on available funds. The focus of the Flexible Capital Plan is not on the expenses, but instead the revenues to afford the expenses. To start with, a list of proposed capital projects is drawn up to define the universe of potential future capital needs of the city. This list will be adjusted from time to time with new projects or projects that have been completed or dropped. The costs to undertake these projects are tempered by the city’s ability to pay and the priority of the project to get completed. The Plan is approved after detailed discussions within the Council and public hearings.
• Socio-Economic Survey: A detailed socio economic survey of the village was carried out in January 1992. A group of 100 trained volunteers surveyed 3936 households in about two weeks time. The information collected was codified and analysed during April.

• Survey of Institutions: This effort traced the details of major institutions existing within the village like schools, industries and co-operatives.

• Demand Survey: In June 1992, a demand survey was organised to find out the possibility of commencing agro based industries and animal husbandry activities in the village. The survey focused on finding out the quantity of vegetables and farm products procured from outside.

• Engineering Survey of Marshlands: To explore the feasibility of commencing shrimp cultivation in the areas identified by the resource mapping, an engineering survey was organised with the help of technical institutions in June 1993.

• Water Flow Survey: This effort was planned against the backdrop of severe water scarcity during summer months. A simple method was followed - tracing the flow of rain water and marking out the same in the resource map. With this, Kaliassery had the distinction of having the country's first water flow map.

• Energy Survey and Power Line Mapping: Organised between December 1993 and May 1994, this survey created a database on the energy requirements of the consumers and also, mapped the electricity distribution in the village.

• Health Survey: A one day survey was organised on December 10, 1995 to enumerate the birth and death rates in the village.

Planning Efforts
Efforts to formulate micro level plans commenced immediately after the Resource Mapping. Since the Constitutional Amendment Act on decentralisation empowering the Panchayats to plan and implement development projects was not passed at this stage, all efforts proceeded on an informal basis. Groups were formed to formulate specific plans for various sectors. The plans were then integrated, issues prioritised and action strategies chalked out in the form of development schemes. By September 1992, a viable blue print was ready. The overall plan was subsequently discussed with the public at the village level; the specific schemes were then discussed in detail at the ward levels. The first project was taken up in January 1993; the schemes are still being pursued.

Projects Implemented
Following the plan and the schemes drawn up, an action agenda was framed to commence implementation of the projects identified. Priority was accorded to projects that involved low costs and a high degree of participation. Emphasis was accorded to very innovative and model initiatives. Vegetable farming, horticulture, pisciculture and integrated power schemes involving low cost eco friendly technologies were some of the projects implemented in the first phase. However, two endeavours stand out for their novelty and impact. The first is the creation of a Panchayat School Complex which emphasised proper education, highly interactive parent teacher forums and vocational inputs focused examinations. The Complex is very popular and is on the fourth year of operations. The other project involved a series of initiatives to augment the physical infrastructure in the village, primarily through voluntary efforts. An interesting exercise in this regard was a One Day Waterway Improvement Programme organised on April 3, 1994. A 16 km stretch of defunct waterway was divided into 48 segments and handed over to voluntary associations. More than 750 people, including women and children, participated in this effort and made the waterways usable. Yet another example of this was the creation of a new waterway in a water scarce area in the village. In a classic case of pooling resources, a new road was built through voluntary effort. The two km stretch which was initially quoted to cost Rs. 200,000 by the government engineers was built within Rs. 80,000!

Institutional Developments
A major initiative mooted during the early phase of the project was the creation of a popular forum called Kaliassery Development Committee. However, over the years, this forum underwent lot of changes. In 1993, Neighbourhood Groups were formed with one representative for 25 houses. These groups are formally registered and elections are held periodically to give them a truly representative flavour. Ward Development Committees are also set up in all the wards with representatives from the Neighbourhood Groups. The General Body of this Forum has one Executive Committee and eight sub committees. The General Body also has representatives from political parties and technical disciplines: the sub committees look after the various sectoral programmes and schemes.

Lessons
The Kaliassery experiment provided a framework for the state of Kerala to embark upon its ambitious programme of total decentralisation of powers and participatory development interventions. Today, the entire administration in the state is decentralised along 990 village Panchayats, 55 Municipalities, 3 Corporations, 152 Block Panchayats and 14 District Panchayats with about 65,000 locally generated projects and 1214 local governance institutions! The success story of this small village has amply demonstrated the potential of collective social intervention and organised people's participation.

(For more information on the 'Kaliassery Experiment' and also on the ongoing Decentralised Planning Interventions in Kerala, please contact: The Kerala State Planning Board, Pattom PO, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. PIN 695004)
Public Agenda

Public Agenda is a non-partisan, non-profit public opinion research and citizen education organisation based in New York city. It was founded in 1975 by public opinion analyst Daniel Yankelovitch and former U.S. Secretary of State, Mr. Cyrus Vance.

Its two-fold mission is to:

- **Help leaders better understand the public’s point of view on major policy issues**
  Through in-depth analyses and opinion studies, the Public Agenda Foundation discovers what the public thinks on various social and humanitarian issues. This critical research enables governments and other organisations to address these concerns effectively.

- **Help citizens better understand critical policy issues so they can make their own informed decisions**
  Drawing on its research, the foundation prepares a broad array of educational materials that help explain policy issues to the public in an impartial and easy to understand way. This information can then be used to make an informed decision.

From initial awareness to considered judgements

Though the current era is widely touted as the Age of Information, the fact is that there are too many choices and too much confusion than ever before. Frequently unable to discern between fact and fiction, citizens are being asked to vote and approve policy decisions based on a less-than-thorough understanding of the issues at stake. In order to take citizens from initial awareness on a given issue, through understanding, to more considered judgements, the Public Agenda conducts its research based on:

**Awareness:** Do people recognise the existence and urgency of an issue?

**Understanding:** Can they comprehend facts and evaluate the choices at hand?

**Choices:** Are people realistic about possible solutions and aware of the alternatives?

**Support for Action:** Are they ready to take a stand?

Public Agenda has addressed a wide range of issues through its research and citizen education work including school and health care reform, national security, AIDS, crime, economic competitiveness and the environment. In an effort to catalyse action, the research they undertake is made available to voluntary organisations working in those particular fields. To further stimulate discussion the Public Agenda prepares three discussion guides annually for a program of public issue discussions called the National Issues Forum. These guides explore critical policy issues using a framework which examines associated costs, trade-offs and implications for each issue. In partnership with media, business and community and educational organisations, Public Agenda is capable of extensive outreach.

To know more about the innovative work done by this organisation, contact:

Public Agenda
6 East 39th Street
New York, NY 10016.
Web Site: http://www.publicagenda.org

Combating Corruption
The Heath Special Investigating Unit in South Africa

The Special Investigating Units and Special Tribunals Act, Act 74 of 1996 is a powerful legislation to combat corruption. This legislation makes provision for the establishment of a powerful investigative unit that investigates and prosecutes corruption, fraud and maladministration relating to state assets and state monies. This Unit, the only one of its kind in the world, has vast powers to investigate matters relating to corruption, fraud and maladministration and either recover or prevent the loss of state assets. Its success is justified in the fact that it is currently investigating cases in South Africa worth an estimated R7 billion. The Unit has designed an infrastructure to deal with these sophisticated malpractices with regard to misappropriation of public money and assets, the laundering and the squandering thereof, and to equip the members to investigate the most highly sophisticated activities of syndicates. The unit is headed by a noted judicial personality, Judge Willem Heath.
Social Capital

It is not uncommon today to find social scientists referring to the concept of 'Social Capital' in trying to analyse or explain social-connectedness and community networking. Though the concept has been defined variously, a simple way of explaining it would be: Social Capital refers to the features of social organisation such as networks, norms and social trust that facilitate co-ordination and co-operation for mutual benefit. As an example, one could cite networks of civic engagement like neighbourhood associations, sports clubs, and co-operatives. There is also a strong view that even caste-based associations can be categorised as a form of Social Capital.

Features...

- Social Capital is not material in nature and does not lie within the individual; it is rather dependent on the quality of relationships among individuals.

- A community or institution has social capital if it can harness the contributions of members to address common problems and concerns; the contribution can be monetary or voluntary involvement/active participation.

- Trust is critical. Individuals should not take advantage of the group or institution for their own personal gain and they should also observe the basic rules of the implicit social contract which makes it possible for the community or group to function.

- Participation and mutual obligation are essential conditions. These are social mechanisms which form the basis of an individual's expectations that others will contribute to the group's welfare. Participation can engender or strengthen the effective use of social capital.

The Origins......

Although the origin of the concept of 'Social Capital' could be traced to the 19th century classics of sociology, the present connotations owe currency to the works of two sociologists - Pierre Bourdieu and James Coleman. Bourdieu first used the term in the 70s to refer to the advantages and opportunities accruing to people through membership in certain communities. Coleman used it to describe a resource of individuals that emerges from their social ties. It must also be mentioned that these developments followed the ideas and observations made by the French Industrialist, Alexis de Tocqueville in his classic work Democracy in America. When de Tocqueville visited the United States in the 1830s, it was the American's propensity for civic association that most impressed him as their key to their unprecedented ability to make democracy work.

Social Capital in Practice

However, it was with Robert Putnam's pioneering works that attention became focused on this concept. Writing in his path-breaking work 'Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy (1993)', Putnam noted that the high levels of social capital in Northern Italy in the 1970s and 1980s were associated with strong economic growth and effective local and regional institutions, while relatively lower levels in Southern Italy were linked to weak performance. He followed this with a pivotal paper titled 'Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital' in 1995. His central thesis was that the vibrancy of American civil society has notably declined during the past several decades. Bowling Alone caught the nations attention with its quantitative evidence of the steady decline in social capital since the 1960s, as measured by participation in many different kinds of activities like voter turnout, church attendance and membership in Parent Teacher Associations and Unions.

Following this, there have been wide ranging efforts to locate, mobilise and facilitate various forms of Social Capital in the US. Some of the examples unearthed in this regard are: Congregation based community organising, Civic Environmentalism, Participatory School reforms and County Extension Systems.

Selected readings in Social Capital


WORKSHOPS


Subsequent to the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act passed in 1992, Wards are poised to become the basic unit of municipal administration. And with Ward Committees taking shape, the trajectory of local development will be plotted with a proposed high level of participation from Community Based Organisations (CBOs) and NGOs. In the light of these developments, Swabhiman - the city wide forum of CBOs and NGOs in Bangalore organised a Workshop for the residents of three wards in South Bangalore. A ward level Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP), inputs on ward level budgeting and monitoring and brainstorming on critical issues at the neighbourhood level were some of the major themes explored. Swabhiman plans to organise Workshops for other localities in the city.

(For more information, please contact Mr. Shiv Kumar, Coordinator, Swabhiman. Office of the Bangalore Mahanagara Palike, II Floor, Annexe, N.R. Square, Bangalore 560002)


Consumer movement in India is today a strong symbol of civic activism. Over the years many consumer groups have demonstrated their ability to transcend the narrow focus of their involvement and take on civic issues on a larger canvas. This Workshop brought together consumer groups from different parts of India and explored various possibilities to extend the organisational strength and focus of the groups to other broader arenas of civil society.


This international Conference brought together scholars and practitioners to share experiences and ideas in placing voluntary action within the confines of the civil society in attempting to assess whether and how voluntary groups contribute to democratic functioning.

A MARCH TO SAVE BANGALORE...

On October 17, 1998 more than two thousand citizens marched under the banner of ‘Swabhiman’ to protest against the deteriorating quality of life in Bangalore. The Swabhiman Initiative is a city wide forum of NGOs, resident welfare groups, business/industry associations and individuals. Prominent citizens, literary personalities and business and community leaders addressed the gathering. In a press release issued on the occasion, Swabhiman noted that: “As citizens of Bangalore and persons active in a variety of public organisations based in the city, we are sad to note that the governance of the city is going from bad to worse. Two major reasons for our march are the pitiable but dangerous conditions of Bangalore’s roads and the fatal attack on valuable green spaces like Cubbon Park which reflects the growing decay of the city’s governance and leadership”. A ten point Memorandum was submitted to the Mayor and the Chief Minister, drawing their attention to a set of critical issues like transparency in public works, reducing corruption and abuse of power, preserving the vital green spaces in the city and preventing the frequent and arbitrary transfers of local government officials. As a follow up to this effort, PAC and the Bangalore Environment Trust (BET) are campaigning to raise public involvement on four actions:

- Supporting this movement by writing immediately to the Mayor and the Chief Minister seeking action on these points without further delay;
- Participate in a people’s programme to monitor the quality of road works in the city;
- Demand road maintenance plans and budgets for your ward from your elected councillor;
- Join in other collective actions being planned.
ROVING EYE

1999 - The Year of Older Persons

The world will be observing 1999 as the Year of Older Persons. The objective of the Year will be to raise awareness of the fast changing demographic picture of older persons globally, to stimulate debate, promote action strategies, and encourage research and information exchange.

(UN Newsletter, October 1998)

Philanthropy in USA

In the United States in 1997, $143.46 billion dollars were donated to charity. Of this amount, Individuals gave 76.2%, Foundations gave 9.3%, Bequests accounted for 8.8% and Corporations gave 5.7%. The money was used for - Religion 47%; Education 13.5%; Health 8.8%; Human Services 7.9%; Gifts to Foundations 7%; Arts, Culture and Humanities 6.7%; Public Benefit 5.3%; Environment 2.6% and International Affairs 1.2%.

(Giving USA 1998, AAFRC Trust for Philanthropy Development Support)

Rural Development Report to be Launched

The Ministry of Rural Areas and Employment is planning to bring out an annual Rural Development Report on the lines of the Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Programme. The Report will bring out regularly a status feedback on rural development activities and achievements in the country. A Rural Development Index is also being prepared for the country at the district level. The Report is expected to be released in January 1999.

(Voluntary Action Pulse, November 1998)

Clean Up Operations in Thailand

Thailand’s new constitution, passed last year in a nation wide effort to provide effective corruption controls, has given the citizens a platform to act against abuses in the country’s health sector. The collection of the constitutionally required 50,000 protest signatures has recently forced the authorities to investigate the health ministry. The health minister and his deputy resigned after rural doctors exposed how senior officials had bought over-priced drugs in return for kickbacks.

(Transparency International Newsletter, December 1998)

A Village with a Difference

Charnoura, a little village in the district of Hisar in Haryana, India reflects the true spirit of effective Panchayati Raj. As of now, none of the 1200 residents in the village has ever approached the police or any court of law for redressal of any grievance. Every dispute is referred to the Panchayat and resolved through consensus.

(Panchayati Raj Update, November 1998)

Husbands, Keep out!

A recent circular from the Government of Uttar Pradesh bars women gram pradhans from letting their husbands interfere in official work. The order, sent to district magistrates, lays down a list of 'things not to do' for enthusiastic husbands. They will not be allowed to enter their wives' offices except for urgent work. They will not be allowed to take part in the meetings of the village panchayat, accept memorandums from villagers or travel in official vehicles.

(The Telegraph, October 9, 1998)

READINGS

Profile 300 Selected Voluntary Organisations in India, First Edition

Compiled by Murray Culshaw, 310 pages, 1998. Published by Centre for Advancement of Philanthropy

Profile 300 presents comprehensive profiles of selected Indian voluntary organisations making important contributions to a wide range of social and development concerns. The main categories featured are:
- rural development
- children
- consumer interests
- disability
- ecology and environment
- health
- human rights
- tribal people
- women
- general support organisations

One of the qualitative criteria borne in mind while selecting organisations has been that of local public fund-raising which is an important and growing trend among voluntary organisations in India. It is important because
- more money is needed to expand work
- a supporting public can become a campaigning force and,
- greater attention will be paid to how money is spent and consequently there will be greater accountability and transparency on the part of the organisation

The information presented in this book is done in such a way as to facilitate its three objectives of:
1. Networking and information exchange in and between sub-sectors
2. Access to the voluntary sector
3. Donations to the voluntary sector
Experiences of Advocacy in Environment and Development

Edited by Joshi, Bhat and Edwin, 206 pages, July 1997 Published by Development Support Initiative

The integration of advocacy and lobbying activities in environment and development work is a relatively unfamiliar field. It opens a wide range of issues to be addressed, and skills and capabilities to be acquired. Conflict and resistance are unavoidable matters to be dealt with in advocacy. In order to skillfully manage potentially explosive conflict situations, and at the same time achieve objectives, campaigns need careful preparation, thorough policy analysis, independent research and data collection, as well as legal advice and networking with other organisations who might have different perspectives and interests.

This book analyses the experiences of NGOs in various situations in their bid to launch effective advocacy campaigns. In drawing from these case studies, an attempt is also made to highlight:
- the skills and systems required in advocacy
- the impact of advocacy with reference to sustainability and potential for scaling up/
replicability
- a critical framework for analysis and reflection on the ongoing efforts

A comprehensive bibliography is included which contains information on issues related to advocacy efforts in environment and development.

Practical Benchmarking
A Manager’s Guide to Creating Competitive Advantage
By Sarah Cook, Published by Kogan Page Limited, 187 pages, 1995

Offering a step-by-step guide to implementing a benchmarking system, Practical Benchmarking is an ideal starting point for any manager wanting to learn how to improve process efficiency. By first breaking down the benchmarking process into its four main systems:
- internal
- competitive
- non-competitive
- best practice/world class

Each stage in the process, such as identifying what and how to benchmark, the practicalities of data collection and analysis, how to action improvements and how to monitor progress, is addressed.

Containing summaries, checklists, case studies and an up to date bibliography, this book is a catalyst in the process of identifying, understanding and adapting best practices.
PUBLIC EYE

A newsletter from Public Affairs Centre

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Public Eye aims to stimulate creative interactions and lively debates on various themes related to good governance. We welcome like-minded individuals, public interest groups and citizen associations to share information and perspectives through this forum. Please send your contributions to:

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PUBLIC EYE

Public Eye is a newsletter from Public Affairs Centre (PAC) is a non-profit non-governmental organisation committed to improving the quality of governance in India. Towards this end, PAC undertakes research, studies, provides citizen action support and advisory services, and facilitates networking for the creation of sustainable fora. Bringing out Report Cards on public services in major cities in India, collaborating with the Government of India to make governance more responsive, helping public agencies to carry out systemic improvements and designing innovative programmes to bring transparency in the electoral process are some of the major initiatives of PAC.

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