

Editorial

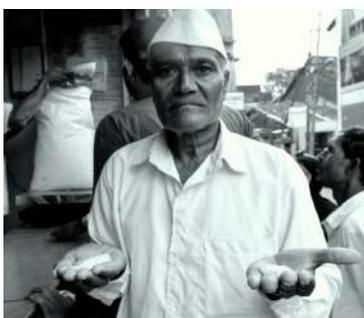
Enabling Agency, Advocacy and Action toward Zero Hunger in Karnataka



*Nitin Chaubey,
Group Head - Programmes*

SDG 2 is to “end hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture” by 2030 and India with its 2013 National Food Security Act (NFSA) had already set the ball rolling.

Under the NFSA falls the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) that expanded the coverage to 67% of the population, from 44%. The Public Distribution System established by the Government of India provides subsidised essential commodities, both food and non-food, to identified beneficiaries in rural and urban areas across the country. The States are responsible for both, identifying the beneficiaries as well as distribution of essential commodities - done via government sponsored shops known as Fair Price Shops (FPS) that are located in every urban, semi urban and rural areas across India. However, there are well documented issues in the proper running of this distribution channel that result in citizens being deprived of their right to food security. Moreover, what ails the implementation of the true spirit of NFSA is the lack of engagement with the communities.



CMAT member in Belgavi

In 2017 Public Affairs Centre (PAC) supported by [Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives](#) and Dasra began work on a 3-year project – “Citizen Monitoring of Fair Price Shops in Karnataka” to address the problem of inefficient functioning

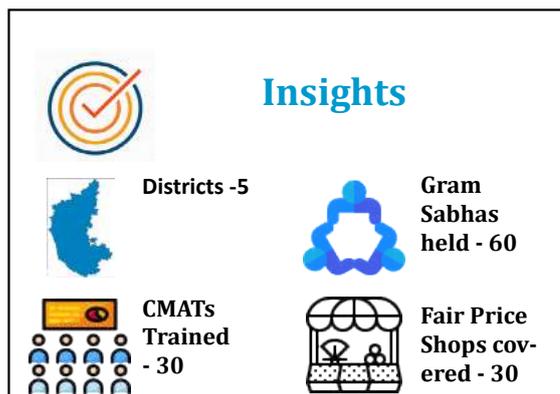
of Fair Price Shops (FPS) in Karnataka by empowering the community members with the Agency to Advocate for their entitlements.

Using PAC’s tools that empowers community participation to take informed action to tackle this problem, the aim is to develop a standardised

Citizen Monitoring Process for Fair Price Shops across Karnataka to improve the accountability, transparency and service delivery associated with PDS. The just concluded first year of the project saw 5 districts, randomly selected and spread throughout the state where 30 FPS’ were identified, 50% of them privately owned, 40% by cooperative societies, while 10% directly managed by the Food and Civil Supplies Department.

Citizen Monitoring of Fair Price Shops in Karnataka

The project aims to enhance the communities’ rights-based access of food and non-food commodities for through the



Public Distribution System (PDS) and the first year of the project brought out some interesting insights.

- Gram Sabhas are an effective platform for community members to share their pain-points pertaining their entitlements vis a vis the Public Distribution System.
- Community members when engaged and empowered as Citizen Monitors and armed with actionable knowledge can be formidable agents of change on the ground.
- These empowered Citizen Monitors were able to engage with district officials and ensure action on discrepancies noted in the PDS process. For example, in Kodagu the District Collector based on his interaction with the Citizen Monitors, instructed the FPS owner to ensure that food items were charged as per the fixed price, since beneficiaries were being charged more.
- Citizen Monitoring and Action Teams (CMATs) in 6 FPSs in Udupi were implementing best practices, in terms of maintaining relevant documentation within store premises.

Interview



Anand Lobo, Secretary of Society for Empowerment through Voluntary Action in Karnataka (SEVAK)

Tell us something about SEVAK briefly?

SEVAK stands for Society for Empowerment through Voluntary Action in Karnataka. It is a Voluntary Organization registered under KSR Act 1960 at Belgaum in the year 2009. Subsequently SEVAK has also been registered under section 12A (a) and 80G of I T Act, 1961 and FCRA Act 2010. The main aim of SEVAK is to organise rural and urban communities around issues concerning increasing income through promotion of various livelihood opportunities, improving access to education and health care facilities, human resources development and empowerment of women, protection and promotion of child rights with special attention to environment up-gradation. Currently SEVAK operates in Belagavi, Dharwad, Koppal and Gadag districts of Karnataka.

In your opinion, do you see a sustainable factor in the engagement with PAC, if so where does PAC and SEVAK fit into this?

SEVAK has been engaging with Public Affairs Centre since seven years on various projects such as study on functioning of PDS system, study on functioning of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, study on functioning of School Development Committees and recently the Citizen Monitoring of Public Distribution System. For the latter assignment "Citizen Monitoring of Public Distribution System" SEVAK has chosen the districts of Belagavi and Koppal. The purpose of both PAC and SEVAK is to empower the communities through knowledge, promote their participation and thereby implement schemes for optimal utilisation by the public. Another key factor is to ensure that stakeholders are accountable in implementation of the same. We believe that development is achieved only when optimum participation of people is ensured and this right-based approach in the engagement is the sustainable factor, which bring both SEVAK and PAC together to collaborate.

What are the key challenges that you faced in this project? And how did you overcome the same?

In our experience, since this project is catering to the poor and there were some challenges we faced:

(a) Selection of Community Monitors among the beneficiaries of the project (BPL and Antyodaya card holders). Most of them are Dalits and from very poor families. They required monetary remuneration to be part of the project which was not available. Selection of team with gender equity was also a concern to us especially in Koppal district.

(b) The selected Fair price Shops within the specified project district are spread very far off from each other. Three distinct blocks in a district and two far off FPS are selected for study.

(c) Organising Special Gram Sabhas to disseminate information organised during monitoring exercise of the FPSs and to find out amenable solutions are also a great concern of the assignment.



Gram Sabha in Belgavi

(d) Getting the cooperation from the owners of the concerned Fair Price Shops. As this is monitoring their effective functioning.

However, these concerns were overcome only because of the strong rapport we developed with the Community Monitors, with the local Gram Panchayat representatives and FPS owners. The initial training and orientation organised for the Community Monitors regarding the functioning of FPS and clarity of the roles of the CMATs helped a lot in this concern. Moreover, PAC was supporting SEVAK in getting necessary cooperation and support from the concerned department at state and district level as well.

contd in page 3...

Please share 2 key learnings from this project.

I deem this pilot study project is successful in addressing people's concern and finding solutions through alternate monitoring system for effective functioning of PDS system. This engagement has reinforced that any project can be implemented successfully only through active participation of concerned stakeholders. Secondly, education, training and proper orientation are key to raising awareness and concern which lead to drawing participation of people.

Voices from the Community



"Dal was sold for Rs. 50 earlier, we demanded that it be sold at its actual price...now it is sold at actual price at Rs. 38 per Kg."

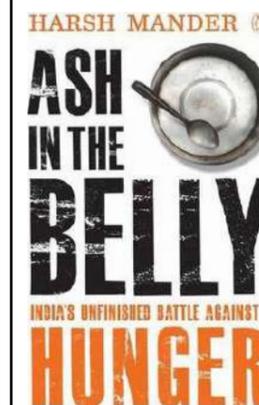
Ms. Shobha Lakshmi, CMAT member



As a Citizen Monitoring member, I learned about my rights on food security and I realized that this will help all m CMATs in 6 FPSs in Udupi were implementing best practices, in terms of maintaining relevant documentation within store premises y community members and now I guide the people in my village on our entitlements."

Mrs. Sunanda, CMAT member

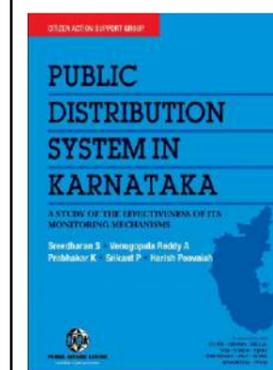
Good Reads



[Ash in the Belly: India's Unfinished Battle Against Hunger](#)

Author: Harsh Mander

A grim account of men, women and children living with hunger. It is also an investigation into the political economy of hunger and examines the increasing economic inequalities, the range of State failures and public indifference.



[Public Distribution System in Karnataka](#)

Authors: Dr Sreedharan, Venugopal Reddy, Prabhakar K, Srikant P, Harish Poovaiah.

The 2014 study based on user feedback generated through a systematic random sampling survey of users, PDS shop owners, Food Inspectors and Vigilance Committee Members at PDS shop and gram panchayat levels, sought to understand and analyse the effectiveness of the grievance redress mechanism for the PDS in Karnataka.

Internspeak



"I'm glad to have had the opportunity to intern at PAC. My internship here helped me in understanding what the community wants and expects from the government and how

to bridge the gap between communities and governments."

Rohan Chaudhuri,
Intern, Ashoka University, Sonapat, Haryana
June 27, 2018

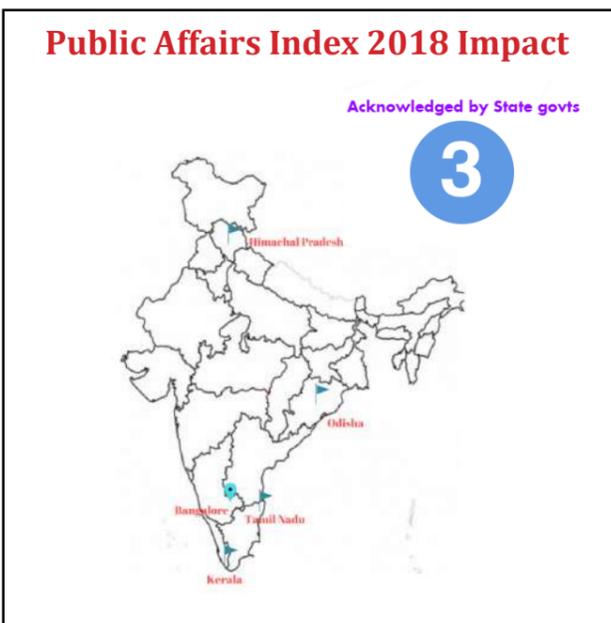
Release of Public Affairs Index 2018

July 23, 2018 was a momentous day for PAC-the launch of Public Affairs Index 2018 (PAI 2018) and the 1st Dr. Samuel Paul Memorial Lecture.

PAI 2018 is an exhaustive data-based study of the quality of governance in the states of India. This edition had a special focus on the Children of India, where a new index was devised to capture the pathos of the existence of children, to examine the piquant circumstances of their lives in matters related to their protection, crimes committed against them and the institutional framework for their safeguard. The report received tremendous media coverage across the country and even internationally. The robust data framework of the Index has urged State governments and the Centre to sit up and acknowledge how data can help amplify governance efforts.



Gurucharan G, Director PAC, Jennifer Daubney Canadian Consul General, Dr K Katurirangan, Chairman, PAC, Prof Arun Pujari, Vice-Chancellor, CURAJ and Dr C K Mathew, Senior Fellow, PAC at the launch of PAI 2018.



Dr Samuel Paul Memorial Lecture 2018



Prof Shantha Sinha and Mr Babar Ali with Gurucharan G, Director, PAC at the first Dr Samuel Paul Memorial Lecture Series

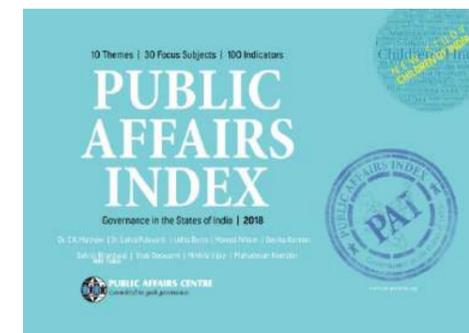
PAC also initiated the Dr. Samuel Paul Lecture series in honour of its Founder -Dr. Samuel Paul, who has established PAC 24 years ago. The event had Prof Shantha Sinha former chairperson of the National Commission of Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) who delivered a realistic and honest lecture on the status of children in India. The lecture also brought in the grass roots level perspective by bringing in Mr Babar Ali, the world's youngest headmaster shared his journey of starting at school at the age of 9 and brought in the grass roots level perspective.



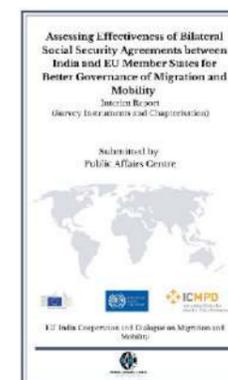
Publications - Reports



Assessing Digital Literacy in Dyavalinganapalya was PAC's first CSR project where the research team assessed the digital readiness of Dyavalinganapalya village in Ramanagara district, Karnataka for Toyota Kirloskar Motors



PAI 2018 takes a more detailed look at the broad themes of governance with thirty focus subjects and hundred indicators. The special focus this year is on the Children of India.



Assessing Effectiveness of Bilateral Social Security Agreements (SSAs) between India and EU Member States for Better Governance of Migration and Mobility was a study carried out for the International Labour Organisation to analyse the efficiency of the implementation of selected SSAs through the experiences of the workers and corporates and the actual benefits accrued to individuals across the migrant spectrum.



PAC Interview Series



Prof Sayantan Ghosal, Professor, University of Glasgow



Prof Narendra Pani, Professor, National Institute of Advanced Studies



Prof Arun K Pujari, Vice Chancellor, Central University of Rajasthan



Mr Nitin Pai, Co-Founder, Takshashila Institutions

To watch more interviews, log on to our YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/pacindiavideos>

Engagements



Public Affairs Centre presented the findings from Public Affairs Index 2018 for the state of Odisha in Bhubaneswar



PAC co-organised a Roundtable on Migration, Skills and Employment with Karnataka Vocational Training and Skill Development Corporation in Bengaluru.



PAC at the #YESIamtheCHANGE jury pitch in Mumbai



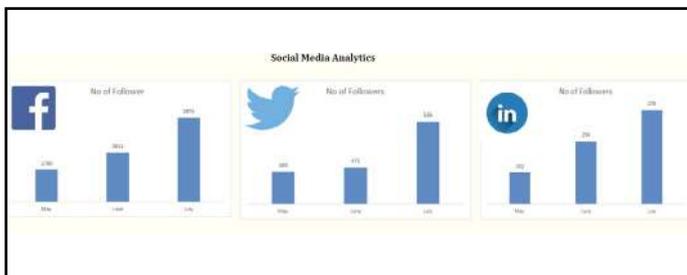
PAC at the SVSS project conference in Sri Lanka



A paper co-authored by team from Public Affairs Centre was selected to be presented and discussed at the Author's Workshop in Singapore



Public Affairs Centre conducted a session on Greenhouse Gas emissions as part of a 5 day course on Climate Resilient Cities conducted by Green Skills Academy for the students of St Josephs' College, Bengaluru



In the last four months, PAC has been able to reach out to a large audience thanks to our sustained Online Presence effort.

Visitor's Comments

A really pleasant and thought provoking discussion, many thanks to the team at PAC.

Dr Narendra Pani,
Professor, National Institute of Advanced Studies
July 10, 2018

It was really a wonderful discussion on activities of PAC. Our students were enlightened about evidence based policy making.

Dr Kaushik Basu,
NLSIU, Bangalore
July 12, 2018

Honoured to visit a place that has inspired several of us to follow the path of changing the country for the better.

Mr Nitin Pai,
Director, Takshashila
August 17, 2018

Really impressed by the ambience PAC, not to mention about the hospitality. Thank you very much for the warmth & kindness. I hope we can develop something concrete & collaborate professionally. All the best.

Dr Fahmida Khatun,
Executive Director, Centre for Policy Dialogue, Bangladesh
August 22, 2018

From the Editor's Desk

Public Eye will be published in September, January and May. Do send us your comments/feedback to pec@pacindia.org. If you wish to unsubscribe please click [here](#).