

Research at JCCD 2007-2008

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1 Introduction

This paper introduces the program of research that is intended to be conducted under the JCCD umbrella during 2007-08 commencing 1 April, 2007. The research questions that are stated are limited to the pursuit of the 2007/08 program.

2 Purpose of this document

We visualize working in the following areas this year.

1. Social
2. Political
3. Legal

The specific projects that are being considered are indicated below. We remain open to considering additional projects but resourcing will be focused on the projects planned.

3 Social and Political Research

3.1 Civic Literacy Index (CLI)

There is an existing program to determine a CLI and examine the relationship between that and the level of civic engagement in local government, and its impact.

In the shorter term it is intended to extend this research effort to cover other cities and communities to assess the hypothesis that an enhanced CLI impacts the quality of local government. If this was validated it would be possible to identify interventions that would be needed to achieve an increment of increase in CLI. In the final stage, CLI itself could be used to determine what interventions are needed.

3.1.1 Research Questions

1. What constitute the elements of civic literacy in the context of primary urban cities in India
2. Can weighted elements of civic literacy be used to create an index that can be used to compare levels of civic literacy in different cities.
3. What is the nature of the relationship between civic literacy and civic engagement in local government.
4. If civic literacy correlates positively with civic engagement in local government:
 - a) Have higher levels of civic engagement led to higher quality of services provided by local government.
 - b) If so:
 - i. is it possible to identify interventions in civic education that would lead to enhanced engagement in local government
 - ii. is it possible to use a civic literacy index to identify interventions that would effect an increase in the quality of services provided by local government.

3.2 Civic Literacy Program (CLP)

3.2.1 Goal

Create within communities the skills needed for productive participation in local governance which lead to a consensual outcome grounded in understanding, honed by abilities of negotiation and compromise, and optimised by a high quality of public discourse.

3.2.2 The Rationale

If people build the capacity to communicate constructively, without conflict, with genuine understanding, then the use of that capacity in various group settings - family, workplace, college etc. will create a framework for managing relationships in non-hierarchical terms that may manifest itself also in the civic engagement space. Civic engagement will for some time and possibly always, be a relatively low frequency though critical opportunity for using these communication skills. Hence, the more frequent exercise of these skills in the home, at college, and at work may keep those skills alive.

3.2.3 The Means

Develop Courses for skills: These would include courses in engagement such as communication skills, conflict resolution, negotiation, legal aspects of engagement e.g. RTI, optimal protocol for engagement, support mechanisms in the NGO, advocacy, legal and political domain.

Develop tools: Budgeting, sensitivity analysis for non linear operational variables, systems dynamics, modeling solutions, project management, monitoring, evaluation, reporting, presenting, disseminating, networking, documenting protocols for collaboration, planning, implementing, quality assurance,

Invoke within Area Sabhas: Integrate the use of these tools and examine the effectiveness on intermediate and final outcomes.

3.2.4 The Mechanisms

Identify, develop, and implement in the field:

Courses: Develop, implement and evaluate courses which exploit the tools and skills, prior to handing over courses

Research: Impact of these tools on the effectiveness of civic and political engagement

3.2.5 Target audiences

These could include four categories:

1. school children
2. lay citizens in communities who have embraced the Area Sabha concept or are about to do so.
3. corporates
4. colleges

3.2.6 Research Questions

1. What are the skills needed to enhance the quality of consensual decision making within the target audiences?
2. Can these skills be acquired through courses created for the purpose?
3. Can capacity created by the courses impact the quality of decision making within the community of an Area Sabha?

3.3 Collaborative research with corporates

3.3.1 Collaborative research for creating Participation In Decision Making (PIDM)

1. JCCD's goal in this would be to ensure that CAP graduates within a corporate unit get a regular booster shot of PIDM over the course of time, through adoption of PIDM within the organization, and to determine if this impacts the level of civic and political engagement.
2. The corporate's goal would likely be to determine if PIDM impacts some aspect of productivity of the enterprise e.g. attrition, better decision processes, increased teamwork etc.

Research Questions

1. Does the CAP lead to increased levels of participative decision making in the home environment?
2. Does the CAP lead to increased levels of participative decision making in the work environment?
3. Does the CAP lead to increased levels of civic engagement. If so, what are the primary forms of engagement that it stimulates?
4. Does the increased level of participative decision making in the office yield other positive indicators of satisfaction in the workplace?
5. Does the increased level of participative decision making in the home yield other positive indicators of satisfaction in the home?

3.3.2 Collaborative research for taking forward civic engagement by Corporates in terms of Advocacy

The City Connect Center to be set up in Bangalore would be one medium for this area of research. Such research would be focused on advocacy and impact of advocacy measures. Research questions would be framed as required when such collaboration takes place.

4 Legal Research

4.1 Instruments for participation at local, state and national level

Currently, the issue of instruments at the national level will be pursued as part of the advocacy initiative of Janaagraha.

4.1.1 Legislative

This research would attempt to identify current voids and proposed characteristics of effective legislative instruments for participation. Participation requires as a fundamental issue the existence of effective instruments for citizen participation within the political framework. JNNURM is endeavouring to stimulate participation at state and local level.

Research Questions The research questions that follows from this are:

1. What effective legislative instruments are provided in other democracies to cater to the need for citizen participation at the local, state and national levels.
2. What are the geo-specific factors that would support or impede the application of similar instruments in India.
3. How can the political space created by such instruments be optimised through legislation to facilitate participation at the local, state and national level
4. How can legislation provide coherence between participatory mechanisms at local, state and national level

4.2 Jurisprudence for municipalities

4.2.1 Case law examination and comparison

The primary objective here would be to be able to mould public opinion and judicial opinion to enable better functioning of municipalities. In particular we would endeavour to evaluate existing case law in the context of municipalities and aggregate and extract strands there that could be of value to that objective. These would then be disseminated through appropriate channels.

Case law effectively complements the impact of legislation by providing precedents which influence outcomes of the judicial process. The research questions that arise from this are:

Research questions

1. What are the lessons to be learned from case law that impact on the role of citizen participation?
2. What tools for awareness are needed for the judicial community that will illuminate future judgements in the direction of enhanced citizen participation?

4.2.2 Municipalities Act

There are great voids in these instruments. The Nagaraj bill seeks to inject citizen participation into municipal governance but this requires many amendments as this must address many more facets of the municipalities acts. We have to have some way of evaluating these acts to see where changes should be made. At the moment, there are a large number of acts that impact on the issue of municipal governance, hence it becomes difficult to both administer and determine in what respects acts should be modified. Hence, we need to create a methodology for evaluating municipalities acts in the sense of creating a diagnostic tool to determine the health of urban governance as determined by legislative instruments.

Research Questions

1. What aspects of municipal legislation are impeding the process of participation?
2. What elements of municipal legislation are providing facilitation for participation?
3. What aspects of state and municipal legislation provide grounds for creating legislation that would provide a satisfactory framework for participation at the state and local level by linking together those elements that are currently providing facilitation with new legislation so that there is an effective structure for citizen participation in place at the local level which purposefully feeds into the state level structures.

4.2.3 Guaranteed land title in Urban India

This project seeks to examine the scope for legislative and statutory change in order to convert property documents in urban India from prima facie documents of title to a guaranteed instrument of title to property.

5 Amplify existing programs and incubate new internal programs

Area Sabha field initiatives and CAP for universities and lay citizens will be natural areas for this work. In general, the development of new programs will be done under the research umbrella in collaboration with the implementing team, which would then be handheld for a transitional period.

6 Pre-publication activities

In order to make use of the large body of research data that has been generated by past activities, a large amount of work normally would need to be done in terms of analysis and conclusions before publication could be considered. The identification of such data, a preliminary analysis, and the generation of a proposal would normally precede any formal adoption of a project.

6.1 Quality and quantity of output

The intention is that we would greatly increase both the quantity and quality of research publications. In addition to the results generated by on-going research projects there is a wealth of information that exists from historical activity. This could be put together into research publications even by researchers located outside Bangalore, as long as the relevant information has been collated inside JCCD in appropriate formats.

We will identify appropriate media for the field of research we are in. This is not only about providing a wider audience for JCCD but also about ensuring that the relatively unique path that JCCD is blazing can be more effectively walked by those who are thinking about doing something similar. Dissemination is one way of ensuring that every step builds on what others have done before us. Volunteers with skills in Latex and/or its various front-ends (Miktex, Lyx, etc.) will be valuable to this effort.

7 Invitation to work with the Research Program at Janaagraha

If you have an interest in working in the areas of research mentioned above, please provide us:

1. your CV
2. a brief statement of a specific project that you would like to work on
3. what specific skills you have that are relevant to that project
4. whether you would wish to work:
 - a) full time
 - b) part time
 - c) remotely
 - d) any combination of the above

Please forward this information to sapna@janaagraha.org at your earliest opportunity.