

Citizen Engagement in Urban Governance

Lessons from Small and Medium Towns in India



Knowledge is Power

PRIA

Society for Participatory Research in Asia

42 Tughlakabad Institutional Area, New Delhi - 110 062.

Tel. : +91-11-2996 0931- 33 **Fax:** +91-11-2995 5183

Email: info@pria.org **Website:** www.pria.org

Preface

Nearly half the world's population now lives in cities. Urban centres around the world are buzzing with excitement. Urbanisation as a fact of human habitation is here to stay. Rapid urbanisation has also occurred in India over the past two decades. Nearly a third of its people – 350 million – now stay in urban centres. This number is only increasing as the pace of economic growth moves on.

Yet, nearly 5000 urban habitats in the country provide a picture of extreme confusion and chaos. Although cities have existed as centres of trade, monarchy and culture in the Indian sub-continent for 5000 years, official policies to support and promote urban habitation have been largely absent during the past six decades since Independence. Many well-known leaders of India's freedom struggle gained their experience of politics in municipalities of medium-sized towns in the early twentieth century, but the founders of the constitution of independent India did not provide for a democratic framework of governance of municipalities. Hence, municipal administration remained underdeveloped, almost an invalid cousin of rural development in the country.

As a result, most urban centres in the country have grown haphazardly; urban planning is non-existent; hardly any municipalities have maps of their territories; most municipalities keep their books of accounts in the single entry system; and there is no specialised cadre of trained personnel working in municipalities. A large number of city level and regional urban planning bodies have come up in recent years, without adequate rationalisation of their functions and accountabilities. That is precisely why it has been a nightmare for citizens to get any basic municipal services all these years. From birth certificate to water, sanitation and education services to getting housing plans approved, citizens of urban India have been the most harassed lot.

While some international financial institutions (like the World Bank or Asian Development Bank) have invested resources in urban infrastructure of large metropolitan cities (like Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai, etc.), the development of small and medium towns has been mostly neglected.

It is in this scenario that the amendments to the Indian Constitution (made in April 1994) related to democratising municipal bodies has to be viewed. The demand for reforming municipal governance has not since gained such a momentum as to demonstrate a 'reformed' urban governance in the country. The voices of citizens and civil society in respect of such a demand have also been largely muted. The terror attacks on Mumbai in November 2008 suddenly made urban middle class in the country to wake up to the reality of urban mal-governance, though it is yet to be translated into practical and persistent actions.

In pursuit of its strategy of "Governance Where People Matter", PRIA began to undertake some interventions in reforming urban governance over the past decade. These interventions were further intensified after 2003 with direct experiments at the grassroots level in small and medium towns of several states. While some interesting impacts have been seen, much of this period has been one of

experimentation, trials and errors and steep learning curves. Much needs to be done, by many more actors and stakeholders in the coming decade, if urban governance in the country has to become democratically accountable to all its citizens.

It is with this hope that we have brought out a series of occasional papers and resource packages. We share them with you all with the hope that we can mobilise a broad coalition for reforming urban governance in India. We also hope that these lessons and insights may be useful in stimulating a wider sharing of strategies and methodologies globally, since we now are living in the 'urban' millennium.

Rajesh Tandon

President, PRIA

Acknowledgement

The 74th Constitutional Amendment Act (CAA) brought out in 1992 guaranteed the existence of municipalities as institutions of urban local governance. The 12th Schedule of the Constitution listed 18 items as the functional domain of the municipalities. It entails that the elected municipality will be responsible to provide such basic services to the citizens and the state government will devolve authorities, funds and functionaries as necessary for the municipalities to become institutions of local governance in urban areas. However, even after almost 15 years of CAA, it remained a distant reality.

In India, citizens' participation in municipal governance is almost non-existent. Legally speaking, the rural counterpart has at least an opportunity to participate in the rural local governance (Panchayati Raj Institutions) through the constitutional mechanism called 'Gram Sabha'. However, no such mechanism does exist for urban citizens. The provision for Ward Committees in cities with a population of more than 300,000 has not been implemented in most of the states, and they remained ineffective at their best, wherever they have been constituted. In the absence of any institutional obligation to involve the citizens in the planning, implementation and monitoring of development programmes, interface between civil society and municipal governance depends on the 'good intentions' of 'well meaning' elected representatives and officials.

In this background, PRIA and its partners started intervening in numerous Small and Medium Towns (SMTs) to promote citizen participation and civic engagement. PRIA's partners, particularly Unnati in Gujarat and Rajasthan, Samarthan in Madhya Pradesh, CENCORED in Bihar, Sahayi in Kerala, Sahbhagi Shikshan Kendra in Uttar Pradesh and Himalayan Action Research Centre in Uttarakhand, initiated a number of innovative methods in this direction. We sincerely acknowledge their contribution in making the urban governance institutions more participatory.

The citizens of these SMTs and the elected representatives have shown incredible persistence and enthusiasm to try out innovative joint problem solving in the face of resource scarcity. We gratefully acknowledge their time, energy and enthusiasm.

We acknowledge the contribution of our colleagues who facilitated citizen mobilisation with great motivation in 50 plus SMTs. This publication would not have been possible without the support and contributions from Anwar Khan, Anil Kumar and Pushpita Bandyopadhyay.

We are deeply indebted to Dr. Rajesh Tandon, President, PRIA, who provided opportunity and constant guidance to undertake these planning initiatives.

Dr. Kaustuv Kanti Bandyopadhyay

Director, PRIA

Abbreviations

- CAA: Constitutional Amendment Act
CBOs: Community Based Organisations
CDP: City Development Planning
CPL: Community Participation Law
CRS: Civil Registration System
CSOs: Civil Society Organisations
DPC: District Planning Committee
ECOSOC: Economic and Social Council
ILO: International Labour Organisation
IPH: Irrigation and Public Health
JNNURM: Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission
MPC: Metropolitan Planning Committee
MSD: Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue
NCC: National Cadet Corps
NREGA: National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
NRHM: National Rural Health Mission
NSS: National Service Scheme
NTAG: National Technical Advisory Group
PEVAC: Pre-Election Voters' Awareness Campaigns
RTI: Right to Information
RWAs: Residents Welfare Associations
SEC: State Election Commission
SHGs: Self-Help Groups
SMTs: Small and Medium Towns
SWM: Solid Waste Management
TCPO: Town and Country Planning Organisation
ULBs: Urban Local Bodies
UNICEF: United Nations International Children's Fund
WHO: World Health Organisation

Contents

Preface

Acknowledgement

Executive Summary

Abbreviations

List of Tables

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Participation and Civic Engagement in Historical Context
- 1.2. Understanding Citizen Participation and Civic Engagement in the Current Context
- 1.3. Spaces for Citizen Participation and Civic Engagement in Urban Governance
- 1.4. Problems and Issues Related to Urban Services

2. Citizen Engagement in Urban Governance: PRIA's Interventions

- 2.1 Mechanisms for Citizen Engagement
- 2.2 Interventions for Citizen Engagement
 - 2.2.1 Pre-Election Voters' Awareness Campaigns
 - 2.2.2 Campaigns on Birth Registration
 - 2.2.3 Campaigns on Access to Sanitation Services
 - 2.2.4 Organisation Building (Mohalla Samities)
 - 2.2.5 Social Accountability Mechanisms

3. Challenges Ahead

List of Tables and Boxes

Table 1: List of Intervened States and Municipalities

Table 2: Examples of Issues Prioritised in Selected Areas through Micro Planning

Executive Summary

The 'top-down' model of development had serious deficits. It failed to improve the quality of life and provide basic dignity to a large number of people. In India, while the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act (CAA) provided enormous opportunity for people's participation in rural local governance institutions and processes, unfortunately it was very much truncated in the case of the 74th CAA.

Participation has been understood and explained in a variety of ways - participation as contribution or organisation building or as empowering process or as combination of all three. The political meaning is inevitably linked to the relationship between the citizens and the state institutions. Active citizenship gives the right to hold others accountable, and accountability is the process of engaging in participation. Thus, the concept of citizenship encompasses social rights, social responsibilities and social accountability.

In India, citizen participation in municipal governance is almost non-existent. The provision for ward committees in cities with a population of more than 300,000 has not been implemented in most of the states, and they remained ineffective at their best, wherever they have been constituted. There are hardly any embedded mechanisms to facilitate the voice and space for citizen participation in urban governance.

A variety of mechanisms have been employed by PRIA to promote citizen participation and civic engagement in urban governance such as:

- a) Information sharing
- b) Consultation
- c) Joint assessment
- d) Shared decision-making and collaboration.

PRIA and its partners initiated a number of interventions for facilitating citizen engagements such as:

- a) Pre-election voters' awareness campaigns
- b) Campaigns on birth registration
- c) Campaigns on access to sanitation services
- d) Organisation building (Mohalla Samities)
- e) Social accountability mechanisms.

The inclusion of weaker sections in governance and strengthening their confidence for demand articulation are major concerns in the urban India. Although Mohalla Samities have become mechanisms for community participation in strengthening local self-governance, the potential roles that other stakeholders could play are yet to be optimised. The Mohalla Samities demonstrated a few interesting cases on how

community involved successfully with greater ownership in the local issues. However, for scaling up of such interventions, making them more representative and their wider sharing, multiplier effort is needed.

The Mohalla Samities demonstrated the potential role of these platforms in monitoring the municipal services by mobilising the community people. The Samities revitalised the community structure and created a medium to explore space in the framework of good governance. There is a need to make the platforms more focused and targeted towards the developmental issues. The Mohalla Samities entailed the participation of the weak, missed out and the marginalised sections with multiple leaderships. They further helped to check the erring functionaries with the relevant action taken at right time. Indeed the initiatives took up by the Mohalla Samities resulted to a large extent in bringing transparency and accountability in urban governance in the interventional areas.

It was expressed by the municipality that many a time the civil societies bypass the municipality and approach the district administration for basic services. In several areas, the municipal stakeholders have a feeling that a parallel body is created against them. Hence, joint initiatives with non-threatening relationship with the elected representatives and Mohalla Samities need to be ensured from the very outset.

The Samiti members also need to strengthen the leadership and level of understanding on the social issues. Further, the question of sustainability of Mohalla Samities is another challenge in their functioning.

A permanent structure is important for the Mohalla Samities like the Gram Sabhas in Panchayat. Towards that end, it is important to have provisions for forming Mohalla Committees in the respective state Municipal Acts. Kerala and West Bengal are the only two states having the provision in the Municipal Acts for constituting committees at ward level in small and medium towns (SMTs). Hence, this issue needs to be taken up for policy advocacy in other states.

Further, it would be imperative to undertake institutional strengthening of Mohalla Samities through exposure visits across the states and introducing some common parameters for their functioning. A set of rules and regulations with specific responsibilities to the Mohalla Samities can further guide their functioning. A viable model also needs to be brought out to multiply the experience in other wards and in other municipalities. Hence, it is important to showcase multiple experiences from different states. It has been extensively recognised from the experience that Mohalla Samities could be a real platform to strengthen citizens' participation to ensure democratic and responsive governance.

There is now an opportunity provided by the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM). One of the reforms proposed under JNNURM is the enactment and implementation of Community Participation Law (CPL). The state governments signing Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the central government and implementing any scheme under JNNURM have to enact CPL in the coming years. The CPL proposes for Area Sabhas and Ward Committees. However, enough indications are yet to come as to how the state governments are planning to facilitate the formation of Area Sabhas and Ward Committees backed up by legal provisions.

Till the time such laws are enacted, rules and bye-laws are framed, and Area Sabhas and Ward Committees are formalised by the state governments and municipalities, how do CSOs work towards institutionalisation of citizens' participation in municipal governance? Notwithstanding the fact that such laws, even if enacted, would not ensure the institutionalisation of citizens' participation, the need for such laws cannot be overstated. Therefore, for the time being, there is no option other than to activate the informal citizens' and residents' associations and developing their leadership to make municipal governance accountable to citizens.

The draft CPL (Model Nagara Raj Bill), however, gives some important clues about the structures and functions of Area Sabhas and Ward Committees, which could be used as a guide. Understandably, in the absence of legal back up the structure and functions proposed in the bill could not be followed ditto (for example, election to Area Sabha). Nevertheless, a whole lot of proposed provisions could be implemented. There will be tremendous strategic advantage, as the practicality of the provisions proposed in the bill will be tested out. In the future, the state governments, municipalities and CSOs could also use the experience gained from this experimentation. Future advocacy work with the state and central governments on citizen participation could be benefited from this important learning.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Participation and Civic Engagement in Historical Context

Post-Independent India adopted a dominant model of development with a firm belief on industrial and economic growth as the basis for development. It believed that wealth created at the 'top' through such growth will percolate 'down' and would help develop the underdeveloped. It was popularly known as the 'top-down' model of development. By the 1960s, it was evident that this model had serious deficits. At best it failed to improve the quality of life and provide basic dignity to a large number of people and at worst it further marginalised and excluded the already disadvantaged people. By late 1960s, there was an urgent search for an alternative model of development with centrality on citizen participation. An emphasis on social development alongside economic growth was debated. Equitable development with emphasis on citizen participation in local-level decision-making processes was emphasised. The decade of the 1970s experienced an exponential growth of civil society in the domain of non-state actors. The articulation of local people to participate in the major development decision-making processes got sharpened with the facilitation by the voluntary organisations; many international agencies like the International Labour Organisation (ILO), Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), World Health Organisation (WHO), United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF), etc. also supported the views that participation must be an integral part of any development strategies. Participation was equated with natural human rights and ensuring provision of basic dignity with a focus on the poor and marginalised. The social development aspect, particularly health and education, got more attention. The mid-1970s also experienced a barrage of intellectual discourse on popular knowledge; the hitherto excluded knowledge of marginalised people got strong recognition and support from the civil society intellectuals, including many academicians. The concept and practices on Participatory Research emerged as a powerful methodology to promote popular production of knowledge. The decade of the 1980s focused on participation in policies, institutions and programmes. Emergence of a large number of community based organisations (CBOs) was evidenced in natural resource management programmes, e.g., Forest Protection Committees, Water User Associations, Watershed Committees, etc. A large number of environmental movements characterised by people's participation also emerged. The decade of 1990s was marked by a major focus on empowerment and capacity building of the marginalised people, particularly women, children, tribal and Scheduled Castes (SCs). The issues on social discriminations got highlighted through many advocacy campaigns and grassroots mobilisation. Citizen participation in projects got a sharp focus. The policies and programmes of national governments, multilateral agencies (like The World Bank, Asian Development Bank, etc.) and bilateral agencies (like DFID, SIDA, etc.) received sharp critics from the civil society,

as they lacked a clear-cut focus on the participation of primary stakeholders. The 1990s also experienced a focus on decentralisation and citizen participation. In India, while the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act (CAA) provided enormous opportunity for people's participation in rural local governance institutions and processes, unfortunately it was very much truncated in the case of the 74th CAA. As we entered the new millennium, citizen participation in governance processes received renewed interest and importance. The concept and practices of citizenship (which includes rights and entitlements) emerged as the basis for engaging with the governance institutions. There is now a greater consensus that citizen participation and civic engagement are the building blocks for democratic governance.

1.2 Understanding Citizen Participation and Civic Engagement in the Current Context

Participation has been understood and explained in a variety of ways by various scholars and practitioners. One of the views is to consider **participation as contribution**. Here participation implies voluntary or mandatory contributions in cash, kind or labour by the people to predetermined programmes and projects, in return for some perceived, expected benefits. This reflects the project or programme nature of participation. The other view of participation is **organisation building**. Here organisation is viewed as the fundamental instrument of participation. The organisations are either externally conceived, where implementing agencies create new organisations within the existing socio-political framework, or organisations emerge as a result of the participation. The later is more difficult to achieve, as it may evoke hostility of existing institutional structures. An alternative view recognises the importance of organisation, but seeks to encourage people to determine its nature and structure, which is also known as popular movement. Still another view is to consider participation as **empowering process**. This view sees participation as developing the skills and abilities to enable people to manage better and decide on the various aspects of their lives, which they feel appropriate. It equates participation with achieving some power: access to and control over resources necessary to protect their livelihood and working towards structural changes.

In the current context, the focus has generally been on the political meaning of participation. The political meaning is inevitably linked to the relationship between the citizens and the state institutions. Unfortunately, the citizens are often considered either as beneficiaries of government welfare programmes or as voters. Citizens in India and elsewhere are becoming mistrustful of public institutions and government agencies. They are becoming apathetic towards governance and dependent on the state for their welfare. There has been clear demand in citizens' voices that they be treated neither as beneficiaries of government programmes and schemes, nor as voters occasionally electing their representatives, but as active citizens. Thus there is a need for re-thinking on the 'politicisation of the participation of citizens' – not in electoral sense, but in the basic sense of developing informed, empowered and active citizenship.

Active citizenship gives the right to hold others accountable, and accountability is the process of engaging in participation. It would assert itself by seeking greater accountability from the service providers through increased dialogue, consultation,

engagement and by monitoring and assessing performance externally and mutually. Thus, the concept of citizenship encompasses the concepts of social rights, social responsibilities and social accountability.

1.3 Spaces for Citizen Participation and Civic Engagement in Urban Governance

In India, citizen participation in municipal governance is almost non-existent. Legally speaking, the rural counterpart has at least an opportunity to participate in the rural local governance (Panchayati Raj Institutions) through the constitutional mechanism called 'Gram Sabha'. However, no such mechanism does exist for urban citizens. The provision for ward committees in cities with a population of more than 300,000 has not been implemented in most of the states, and they remained ineffective at their best, wherever they have been constituted. The non-functioning of ward committees are partly rooted in the constitutional provision itself. Recent studies show that it is almost impossible to enable citizen participation in the current format of ward committees. In the absence of any institutional obligation to involve the citizens in the planning, implementation and monitoring of development programmes, interface between civil society and municipal governance depends on the 'good intentions' of 'well meaning' elected representatives and officials. Recent studies also show that the much acclaimed experimentation on Residents Welfare Associations (RWAs) at best attracted a section of middle class and upper middle class citizens in the large metro cities. The poorer locations remained uncharted and devoid of organised citizen actions (barring some isolated NGO interventions). The proposed Community Participation Law (CPL) under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) is one step forward, though it envisages only a truncated version of citizen participation and relies on proxy participation. There are hardly any embedded mechanisms to facilitate the voice and space for citizen participation in urban governance.

The theoretical debate on 'new public management' focusing on institutional transparency and accountability has reached at its crescendo in this country. Many legislations and provisions have been in place geared towards governance reforms. Mandatory provision of social audit in the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), Right to Information (RTI) Act, provision of community monitoring in the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) are some of the examples to substantiate the governmental efforts to ensure social accountability in public programmes. However, there emerges a stark contrasting picture as far as transparency and accountability of urban governance institutions are concerned. The municipal administration, elected representatives and other parastatal institutions in the country by and large have remained elusive to transparency and accountability. For example, most municipalities with a very few exceptions have not even published proactive/suo moto disclosure of 17 items as required under section IV of RTI Act. There has been hardly any enforcement even by the higher tier of governance, for example, state department of municipal administration. Municipalities, which were supposed to be the people's institutions as envisaged in the 74th CAA, paradoxically, have remained closed institutions to the people at best and anti-people at worst by outrightly denying rights (right to a dignified life, live and livelihood) to the citizens.

Civil society in India has been historically indoctrinated with the saying, “India lives in her villages”. The vibrancy and activism of civil society, which could be seen and felt in rural areas, is largely absent in urban locations. The dominant large sections of civil society organisations (CSOs), particularly the intermediary NGOs active in urban locations, remained captive of provisioning service delivery, so far. There are very few CSOs currently engaged with the municipal governance to hold them accountable and make them transparent. Encouraging and nurturing associations of poor and marginalised citizens to assert their voice in municipal governance is the least priority of CSOs, *albeit* with exceptions. More over, even if civil society is ready to engage with municipal governance and prepare the poor and marginalised as right-conscious citizens, it does not have the necessary capacity. A systemic capacity deficit plagues the civil society activism in urban locations.

The other aspect of this challenge is the absence of critical civil society voice at the state and national-level policy-making process for urban development and governance. In recent years, through the National Technical Advisory Group (NTAG) in JNNURM, efforts have been made to create spaces for civil society participation in influencing JNNURM processes with very limited success. It must be acknowledged that there are capable individual CSOs contributing to improve urban governance by fostering innovations. However, the efforts to bring these individual organisations together to create synergistic talent and voice are very few and far between. There are hardly any national or state-level platforms engaged in influencing urban policies.

The 74th CAA, for the first time in 200 years old history of municipalities in India, made the revolutionary provision for the municipalities to undertake the town and development planning process. However, the state governments have retained their control over the urban planning process in nearly 5000 plus towns and cities through an archaic institution called the Town and Country Planning Organisation (TCPO). The municipalities continue to be dependent on the colonial practices of town and country planning. They have been denied the power to acquire appropriate capacities to undertake development planning exercise on their own. The parastatal institutions described earlier take planning and infrastructure development activities in the towns and cities on behalf of the municipalities. Many a time, these parastatal bodies are accessing private capital from the market as loans for developing new infrastructures, and in most cases the loans are then transferred to the municipalities for servicing. This has been creating discontent in the municipal authorities. In most states, the constitutionally mandated two institutions – District Planning Committee (DPC) and Metropolitan Planning Committee (MPC)—either have not been formed or remained defunct, where they have been formed.

The municipalities in most cases do not have adequate database on the status of basic service delivery. In the absence of authentic database on demography, economy, water, sanitation, solid waste, drainage, roads and social infrastructure, no proper planning could be undertaken. Many of them even do not have any kind of physical map of the towns.

Until recently, the principal legal instrument for urban planning has been considered as Master Plans, which enable the planners to freeze land use for specific purpose for 15 to 20 years purely from a technical point of view, irrespective of demographic, economic or political changes that are bound to happen in an urban habitation.

Recently, the City Development Planning (CDP) approach introduced through JNNURM has ushered a new hope in making the city planning more comprehensive to include considerations other than only land use. However, whether it was Master Plans or City Development Plans, there was hardly any effort or scope to make them inclusive and participatory. The entire planning process has remained expert driven. As a result, most of the plans do not reflect the priorities of the citizens and other stakeholders in the cities.

1.4 Problems and Issues Related to Urban Services

As per the 74th CAA, the municipalities are entrusted to provide basic urban services and amenities to the citizens. However, by any standard the services supposed to be provided by the municipalities are either absent or of unacceptably low quality. While the middle and upper middle class citizens have found ways to get these services through private provisioning, it is the poor and the most marginalised who bear the social costs of unhygienic environment due to improper management of water, sanitation and solid waste. In the absence of secured land tenure in the numerous slums and squatters, the poor and marginalised are not provided with basic services, and most municipalities remain largely unresponsive. However, in the absence of any alternative sources, poor are still dependent on the municipalities for such services irrespective of their irregularity, unreliability and low quality. In situations where the local market mechanisms responded to fill in the service delivery gaps, the poor had to bear the burden of higher costs. There is no policy to regulate the market in favour of the poor.

A considerable amount of discrepancy is noticeable when one compares bigger cities on the one hand and Small and Medium Towns (SMTs) on the other. This discrepancy is observed in the service delivery, which is comparatively better in bigger cities than in the smaller towns. Although the population in SMTs is lesser in comparison to larger towns, it does not mean that the smaller towns are free from problems. Facilities like the availability of clean drinking water, sanitation and proper health facilities are missing. Even if these services are available in such SMTs, what needs to be understood is that who is able to access these services? It is more often the well off, influential and powerful people and areas that are able to access these services better than the marginalised sections in the towns who often live in slums, squatters and other low-income areas. In addition to problems related to services like water, sanitation or health, there are other problems like the lack of awareness among people on issues such as birth and death registration, registering one's name on the voter's list, which are a proof of one's citizenship and, therefore, various entitlements.

As India is experiencing spectacular economic growth primarily through the burgeoning service sectors, the urban centres, particularly the larger ones, are seen to be the engines of economic growth. The neoliberal policies and programmes have resulted in manifold increase in expenditures on large infrastructure like roads, bridges, flyovers, rapid transportation systems, etc. The private sector participation (encouraged through various concessions given by the governments) has also resulted in augmentation of public resources for building such large infrastructure. On the other hand, these policies and programmes have also posed serious threats to the traditional urban livelihood systems, informal economies and social networks on which most urban poor are dependent. The large-scale privatisation of basic

service utilities and infrastructure development has been taken up in unprecedented manner. In this juggernaut of mindless privatisation, the urban poverty has been obscured in the eyes of policy-making institutions. Many development onslaughts have encouraged the municipal administration to push hard the urban poor to the periphery of the towns and cities, thereby completely destroying livelihood, economic and social networks. The informal economy of the poor and marginalised gets the least priority. The programmes conceptualised and developed by the policy-making agencies remained highly fragmented and inaccessible to poor, due to the corrupt and inefficient service delivery institutions. The current terms of engagement for the poor and informal workers with the governance and market institutions are heavily skewed in favour of the powerful. The unorganised nature of informal labour force and urban poor exacerbates the situation and perpetuate the skewed terms of engagement.

Chapter 2

Citizen Engagement in Urban Governance: PRIA's Interventions

2.1 Mechanisms for Citizen Engagement

A variety of mechanisms have been employed to promote citizen participation and civic engagement in urban governance of 52 SMTs (Table 1). The choice of a particular mechanism was guided by the objectives to be achieved and the local context. Some of the mechanisms employed are given below:

- a) **Information sharing:** In order to generate awareness and to prepare the citizens, elected councillors and other stakeholders, wide range of information was disseminated. It included simplified version of the 74th CAA, spaces, roles and responsibilities of citizens and elected representatives, procedures of local elections, status of services, and so on. In addition, regular meetings and interfaces were also used to share information.
- b) **Consultation:** Consultative meetings with the stakeholders were undertaken in regular intervals. Each intervention was discussed with the citizens, elected representatives, local civil society groups and other stakeholders to get their perspectives included in the designing of the interventions, and thereby increasing the chances of ownership among various stakeholders.
- c) **Joint assessment:** Participatory assessment and monitoring with the stakeholders, particularly the targeted citizens, were used as tools and approaches for enhancing civic engagement. These included use of a variety of tools like citizen monitoring and citizen assessment of urban services and interfaces with the elected representatives to discuss those monitoring results and findings.
- d) **Shared decision-making and collaboration:** A range of participatory planning techniques was undertaken by the facilitators. It included participatory urban planning at the ward level, comprehensive zonal planning as well sectoral plans like Solid Waste Management (SWM) at the city level. It involved engagement from various stakeholders at every stage of the planning process.

Table 1: List of Intervened States and Municipalities

State	District	Municipality	Type of Municipality
Andhra Pradesh	Vishakaptanam	1. Anakapalli	MC
	Mehaboobnagar	2. Mehboobnagar	MC
Bihar	Madhubani	3. Madhubani	MC
	Muzaffarpur	4. Kanti	NP
		5. Motipur	NP
Chhattisgarh	Rajnandgaon	6. Rajnandgaon	MCorp
	Sarguja Janjgir Champa	7. Dongargaon	NP
		8. Ambikapur	MC
		9. Janjgir	MC
		10. Adbhar	NP
Gujarat	Ahmedabad	11. Dholka	MC
	Kutch	12. Sanand	MC
		13. Bhachau	MC
Haryana	Fatehabad	14. Fatehabad	MC
	Mahendargarh	15. Ratia	MC
		16. Narnaul	MC
		17. Mahendergarh	MC
Himachal Pradesh	Hamirpur	18. Hamirpur	MC
	Kangra	19. Kangra	MC
		20. Dharmshala	MC
Jharkhand	Pakur	21. Pakur	MC
	Jamtara	22. Jamtara	NAC
Kerala	Kollam	23. Punnalur	MC
	Kasargode	24. Paravur	MC
		25. Kasargode	MC
		26. Kanhangad	MC
Madhya Pradesh	Sehore	27. Sehore	MC
	Panna	28. Ichhawar	NP
		29. Aastha	NP
		30. Panna	MC
		31. Ajaigarh	NP
Rajasthan	Jodhpur	32. Bilara	MC
	Karauli	33. KarauliMC	
	Jhunjhunu	34. Jhunjhunu	MC

Uttar Pradesh	Sitapur	35. Siddhauri	MC
		36. Misrikh	MC
		37. Khairabad	MC
	Mirzapur	38. Mirzapur	MC
		39. Bahraich	MC
	Ghazipur	40. Mohamadabad	MC
	Maharajganj	41. Saidpur	NP
		42. Ghughly	NP
	Pratapgarh	43. Garhi Manikpur	NP
	Mau	44. Doharighat	NP
		45. Mau	MC
	Banda	46. Banda	MC
		47. Tindwari	NP
Sabarkantha	48. Khedbrahma	NP	
Uttarakhand	Pitthoragarh	49. Pitthoragarh	MC
	Champawat	50. Champawat	NP
	Chamoli	51. Chamoli	MC
	Gopeshwar	52. Gopeshwar	MC

Note: MCorp = Municipal Corporation; MC = Municipal Council; NP = Nagar Panchayat; NAC = Notified Area Committee.

2.2 Interventions for Citizen Engagement

2.2.1 Pre-Election Voters' Awareness Campaigns

Elections are the foundation of a representative democracy. In order to ensure that citizens participate in the functioning of the democracy, they have to be aware of the rights that are available to them. One basic right is the 'right to vote'. In a democracy, individuals are granted the right to elect representatives from amongst themselves, who then become part of the governing institutions.

In the context of urban India, the 74th CAA was a milestone, as it gave constitutional validity to Urban Local Bodies (ULBs). This amendment guaranteed that the ULBs are governed by democratically elected councils. The vibrancy and effectiveness of such councils will depend on the quality of leadership that people elect through urban municipal elections. Given the complexity of such elections, coupled with the nature of electoral politics and somewhat apathetic citizenry,

the conduct of free and fair elections is always doubtful. In order to ensure free and fair elections to urban municipalities and to encourage the citizenry to actively participate in it, PRIA along with a range CSOs organised several rounds of campaigns during the electoral process. These campaigns were branded as Pre-Election Voters' Awareness Campaigns (PEVAC).

The main objective of the campaign was to ensure free and fair elections to be achieved by:

- a) Sustaining the voters' interest in elections to ULBs with timely, authentic and relevant information. This comprises sharing information about electoral registration procedures, voting procedure, voting arrangements, etc;
- b) Ensuring that the marginalised communities and women are supported and they enjoy equal benefits;
- c) Seeking to establish liaison with the State Election Commissions (SECs) concerned as the state administration, so that an effective partnership is established for timely dissemination of information;
- d) Generating awareness on responsible electoral behaviour so that irresponsible candidates do not participate in the electoral process.

PRIA and its partners facilitated PEVAC for ULB elections in eight states during 2004—08. PRIA led the campaigns in Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Jharkhand, while in Kerala it was led by Sahay, in Bihar by CENCORED and in Madhya Pradesh by Samarthan. The scope and coverage of PEVAC varied from state to state; however, the objectives, guiding principles and methodologies were consistent in all the states. Following activities were undertaken at various stages of the elections:

a) Creation of platforms of CSOs

In most of the states there were a good number of CSOs working with the community. Efforts were made to identify these organisations and to involve them in the process of governance. The objective was to form a platform of CSOs and to take PEVAC in an extensive mode beyond PRIA's direct interventional areas. Before taking up the campaign in extensive mode, workshops and meetings were organised at the district level to finalise a detailed strategy and code of conduct that needed to be followed by different organisations. This was considered to be an opportunity to sensitise these CSOs to work on the issues of urban governance in SMTs, an area wherein the attention of CSOs needed to be drawn.

b) Involving community in voters' list updation

Voters' list is one of the most important documents in the process of elections. A person cannot cast his/her vote if the name is not included in the voters' list. The sole objective of initiating a campaign on voters' list updating was to disseminate timely information to the community on the process initiated by the government, so that aware citizens could take active part in the process and mark a beginning of an enabling environment for just and fair elections.

The information dissemination was primarily done through citizen leaders or active volunteers (after training on issues related to PEVAC) in the intervening wards or

in an extensive mode via information, education and communication (IEC) material distribution through established networks of newspaper agencies, cable networks, slide shows in theatres at intervals, street plays, information dissemination at festive events like Jagran, Ramleela, etc. At some locations help lines (information kiosks) were established to facilitate information dissemination on PEVAC. Some academic institutions were also involved to disseminate information among college going eligible voters. The Mohalla Vikas Samities formed around specific developmental issues were also involved in spreading this awareness regarding the importance of voters' list updation at the ward level.

c) Awareness generation regarding reservation of seats

Efforts were targeted towards prospective contestants to generate awareness about the status of their ward with regards to reservation, and also about the reservation of seats and posts of chairperson for marginalised community, the notification of which was made by the state government through its urban department. Interface meetings of ex-women elected representatives with women groups at the ward level were also very effective, as it encouraged the women group leaders for contesting elections around developmental issues.

d) Awareness generation on nomination filing procedure

Awareness generation on nomination filing procedures was undertaken with the following objectives:

- To provide necessary information related to nomination filing procedures so that all those candidates, who are contesting elections, get a guideline to fulfil all the necessary formalities without committing mistakes, which would have made the nomination liable to rejection.
- To provide information to the partnering CBOs, women and dalits to motivate them to file nomination.

Guidelines were distributed through various networks like newspaper agencies, residential community volunteers, CBOs, district library, etc. Pamphlets were placed at different nomination centres from where forms and other necessary documents were to be obtained. At some locations, rickshaws with loudspeakers roamed the cities broadcasting information on the important dates and venues (courts), where nomination forms had to be deposited.

e) Community mobilisation

PEVAC was an effort to involve the community in local elections and to sensitise them about the purpose and the importance of election vis-à-vis local development. Different methods were used to sensitise and mobilise the community through PEVAC:

i) Mobilising through citizen leaders

Citizen leaders working intensively in different wards were primarily responsible for mobilisation of the community. They were first oriented about the objective and purpose of the campaign. Orientation programmes were organised in intensive districts of the states. Small group meetings were organised in different locations within a ward to encourage people to vote

and more importantly to vote for a candidate with leadership qualities. People were also encouraged to prioritise their pressing needs relating to municipal services (e.g., lack of adequate latrines, poor water supply, poor road conditions, etc.) and demand these services from the potential candidates.

ii) Mobilising through informal and formal groups

The existing informal and formal groups were also influenced to take up the campaign and to mobilise and sensitise their members. Local self-help groups (SHGs), local youth clubs (in Haryana and Andhra Pradesh), Kudumbashree groups and Mahila Samajam (in Kerala) and ex-servicemen's organisations (in Himachal Pradesh) were mobilised through regular meetings and information sharing. Students (above 18 years) of local colleges were also made aware through distribution of pamphlets and leaflets. For example in Haryana, female students were encouraged to vote on issues affecting them through the Women Development Cell in their respective colleges. Priests and nuns (in Kottayam district of Kerala) were also mobilised and sensitised to spread the message of PEVAC. In Haryana, the Mohalla Vikas Samities and Nari Network members were also oriented.

iii) Dissemination of IEC materials

In order to cater to large and diverse section of population, different information and communication tools were prepared. The most common materials prepared were posters, handbills and leaflets. These materials were primarily non-political in nature and focused on creating awareness among the voters regarding inclusion, exclusion, rectification in voters' list and dates of voters' list publication, their rights as voters and eligibility for enrolment in the voters' list, importance of their vote, criteria of selecting the right candidate, background of the candidates, details of polling booths in their towns, punishment imposed on casting a fraud vote, information on different colours of ballot paper, women's participation, etc.

iv) Use of street plays, folk song and dance and audio-visual mediums

In order to cater to the illiterate section of the community, street plays were organised at different locations in various districts. Folk songs accompanied by folk dances were organised to attract people and to share the messages relating to PEVAC. Audiocassettes with songs sung by the local artists in regional languages were prepared and used for information dissemination. Slides were prepared for dissemination of information through cinema halls. Cable television was extensively used to generate awareness among the urban voters.

During the final phase of the campaign efforts were made to make the citizens aware about the correct use ballot paper, as its incorrect use would make the vote invalid, and also on the colour of ballot paper for different posts. It also included the procedures for tendering votes – awareness was generated in the community that if a vote was already been casted in his/her name, then by producing a document (driving license, ration card, passport, etc) one can cast a tendered vote, seal it in an envelope and hand it over to the designated officer. Tendered vote is not counted, but if instances of tendered votes were higher then voting may take place again for that particular booth.

f) Interface with government

The government played a very important role of a facilitator in the elections of local bodies. Before undertaking the PEVAC, the strategies were shared with the district administration. All IEC materials prepared for dissemination were shared with the district officials before circulating them to the people in general. Information regarding the demarcation and reservation and voters' list updation were also exchanged with district administration. Effective linkages were established with senior officials at all levels (District Collector, Municipal Commissioners, Chief Municipal Officials, Secretary, State Urban Development Department, and so on), who enthusiastically participated in the campaign.

As SECs play a decisive role in conducting election, it was very important to forge collaborative relationship with them. PEVAC was conducted in close collaboration with the commissions. The SECs provided support by validating the civil society efforts in the PEVAC and directing local administration to render information to participating civil society groups. During the campaign, issues and insights from the field, e.g., complaints regarding shortage of voters' list inclusion forms, nomination forms or declaration forms were shared with the commission on a regular basis. Irregularities during the nomination process, polling and even during the declaration of results from different regions of the states were brought to the notice of the commission, and most of these led to initiation of suitable remedial action. Timely and authentic information from the SECs helped taking the campaign forward. Regular contact with SECs helped in sharing information with district-level CSOs participating in PEVAC about various electoral reforms like in Andhra Pradesh about a) compulsory identification of voters – production of specified documents; b) disclosure of information regarding criminal antecedents, assets and liabilities and educational qualifications by candidates contesting elections.

g) Interface with media

Media linkages were very significant in the sense that they acted as a bridge of communication and sensitising the community on various election related issues. The print and the electronic media have the widest outreach. Hence, media services were utilised for the purpose of information dissemination related to PEVAC. District correspondents of various news agencies were motivated to write stories on election issues. Field visits for journalists were organised, media workshops were held and media officials were invited to cover various workshops conducted during the PEVAC. The local electronic media carried out short-duration programmes to generate awareness on different aspects of the elections.

h) Interface with academia

Efforts were made to involve academic community including university, colleges and schools students and teachers in the PEVAC. In most towns, the National Service Scheme (NSS) volunteers and National Cadet Corps (NCC) cadets of colleges actively participated in distributing handbills/pamphlets in their respective residential areas. The students also organised and participated in cycle rallies with the NCC cadets and NSS volunteers. School children were involved in street rallies to generate curiosity regarding the campaign.

Academicians, especially political scientists, were interested in understanding the dynamics of voters' behaviour during the elections. Students were also interested in writing thesis on this aspect as part of their courses. Efforts were made to explore these academicians and to rope them in taking up impact assessment studies of the campaigns. On the day of election, these academics surveyed the voting pattern along with the nominations filed from the reserved seats. After the elections, these data were compared with those of SEC and the results gave an assessment of the campaign and the improvement in the scenario vis-à-vis the last elections.

2.2.2 Campaigns on Birth Registration

Birth registration – the official recording of the birth of a child by a designated authority - is a permanent official record of a child's existence. It is a fundamental human right that opens the door to other rights including access to education, health care, participation and protection. Birth registration, therefore, is not only a fundamental right in itself, but also key to ensuring the fulfilment of additional rights. It is part of an effective Civil Registration System (CRS) that acknowledges the existence of a person before the law, establishes family ties and tracks the major events of an individual's life.

Despite having a legal framework for registration (Birth and Death Registration Act, 1969), state rules framed pursuant to the Act, India holds the largest number of unregistered children in the world. According to the statistical figures available at the Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner only 65 per cent of the Indian population has gone through the birth registration process. States such as Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Maharashtra, Punjab, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal have reported birth registration of more than 90 per cent, while Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand have reported less than 30 per cent.

In India, the data on vital statistics of birth are generated through the CRS. The RBD Act provided provisions for constituting separate structures at national, state, district and local body levels to perform the functions of birth and death registrations. The 12th Schedule under the 74th CAA confers the responsibility for birth registration to the municipalities. In most municipalities, the Commissioner or the Health Officer is designated for issuing birth certificates. In India, the registration of birth and death is a free of cost affair for the citizens. However, municipalities usually charge an amount of Rs.10 to Rs.20 as the cost of certificate. Nevertheless, the process of registration gets complicated in case of delayed registration. A set of rules has been framed for delayed registration. The poor are often forced to undergo these proceeding of late registration, as they may not do it before the stipulated time primarily due to the lack of awareness. The existing rules require producing an affidavit made before the notary public or before the prescribed authority for the birth registration after 30 days of occurrence. The case of delayed registration after one year is more complicated, as it requires an order of the Executive Magistrate for further processing. The poor are often victimised in these cases for getting such a certificate, as they are not aware about these processes.

PRIA launched a campaign on birth registration in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Haryana and Uttarakhand to make the municipal governance fulfil its constitutional mandate in this respect, i.e., to provide birth certificates to its citizens. The two-pronged approach envisaged sensitising the citizens on the importance of birth registration

to enable them to register and to generate supply-side response to the citizen's demand with equity, transparency and accountability. Emphasis was on improving partnership between citizen leaders, CBOs, elected councillors and government functionaries in developing solutions to ensure effective registration process. The campaign resulted in creating a mass-level impact in intervention locations in terms of area and people, and involved a variety of stakeholders. The campaign broke the impasse, which existed in the intervention locations, by spurring public action to give a desired 'push' to the governance machinery to strengthen and reform the existing birth registration mechanism. In the campaign, citizens and CSOs in large numbers took on the task of improving the existing rules and practices, deliberated on changes required to introduce what is feasible to suit people's needs. The idea was not to take one-time campaign, but to demonstrate how to approach the function with equity, access, transparency, accountability and participation. The campaign was initiated after a realisation that birth registration was a major hurdle for the community, specially the marginalised, for getting their rights and privileges, which the state confers. This was identified during various micro-planning exercises and ward-level meetings in the municipalities, wherein people raised the issue of not being able to avail the basic services or benefits of welfare schemes due to the lack of birth certificate. In most local situations, the municipal authorities did not have any data about the extent of unregistered births. Logically, the first intervention was to collect information regarding the current status of registration to assess and demonstrate the enormity of the problem. The participatory interventions in select wards helped to build an understanding of differential expectations of the 'privileged' and 'disadvantaged' sections, which led to better positioning of interventions to achieve results in terms of equity, responsiveness and better access to registration.

Sharing the preliminary research findings in the public domain helped to garner the interest of one and all in a joint campaign. It was carried out to determine the responsibilities of all stakeholders. In this exercise, most of the stakeholders participated publicly and deliberated on the problems, and decided on the future course of action by delineating their roles and commitments. The complex process of getting oneself registered was incomprehensible to many, especially the illiterate or semi-literate citizens. The need for generating awareness about the importance and the process of registration was felt during the interactions with different communities. In this direction, the demand-side interventions focused on increasing the awareness level of the community for taking self-initiatives for registration. Towards this end, support of other stakeholders like NSS volunteers, Municipal Councillors, women and youth groups and Mohalla Vikas Samiti members helped accelerate the campaign. Myriad ways to develop stake of these actors were followed by way of conducting seminars at local colleges, participation in ward-level meetings, organising small groups meetings, etc. PRIA's experience suggested that a meaningful dialogue and negotiation between citizens and municipality must precede orientation with a series of informal meetings at the ward level to help citizens understand the basic nuances of birth registration. Therefore, numerous informal meetings at several locations along with formal workshops were organised primarily aimed at informing and motivating the community, inculcating a larger sense of duty that citizens too have responsibilities to make their local governance accountable. Such direct interactive communications were supplemented with easily comprehensible reading material in vernacular language.

Interface workshops in the form of Multi-Stakeholder Dialogues (MSDs) were organised with necessary follow-up measures to facilitate the process further and to consolidate the gains. In course of the interactions with different government officials, it was observed that in some states the officials were ignorant about the state rules and the latest notification regarding birth registration. Hence, it was also felt that the capacity of the officials should also be developed in the process. In some cases, the copy of the relevant rules and enactments were collected and supplied to them.

Informal discussions with the community revealed that in spite of the awareness about the importance of registration, very few took the initiative to actually get it done. It was realised that a critical agent de-motivating the poor community to register was the existing process of registration itself. For poor it meant loss of time, which translated into loss of their daily income without the guarantee of their work being completed. This finding was brought to the notice of different government officials like District Magistrate, Sub Divisional Magistrate, Executive Officer and the District Registrar. A creative consensual answer to the problem was to organise Spot Registration Camps, wherein all resource persons (SDMs and EOs) and resources (like the notary, stamp papers) came under one roof on a particular date and served as a single window solution to the otherwise time-taking long process. The involvement and support of the elected councillors helped in organising the camps more effectively and in mobilising the people to come forth and register.

Anchors and links were explored with media (both print and electronic) and academia during the course of the campaign to build long-term stake of the municipality and to ensure its accountability. Women groups, social workers, teachers, lecturers, councillors and doctors were the support anchors and links with media and like-minded CSOs were also explored for future anchoring of the process of birth registration. Throughout the campaign, the underlying perspective was of reaching out and forming linkages with stakeholders to bridge distances in registration.

Looking at the complex process of the registration, some improvisations were made in different areas to make the process user-friendly and pro-poor. A few examples included like: a) decentralising the distribution of registration forms; b) use of single stamp paper to enlist several children of same family; c) introduction of incentive-based monitoring of new born; d) door-to-door survey through community health workers; and e) involving school teachers. These and several additional innovative 'reforms' were introduced by the municipalities in order to enable the citizens, particularly belonging to the poor and marginalised households, to be able to get the births registered and obtain certificates.

Several constraints have been identified in the process of the campaign such as: a) expensive, time consuming, complicated and user-unfriendly nature of the process; b) inadequacy of staff in the municipality; c) lack of adequate infrastructure and stationery for birth registration; d) non-availability of the higher officials causing further delay in registration; e) corrupt practices; f) use of separate stamp paper for every unregistered child; and g) frequent transfer of senior officials.

Some important recommendations were also made through various interface dialogues with appropriate authorities and by bringing out report based on practical

experience of facilitating birth registration. They include: a) mechanisms to make municipalities responsible and accountable; b) decentralised distribution of birth registration forms; c) organising birth registration campaigns periodically; d) simplifying the process of delayed registration; e) computerisation of registration process; f) greater publicity by the government departments; g) periodic capacity building of officials; and h) enhancing community ownership.

2.2.3 Campaigns on Access to Sanitation Services

Access to sanitation facilities is a fundamental human right for hygienic and disease-free life. Open defecation is still widespread in India and the consequences are devastating. The situation is so bad that studies reveal diarrhoea, which results from poor sanitation, being responsible for the death of more than two million poor children every year. The management of solid waste is another important challenge in the urban systems. In fact, unresolved garbage disposal and inadequate toilet facilities are the prominent issues in most of the urban centres. This rapid urbanisation has increased the gap between the demand and supply sides of essential services, especially with regard to sanitation, sewage disposal and SWM. The hardest hits are the marginalised poor, living in densely populated cities that manage to provide only two-thirds of their population with sanitation services.

The 74th CAA has been hailed as a solution for the problems of urban management in the country. Sanitation conservancy and SWM was one among the 18 subjects transferred to ULBs as per the 12th Schedule added to the constitution. As a follow up of the 74th CAA, the state governments had to entrust the responsibility of operation and maintenance of urban sanitation to the local bodies. This would further help to revitalise the administrative and functional responsibility especially in urban service delivery and infrastructure development. However, sanitation remains a neglected subject in most of the SMTs in our country. Majority of the cities in India face acute problem in relation to the management of proper sanitation and disposal of municipal solid waste. PRIA and its partners (Unnati in Gujarat, Sahbhagi Shikshan Kendra in Uttar Pradesh, Samarthan in Madhya Pradesh and Himalayan Action Research Centre in Uttarakhand) had initiated the intervention on sanitation and SWM in 29 ULBs in 12 states. PRIA's intervention focused on two levels:

- a) **Demand-side intervention:** Different strategies like forming groups (collectivisation), capacity building of urban poor on demand articulation, initiating sanitation campaign, community monitoring of services, micro planning, etc. were used to bring the community people together and actively participate in the common issues.
- b) **Supply-side intervention:** The interventions enhanced the responsiveness of the major stakeholders like ward councillors and municipal functionaries. They further led to a sustained result while improving the sanitary conditions. Creatively designed discourses, discussion forums, sharing of study findings, exposures and success stories were able to draw the elected councillors into a learning mode. The strategies to influence the stakeholders included sensitising the stakeholders and building pressure on them in response to the emerging needs of the community.

The demand-side intervention focused on mobilising the community, forming *Mohalla Samities* and undertaking collective action in building pressure on the municipal stakeholders. Further, it focused on to create a sense of ownership among the community itself in collectively addressing the local issues and taking a lead role in monitoring the services received. While the supply-side intervention focused on sensitising the municipal stakeholders, building pressure on them and in strengthening their responsiveness to address the community issues on sanitation and SWM. All these efforts supported in achieving a positive result in the intervening areas.

One of the important achievements of this intervention was the attitudinal change of elected councillors and officials in response to the community needs that increased the willingness of the community to participate in the projects on sanitation and SWM. In most locations, the municipal councillors and the health officers started participating actively in the meetings of *Mohalla Samities*. Further, responding to the complaints of the slum dwellers, the municipal authorities took immediate action in providing waste bins and employing staff to ensure the collection of waste on a daily basis. This was seen in some of the intervening locations in states like Bihar and Andhra Pradesh. The participation of elected councillors and chairpersons also resulted in an increased pace of awareness campaign with more community participation, as the communities witnessed greater involvement of elected representatives in their issues of concern. Further, it supported in building a harmonious relationship between the community groups and the elected councillors.

In short, the supply-side interventions supported in pressurising the municipal stakeholders to include adequate provision for better sanitation practices in the developmental plan of the town.

2.2.4 Organisation Building (Mohalla Samities)

The 74th CAA has set up a landmark provision in the process of decentralisation and community participation in urban governance in India. With the enactment of the legislation, the ULBs in the country have attained a statutory status. The Act has introduced provisions to take step for ensuring the participation of weaker sections in municipal governance and enhancing the participation of citizens in governance. The intention of such provisions was to ensure the involvement of the whole community in the direction and execution of developmental activities and have a say in the process of negotiating with the existing delivery system. In order to provide space for increased people's participation and bringing municipal governance closer to the people, Article 243S provides for constitution of ward committees in all municipalities having a population of more than 300,000. However, the provision is not mandatory for SMTs. Indeed, if we closely look into the 74th CAA we can realise the dearth of mandatory provisions in forming committees to ensure the people's participation in SMTs. Several studies conducted by PRIA disclosed that the lack of proper platform for the community people to come together and discuss community priorities, plans and actions, led to their poor participation in governance issues. Further, the absence of awareness and socio-economic and political exclusion of certain section has blocked their involvement in municipal governance. Although political devolution has taken place in ULBs, community participation remained abysmal in majority of the SMTs. Given

this environment, PRIA ventured into the area of urban governance to make the system more transparent and accountable to the community people.

In urban areas, the wards are the closest geographical demarcation for the community people to avail the municipal services. Mohallas are considered the neighbourhood areas within a ward, where a group of families are living together. PRIA and its partners in the course of their work in SMTs observed that the basic amenities like drinking water, sanitation, garbage disposal, electricity and other issues in these Mohallas were not been addressed on time properly. Further, there was an absence of community led initiatives to address these issues. It was also observed that the municipal stakeholders have taken only very limited initiatives in mobilising the community people. The awareness programme on urban governance that PRIA conducted in several intensive intervention areas teamed up a good number of active and interested people, especially the youth and women, to undertake the issues collectively. Based on these efforts, the Mohalla Samities were formed in the intensive wards, where PRIA was working. These Samities were thereafter named as Mohalla Samities. The efforts resulted in forming two to three Mohalla Samities in several wards in the intervening municipalities. The basic purpose of these Samities was to deal with the governance issues and ensuring citizen participation in the service delivery and in the implementation of people-centred programmes. Further, the Samities initiated a dialogue with the common mass on their day-to-day issues with increased responsiveness of stakeholders and greater willingness of the community people to take the ownership on the local issues. The Mohalla Samities showed considerable interest and concern for the community people and made them to come together, prioritise issues and collectively bargain for their basic amenities that are supposed to be provided from the municipalities and from other allied departments. The Samities were taken as a mechanism by which the community problems were resolved locally and thereby strengthening the local governance system for equitable and effective access to services.

One of the common factors that led to the formation of Mohalla Samities in most of the states was that in rural areas the people had Gram Sabhas to participate in local governance, but no such mandatory platforms existed in municipalities due to the lack of constitutional provisions. A lot of other basic concerns that emerged from the communities also led to the formation of Mohalla Samities in every state. For example in Haryana, the existing women group members (Nari Network) were hesitant to involve the local men in addressing the common issues of water and other issues in the municipalities. PRIA's intervention among these groups floated the idea of forming a common group. This resulted in forming Mohalla Vikas Samities in the interventional sites of Fatehabad and Ratia Municipalities in Haryana. In Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh, the Mohalla Vikas Samities were formed around the issues of sanitation and SWM.

A study done by PRIA on the status of urban governance in Jamtara Municipality in Jharkhand was shared among different stakeholders including the citizen leaders. This resulted in forming Mohalla Samities called '*Nagarik Parishad*' to collectively address the identified local issues of water and sanitation. In Chhattisgarh, PRIA's earlier work with the women beedi workers helped in the formation of Mohalla Samiti in Rajnandgaon. Hence, the Mohalla Samities formed in Chhattisgarh were

to discuss the issues of Beedi workers and bringing them before the concerned authorities. The Mohalla Samities have gone through a series of stages starting from community mobilisation in the process of their formation.

Mobilising the community and conscientising on community participation were the initial tasks undertaken in ensuring the community participation in local governance. A number of citizen leaders from the existing groups of women and youths were trained. These leaders were the key persons and facilitators in mobilising the community. Regular interactions with the existing groups of women and youths supported building a pressure group within the ward. Regular group meetings were conducted from time to time with the facilitators as catalysts. These meetings provided an opportunity to discuss on various issues that affect their day-to-day lives in the community. It was observed that the women and dalits had a very low participation in the community meetings. During these visits, the facilitator provided capacity building support and supported in articulating their voices. These helped to develop their confidence to cope with many problems arising in their day-to-day lives.

a) Micro-planning Exercise by Mohalla Samiti Members

Micro-planning exercise was considered as an appropriate tool in identifying the local issues. Hence, it was conducted at ward level as a follow up of the mobilisation process. The basic objective of this exercise was to provide opportunities to the marginalised sections to share and prioritise the development issues. Pre-fixed timings according to the convenience of the community ensured their greater participation. The micro-planning exercise demonstrated the dismal picture of the status of municipal services available within the intervening locations. It supported in getting clarity in the consolidation of the major issues of the wards and in planning probable solutions at municipal level.

Table 2: Examples of Issues Prioritised in Selected Areas through Micro Planning

State	Intervention Location	Issues
Andhra Pradesh	Ward Nos. 19 and 22 drinking water in Anakapalli	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scarcity of safe • Garbage disposal • Filthy pathway • Haphazard community hall • Unsanitary public latrines
Bihar	Ward Nos. 20, 21 and 22 in Madhubani	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solid waste management • Birth and death registration • Poor services from public distribution system • Health and sanitation
Madhya Pradesh	Intensive wards in Sehore, Icchawar and Panna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues related to drinking water • Voters' list updation • BPL survey
Rajasthan	Ward Nos. 2, 9, 10, 11 and 12 in Bilara and ward No.13 in Karauli	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eradication of manual scavenger • Poor municipal services
Himachal Pradesh	Ward No. 10 in Hamirpur and Ward Nos. 3 and 4 in Dharamshala	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sanitation • Solid waste management
Haryana	Ward No. 4 in Fatehabad	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sanitation • Birth and death registration • Garbage disposal • Voters' enrolment
Uttar Pradesh	Intensive wards in the municipalities of Sitapur, Bahraich, Manikpur, Ghazipur and Baanda districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sanitation • Solid waste management • Social harmony
Uttarakhand	Intensive wards in the ULBs of Champawat and Pitthoragarh districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth and death registration • Banning the use of polythene bags • Waste disposal

Micro Planning in Khairabad, Uttar Pradesh

Khairabad Nagar Palika Parishad is about nine kilometres from Sitapur district headquarters. There are 25 wards in Khairabad and out of which Panwaria is one of the most backward wards. Basic infrastructure facilities such as roads, electricity, health centres, etc. are not available in the ward. The castes that reside here are the Kori, Kashyap and Chaudhury, and among them Kori is

the dominant caste. The Koris are engaged as wage labourers and they also carry out agricultural work. The literacy level is very low and majority of the population does not have the basic educational skills.

First Phase - Environment Building: It started with rapport building. A range of activities such as intensive household visits, small group meetings and discussions, etc. were carried out during this phase. It was not easy to interact with the people in the daytime due to the work timings of the male members of the households. An intensive rapport-building workshop was carried out with female members and the youth. For interaction with male members, visits were made in the evening too. Gradually through intensive visits and wall writing campaign, people got mobilised and a meeting was organised at the ward level. This was the initial success. In the meeting, a number of problems were identified at the local level. These were problems of sanitation, illiteracy, unemployment and electricity.

Second Phase - Prioritisation of Problems: After listing all the identified problems, there was one major area that had to be dealt with, this was the problem of sanitation. Towards this, discussions were carried out in a manner so as to ensure maximum participation. Although a drainage system was set up in the ward, there was no waste disposal system. As a result of this, the drains used to get choked and dirty water from the drains would run down the roads. It became difficult for the people to lead a healthy living in such unhygienic conditions. Despite launching repeated complaints to the officers of the Nagar Palika as well as the ward members, the problem was not dealt in a proper manner and the attitude of these officials remained negligent. Finally, in a meeting held with the residents of the ward, the people decided to clean up the area through their own efforts.

Third Phase- Finding Out Collective Solutions and Planning: After selecting the core problem, a plan for waste disposal through community participation was planned. Towards this, a meeting was organised in which a discussion took place on various measures, but unanimous result was not obtained. It was felt that the lack of unity is a problem and there is a need to treat the problem as soon as possible. In order to get a unanimous result the Citizen Leaders trained by PRIA and its partners played very important role in mobilising the community. One such youth leader named Ram Prakash Kashyap contributed enormously. He played a key role in making the community aware about the need of sanitation. As a result of these discussions, the local people decided to establish dustbins at various locations in the ward. It was expected that the ward members would ensure the availability of the sweeper, who will clean the dustbin regularly.

Fourth Phase- Resource Mobilisation and Implementation: After problem identification, selection of appropriate solutions for addressing the problem was necessary. A crucial phase of micro-planning was the mobilisation of resources. Towards this, the community members prepared a budget for the dustbins, following which a discussion took place to estimate the expected expenditure regarding dustbin construction. In the beginning, people felt that a contractor should be involved in its construction. However, after a long discussion, the people felt that the entire process would be an expensive one and thus the people collectively decided to construct the dustbin themselves through shram dan (contributing labour). The total estimated cost was around Rs 6500, where PRIA's partners decided to contribute a token sum

of Rs 5000 and the community volunteered to pay the rest of the money through the shram dan.

For the micro-planning process, it was felt that a committee is necessary to implement as well as monitor all the activities. For this, the community set up a committee comprising six youths, who came forward voluntarily for implementation and monitoring. In addition to this, an advisory committee was also constituted consisting of ward members and two other elderly persons of the ward. Ram Prakash Kashyap was elected president of 'Youth Committee'. This 'Youth Committee' was given full responsibility of the activities from purchasing the material to construction of dustbins.

Dustbins were put up at the desired places. The Chairperson and other Councillors came to visit the ward and carried out discussion with all the volunteers. In between all these, the dustbins could not be kept in one place alone due to some conflict over the land. The chairperson came forward and took the lead in resolving this issue. Looking at the collaborative efforts of PRIA and its partners, community members along with the ward member, the chairperson expressed a desire to replicate the model in other wards as well and preliminary discussions took place.

The periodical meetings and training programmes sensitised the communities and initiated in preparing plans to address these issues. This has promoted the idea of having a formal set up to undertake the grassroots-level issues. The proposal of forming a separate entity has emerged from those discussions. In short, the identified issues synergised the formation of committees at Mohalla level.

The next stage was to clarify and sensitise the Mohalla Samiti members about its functional domain and make it as formal structures to take up the identified community issues. The micro-planning exercise conducted supported in giving clarity on the objectives of the Samities. The basic objective of Mohalla Samities identified in most of the intervening states was to bring transparency and promote participation of local people in urban governance. The objectives included:

- To facilitate participation of community people in urban local governance with increased ownership to make demands upon the system for better service delivery;
- To bring transparency in local governance and create bottom-up pressure in solving the local issues within the framework of accountability and transparency;
- To engage the community in the development work of the ward;
- To enable the elected representatives and municipal authorities in identifying and prioritising the local issues towards planning strategies with community participation.

In order to attain these objectives, concerted efforts were laid out in organising the poor and negotiating with the institutional framework. A series of awareness programmes conducted at different levels evolved a good response from the citizen groups. The informal relations and meetings often supported in understanding the functioning of such Samities to the elected representatives and to the public.

While looking at the periodicity of meetings, it was observed that it depended to a large extent on the intensity and the stage of the issues being undertaken by the Mohalla Samities. In the initial stage, the periodicity of the meetings was more to create awareness among the community people. In several locations, the meetings were organised once in a week or fortnight or month depending on the frequency of the need. In that way, the people in the Mohalla got an opportunity to put their problems before the elected representatives and before the responsible bodies. Initially, the Mohalla Samities were more informal in character and gradually changed into formal bodies. For example in Bihar, it took 10 to 14 months to formalise these Mohalla Samities.

Looking into the composition of Mohalla Samities, most of the locations had a fair representation of gender, caste, class and age groups, to make it representative of the community. Even though the membership was not limited, nearly all Mohalla Samities had a group of members ranging from 15 to 30. The youth in Mohalla Samities had meaningfully engaged in the community issues, which further resulted in emerging a new dynamic leadership. As the Mohalla Samities were acting as representative bodies of the citizens in majority of the wards, they were more inclusive in their character. Further, in most of the intervening states, the members in Mohalla Samities included active members from the existing women groups, youth groups and citizen leaders.

Even though, no comprehensive structure has been evolved as a viable model for Mohalla Samities, various interim structures evolved in taking the day-to-day administration of the Samities. For example, in Madhubani for the purpose of taking day-to-day decisions in Mohalla Samities, some volunteers were selected as the office-bearers. These members were designated as the Executive Body of the Mohalla Samiti. For all practical purposes, Executive Body is responsible for managing and implementing the decisions by virtue of the powers vested on them. The roles and responsibilities of the Mohalla Samiti depended on the objective of the sanitation campaign that was best suited to the prevailing context.

In Bihar, after the election of local bodies, PRIA along with its partner organisation CENCORED intervened in the hope of empowering local governing bodies. While intervening in Kanti and Motipur municipalities, a lot of issues were identified in the slums and in the Mohallas. The micro-planning exercise conducted in the selected intensive wards exposed and prioritised these issues related to the basic amenities like poor sanitation facilities, inadequate supply of safe drinking water, haphazard public latrines and drainage, littering of solid waste, etc. Indeed, the interested youth and citizen leaders were involved in addressing these issues collectively. The major obstruction in ensuring the community participation was the lack of opportunities to have a free dialogue with the elected representatives and other stakeholders. The intervention in these wards, hence, could focus on forming Mohalla Samities with the active involvement of local people and the elected representatives. Initially, there was lot of apprehension about forming such groups. The elected representatives, who were sceptical about such initiatives, were also brought into a learning mode through the continuous discussions and meetings. Finally 24 Mohalla Samities were formed in 12 wards of Kanti and Motipur Municipality in Muzaffarpur district.

The key aspect in the functioning of Mohalla Samiti was to ensure collective action in pursuance of the objectives. In tracking down these issues, the Mohalla Samities initiated a number of activities in building pressure groups. For example in Andhra Pradesh, the Mohalla Samities formed in Ward No. 22 of Anakapalli Municipality undertook a series of initiatives to build pressure on the municipal body in addressing the issues of unsanitary conditions. It included giving memorandum to the concerned officials, picketing municipal office and bringing the Municipal Commissioner and elected representatives to the ward. All those efforts resulted in employing a sanitary worker from the municipality for the daily collection of garbage and cleaning of public latrines once in a week. Further, the Mohalla Samities played a key role in monitoring the municipal services.

Mohalla Samities also conducted awareness programmes involving local civil society by adopting various techniques such as street plays, cultural programmes, rallies, mass meetings, etc. For instance, in Haryana and Uttarakhand the Mohalla Samities supported in undertaking the street rallies and spot registration camps to improve birth and death registration. This resulted in the increased percentage of registration of birth in the intervening municipalities.

The Mohalla Samities were able to build alliances and networking with like-minded organisations working on urban development issues. This prompted Mohalla Samities to undertake advocacy at municipal level by involving actively in the programmes for the marginalised sections, especially the women. The kind of effort that was undertaken with clear objectives to eradicate manual scavenging in Rajasthan was one of such initiatives.

Valmiki Community: Attempting to eradicate manual scavenging

Manual scavenging has been identified as an obnoxious human rights issue and efforts have been made to ban this activity throughout India. Bilara is a small town in Jodhpur district of Rajasthan. Valmiki community is a marginalised group, which takes part in the different works relating to scavenging. These communities are spread over the Bilara town and they are involved in collecting night soils from the existing dry latrines. After the Supreme Court Order, the government was supposed to take stern action to prevent the practice of manual scavenging and to abolish all the dry latrines. Unfortunately, even after a lot of campaigns against this activity, it is still undertaken by a considerable number of people from the Valmiki community. Government statistics, however, claim that the town is free from manual scavengers. The ground reality fails to match the government statistics. PRIA and its partner Unnati started to address this issue jointly. Linkages were also developed with other local civil society organisations like Manav Adhikar Sandarbh Kendra (MASK), Jaipur.

During the internal meetings, it was jointly decided that there is the need to mobilise the Valmiki community. About 15 community meetings were organised to understand and address the different aspects of the issue. The meetings were organised in different locations of the town having people from Valmiki community. They were organised in the evenings to ensure maximum participation of the community.

A mapping exercise for the location of the existing dry toilets was undertaken. Joint rally was also taken out on 10 December 2004 (International Human Rights Day) to bring the issue to the notice of the community at large.

Different groups were formed taking the members of the Valmiki community. The primary function of the groups was to keep track of the activities of their own community members. It has now unanimously been decided that the Valmiki community should take concrete steps to outcaste the members from their own society, who involve in the manual scavenging. Change is slowly but steadily taking place and the members of the Valmiki community are now refusing to take part in any activity relating to manual scavenging. The active monitoring by the Valmiki groups is now paying its dividends. One can hope that the ground reality will soon match the government statistics and make the town a better place.

In Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh the Mohalla Samities played an important role in the process of preparing electoral rolls as part of the urban Pre-Election Voters' Awareness Campaign (PEVAC). The involvement of Mohalla Samities ensured the dissemination of information related to the election even into the slum pockets, and ensured the increased percentage of voting in the intervened locations. Further in Madhya Pradesh, they played a crucial role in the selection of a suitable candidate representing their ward to contest in the local body election as illustrated below.

Mohalla Committee Takes Charge: An initiative to find their suitable candidate

Samarthan, a partner organisation of PRIA in Madhya Pradesh, has been working in Ward No. 29 (Dashahra wala Bag) of Sehore. Most of the residents of this ward were daily wage labourers. Falling into the debt trap of big mahajans (money lenders) was a common phenomenon. Looking at the precarious condition, Samarthan decided to work in this area and formed women's savings group to bring them out of the debt trap of the mahajans. In addition to this, a local youth group was also formed to generate awareness on the issue of local urban governance. A Mohalla Samiti was formed taking the women from the SHGs, the youth groups and other members of the locality.

It was in this ward that in the wake of PEVAC, meetings were conducted at the Mohalla level so as to make them aware of the norms and modalities of the voters' list updation process. Small group discussions were conducted and pamphlets and posters were distributed among the dwellers. In this entire process, the youth and women groups were the lynch pin in the process of the PEVAC. They proved to be most active and most participatory in their approach and were ready to take the idea in a better way so as to utilise the information. The entire campaign for the voters' list updation, which was only the first part of PEVAC, proved to be very fruitful. In fact some 60 names were enlisted in the voter's list from this particular Mohalla itself.

After the successful campaign and completion of the updation of the voters' list, the Mohalla Samiti again sat for a discussion and the work of the present councillor was discussed. It was analysed that the present ward councillor could have done much better if he had taken a proper interest in the developmental works for the Mohalla. The group decided to select one suitable candidate, who would be in a position to undertake the development works in a more sincere manner. An elaborate discussion followed to find out a suitable candidate. The task was more difficult because it was a

reserved seat for a women candidate. Finally, the Mohalla Samiti members unanimously selected one woman as a prospective candidate.

The experience from Kerala demonstrated that the local residents were reluctant to take up the ownership in majority of their local issues, even though the mandatory ward sabhas exist in the Municipal Act. Hence, one of the objectives of the urban intervention in Kerala was to increase the ownership of community people through Mohalla Samities. The Mohalla Samiti formed in Marancode ward of Punalur municipality had successfully addressed the issues of drinking water as illustrated below.

Marancode: Community initiative to address the issue of drinking water

Marancode is a neglected slum located at Punalur Municipality in Kollam district, where about 45 poor families are living together. Manual labour is the basic source of income to make a livelihood for the dwellers. The families in this slum are included in the poor category as per the BPL list in the municipal records. PRIA along with its partner organisation Sahayi started intervening in this colony, understanding the poor condition of this ward. The micro-planning exercise conducted with the existing women groups of this community exposed the scarcity of pure drinking water in this area, leading to severe health problems. The slum dwellers in this area were depending on the municipal water from the public tap to satisfy the basic necessities. However, during summer, shortage of water made the people to go far off places to collect it. In order to address this issue collectively, Sahayi initiated forming a Mohalla Samiti with the active participation of youth and the members from the Neighbour Hood Women Groups. The first meeting organised with the Mohalla Samiti, disclosed the account of an unused well in the centre of the community. The well was mounted with waste for the last 6 years and started ousting out a foul smell. The Mohalla committee initially brought this problem before the ward councillor. Even though the ward councillor had agreed to take up this issue, nothing was turned towards that end. The Mohalla Samiti then organised a general meeting of the members especially with the youth of the slum and decided to clean up the well. The entire 45 households participated in the process of cleaning the well, removing the waste, clearing the vicinity and paving a rout to collect the water. One full-day shramadhan with the whole participation of the community was employed to clean the well. Further, with the contribution of all families in the Mohalla, a metal cover was put on the well to keep it clean for a long time. The well was cleaned three more times thereafter in the similar manner, and also bleached to make it safe for drinking. During the follow up meeting, members of the group reported that the Marancode colony now had enough water even in summer time. The initiative of this Mohalla Samiti showed the ownership of the people in addressing the issue, even without any external resources. The effort streamlined multiple results in ensuring adequate drinking water, cleaning of the well and more over the increased ownership of the community people to maintain the well properly. The group members are now quite enthusiastic to take up other issues pertaining to electricity and waste disposal through this Mohalla Samiti.

The prime responsibility of addressing the community issues is entrusted with the municipalities. Hence in all the intervening locations, one of the key responsibilities that Mohalla Samities undertook was to build rapport with the elected members

representing their wards. This has supported in bridging the perceived gap between the elected members and citizen groups in undertaking the projects for the welfare of the society. Further, the experiences from several states demonstrated the importance of having a non-threatening relationship. The members in the Mohalla Samities had invited the ward councillors in the Mohalla meetings. This had brought a change among the elected members in responding to the community needs and increased willingness to participate the community people in the projects designed for them.

For example, the Mohalla Samities constituted in Kanti Municipality in Bihar undertook the issue of electricity with the active support of the ward councillor to have an immediate solution.

Kanti: Citizens and elected representatives' approached Mohalla Samiti for solving electricity problem

In one of the wards of Kanti Nagar Panchayat, the electric transformer burnt down causing inconvenience to the ward residents. The residents approached the Mohalla Samiti for resolution of the same. Mohalla Samiti, in turn contacted the concerned ward councillors to collectively approach the electricity department for instituting remedial measures. Ward councillors along with Mohalla Samiti members filed an application to this effect in Muzaffarpur district electricity office. No response or action was initiated to this effect by the concerned office. Mohalla Samiti members along with key women members (from SHG groups) and the ward councillor then decided to approach the Block Development Officer (BDO) on this intervention. The BDO expressed his inability to intervene in resolving the deadlock. The anguished Mohalla Samiti members, ward councillor and women SHG members then resorted to demonstrate against government inaction to the public grievance. They collectively took to streets and blocked the Muzzafarpur—Motihari Highway and attracted public attention to their pressing problem. To this effect, the District Magistrate (DM) summoned the Sub-Division Magistrate (SDM) to intervene and pacify the aggrieved members on the road. The SDM reached the location at the highway where the members were blocking the road. He mollified the protestors and promised immediate response and action, to replace the old burnt transformer with a new one. Within next four days, the collective efforts of the Mohalla Samiti paid off, by getting the new transformer installed and restoring the electric connection.

Converting Wasteland to Community Park: Result of Citizen Collectivisation in Hamirpur, Himachal Pradesh

Hamirpur, a small town of Himachal Pradesh is situated at an altitude of 765 metres in the lower Himalayas. Due to its advantageous location, it has witnessed a high rate of urbanisation. The influx of population there has been a constant pressure on the land and also for scarcity of resources. The physical space of the town has shrunk and a large number of unplanned constructions have led to a void in the urban service delivery mechanism. Improper sanitation and the disposal of solid wastes have created problems. Most of the unutilised lands have been converted into dumping grounds for solid wastes. For example, the Ward No. 7, also known as The Housing Board Colony of Hamirpur, had a piece of land that remained unattended and unutilised

due to lack of proper maintenance by the municipality and apathy of the local respondents. This land was soon transformed into a dumping ground, where the solid wastes from the neighbourhoods were disposed off. It thus turned into a wasteland.

In the continuation of the efforts of enhancing citizen participation in urban services, a meeting was organised with the local citizen leader, local councillor, ward residents, Housing Board Welfare and Action Committee and a few members of the Mahila Mandal to discuss about the emerging problems of the particular ward. During the meeting, all the members present unanimously decided that the park should be renovated urgently. This would provide a playground for the children and a nice walking and seating space for the senior citizens.

The local people of the community also took initiative to organise door-to-door campaign and generated awareness related to the importance and need for renovating the public park. The Mahila Mandal and the Housing Board collectively took the responsibility of writing a letter to the municipality for the purpose of renovating the park.

As a result of the collective endeavours of the citizens, the Executive Officer of the municipality agreed to provide labourer for cleaning and levelling the site. The municipality further provided a water tap in the park. With the rising interest of the members of Housing Welfare Board, Mahila Mandal of Ward No. 7 and members of Ward Committee, action committees were formed to take up the responsibility to monitor the cleaning activity.

These efforts highlight that a constructive interest can be generated within the community with support from the CSOs. The collective interest within the community can then act as a pressure group. In this case, we found that the enthusiasm of the informal and the formal citizens' groups forced the municipality to take active steps to renovate the park. The ward also received a sum of Rs. 1 lakh for the purpose of beautification of the park, which helped citizens to undertake more initiatives in a collective manner.

Another significant task for the effective facilitation of Mohalla Samities was to build continued relation with the Municipal Commissioner and other functionaries. Towards that end, a series of orientation programmes and stakeholder dialogues were organised at municipal level. Further, the study findings and micro plans were also shared with the municipal officials. This had enabled to receive a positive support from the municipal stakeholders on the issues raised from the communities. Moreover, it has promoted in identifying the available resources within the municipalities responding to the people's needs. Also it enhanced the sharing of information as well as in selecting the beneficiaries for various municipal schemes. In several municipalities, the authorities recognised the initiatives and put an effort to initiate similar drives in rest of the wards. All these efforts made a definite change in the community leadership and in approaching the municipal authorities for resolving their local issues.

The Mohalla Samities enabled to have a closer interaction between the people and their elected representatives, and thereby promoted a sensitive response to the local needs. The experience suggests that ensuring the participation of community through

a common platform rendered multiple results at grassroots level. In several locations the people themselves took the ownership in addressing the local issues and maintaining the services available within the community. The local people, especially those who have the interest and commitment like the youths, women and citizen leaders, got a platform to act together on the local issues. To sustain the dialogue with common mass and elected representatives, the platform played a lead role on the issues intervened. Responsibility undertaken by Mohalla Samities in monitoring the implementation of basic facilities, especially on sanitation and drinking water, showed a new direction in the functioning of Mohalla Samities. Further, to a large extent, the Mohalla Samities brought accountability and transparency in different activities of municipalities like in selecting the beneficiaries, focusing on women and children and in conducting micro-planning exercise with greater credibility through these platforms. The Samities also provided a platform for the representation of different stakeholders in the multi-stakeholder dialogue (MSD). Indeed, the entire process of engaging Mohalla Samities in local self-governance ensured the importance of such Samities in SMTs.

2.2.5 Social Accountability Mechanisms

A number of social accountability mechanisms were used to promote civic engagement, particularly on the issues related to urban services. The Mohalla Samities, youth groups, women groups, media and academic institutions were also mobilised to participate in the social accountability exercises. This primarily involved engaging citizens and other stakeholders in periodic monitoring of urban services, consolidating the findings of the monitoring and assessment and organising dialogue and discussion with the municipal authorities.

a) Performance Monitoring of Municipal Services

Preparing Citizen Report on Water Supply and Sanitation Services was one of the important initiatives undertaken by PRIA. The objectives of the intervention were two-fold: a) enhancing civic engagement and citizen participation; and b) improving service delivery by the municipalities through enhanced accountability and participation. The specific objective was to assess the status of water supply and sanitation in terms of availability, accessibility, quantity, quality and affordability by involving citizen leaders/volunteers and local civil society actors, so as to initiate a citizen monitoring system.

Surveys were carried out in eight cities of five selected states, namely Dharamshala (Himachal Pradesh), Narnaul and Mahendergarh (Haryana), Rajnandgaon and Janjgir (Chhattisgarh), Jhunjhunu and Karauli (Rajasthan) and Sehore (Madhya Pradesh).

Information on water supply and sanitation had been collected through a series of primary household surveys using a structured questionnaire. The approach was to involve active citizen volunteers/leaders in collecting data wherever they were present. Youth from local colleges and senior secondary schools were especially encouraged to participate in carrying out the surveys.

The ownership of houses among the surveyed households was quite high. Most of the households belonged to Hindus and Other Backward Classes. Except a few

cities like Sehore and Dharamshala, majority of the households belonged to low-income groups.

The findings showed that the overall status of water supply and sanitation was not satisfactory. Water supply from the Irrigation and Public Health (IPH) existed along with private arrangements in which piped water was supplied from private tube wells to a number of households. Most of the households had faulty and non-functional meters, and hence they were paying lump sum amount to the authority. A higher proportion of households paid up to Rs. 50 per month for water supply across the selected cities. As far as rating of water supply is concerned, in aggregate, most of the households in the selected cities had rated water supply service as 'average' in terms of accessibility, quantity, quality, frequency, timings and expenditure on water.

Regarding sanitation services (latrine, sewerage, drainage and solid waste management), the study showed that most of the households had private latrines with pour flush with septic tank in their houses. However, at the same time, there were some households, which had been using open areas for the defecation including those that had private latrine, owing to shortage of water and non-availability of proper sewerage system. Majority of households with private latrines had been using individual piped water connection for sanitary purposes. Sewerage and drainage facility were almost absent. Wherever sewers were available, they over flowed, choked and were broken because of irregular cleaning and maintenance by the municipality in their localities. The municipality took longer than a week time for cleaning of sewers in Rajnandgaon, Narnaul and Janjgir. Moreover, it was not cleaned at all as complained by the households of Janjgir and Narnaul. As a whole, the conditions of sewerage system were very alarming and acute across the cities. Most of the households had no drainage system; where it was available, they were not cleaned daily or even in a week.

The overall situation of SWM in the cities was not satisfactory, since most of the households of all the select cities had to dump their waste in the open areas like roadside, land, river, canal, etc. The municipal staff took a lot of time (duration of a week's time) to collect the waste. City streets were not swept daily. Most of the households had rated these services within the range of 'average' to 'very poor'.

The study findings were shared with the community in each town, where the survey was done. The citizens discussed the findings and invited their local elected councillors to share them. In the next stage, the community members and the elected councillors jointly organised interface meetings with the concerned departments to share the concerns of the citizens.

i) Using Report Card Methodology in Panna, Madhya Pradesh

The objectives of bringing out a report card were to capture the perspectives, needs and aspirations of citizens vis-à-vis service delivery, and to make municipal officials and service providers more sensitive towards these needs. The report card followed the approach of taking feedback from the citizens in order to assess and take stock of the quality of service delivery. The approach ensured that the service providers were in close contact with the service users to comprehend their problems on one hand and acknowledging their suggestions for further improvement and re-strategising the service delivery plans on the other hand. In the intervention areas,

the following basic services were selected for study—water supply (hand pumps and taps), garbage management, drainage, street lighting, roads, public health, public distribution system and electricity.

A number of youth volunteers and citizen leaders were engaged in data collection. The analysis was first shared with the community to validate the existing status of the services. Later several meetings were organised at the ward level involving the municipal councillors to share the findings of the survey. In each such meeting, the community members, citizen leaders and municipal councillors jointly planned to address the problem within the existing capacities of the municipality.

ii) Citizen Monitoring Committee in Action in Himachal Pradesh

Dharamshala is one of the most visited tourist sites in Himachal Pradesh. However, despite this, the area is not free from problems. Sanitation is one of the biggest problems in the town. The number of garbage disposal bins within the municipality is limited and the *Safai Karamcharis* (sanitation workers) do not perform their responsibility regularly. The people in the town throw off the garbage in the drains, which are constructed all across the town. They believe that the water in these drains will flush away all the garbage and the city would remain clean and there would not be any problem of sanitation. The garbage is dumped continuously in the drains causing blockage, and the drains get filled up with all the dirty water and wastes that makes the entire environment unhygienic.

It was realised by PRIA facilitators that it was the people who needed to be made aware and educated on this issue and who should together plan a better way to sort out the problem. PRIA played an active role in mobilising the citizens of the wards through a number of ward-level meetings. A number of residents joined hands and formed a rotating monitoring committee. In other words, the responsibility of monitoring did not fall on a few people, but was spread among a number of concerned residents.

The role of the monitoring committee was to stand and guard the drains in their wards to prevent the residents from throwing off the garbage in them. The committee members stood near the drains every morning, the time when most residents used to throw off their garbage. They would prevent them when they saw anyone trying to throw off the garbage and make the people understand that they were not supposed to do this. This plan was implemented with the belief that catching the guilty on the spot would create an understanding that their actions were wrong as well as instill a sense of fear and make them think twice before carrying out such an act.

The committee has since then undertaken a number of visits near the drains to monitor the problem of garbage dumping in them. The problem has visibly reduced and at present the committee is planning to involve the municipality in dealing with the garbage disposal problem in the ward (with the cooperation of the ward councillors).

iii) Citizen Monitoring in Bihar

In Motipur, one of the wards was allotted with the funds for a culvert (septic tank) construction under a government scheme. The intention of the local ward

representative was to earn a cut from the total allotment. The easiest way out was to use an inferior quality construction material. The material was supplied at the local site and the work was to be started. Soon the local Mohalla Samiti members and Citizen Leaders became aware of this development. They mobilised the local community and pressurised the ward members to adopt fair practices in the purchase of construction material. After an investigation by the community members and Mohalla Samiti members, it was decided that the inferior quality materials should be returned and proper materials should be purchased. As a result of this initiative, proper material was used in the construction of the culvert and the work was satisfactory.

Chapter 3

Challenges Ahead

The inclusion of weaker sections in governance and strengthening their confidence for demand articulation is a major concern in the urban India. Although, Mohalla Samities have become mechanisms for community participation in strengthening local self-governance, potential roles that other stakeholders could play are yet to be optimised. The Mohalla Samities demonstrated a few interesting cases on how community involved successfully with greater ownership in the local issues. However, scaling up of such interventions, making them more representative and wider sharing, multiplier effort is needed.

The Mohalla Samities demonstrated the potential role of this platform in monitoring the municipal services by mobilising the community people. The Samities revitalised the community structure and created a medium to explore space in the framework of good governance. There is a need to make the platform more focused and targeted towards the developmental issues. The Mohalla Samities entailed the participation of the weak, missed out and the marginalised sections with multiple leaderships. The mechanism further helped to check the erring functionaries with the relevant action taken at right time. Indeed the initiatives took up by the Mohalla Samities resulted to a large extent in bringing transparency and accountability in urban governance in the interventional areas.

It was expressed by the municipality that many a time the civil societies bypass the municipality and approach the district administration for basic services. In several areas, the municipal stakeholders have a feeling that a parallel body is created against them. Hence, joint initiatives with non-threatening relationship with the elected representatives and Mohalla Samities need to be ensured from the very outset.

The samiti members also need to strengthen the leadership and level of understanding on the social issues. Further, the question of sustainability of Mohalla Samities is another challenge in their functioning.

A permanent structure is important for the Mohalla Samities like the Gram Sabhas in Panchayat. Towards that end, it is important to have provisions for forming Mohalla Committees in the respective state Municipal Acts. Kerala and West Bengal are the only two states having the provision in the Municipal Acts for constituting committees at ward level in SMTs. Hence, this issue needs to be taken up for policy advocacy in other states.

Further it would be imperative to undertake institutional strengthening of Mohalla Samities through exposure visits across the states and introducing some common parameters for the functioning of these Samities. A set of rules and regulations with specific responsibilities to the Mohalla Samities can further guide their

functioning. A viable model also needs to be brought out to multiply the experience in other wards and in other municipalities. Hence, it is important to showcase multiple experiences from different states. It has been extensively recognised from the experience that Mohalla Samities could be a real platform to strengthen citizens' participation to ensure democratic and responsive governance.

Unlike universal acceptance of Gram Sabhas in all rural locations under the three-tier Panchayati Raj Institutions backed by the Indian constitution, there is no constitutional backup for citizens' participation in small and medium municipalities. The provision for Ward Committees is restricted to the municipalities having population more than 300,000. Till date, even this provision has not been fully operational in most of the municipalities leaving the citizens to the mercy of elected councillors and municipal officials. Most of the State Acts applicable to small and medium municipalities, except West Bengal and Kerala, do not have the provision of Ward Committees. In the absence of any legal sanctity to the Samities formed thus so far, they have been viewed at best as citizens' own local initiatives to make the municipalities more accountable. However, the practice of organised citizens' action through formation of Mohalla Samities could not be mainstreamed in terms of gaining state-wide acceptance by the policy makers. This has been a great limitation to various interventions with the Mohalla Samities.

There is now an opportunity provided by the JNNURM. One of the reforms proposed under JNNURM is the enactment and implementation of CPL. The state governments signing Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the central government and implementing any scheme under JNNURM have to enact CPL in the coming years. CPL proposes for Area Sabhas and Ward Committees. However, enough indications are yet to come as to how the state governments are planning to facilitate the formation of Area Sabhas and Ward Committees backed up by legal provisions.

Till the time such laws are enacted, rules and bye-laws are framed, and Area Sabhas and Ward Committees are formalised by the state governments and municipalities, how do CSOs work towards institutionalisation of citizens' participation in municipal governance? Notwithstanding the fact that such laws even if enacted would not ensure the institutionalisation of citizens' participation, the need for such laws cannot be overstated. Therefore, for the time being, there is no option other than to activate the informal citizens and residents' associations and developing their leadership to make municipal governance accountable to citizens.

The draft CPL (Model Nagara Raj Bill), however, gives some important clues about the structures and functions of Area Sabhas and Ward Committees, which could be used as a guide. Understandably, in the absence of legal back up the structure and functions proposed in the bill could not be followed ditto (for example, election to Area Sabha). Nevertheless, a whole lot of proposed provisions could be implemented. There will be tremendous strategic advantage, as the practicality of the provisions proposed in the bill will be tested out. In the future, the state governments, municipalities and CSOs could also use the experience gained from this experimentation. Future advocacy work with the state and central governments on citizen participation could be benefited from this important learning.

