



CITIZENS BEGIN THE JOURNEY TOWARDS WARD VISION

Shifting away from the usual grievance redressal approach, citizens in four wards of the city, took the first major step into participatory planning, as a single group, taking the initiative to identify the problems of their ward, at a workshop facilitated by Janaagraha on Sep. 14. Three of the local Corporators were also present on the occasion.

Former Chief Justice of India, Justice M.N. Venkatachalya, resident of ward 50, on a special invitation of Supraja federation, spent almost an hour going from room to room where the citizens were identifying their problems, and appreciated their interest and commitment.

Nearly one thousand people, including about 100 people from the slums, came

individually, and as representatives of the resident associations at wards 50, 54, 94 and 100, sat down for more than 4 hours and methodically listed out their concerns on 26 issues from roads to building violations and land encroachments, not by showing their lung power, but marking it on their neighborhood maps, especially prepared by Janaagraha as a central planning devise.



Citizens observe Digital Maps

The workshops, held at four educational institutions of the local wards, - another important feature, indicating the growing sense of Ward - level responsibility not only of citizens - attracted large numbers of women and many were excited that they could identify their own neighborhood so clearly, and easily mark the problems of

(Contd...Page 5)

Urban Poor get vocal about Infrastructure Problems

“We cant come out of our houses after six in the evening, because of misbehaviour by drunkards on the street. Eve-teasing is rampant,” said a woman from a slum in Hebbal. She was one of the 250 participants in Janaagraha-sponsored workshop for the urban poor held in



We will not be silent spectators any more.

Government Arts College on Sep. 6.

Safety and security was the topic being discussed with Dr. Parashivamurthy, DCP Central. The problem of harassment by drunkards highlighted by the woman from Hebbal, was echoed by all women from slums in 10 wards across the City. The only other

(Contd...Page 5)

INSIDE PAGES

Page-2 : Bala Janaagraha Trips

Page-3 : Assessing Government

Page-5 : Second Round Workshops

Page-6 : Excitement of Citizens

Solid Waste

The trip to solid waste management institute was very good. We acquired much knowledge as they explained to us about uses of garbage, the things which get decayed and the things which does not get decayed, municipal solid waste, mechanical compost vermi compost, plastic garbage etc..

They also advised us not to use thin plastic carry bags etc. because it is not possible to recycle them and littering them causes environmental pollution.

They also showed us earth worms, fresh garbage, decomposed garbage and so on. They also gave us a chance to collect Earthworms. we were informed that Earthworms eat garbage and give out manure; this takes 50 days.

BALA JANAAGRHA FIELD TRIPS TO SERVICE CENTRES

Earthworms are also very useful for plants, and vermi-compost is done by Earthworm and mechanical compost is done by bacteria.

-Divya Y. Rao, Ranjan K.N. & Vaishnavi J.

BESCOM Visit

We visited BESCOM at Somanahalli, a place full of electric poles. We went to a room full of CR panels. Basavaraj uncle, who has 5 years experience explained how his company provides electricity to whole Bangalore.

Some of the terms we learnt are:
PT=Potential Transformer for

Measuring voltages.

CT=Current Transformer used to measuring current.

It was great to learn with fun.

Abhay S. Rao, Abhishek C. & Siddharth B.V.

Electronic City

On August 2, our school team went to a field trip to Electronic City, near Hosur Road. We went there at 2.30 pm and went inside the hall where electric meters and electric switches were there. there were different types of electric meter and electrical switches.

We felt very nice after going there and learnt many things. How does electric current pass from place to place. etc

-Kiran, Manoj, Achal & Balaji, VII Std.

LETTERS

OF EXPERIENCE

Our association started its activities on March 12, last year, under crisis of non-implementation of many development issues and cable TV viewers problems. Unfulfilled and emergency needs of our area forged a strong unity amongst us. This has made us to move towards "living together" as one community.

The unity was further strengthened by the support provided by our ward 13 Corporator, young and energetic-Shri M. Nagaraj in implementation of many developmental programmes in our extension. Our vow is to make ours a model colony.

In one year, our association has been able solve many problems. For handling cable tv harassment, we have formed an association and unitedly decided to pay Rs. 170 only, towards subscription.

AGB Residents' Welfare Association

With cooperation of the local police, we were able to control the nuisance of parking of Trucks in the CA area. There is a park taking shape with the cooperation of BCC authorities and the Corporator. Sodium vapour neon lights and tube lights have been fixed in the entire area and on our own we have appointed security guard for the entire locality on a monthly expenditure of Rs. 2000, in addition to getting regular police beat.

We have also got bus stop markings done, road numbers painted, trees planted and protected by guards, and we have also been able get assurances for metalled road, replacement of defective sewerage pipes, proper transmission of Dooradarshan programmes, etc; from the concerned authorities.

We strongly feel that to achieve transparency from local government and elected bodies, citizens should get together and involve in public governance, by building a bridge with them.

-M.M. Patil

Secretary, AGRWA

(Keep it up-JT)

CONGRATULATIONS



Rama Raju

Shri V. Rama Raju, President-Abhyudaya of Ward 55, Padmanabhanagar has been unanimously elected President of Model Education Society (MES) of Jayanagar, Bangalore.

Archana

Children of Sri Vidya Mandir High School in Malleswaram attended a field-trip to the Police Control Room on Infantry Road, as a part of the Bala Janaagraha programme.

After the trip, children had to make a report of the 10 most important points learnt during the field-trip and share it with friends, family and neighbours and collect their -signatures. Archana R. Kadambi, of class VIII B took the lead in this exercise, collecting 42 signatures.



Assessing Government: Personal Notes

It has been close to five years that I have been working with government, at the second and third levels in our federal system. It has been a great learning experience, during which many myths have been exploded and many insights gained. What has emerged is a more informed sense of what is needed to improve public governance. Here is what I think:

1. There are hundreds of extremely qualified, competent, honest people in government, enough to be agents of larger change. The tragedy is that they are not leveraged enough.

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Unfortunately, what government can do in quantity, it cannot do with significant precision on quality.

In government, even if an officer does an outstanding job, he or she will still get transferred in a few years. In the private sector, this person would get additional responsibilities in the same area, whether it is project management, marketing, manufacturing etc. While there is certainly good argument to develop generalists, this could be for the first phase of any administrator's career; around the midway-mark, they should develop specialisations.

2. There is no institutional structure that can deliver on scale like the government: there are very few private-sector firms that have the kind of competency that government has in doing this, whether the issue is education, health, basic infrastructure, even the mid-day meal scheme that they announced recently (yes, failed at first, but they fixed the problems). In my mind, there is absolutely no arguing the capacity of government in doing this.
3. Unfortunately, what government can do in quantity, it cannot do with significant precision on quality. While there are several reasons for this, the one that strikes me as most significant is that Government has no experience in partnering with other players; if the scale of government delivery can be combined with the finesse of smaller players, the results would be extraordinary. One of these other players is the citizen herself, ironically the central character around whom the whole script has supposedly been penned.
4. In all my interactions with government, I am surprised to see the absence of the youth. All my experiences in the private sector and in Janaagraha have shown the power of the energy and talent of youth. There are hundreds of

thousands of college students who can be brought in as interns by government, getting exposure to important skills in a variety of fields: communications, technology, engineering, health, education etc. A well-organised internship programme can be at the heart of a sustainable change in the flow of new ideas coursing through the veins of government.

5. If we need to move beyond superficial terms like transparency and accountability to actual change in quality-of-life for citizens, I believe it is with participatory processes. This requires formal spaces, not informal consultation sessions. Today, the average citizen has no "space" or "platform" from which to interact with government. As a result, people feel alienated and disempowered. When there is no space, the energies and frustrations of the people tends to burst out in destructive eruptions that tend to exacerbate "us" and "them" sentiments, and drive citizens and government further apart.
6. A large portion of government's reluctance to provide formal spaces to citizens is the low level of trust that government has in citizens: both in terms of their willingness to act selflessly, as well as in their skills to bring specific value to any discussion. At a broad general level, government is willing to "listen" to citizens, but not willing to allow citizens to actually make or participate in decisions themselves.
7. Politicians are actually quite responsive to the needs of the people, if the people are outspoken (I am not talking of corruption - of course, many are corrupt - rather, about the capacity to bring change). We tend to think of them as immature, uninformed etc. Quite the contrary: even at the local government level, many of them are intelligent individuals, chipping away to secure benefits for themselves and their constituencies *(Contd...Page 4)*

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Assessing Government: Personal Notes

(Contd from Page 3)

from a system that nobody controls. Unfortunately, there is little political leadership to make the system itself more sensible and structured, so the collective appearance is a bizarre tableau that would be comical if it were not for the tragic human consequences.

8. Every institutional arrangement has its own particular ethos; government is no exception. The relationship that exists between administration and elected representatives is a complex one: the lakshman rekha is drawn at different points by different actors, depending on their personalities. Sometimes, the level of compromise is greater, sometimes less. Invariably, every officer has a line of control, beyond which compromise is not allowed.
9. There are hundreds of civil society organisations that have emerged over the past few decades to fill the governance gap. Some of these are directly involved in addressing themselves to local government issues. I must say here that while a few are exemplary organisations, the majority are flawed in many ways: lack of focus, consistency, delivery and even worse, of integrity. The very “power” that is being challenged among the institutions of government, is often actively being sought and retained. Many are caught in ideological dead-ends, and do not have the intellectual honesty to admit to themselves that they are wrong. My only assessment is that this is also a social “marketplace” at work, that over time, the less robust ones will wither away and die.
10. There are those who are constantly poking holes in the edifice of government. I believe that these people have an obligation to articulate an alternative, one that works in the real world, for the majority of people. Yes, it is

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more romantic and peaceful to retreat to a riverside and grow organic vegetables, and it is indeed an extraordinary way to live one’s life as an individual. But if this is the world-view being expressed for all people, then the proponent must show a realistic path for this to happen, not occupy a moral high ground to preach to the world from. Let this alternative demonstrate how to deal with the complexity of energies and forces of the world today, let this alternative take on the challenge of bringing millions of people on board, let this alternative address issues of poverty and inequity and freedom. Otherwise, it is fit for that individual alone. And I would gladly join that individual by the riverside, if what I wanted to do was to live at peace for myself. But if one voluntarily dons the clothes of a social reformer, one accepts the task of convincing and motivating others. Unfortunately, much of the inflammatory material that I read is

incoherent: a broad swathe of criticism levelled at government, multi-national companies, urbanisation, globalisation. To those who have nothing but vitriol for government, I ask, “What is the alternative?” Every institutional structure has flaws. For example, our private healthcare industry in the country is guilty of excesses and atrocities that could make the government look like a saint. I do not want to sound like a defender of government. Of course, there are unacceptable excesses in government as well. But our solutions must start with a vision of the future. For myself, that vision has government as a key player in giving people the freedom to live their lives as they choose.

Ultimately, as a student of democracy over these past few years, I have encountered piece after piece of evidence to suggest that what is missing is the participation of citizens.

Ultimately, as a student of democracy over these past few years, I have encountered piece after piece of evidence to suggest that what is missing is the participation of citizens. Not as CUSTOMERS of the services of the government, but as PARTNERS in the process. Not as someone standing outside the ivory towers where the decisions are made, but as joint decision-makers, sitting at the table. Not as emasculated recipients getting rationed crumbs of tokenism, but in the fullest sense, with the same information that is available to the administrative and political leadership.

Much of this argument is not new: it has been advocated, accepted, legalised (through the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments) and now being actively pursued in rural India. While there are still enormous challenges in implementing the legal provisions with regard to true decentralisation, there is a great deal of energy emanating from within many state governments to solidify this process in rural areas. Issues such as untying of funds, streamlining of programmes, capacity building and training of Gram Panchayat members are among the hottest potatoes being tossed around in state legislatures.

However, such leadership is sorely lacking in urban decentralisation. Caught in the penumbra of the spotlight on their rural brethren, the urban dwellers are finding themselves in a governance vacuum. And as the nation urbanises, this vacuum can only grow.

Unless we start building the scaffolding of citizen participation.



Ramesh Ramanathan
Campaign Co-ordinator

... Journey towards Ward Vision

(Contd from Page 1)

the area with all specifications. It was also an opportunity for many of them to interact with their own neighbors from the next streets, who were either strangers or only "hello and smile" acquaintances, thus far.

In ward 50, Mr. P.R. Ramesh, Corporator and former chairman of Standing Committee for Ward Works, complimented the citizens for coming together as a community, to identify their problems, which made the work of the corporator easy. He also felt that the high quality state-of-the-art digital maps would provide the basis for deciding priorities of development works, since

they could compare their own area with that of others with factual information. "Otherwise, we might need ten years budgetary allocations for one single year," he pointed out.

Corporators, Mr. Venkateshmurthy, of ward 54 and Mr. T.M. Muniswamappa of ward 94 arrived at their respective ward level workshop venues, went around the classrooms where citizens were identifying their issues, and complimented them for their partnership with the elected representatives and government to prepare a 3 year plan for the improvement of living conditions in their Ward.

Mr. Ravichander of BATF, and Prof. Rajeev Gowda of IIM were among the 100 people who volunteered their services today, to facilitate the workshops conducted their respective workshops. In addition to the ward maps, and maps showing transport and water lines in the wards, citizens had displayed their own vision pictures and communication students of Surana college and COMMITS colleges had put up a photographic collage, depicting the strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the ward, at the venue.

-Inputs by Madhavi, Ajay, Mani & Gurudath

Urban Poor and Infrastructure Problems

(Contd from Page 1)

problem related to security was rowdism, and this was voiced by the only male resident present in that group. The DCP assured the residents of quick action.

Residents of about 30 slums, a majority of them women, came together for the first time to discuss about their basic infrastructural problems.

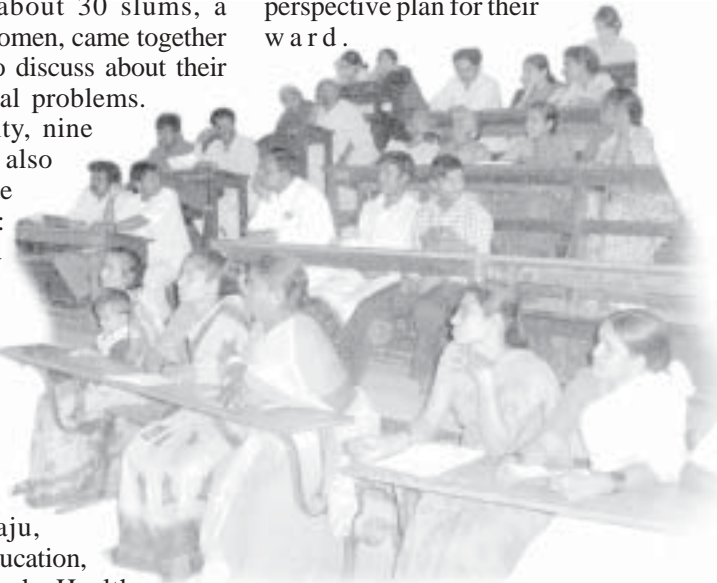
Apart from security, nine other issues were also discussed in separate groups. They were: Water, sewerage and stormwater drain, garbage, health, education, land and slum declaration, electricity and street lights, community toilets, micro-enterprise.

Mr. S.P. Shantaraju, Deputy Director Education, BCC, Dr. G. Lokesh, Health Officer, and many other officials from respective development agencies and NGO activists facilitated the workshop and interacted with the citizens.

The citizens first identified the problems in their areas, then explored the potential solutions with agency heads, and subject experts.

The event for the urban poor was a

preliminary planning exercise to better equip them to participate in the ward planning campaign of Janaagraha, which consists of 5 structured workshops for all citizens of the wards to identify their local issues and create a 3-year perspective plan for their ward.



In the workshops which commence on September 14 and ends on December 6, a wide range of citizens will plan to improve their basic infrastructure facilities that affect their everyday lives.

The atmosphere in Government Arts College resembled one's first day in school. At the end of the exercise, many women were excited that they could

actually put forth their problems directly to the authority concerned. What motivated them to come back for the next workshop was positive response from authorities.

Today's exercise will also help in creating a forum that transcends grievance redressal and instead analyses specific answers and solutions from each agency for citizens in the City's slums.

Second Round Workshops

Six more wards in the city (Ward 55, 68, 74, 78, 85 and 96) are going in for their series of community workshops commencing from Sunday (Sep 21) and over 2,500 citizens have already registered their names as participants, with their ward level resident associations.

The venues of the workshops are as follows. Ward 55 (Carmel School, Padmanabhanagar) Ward 68 (Jyothi Nivas College, Koramangala) Ward 74 (Miranda School, Jeevan Bhima Nagar) Ward 78 (Mount Carmel College, Vasanth Nagar) Ward 85 (St. Aloysius School, Sarvajna Nagar) and Ward 96 (Sumangali Sevashrama).

Enthusiastic Response for Workshops

September 14, 2003, was a Sunday with a difference for Ward 94, who held their first Ward Vision workshop in Siddhartha College to identify issues and problems. At 8 am, the Janaagraha volunteers were welcomed by enthusiastic ward members at the venue. The volunteers were setting the stage, and putting up panels for the maps in different rooms, for areawise workshops.

At the start of the programme, the conductor, Mr. Ravichander, addressing the crowd in open-air, clearly defined the purpose of the entire workshop. He said, "The local community should come forward and actively participate to identify problems so as to improve individual wards."

By noon, the rooms of six areas were packed with eager residents who came forward as a group to identify their problems, which they have been living with for years.

Venkateshpura area was overflowing

... the mood was very enthusiastic and the place was bustling with frenzied activities. Many of the volunteers impressed with the whole effort said "we want to be actively involved in the entire programme."

with participants, such that another room was dedicated to them for convenience.

The Corporator, T.M. Muniswamappa, came to visit the workshop and was very satisfied to see citizens working together improve the ward. He said "with the initiative of Janaagraha, I hope to solve the problem of public lavatory in all slum areas, bad roads, water supply and sanitary lines to be made operational within 3 years".

Overall, the first workshop received an enthusiastic response, with most people treating this as their last resort to any kind of betterment. Initially there were more men than women who came forward to participate, but as the workshop progressed many women

CORPORATORS PAT CITIZENS

joined in too. The ward co-coordinators were very proud of their efforts, since most of them single-handedly went door to door to invite people to participate in this noble novel venture.

In **Ward 50** the programme began with a welcome address and a talk by the Corporator, P.R. Ramesh. Next, the group Kalagangotri held a brief play about spreading the idea of Janaagraha and about the situations that people face during their regular travel in their localities.

Ward 100 is one of the biggest wards in Bangalore. At the first Ward Vision meeting there was a palpable sense of excitement in the air.

In area 2 the meeting began at 11am, with area members introducing themselves. 25 citizens were present, mostly men between the ages of 60 and 70 years. The facilitator initiated the proceedings with a brief introduction on what the agenda was and what they hoped to achieve at the end of the day. The participants were quite enthusiastic, as they believed they could do something constructive for their area and its improvement. Most participants were convinced at the end of the workshop, that they could successfully work towards fulfilling the objectives of this initiation. The facilitator urged the residents to encourage and motivate the younger generation to participate in ward activities.

The participants were asked to identify their problems and put it up on the large map. The most important issues that stood out in this area were the problem of traffic, water supply and roads.

This led to a heated discussion and soon people were talking among themselves about the issues. Some were keen to come up with solutions and expected immediate answers.

Overall, the mood was very enthusiastic and the room was bustling with frenzied activities. Many of the volunteers impressed with the whole effort said "we want to be actively involved in the entire programme."

**Reports by: Devika,
Natasha & Divya of Commits &
Madhavi of Surana College**



(photo-Madhavi)

Kalagangotri presents street play at ward 50, while citizens at Ward 100 list out their problems



(photo-Natasha)