

About PRIA

PRIA is an International Centre for Learning and Promotion of Participation and Democratic Governance. Since its inception in 1982, **PRIA** has embarked on a set of key initiatives focusing on participatory research, citizen-centric development, capacity building, knowledge building and policy advocacy. With a combination of training, research and consultancy, it has grounded its work with conceptual rigour and understanding of social reality to command the strategic direction of interventions. **PRIA** works with diverse range of partners at local, national and global levels.

PRIA's professional expertise and practical insights in the following areas are being utilised by other civil society groups, NGOs, governments, donors, trade unions, private business and academic institutions around the world:

- Participatory development methodologies
- Institutional & human capacity building for social sector
- Women's leadership & political empowerment
- Empowerment of SC/ST leaders in panchayat
- Citizen monitoring & social accountability of services
- Participatory governance in panchayats and municipalities
- Municipal reforms & participatory planning
- Environmental & occupational health
- Corporate social responsibility (CSR)
- Adult education & lifelong learning
- Gender mainstreaming in institutions (including preventing sexual harassment at workplace).

PRIA adopts three broad approaches in its ongoing programmes:

First, it intervenes directly in the field primarily in the northern and eastern poorer regions of India, in order to promote 'citizen's collective voices' to make demands on governance institutions to claim their rights, access services and ensure accountable utilisation of public resources in development programmes. In recent years, **PRIA**'s interventions have specially targeted Right To Information (RTI), National Rural Employment Guarantee Schemes (NREGS) and Urban Basic Services.

Second, **PRIA** provides on-demand advisory and consultancy services to a wide variety of clients internationally. It utilises its practical knowledge and professional expertise in various areas to offer '**participatory and sustainable solutions**' to improve supply sides of development and democracy.

Third, **PRIA** offers educational programmes in numerous human and social development themes, drawing from its field experiences, advisory services and extensive research projects. Within the framework of 'learning for social change', these educational courses are offered in face-to-face and distance modes, sometimes specially designed for a client, and many times in partnership with such premier educational institutions as Indira Gandhi National Open University (**IGNOU**), India, University of Victoria (**UVic**), Canada and Institute of Development Studies (**IDS**), UK.

Through its campaigns, research, education and policy advocacy interventions, **PRIA**'s overarching mission is to '**make democracy work for all citizens**'.



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Occasional Papers Series - No. 11

Urban Governance

Spaces for People's Participation



Case of Area Sabhas in Indian Cities

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Spaces for People's Participation

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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

Citizen participation in governance has become the buzzword in the recent times. Many exemplars and methodologies for citizen participation in development and governance have been evolved and up scaled in the last two decades. However, most of the exemplars have been evolved in the rural context, whereas a very few in the urban context. The efforts from civil society organisations to promote citizen participation in urban context are also limited due to various reasons.

Despite the provisions of the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992, not many local self- government institutions realised the importance of good governance. Though political devolution or the handing over of functions from the central to local authorities took place to some degree, fiscal and administrative devolution were not actualised in many states.

It was against the background of such a dismal state of affairs that PRIA and its partners ventured into the field. PRIA's interventions have focused on getting these public institutions to function in accordance with their constitutional mandates. PRIA has demanded of and facilitated all such public institutions, to fulfill their mandates through transparent and accountable functioning. This paper presents that how citizen voices can be made heard to the local institutions and how important it is that the public participation must be ensured in decision making, implementation and monitoring of basic amenities. We present an ongoing process of civic engagement in urban governance in this occasional paper with some initial achievements and learning.

We proudly acknowledge the contribution of our colleagues, particularly Vinika Koul and Kanak Tiwari for their research, intellectual and managerial contributions to give final shape to this paper. We must acknowledge the contributions of Khatibullah Sheikh, Pranav Praveen, Bhavita Vaishnava and Shabana Charaniya who contributed in the preparation of this paper. A special word of thanks to Vishwa Ranjan, Mahesh Sudhakar Dhandole and Rose Anita Tirkey along with our field based partners in the states. This publication would not have been possible without the support and contributions of Pushpita Bandyopadhyay, Anil Kumar and Naveen Kr. Jha.

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Dr. Kaustuv Kanti Bandyopadhyay

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Executive Summary

In recent decades, people in countries around the globe have increasingly sought active roles in shaping the institutions and rules, that affect their lives. There has been a wave of reforms to decentralise power away from central governments and locate it closer to 'where people live'. Thus, decentralisation presents unique opportunities to invoke the right of citizens to get involved in local decision-making processes and participate in planning for their own local governance.

Citizen participation offers a new way of thinking about development. It embodies the idea that citizens can help themselves; that they can articulate their own needs and find the solutions to address them; that they can be active participants rather than mere recipients of development processes; that development works better for them if done 'bottom-up' rather than from the 'top-down'.

The 74th Constitutional Amendment Act or Part IX of the Indian Constitution ushered a new hope to democratic decentralisation in urban areas. The Act provided recognition to the municipalities as institutions of local self-governance and conferred "such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to carry out the responsibilities conferred upon them including those in relation to the matters listed in the Twelfth Schedule."

Strengthening citizen participation in urban governance has been the core focus of PRIA and its partners. A variety of interventions towards formation of citizen collectives such as Mohalla Samities and more organised citizen groups like the Area Sabhas for effective participatory Governance have been carried out at multiple locations. The most active members of these Sabhas, identified as 'Citizen Leaders', were trained through various capacity building interventions on a variety of issues related to urban governance. These efforts have resulted in meaningful engagement of these members with their ward-level elected councillors and with municipal officials on local issues like water, sanitation, sewerage, roads, etc. The fundamental assumption has been that, organised citizen action would result in improved accountability of the municipal councillors and officials. This in turn would give better service delivery to the citizens within the current capacity of the municipality. Much more still needs to be done by many more actors and stakeholders, if urban governance in India has to become democratically accountable to all the citizens.

It is with this backdrop that PRIA initiated this project, which mainly aimed at increasing 'the citizen engagement in urban governance'. It reinforced that collective action helps to identify and address issues of public concern. A number of civil society groups were activated in the intervention cities (Jaipur, Raipur, Ranchi, Patna and Varanasi), to mobilise Area Sabhas in selected wards and gradually interface meetings between citizens groups and municipalities were organised to improve the service delivery. These initiatives and their outcomes have been well illustrated in this paper.

The first chapter of this paper elaborates on the basic concept, meaning and the definition of participation, and its relevance in context to space. It elaborates on the various types of spaces in which the citizens participate. Along with it, this chapter also focuses on the present challenges to citizen participation. The second chapter

describes the various opportunities of participation that are available to the citizens in the Indian context, with respect to the Community Participation Fund and Community Participation Law. Chapters three and four focus on PRIA's experience with the community through the means of conduction of Area Sabhas. They specify the immediate impacts that were observed within the specific wards in all the project cities. Further, they elaborate on the prominent lessons that were learnt in the whole process and important inferences that were drawn, as seen from a viewpoint of a civil society organisation.

Abbreviations

CPF	:	Community Participation Fund
CPL	:	Community Participation Law
CSOs	:	Civil Society Organisations
DPC	:	District Planning Committee
EU	:	European Union
JNNURM	:	Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission
MPC	:	Metropolitan Planning Committees
NGOs	:	Non Governmental Organisations
PIL	:	Public Interest Litigation
PRIA	:	Society for Participatory Research in Asia
RWAs	:	Resident Welfare Associations
UDAs	:	Urban Development Authorities
URA	:	Urban Reforms Agenda
ULBs	:	Urban Local Bodies

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Chapter 1

Understanding Participation and Spaces for Participation

1.1 Introduction

According to the Commonwealth Foundation 1999, around the world, a growing crisis of legitimacy characterises the relationship between citizens and the institutions that affect their lives (Narayan *et al.* 2000). In both North and South, citizens speak of mounting disillusionment with government, based on concerns about corruption, lack of responsiveness to the needs of the poor and the absence of a sense of connection with elected representatives and bureaucrats.¹ Newell says that the rights and responsibilities of corporations and other global actors are being challenged, as global inequalities persist and deepen.²

In the past, there has been a tendency to respond to the gap that exists between citizens and institutions in one of two ways. On the one hand, attention has been paid to strengthening the processes of *participation*, i.e., the ways in which poor people amplify their voice through new forms of deliberation, consultation and mobilisation designed to inform and to influence larger institutions and policies. On the other hand, growing attention has been paid to strengthening the *accountability* and *responsiveness* of these institutions and policies through changes in institutional design and a focus on enabling structures for good governance. Each perspective has often perceived the other as inadequate, with the latter warning that consultation without attention to power and politics will lead to 'voice without influence', and the former arguing that reform of political institutions without attention to inclusion will only reinforce the status quo.³

The *UNDP Human Development Report 2000* argues that 'the fulfillment of human rights requires democracy that is inclusive'. For this, elections are not enough. New ways must be found to 'secure economic, social and cultural rights for the most deprived and to ensure participation in decision making'.⁴

¹ As cited in Gaventa, G. (2002), "Introduction: Exploring Citizenship, Participation and Accountability", IDS Bulletin, Vol. 33, No 2, p. 1.

² Ibid

³ Ibid

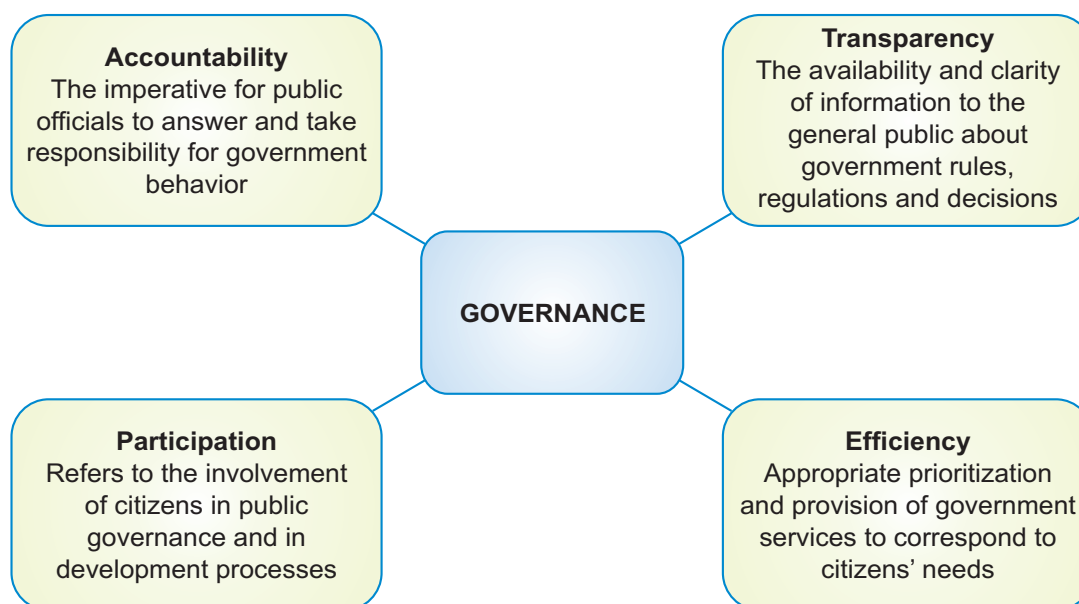
⁴ As cited in Gaventa, G. (2002), "Introduction: Exploring Citizenship, Participation and Accountability", IDS Bulletin, Vol. 33, No. 2, p. 2.

Figure 1: Concept of Governance



Source: Presentation by UNS Public Administration Programme: UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Training Workshop on Citizen Action for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Module 2: Citizen Engagement and Participation.

Figure 2: Elements of Governance



* Adapted from ADB (1995).

1.2 Perspectives on Citizen Participation

a) Participation

Participation is a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources which affect them.⁵

The ideas of participation as a right also invoke a move from participation of 'beneficiaries' or 'stakeholders' to the more political idea of participation of 'citizens', who themselves bear both rights and responsibilities. In this sense, the participation discourse begins to enter the domain of governance, and begins to link the participatory development, participatory democracy and participatory governance agendas (Gaventa and Valderrama, 1999; Gaventa, 2002).⁶

We are now in an age where public governance cannot do without citizen engagement and citizen participation.

Source: Presentation by UN Public Administration Programme: UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Training Workshop on Citizen Action for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Module 2: Citizen Engagement and Participation.

The concept of participation can be redefined, as it moves from only being concerned with 'beneficiaries' or 'the excluded' to that with broad forms of engagement by citizens in policy formulation and decision-making in key arenas, which affect their lives (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Shift in Participation

From		To
Opportunities		Rights
Beneficiaries	→	Citizens
Projects		Policies
Consultation	→	Decision-making
Micro		Macro

Source: Gaventa, J. (2006), "Perspectives on Participation and Citizenship", In Mohanty, R. and Tandon, R. (ed.), *Participatory Citizenship: Identity, Exclusion, Inclusion*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, p. 58.

Participation in practice may be seen as a contest between different actors and groups, who themselves may employ differing meanings and understandings to strengthen their voices, claims and interests. Thus, understanding participation means, understanding what it means to different actors at that particular local context.⁷

⁵ World Bank 2004

⁶ As cited in Gaventa, J. (2006), "Perspectives on Participation and Citizenship", In Mohanty, R. and Tandon, R. (ed.), *Participatory Citizenship: Identity, Exclusion, Inclusion*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, p. 57.

⁷ Ibid

"The success of participatory institutions depends on a dual process of commitment-building. Unless both state actors (ranging from politicians to bureaucrats) and ordinary people are motivated to support, take part in, and respect [Empowered Participatory Governance] experiments, those policies are unlikely to become either empowered or participatory." (Abers, 2003)⁸

b) Rationale for Participation in Governance

Effective participation is where all relevant stakeholders partake in decision-making processes and are able to influence the overall exercise such that in the end of the process, everyone feels that all views and opinions have been duly recognised and considered, even if the final outcomes are not in their favour. Osmani (2007) has pointed out that citizens' participation in governance is rationalised by two of its major values: the intrinsic and the instrumental.⁹

Intrinsic Value of Participation: It advocates that every human has the ability and the right to participate in the societal affair. This can be further explained as:

- The act of participation in public affairs is valuable in itself because it constitutes the freedom to do and to be the things that individuals value (Sen, 1999).
- Participation is an opportunity to achieve valuable outcomes and to influence the processes through which these outcomes are achieved.
- Declaration of the Right to Development adopted by the United Nations in 1986: "The right to development is an inalienable human right by virtue of which every human person and all people are entitled to participate in, contribute to and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized." (UN 1986, Paragraph 1 of Article 1).

Instrumental Value of Participation: It advocates that participation is important, as it enhances accountability and gives a chance to the community to contribute. Therefore, it enhances the chances of leadership. This can be further elaborated as:

- Participation has the potential to achieve allocative efficiency, whereby resources are guaranteed to be allocated in accordance with the preferences of the citizens concerned.
- Participation also has the potential to ensure technical efficiency by addressing information asymmetries and strengthening institutions of accountability so resources are used as intended.

⁸ Guthrie, D. M. (2008), "Strengthening the Principle of Participation in Practice for the Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals", In Participatory Governance and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), United Nations, New York.

⁹ This section and its sub-points have been cited from the Presentation by UN Public Administration Programme: UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Training Workshop on Citizen Action for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Module 2: Citizen Engagement and Participation.

1.3 Elements of Participatory Process¹⁰

Although there are various views and meanings of participation, there are important elements for putting citizen participation into practice, and they can be explained in terms of the following questions:

a) Whose Voices (Really?)

Goetz and Gaventa (2001) have used the term 'citizen voice'. To them, the term 'voice' refers to the range of measures---such as complaint, organised protest, lobbying and participation in decision-making and product delivery---used by the civil society actors to put pressure on service providers to demand better service outcomes.

According to Gujit and Shah (1998), there are risks of homogenising voices in such a way that critical differences between collective categories such as the 'poor' or the 'community' are ignored. The concern is 'who speaks? Is it women or men? Old or young? The poor or representatives of the poor?'

On what basis do they speak? Is it through experience or from other forms of knowledge? The voice that is speaking---is it based on critical awareness, in which there has been an opportunity and space for collective reflection and analysis of one's situation? It is also important to know that, for whom do participants speak? Do participants speak from self-experience or for others? If for others, are there mechanisms through which such representations/representatives of the realities of others can be held accountable?

b) In Whose 'Space' does Participation Occur?

The dynamics of participation in particular arenas will vary a great deal according to who creates the space for it to occur; and who enters the space and how they behave once they do. According to Cornwall (2002) and Brock, Cornwall and Gaventa (2001), there exist a continuum of spaces that are mentioned below:

i) Closed or provided

Quite often, many decision-making spaces are closed, i.e., decisions are made by a set of actors behind closed doors, without any pretence of broadening the boundaries for inclusion. These are also called the 'provided spaces', which means that the elites (bureaucrats, experts or the elected representatives) make decisions and provide services to the 'people', without seeing any need for broader consultation or involvement.

ii) Invited

Spaces move from 'closed' to more 'open' ones when efforts are made to widen participation. This would mean that the 'people' (as users, as citizens, as beneficiaries) are invited to participate by various kinds of authorities---be they

¹⁰ This section and its sub-points have been cited from Gaventa, J. (2006), "Perspectives on Participation and Citizenship", In Mohanty, R. and Tandon, R. (ed.), Participatory Citizenship: Identity, Exclusion, Inclusion, Sage Publications, New Delhi, pp. 58--63.

government, other national agencies or non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Invited spaces may be more transient, through one-of- forms of consultation like the Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPAs) and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs).

iii) Claimed or Created

There are some spaces, which are claimed by less powerful actors, for or against the power holders, or created more autonomously by them. These may include ways in which civil society actors themselves mobilise from below on poverty-related issues, or choose to create their own parallel processes independent from the more formal state or donor-led decision-making processes.

These spaces exist in dynamic relationship with one another, and are constantly opening and closing through struggles for legitimacy and resistance, co-optation and transformation.

c) What Purpose?

There are various forms of participation that exist. Hence, it is important to ask the question 'Why Participation?' as not every form of participation leads to poverty alleviation or democratisation. Thus, while examining the participatory processes, it is important to know the purpose behind those who are participating or calling for participation, as given below:

- Manipulation or co-optation, e.g., to support the status quo and to divert opposing voices.
- Legitimacy, e.g., to ensure wider ownership and support for an agenda which already has been predetermined, or which will really be decided elsewhere.
- Efficiency, e.g., to help make projects or programmes, more cost-effective, targeted and sustainable.
- Transformation, e.g., to change underlying social and power relations in favour of the poor or the previously excluded.

d) Whose Power is Affected?

Transformative participation changes power relations in favour of the relatively powerless (poor and marginalised people). Given below are several levels of power, as explained by Gaventa (1980) and Veneklasen and Miller (2002), in order to analyse the extent to which it occurs:

- Visible Power – examining who participates in public spaces, and who appears to win or lose on particular issues.
- Hidden Power – which is not at all visible.
- Invisible Power- in both the visible and hidden arenas of power, there may be more internalised norms or stereotypes, which prevent certain perspectives from being raised or certain participants from engaging.

It is important to note that in situations of highly unequal power relations, simply creating public spaces for more participation to occur, without addressing other forms of power, may do little to bring about pro-poor or more democratic change. New public spaces will simply be filled by the ones already powerful. Therefore, the focus should be to know what capacities are needed to strengthen the ability of relatively powerless groups to challenge the power relations. If the concern is for challenging the more invisible, internalised forms of power and powerlessness, which keep certain actors from engaging at all, then the support needed may be more of awareness building or conscientisation through means such as literacy/popular education/participatory action research.

This Chapter has comprehensively covered some theoretical aspects of participation. In the next chapter, some challenges and opportunities of participation in Urban Governance of India have been presented.

Chapter 2

Opportunities and Challenges of Participation in Urban Governance in India

2.1 'Where' does Participation occur?¹¹

The socio-economic and political status of interacting individuals and/or organisations has a pervasive influence over the nature of interface. For example, engagement has different meanings for the powerless marginalised citizens, as opposed to resource-rich and politically powerful citizens. Here the type of engagement may be the same, but the outcomes may vary significantly. Furthermore, the nature of engagement differs corresponding to the level and the content of interface, as does its impact. For instance, citizen engagement with local self-governance institutions is very different and has greater possibilities than engagement with the national government.

Thus, there are various **levels of engagement** that have been explained below:

Local/State: The engagement of citizens at the local level is instrumental in creating and strengthening grassroots voices – the development of the bottom-up pressure of the demand side of the equation. Local actors include the local self-governance institutions, community based organisations (CBOs), local media and citizens, etc.

National: The engagement at national level is more focused on policy advocacy and mass awareness generation campaigns aimed at strengthening both the demand and the supply side of the equation. National actors include the national governments, larger civil society organisations (CSOs) and networks, national media and donor agencies, etc.

Global: The engagement at the global level again focuses largely on policy advocacy – voicing the demands of the poor and creating a space for their voice in the global fora, thereby strengthening the citizens' voices. The global actors would include multilateral institutions, national governments, donor agencies, larger CSOs and global media, etc.

¹¹ This section and its sub-points have been cited from, Kak, M. and Bandyopadhyay, K.K. (2007), "Pathways to Citizen Engagement", In Citizen Participation: Future of Governance, PRIA's 25th Anniversary Deliberations, 5--8 February 2007, New Delhi, PRIA, New Delhi, pp. 9--13.

These levels of engagement constitute various **forms of citizen engagement** that have been listed below:

a) Seeking information

'Knowledge is power'. It enhances the ability to ask questions and demands answers without the fear of being shunned with accusations of ignorance. Thus, it is the first form of engagement by the citizens. Knowledge only transfers into action if there exists awareness within the individual that one has rights as a citizen and the freedom and responsibility to avail the denied rights.

b) Collectivisation

A sustainable social and systematic change comes from the collective rather than an individual action. Therefore, when a large number of citizens come together, raise their voice against the anomalies and demand action, a complete revision can be expected as opposed to individual redressal (or non-redressal) of problems.

c) Dialogue with elected representatives

Collectively or individually, the first state actors that citizens generally engage with are their elected representatives. Thus, either in the form of an appellant or in the form of a delegation, citizens express their dissatisfaction through dialogue with the elected representatives.

d) Participation in informal and constitutionally mandated forums

Every democracy has formal or informal forums created for enabling citizen participation. Formal structures are constitutional bodies like the Area Sabhas, water user committees, temporary consultative forums/committees created by the government to involve the civil society actors in policy formulation and debate. Informal structures are those created by civil society in the form of neighbourhood committees, women's groups, etc., where people share and express opinions about local priorities and concerns.

e) Advocacy

A relatively new and emerging form of citizen engagement can be seen in the form of the evolving legal system and the growing information technology revolution:

- **Public Interest Litigation (PIL):** This is a legal tool available to general public to use in case the deficiencies on the part of government continue without any improvement. Individuals often engage with governance institutions through challenging the legality of their actions and decisions when these are detrimental to citizens' interest and rights.
- **Media:** Through the creation of a number of forums, media is making way for citizens to express their opinions, either through opinion polls, discussion forums or opinion surveys.

2.2 Opportunities of formal Citizens' Engagement in Urban Governance and related Challenges

The most important of any opportunities that promote greater engagement of citizens with the local government is a historical addition to the Indian Constitution about seventeen years ago. This was the Constitution (Seventy Fourth Amendment) Act (74th CAA), 1992, that seeks to provide power to the people by granting constitutional recognition to a third tier of urban local government. The need for such an amendment arose on account of the weak performance and ineffectiveness of the states due to failure to hold regular and periodical elections, prolonged suppressions, inadequate representation of the weaker sections, lack of financial resources and inadequate devolution of power and responsibilities upon urban local governments.

2.2.1 The Seventy Fourth Constitutional Amendment Act (74th CAA)

The Act provides for many changes in the structure of municipalities, their composition, powers and functions. The municipalities are expected to become more responsive to the needs of the poor. It provides for second and third tiers of governance in the form of Ward Sabhas and Area Sabhas so that the last citizen is connected to the local government structure. For seventeen years, the expectations have been high as the amendment was geared towards empowerment of urban local self-governance and implantation of a new structure of municipal authorities with additional devolution of functions, planning responsibilities, new system of fiscal transfers, and empowerment of women and the weaker sections of the society.

Ideally it must provide the much-needed institutional capabilities to the otherwise fragile system of urban government in dealing with the impulses of urbanisation and urban growth. In reality, the impact of the amendment is hardly visible as the mechanisms or capacities for its implementation were absent from the urban domain. In fact its rural counterpart i.e. the 73rd CAA fared better due to the following reasons

- There was a historical structure of Panchayats existing in villages that could be easily adapted as the third tier of the government. In the cities, there were no defined spaces or structures for people's participation.
- Civil Society Organizations have always been more active in villages and readily took collective responsibility of making the 73rd Amendment a reality. In cities, on the other hand, there were mostly welfare organizations working on health and education at that time and the civil society presented no collective strength in the urban domain, even less so in urban governance. Thus, the 74th Amendment could not receive similar support from Civil Society.

There were several other reasons due to which the 74th CAA has still not seen the light of the day and a critique has been presented in the next section.

2.2.2 Critique of the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act¹² and Challenges Presented

The 74th CAA has been critiqued on various aspects especially on how its impact has been limited due to its suggestive nature rather than a mandatory one. Given below are some critical issues in relation to the power, that the act grants to Urban Local Bodies or local self-governments.

a) Structure

Through the amendment, the constitution now provides three types of institutions of urban self-government:

- Nagar Panchayats to be constituted in areas, which are in transition from rural to urban
- Municipal Councils in smaller urban settlements
- Municipal Corporations in larger urban areas.

The areas, which are to be categorised under 'transitional', 'smaller' and 'larger' urban areas have been left to the discretion of the state governments. Thus, there is no uniformity of their definitions in the country leading to issues of transfer of funds, functions and functionaries.

b) Composition

The Municipal Authorities are to be constituted of:

- Elected representatives to be elected from the different electoral wards
- Members the House of People (Lok Sabha) and Legislative Assembly of the State representing constituencies, which are wholly or partially under the municipal area
- Members of the Council of States (Rajya Sabha) and the Legislative Councils of the State, who are registered as electors within the Municipal Area
- Chairpersons of Committees of Municipal Authorities
- Persons having special knowledge or experience in Municipal Administration.

Empowerment of the weaker sections of the society and women happens to be one of the substantive provisions of the amendment but this is limited to the extent of elected representatives. In the composition of the second tier, Ward Committees, there are members of the Municipal Council representing the wards within the jurisdiction and one of the elected representatives from within the wards is to be

¹² This section has mostly been cited from Jha, G. (1997), "The Seventy Fourth Constitutional Amendment and Empowerment of the Municipal Government – A Critique", In The 74th Constitutional Amendment: Power to the People, Urban Basic Services Programme for the Poor, National Institute of Urban Affairs, New Delhi, pp. 55-- 62. (additional inputs from PRIA's experiences on ground)

appointed as its Chairperson. However, in addition to these elected representatives, the Ward Committee is to consist of members nominated by State Governments. As the amendment gives discretion to the state governments to decide the composition, the territorial area of the Ward Committee and the manner in which the seats in Ward Committees are to be filled, the decision making power at local level gets diluted. In addition to this, the equitable representation of women and weaker sections of society is also lost.

Another conspicuous deficiency of the amendment is that it has not envisaged a significant role for a political executive in the Urban Local Bodies, thus separating elected representatives and local city planning.

c) Powers and functions

The amendment envisages to devolve to the municipal authorities, functions relating to preparation of plans for economic development and social justice, as well as for the implementation of various development schemes. In its 12th Schedule, it lists out 18 functions for the ULBs. The amendment gives an impression that the gradual encroachment of the state government on the municipal function domain will stop altogether. However, a closer look at the enabling provisions shows that the state has all the discretion in this aspect.

Another gray area is that no functions have been assigned to the Ward Committees as per the amendment. There are no guidelines or framework for their functioning and sustenance. Thus, at some places where ward committees were formed with great fanfare, they became defunct soon after due to lack of direction.

d) Municipal finance

Devolving the functions without devolving the sources of revenue does not carry any meaning. However, the amendment does not cover this critical area of municipal governance. The taxes, duties, tolls and fees to be levied by them and assigned to them, as also the grants-in-aid to be given to them, have been left to the discretion of the state governments. Most state governments in the past have been largely indifferent to the need of revamping of municipal finance and sometimes overtaken legitimate sources of local revenue.

e) Urban planning

The amendment provides for setting up of District Planning Committees (DPCs) to consolidate the plans prepared by the Municipalities and the Panchayats within the district and to prepare a draft Development Plan for the district as a whole. The ULBs are to be represented on it. Till date very few states have prepared district development plans and these too have rural focus as planning of cities is being carried out by a plethora of agencies including development authorities, ULBs etc. Thus, integration of urban and rural plans is not taking place in actuality nor are there any guidelines provided for it in the amendment

The setting up of the Metropolitan Planning Committees (MPCs) is going to create further confusion about the roles and relationship of the myriad Urban Development Authorities in metropolitan cities.

Although the 74th Amendment Act has several infirmities, it is historic in many ways:

- It gives the right to the Municipal Government to exist, as it provides for fresh election every six months of dissolution of the Council.
- It empowers the weaker sections and the women by providing for the reservation of seats.
- It provides the creation of the Ward Committees, which will reduce the distance between the citizenry and the local government, and will hopefully make it much more responsive to the needs of the local community, ensuring accountability.
- The provision for the constitution of the Finance Commission is expected to contribute to the strengthening of fiscal capabilities of the Municipal Authorities.

2.2.3 Community Participation Law (CPL)

The CPL was originally called the Nagara Raj Bill 2004. It is one of the mandatory reforms or conditionalities to be enacted by the states accepting JNNURM funds. Its main objective is *'to institutionalize citizens' participation in governance by setting up, recognizing and empowering general people's assemblies in each Mohalla of urban areas of the state with adequate functions, functionaries and funds'*.

This legislation is considered progressive by many as it gives legal backing to the three-tier structure of local governance proposed originally by the 74th CAA. It has been adopted as a separate bill/law by some states and some others have made provisions for it in the State Municipal Acts; yet others such as Bihar and Uttar Pradesh still have to enact this law.

In spite of its progressive nature, there are some criticisms of the CPL and these convey that some of the same mistakes may be repeated and present challenges in enhancing the effectiveness of the local governments, which was the original mandate of the law. Thus though the legislation may be passed in letters, its spirit needs to be ensured. Many CSOs including PRIA have discovered anomalies in the CPL while working closely with the local and state governments and at a micro scale with people in many wards in different cities. In fact, PRIA is currently attempting to reinforce the spirit of the legislation by facilitating formation and functioning of Area Sabhas and thus is aware of challenges that may occur in implementation of this law. Some of these criticisms are listed below:¹³

- CPL specifies that the state government will decide the territorial limits of the Area Sabhas. It has not been made clear as to who or which department in the state government will execute this responsibility. But it is likely that senior bureaucrats in the state government, connected to powerful lobbies may decide on the territorial limits or decide the criteria on the basis of which Area Sabha limits may be set. Hence, there is a strong chance for arbitrariness and corruption in such a demarcation process.

¹³ Source – PRIA's experiences and "Community Participation Law (CPL): What Participation? Whose Community?", Collaborative for the Advancement of the Study of Urbanism through Mixed Media (CASUMM) through support of Action Aid India

- The Nagara Raj Bill 2004 had proposed that Area Sabha representatives should be nominated. However, after severe criticism of this clause from various civil society groups, it was amended. Area Sabha representatives are now to be elected.
- The other problem with CPL is that individuals whose names do not appear on voters' lists cannot participate in Area Sabha proceedings and decision-making. Area Sabha is defined as "the body of all the persons registered in the electoral rolls pertaining to every polling booth in the Area in a Municipality". This means that migrant populations in the city will be excluded from the participatory democracy, which CPL promises. This would lead to creation of new 'marginalized' groups.
- Under CPL, accountability and transparency mechanisms are fuzzy. CPL does not specify in what way Area Sabhas will be accountable to Ward Committees and to the Municipality, and there is also no mention of Ward Committees being accountable to the Municipality.
- The most important critique is that a comparative analysis of the actual legislations enacted by different states presents variety of different 'avatars' of the law. States have conveniently enacted some portions of the model law and left out the others. There exists no mechanism of check and balance to ensure some universal common minimum for the law to be passed. For e.g. Gujarat has discarded the concept of 'area sabhas' and the state law just makes constitution of Ward Committees mandatory; but Haryana has made no changes in the model bill and passed it word for word. In the race to acquire funds under the JnNURM, somewhere, the actual substance of the reforms is getting lost.

2.2.4 Community Participation Fund (CPF)¹⁴

One of the central features of the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) is community participation. Mandatory reform conditions such as the Community Participation Law and Public Disclosure Law (PDL) are testimony to this fact. However, experience shows community participation in various aspects of implementing JNNURM needs much greater attention than just the passage of laws for community participation. In fact the City Development Plans prepared by every city in a short duration of three months by external consultants are testimony to the fact that people's participation needs time and direct involvement.

The Community Participation Fund has been proposed under the mission as a catalyst to drive community participation by creation of local assets. Providing the platform for participation is only one aspect of enabling community participation, the other is to ensure that communities have capacity to fully utilise these spaces and participate meaningfully. In the long run, it is envisioned that this should lead to increased community participation in the city's functioning thus enabling them to develop a *sense of ownership* on community assets and take on responsibilities for community-based exercises. These assets or projects must have a direct impact on

¹⁴ This section and its sub sections have been cited from from; "Community Participation Fund : Catalysing Community Participation to Develop a Sense of Ownership on Community Assets", JNNURM Website (<http://www.jnnurm.nic.in>).

the community and there should be a clear plan of implementation and subsequent operation and maintenance.

There is provision for about 1000 community projects under CPF, with Rs. 90 crore already approved. In the projects supported under the CPF, the community would contribute towards about 10 percent of the total project cost or 5 percent in case of very poor communities. The following can apply for funds under the CPF:

- Citizens at large (both poor and non-poor)
- Community Based Organisations (Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs), Neighbourhood Groups, Youth Clubs, Shopkeepers Associations)/Area Sabhas (provided the proposal is supported by minimum 51 per cent of eligible voters in the project area (concerned polling booths))
- Individuals, NGOs, ULBs, private sector, etc. not eligible, but if the community cannot execute the project itself due to lack of technical expertise or because it is not a registered body, then it can nominate an NGO to do so.

The primary challenge that the CPF presents is the lack of knowledge of existence of such a fund among communities. PRIA is currently working in five JnNURM cities and our experience shows that neither the community nor the ULB is adequately informed about this. A glance through the projects that have been approved under the CPF shows a definite tilt in favour of the more progressive states due to better flow of information there. Here too, some select cities such as Madurai, Mysore, Bangalore, Kolkata, Bhopal and Kanpur have had most of the CPF projects approved. There are no projects from the remaining more than 55 cities and certainly no mechanisms exist to improve the flow of information to the other cities. This role could be best played by CSOs that are already working in various cities but there is a need for proper guidance and support from the government to carry out this task efficiently.

2.3 Generic Challenges/Barriers to Citizen Participation¹⁵

The apparent gap between the promise of enhanced participation through democratic decentralisation on the one hand, and the everyday realities of participatory politics on the other, suggest the need to understand more fully the generic barriers and dynamics of participation in local governance in India. There are challenges at every step, as processes of citizens' engagement are not institutionalized within government structures and schemes.

a) Challenges for Policymakers

- One size doesn't fit all: Importing a 'best practice' model from elsewhere does not guarantee success – it is vital to consider the local context. This includes

¹⁵ This section and its sub-points have been cited from the following:

- Gaventa, J. and Valderrama, C. (1999), "Participation, Citizenship and Local Governance", A background note prepared for workshop on "Strengthening Participation in Local Governance", Institute of Development Studies, 21--24 June 1999.
- IDS (2006), "Making Space for Citizens: Broadening the 'New Democratic Spaces' for Citizen Participation", IDS Policy Briefings, Issue 27, Institute of Development Studies, Sussex.

identifying existing spaces for participation, since in contexts where there are many such spaces setting up a new institution may not be the right approach.

- ***The 'rules of the game' need to be clear:*** The absence of an enabling legal framework may make it difficult to integrate a new democratic space with the formal structures of government. Lack of clarity on the space's mandate and the extent to which decisions will be binding can lead to frustrated expectations among participants and loss of credibility.
- ***Participation demands different procedures and attitudes:*** Institutional arrangements and processes need to be flexible to respond to the information and priorities emerging from participatory processes. As facilitating inclusive participation requires very different qualities from those needed for decisive political leadership and efficient bureaucratic management, officials may need to be encouraged to change their attitudes and behaviour.
- ***Participation takes time:*** Grassroots decision-making often requires much more extended deliberation than a short meeting, and rushed meetings can make inclusive discussion impossible. Participation involves a series of learning processes and there is no substitute for experience and the gradual build-up of specialist knowledge.
- ***Participation has resource implications:*** Citizen representatives will need support to meet the costs of travel, communication and technical assistance. This support can be justified by reminding funding agencies that programmes implemented without participation can be very costly, as they run the risk of missing key priorities or failing altogether.

b) Challenges for Citizens and Civil Society Representatives

- ***Governments demand a clear interlocutor:*** CSOs and citizens often face pressure to mandate a small number of representatives to negotiate on their behalf. While insisting that governments must respect diversity, civil society groups also need to work together to articulate a coherent set of policy positions that can secure broad support among their constituents.
- ***Mandates matter:*** Governments will often challenge the legitimacy of representatives, who disagree with the official position. Establishing a clear mandate and demonstrating accountability make it possible to respond effectively to such challenges.
- ***Representation needs to be shared:*** Heavy demands can be placed on representatives, leaving little time for the activities that formed the basis of their legitimacy in the first place. Representatives often acquire valuable political skills and technical knowledge, but unless this learning is shared there is a risk that its concentration in a few key individuals will change the internal balance of power of the groups they are representing.
- ***Links with other spaces are vital:*** Grassroots engagement to give feedback and identify priority agendas is essential. Networking and alliance building can help mobilise support for these agendas, both inside and outside the official spaces.

- **Engagement should be a strategic choice:** There are costs as well as benefits in participating. When invited to enter new democratic spaces, individuals and organisations should carry out a 'political risk analysis' to identify dangers as well as opportunities. Civil society groups need to ensure that they do not devote all their energy to local participation at the expense of working strategically to bring about wider change.

There are other factors that hinder successful participatory process and pose as barriers, like:

- **Power relations:** Citizen participation is about power and its exercise by different social actors in the spaces created for the interaction between citizens and local authorities. However, the control of the structure and processes for participation---defining spaces, actors, agendas, procedures--is usually in the hands governmental institutions and can become a barrier for effective involvement of citizens.
- **Level of citizen organisation:** Citizens are most able to counter existing power relations where there is some history of effective grassroots organisation or social movement. The existence of popular organisations with a certain presence at a local level and the occupation of political posts in the municipal government by parties or individuals who favour popular participation, seem to be fundamental conditions under which citizens can influence decisions at the local level.
- **Participatory skills:** As progress is made from lower to higher levels of participation (information, consultation, decision making, management), participatory processes become more complex and demand different types of skills, knowledge, experience, leadership and managerial capabilities. The problem arises when there is existence of weak participatory skills at different levels.
- **Political will:** A fourth barrier to strengthening participation involves the absence of a strong and determined central authority in providing and enforcing opportunities for participation at the local level, as well as the lack of political will by local government officers in enforcing the legislation that has been created for this purpose.
- **Level of participation:** Strengthening of participation in local governance means the strengthening of direct citizen involvement in decision-making by individuals or groups in public activities, often through newly established institutional channels, e.g., monitoring committees, planning processes, etc. However, many a times at the municipal level, a majority of these mechanisms have a consultative character, such that participation gets associated with the stages of plan formulation or execution of programmes, but not with decision-making.
- **Insufficient financial resources at the local level:** A common barrier for citizen participation in decision-making is the control of financial resources by higher levels of authority and the meagre resources available for local activities. This is generally due to the inability of local authorities to realise

their revenue for various political and technical reasons, and sometimes due to insufficient allocation of central revenues.

2.4 'Why' of Participation? When can Participation be ensured?

Participation is a two-way process. Participatory governance needs to be supported by politicians and officials, at every level, who are committed to working with communities in a different way, and who have the necessary skills to do this well. Building their capacity is a priority and requires training and support for them, alongside the development of new structures and processes for involvement.

An EU project called 'Why Participate?'¹⁶ produced a diagnostic model for local government to use for planning its improvements in participation: the CLEAR model is positioned '*somewhere between prescription and laissez faire*'. The project found that people are more likely to participate when the CLEAR conditions are in place (Table 1).

Table 1: Conditions for a Successful Participatory Process

	When Do People Participate ?	What Could Local Government Do to Increase Participation?
C	When they can	Provide the resources, skills and knowledge. Socio-economic profile remains the best predictor of participation.
L	When they like to	Work to create a shared attachment to the decision-making body, e.g., a strong city identity. Community identity can grow through cohesion activities and place shaping dialogue. Councils and others can build and reinforce shared identity.
E	When they are enabled	Create a civic infrastructure of active groups in the community, new civic activities and accessible processes and structures for decision-making. The local press is part of this infrastructure.
A	When they are asked	Have a range of different ways in which people are mobilised, e.g., through music, culture, etc. An area needs a range of opportunities for different tastes. It is not about codified standards and rulebooks.
R	When they are responded to	Political will and accountable leadership with clear links to decision-making. The system provides for transparency, listening, assessing impacts and other legitimate inputs and giving feedback. It is not about populism or parochialism.

Source: "Champions of Participation: Engaging Citizens in local Governance", International Learning Event Report, 31 May – 4 June 2007, UK, p. 24.

¹⁶ Lowndes, V., Pratchett, L. and Stoker, G. (2006), "Diagnosing and Remedying the Failings of Official Participation Schemes: The CLEAR Framework", *Social Policy and Society*, Vol. 5, No.2, pp. 281–291, As cited in 'Champions of Participation: Engaging Citizens in local Governance', International Learning Event Report, 31 May – 4 June 2007, UK, p. 24.

Chapter 3

Effective Citizen Engagement – PRIA's Experiences in Five Cities

Local governments, community organisations and public agencies make better decisions and have greater positive impact on their communities when they increase the frequency, diversity, and level of engagement of community residents.¹

PRIA has been involved in enhancing and developing effective means and strategies for citizen engagement in five JnNURM cities, namely cities of Raipur, Ranchi, Varanasi, Jaipur and Patna. We are working intensively at ward level to deepen the involvement of citizens in finding collective solutions to their local problems. In each city two wards have been selected on the basis of fulfillment of certain criteria such as majority of the people belonging to LIG or EWS and at least one of the ward having a female elected representative. This has enabled a conducive environment for community mobilisation and also encouraged the citizens to take part in the urban governance process.

Various strategies were adopted by PRIA to actively engage the community in the governance process in the cities. They enabled the community to get actively involved in defining the issues, identifying solutions and developing priorities for action and resources. One of the main objectives was to make people realize their collective strength and empower them with relevant information to take action.

3.1 Process of Enhancing Citizen Engagement: PRIA's Experiences in Five Cities

PRIA has been making efforts to plant the roots of people's engagement in the cities through its interventions. A large amount of time has to be dedicated to build the interest and trust of the community and to mobilise their engagement. These involved various planned steps, which were carried out in all cities, which have been elaborated below:

a) Mobilisation

Mobilising the community is a strategy that involves the community members in the process of defining and transforming social problems. In specific terms "It is the process of moving a group of people from a state of inaction (or ineffective action) towards effective action on issues of real concern to them".

This action builds a sense of collective *empowerment and efficacy* (the expectation and belief that the community has the knowledge and ability to get the job done). Community mobilising can take several different forms, depending on the extent to which the 'grassroots' community members (neighbourhood residents or local group

¹ Bassler, A., Brasier, K., Fogle, N. and Taverno, R. (2008), *Developing Effective Citizen Engagement: A How-To Guide for Community Leaders*, Pennsylvania State University Cooperative Extension.

members) versus officials and government leaders and organisations are actively involved in defining the problems and deciding on solutions. Mobilising is accomplished through a sequential process that involves linking *Awareness* (of the problem and its causes, consequences, costs, etc.) to *Action* (the community taking steps to remedy the problem or prevent it from happening again) in order to bring about *Change*.

This process is expressed as:²

Awareness + Community Action = Change

For mobilising the community, PRIA organised various ward-level meetings with the citizens. The purpose of these mobilisation meetings was to give the information about the concepts and working of the Ward Committees and Area Sabhas, and how the citizens can participate in the affairs of the local government through the medium of these Sabhas.

Further, it also gave the citizens a chance to discuss their existing problems/issues of the ward, especially those related to water and sanitation. They were also able to plan how to solve the existing problems through the public grievance redressal system provided by the ULB.

As the first step of Citizen Engagement effective mobilization of the people is extremely important. They already face common issues related to the basic services but collective discussion of these problems amplifies their voice and empowers them to act upon finding solutions.



Meeting organised at Mainpura- Chainpura ward No 22, Patna

² What It Is and Isn't, Transforming Communities, Technical Assistance, Training & Resource Center (TC-TAT), Retrieved from http://www.transformcommunities.org/tctatsite/instigate/isup/community_mobilizing.pdf

b) Citizen Leaders³

Leadership is a process of influencing and motivating people for bringing positive social change in favour of the marginalised sections of the society.

A good leader should be a good citizen, and he/she should have the ability to shoulder the responsibility. The attributes of leadership need to be understood at three levels: knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Therefore in the process of promoting citizen leaders, we have to consider all polarities of citizenship in totality.



Interaction with citizen leader Mr. Anil Choudhary at ward 33 on demarcation of Area Sabha (Ranchi)

There are many roles a citizen leader needs to perform, but following two roles are of prime importance:

- i) **Society building:** The first important function of a leader is of building society through:
 - **Social mobilisation:** It includes mobilisation of poor and marginalised towards reforming governance. The purpose of mobilisation varies from engaging in constructive development work to large-scale protest activities.
 - **Overcoming social exclusion:** Means how to include vulnerable/deprived/disadvantaged sections of the society, who were invisible and voiceless till now, into the mainstream.
 - **Managing differences/divisions:** Means to resolve the conflicts emerging within the community through negotiation and decisions acceptable to both the parties.
- ii) **Engaging governance institutions:** Another important task of a citizen leader is to engage different institutions of governance as health, education and many others, for the development of society/community through:
 - **Voice:** Raising voice on emerging issues affecting the community at large through different forums.
 - **Negotiation:** This is only possible among equals. An effort is being made to negotiate a solution of the problem on behalf of the community.
 - **Credibility:** This factor is earned. For example, to be present on some important occasions. It highlights the principle “what he/she says, does also”.

³ The concept and role of citizen leaders has been cited from Ganai, S. (2004), Concept Note on Understanding Citizenship and Citizen Leadership, Workshop on Strengthening Citizen Leadership, 27--31 January 2004, Lucknow, PRIA, New Delhi, pp. 6--7.

Both society building and engaging governance institutions are cyclic in process and are based on knowledge, attitude and skill.

In the five cities that PRIA has been involved in, citizen leaders were identified in all the wards. These were persons who were actively working on the same issue or the other within the community or; enjoyed a place of respect among the people as advisors etc; or people who were most active and vocal during the community mobilization process. Choosing citizen leaders is important for sustaining the process even after this intervention is over. An orientation exercise was carried out for these citizen leaders, the aim being to facilitate community mobilisation activity so that they could also contribute in organising Area Sabhas.⁴

These orientation sessions were on the following topics:

- PRIA's intervention in the ward
- Information on the formation of Area Sabha, how it functions, its roles, rights and duties.
- Community mobilisation for formation of Area Sabha and solving legal issues
- Community Participation Law (CPL) and the 74th Amendment
- Importance of community mobilisation and people's participation
- Importance of involving women in the local development process.

It is important to mention here that the process of learning was mutual. PRIA gained more knowledge about local issues and social context by interaction with these citizen leaders. A simple activity like taking a group walk to demarcate mohallas or 'areas' within a ward with the citizen leaders led to better recognition and acceptance of PRIA staff among the people and increased interest of people in the intervention. The enhanced local knowledge substantiated the intervention and added newer aspects to make it more effective.



Group of citizen leaders chosen to form a committee to support Area Sabha formation and its related activities in ward 33, Ranchi

⁴ The concept of Area Sabha has been explained in the next section.

c) Women's Participation

Women's equal participation in the governance process plays a pivotal role in the general process of the advancement of women. Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspective at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved.

In all the intervened cities, PRIA has been actively involved in promoting women and encouraging them to participate in the mohalla/area/ward-level meetings. Although women have participated with enthusiasm in some cities, their numbers were quite low in other cities. Low participation could be attributed to various factors like patriarchal attitudes, lack of education, male-biased environments, lack of self-confidence, etc.

Some observations of the Gender component in the Area Sabhas: It is interesting to note the male--female proportion in these meetings held in the wards. However, the following are certain discrepancies found when the meetings were held in the five cities:

- Mostly women attended the Area Sabhas because a majority of them were housewives and hence were available in the evening from 3 to 6 pm., like in Ranchi, Raipur, Varanasi and Patna.
- Another reason for their greater presence in the ward meetings was because they are the ones directly affected with the problems of the water (as they are usually the ones who fetch water from the sources like the community well/pond or the public stand posts), sanitation and sewage (they are the ones who are primarily responsible to keep their homes and the neighbourhood clean), etc.
- Women's participation was greater in Patna, especially during rainy season, as they were not engaged with jobs during that time. 70 per cent of the women were either domestic servants or vegetable vendors, and their occupation gets adversely affected during the rains. Hence, women were much more in number in the meetings.
- Attendance of men in these meetings was mostly low because they were either busy in office work or were involved in some earning activities. Sometimes men were available at their homes when Area Sabhas were being conducted on Sundays, but did not participate in the area sabhas instead spent their time playing cards, gambling etc.
- Women showed more faith and acceptance towards any activity / interaction in the hope of betterment of their current situation. Focused mobilization was required in case of men as their faith in the system had been lost.
- In Jaipur women's participation was low as compared to other cities. It required special efforts to involve more women in the process as the communities were highly male-dominated ones.

- However, when the meetings were held on a Sunday, the presence of male members relatively increased everywhere.
- One of the most important observations in this respect is that, women were removed from local politics. Unlike men, they were not concerned in being in the good or bad books of local politicians. Women participation wholeheartedly in the process to contribute towards a positive change and added collective hope and strength to the intervention.



Area Sabha meeting in Saraswati Nagar, Ward No. 34, Raipur (Above) and Nehru Nagar, Ward No. 22, Patna (Below) with more number of females.



The status of women's participation in the meetings can be further enhanced by creating greater awareness among women, that local-level participation would give them an access to the political decision-making process that is related to the allocation of resources.



**Area Sabha in process in Amarpuri mohalla (Ward No.66)
in Raipur with an almost equal proportion of males and females**

d) Strengthening the Interface: Training and Orientation

Various trainings and orientation sessions were provided to the citizen leaders, elected representatives and the local partners (Community Based Organisations that have been working on local issues and are run by local people) within the wards, where PRIA was working.

It is important to involve such local partners in order to ascertain the sustainability of the impact of these interventions and also to ensure the transfer of knowledge and learning so that similar processes can be carried forward by the local people. Hence, the staff of the partner organization were trained to improve their skills such as survey and documentation and substantial inputs on specific topics were provided periodically in the local language.



**Citizen leaders being oriented on the concepts and working
of an Area Sabha at Ward No.38 (Ranchi)**

Some of these capacity building inputs were:

- Reading material on Citizens' Participation
- How to conduct Area/ Ward Sabhas
- Formation of ward committees – the CPL
- The 74th Amendment Act
- A workshop on gender issues - how to be more sensitive and inclusive while conducting meetings, etc.
- Community Participation Fund
- Other sections of the JNNURM Toolkit



Presentation on the concept, formation, roles and responsibilities of Area Sabha during citizen leaders orientation at Ward No.33, Ranchi

e) Surveys: Citizen's Report (CR) and Ward WATSAN Watch (W3)

Conducting a participatory survey is one of the most effective techniques for community mobilization. It is an efficient way of collecting information from a large number of respondents. With local partners and citizen leaders, facilitating the process, the reliability of the data collected is more.



W3 Survey being conducted within the Selected Wards in Jaipur

PRIA engaged in several such surveys, with the help of the local partners. These helped to create a rapport with the local community and enabled the citizens to know more about their local governments/municipalities, the status of various services within the wards like, water supply, sanitation and solid waste management (SWM). These surveys have often involved dialogues between the elected councilors, citizens and civil society groups that have often resulted in concrete action plans.

Given below are two forms of surveys conducted in conjunction with the intervention.

- **Citizen's Report- PRIA's Experience in Improving Citizens' Access to Urban Services:** A Citizen Report Card (CRC) Survey was conducted in the selected JNNURM cities to assess the level, quality and efficiency of service delivery. The study included an interaction with as large as 5020 citizens across various income groups within all the selected cities. The findings of the survey gave an insight into the perceptions of the citizens on basic civic services like water supply, sanitation and SWM, which are provided by the municipality.
- **Ward WATSAN Watch (W3):** A household survey was conducted by PRIA in three wards each in the cities of Patna, Raipur, Ranchi, Jaipur and Varanasi to know the status of Water Supply, Sanitation and Solid Waste Management (SWM). The W3 was conceived with the twin aim of improving service delivery of basic services like water supply and sanitation and demanding accountability.

Something as fundamental as water and sanitation is a right of the citizens, and the ones who do not have access to these, have a right to demand them as well. To voice this demand, the status of these services need to be monitored and relevant figures with respect to various parameters like coverage, accessibility, efficiency, etc need to be obtained. This information can be collected at various levels, like city, zone and ward. However, collecting this data ward-wise will ensure increased participation and paint the real picture of the existing levels of the services at micro level. It also provides accuracy to the data collected.

These data can empower the citizens as well as the representatives who can then negotiate with the service providers and demand standardised levels of services.

Conducting such exercises within the community help mobilise the citizens, generate opinions and make them more aware and vigilant towards their respective area/ward.



Interaction with the community while conducting the W3 survey in the wards of Ranchi

3.2 Building/Strengthening Spaces for Participation

A number of meetings with the citizens in the intervened wards in all the cities were organised by PRIA with the help of the local partners. These meetings have been conducted in the form of Area Sabhas and Ward Sabha. These sabhas have helped to impart information as to how citizens can have a say in their area's developmental schemes. Further, they also gave the citizens a chance to discuss the existing problems/issues of the ward, especially those related to water and sanitation, and how they can solve them through grievance redressal systems in their respective cities.

The following sections explain the whole structure and process of Area Sabha formation and their applicability in the project cities.

a) Reinforcing the Structure from Below

The JNNURM contemplates the creation of another tier of decision-making in the municipality, which is below the ward-level, called the Area Sabha. All the Area Sabhas in a ward will be linked to the ward-level committee through Area Sabha representatives, who will be chosen from the community. There will thus be a minimum of three tiers of decision-making in a municipality, namely, the Municipality, the Ward Committee and the Area Sabhas. In addition, states may choose to have an intermediary level for administrative reasons, clustering multiple wards into a regional structure between the ward and the municipality.⁶

Area Sabhas: It is a two-way accountability mechanism making local governments more responsible to citizen needs, while increasing the responsibility of the citizen for equity in decision-making, enforcement of laws & partnerships in implementation.

Source: "Area Sabhas: Citizen's Participation in Urban Governance", A presentation by the Community of Ward 35, Vijayanagara Nagarikara Vedike, Bengaluru.

b) Three Tier Structure of Urban Governance: Area Sabhas

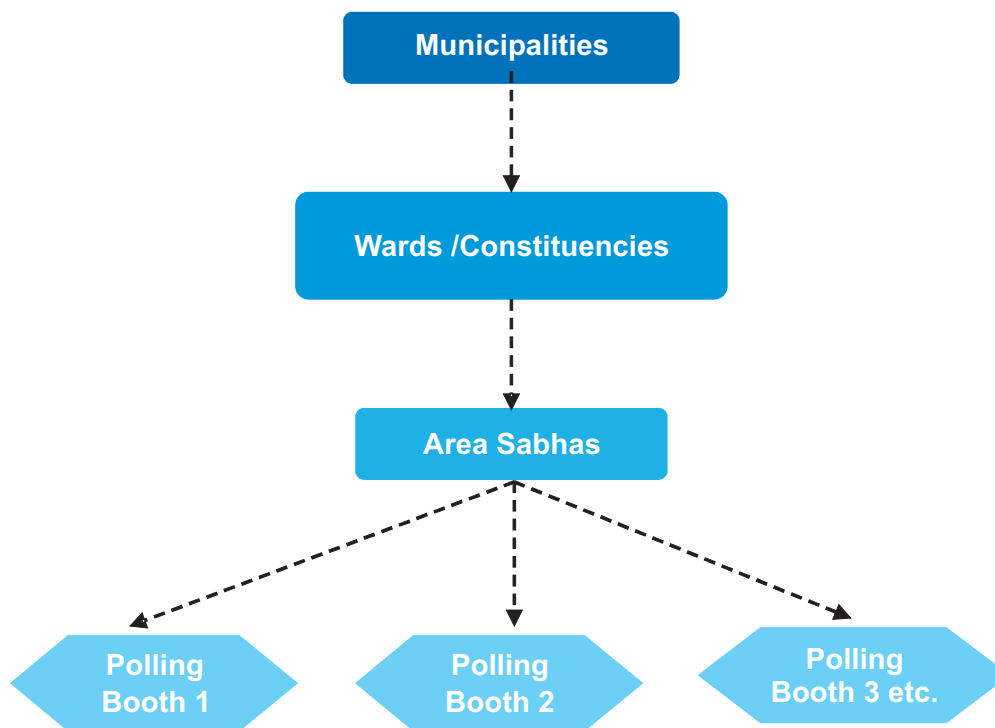
Citizen participation is essential for making democratic processes effective and for strengthening them. Institutions such as Area⁷ Sabhas provide a platform to citizens to influence policy/programme development and implementation. While various platforms and systems for citizen participation have developed organically, there is a need to institutionalise them to make them effective and sustainable.

An Area Sabha is the lowest tier of governance, which connects every individual citizen, who is a registered voter, to the lowest political tier of the Ward (the polling booth); this in turn facilitates an on-going involvement in the governance process. Since, it is based on a polling station limit, i.e., one or more polling booths are the footprint of the Area Sabhas.

⁵ Source: Community Participation Law (CPL), State Level Reform; JNNURM Primers.

⁶ The official gazette of the Maharashtra Municipal Corporations and Municipal Councils (Amendment) Act, 2009 (Mah. Act No. XXI of 2009) determines 'Area' as:

- a) The area into which each electoral ward may be divided; and
- b) The territorial extent of each area, which shall necessarily include the entire geographical territory in which all persons mentioned in the electoral roll of any polling booth in such territory, or, if the government so decides, two or more contiguous polling booths (not exceeding five such polling booths) in such territory, are ordinary resident.

Figure 5: Basic Structure/ Hierarchical Order of the Area Sabhas

The concept of the Area Sabha is taken from the idea of the Gram Sabha in the village Panchayats. Organisations such as the Loksatta in Hyderabad and Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy (JCCD) in Bengaluru argue that in village Panchayats there is one elected representative for every 500--1000 people, whereas in the urban areas there is one elected representative for every 50,000 people. Thus, the concept of Area Sabhas will ensure that there is one elected representative for every 5000 people in the cities. Thus, when Area Sabhas are created, a representative will be elected to head it. S/he will represent the interests of his/her Area Sabha in the respective Ward Committee.

Area Sabha aims to improve the quality of life of the urban citizen through the establishment of a systematic process for participation at three levels: the polling booth; the ward and the municipality as shown in Figure 5. Each Area Sabha elects a representative from among themselves for the ward committee. Since a ward is comprised of multiple Area Sabhas, a Ward Committee is made up of representatives of the various Area Sabhas within that ward. The municipal corporator/ councilor of the ward will be the Chairperson of the Ward Committee and will represent it at the municipality. Municipalities must also consult each Area Sabha on matters of land-use, zoning and public works projects in that Area.

c) Functions and Duties of Area Sabha

An Area Sabha operating in a municipal area, should perform and discharge a number of functions and duties as mentioned in the Model Nagar Raj Bill of the Ministry of Urban Development. The area sabha should be able to identify issues of the area and convey these to the ward committee and the ULB and also demand action on these issues.

The area Sabha should with time evolve and mature to a stage when it can generate its own proposals, generate a priority of schemes and present them to the Ward Committee and ULB. As all residents of the area are members of the sabha, they should fairly identify needy beneficiaries for various schemes and welfare assistance (widow pension, disability pension etc.) and present this to the ULB from time to time. The more important duty of the area sabha is to ensure that developmental priorities of the area with respect to beneficiaries as well as infrastructure are included in the development plan of the municipality.

The basic functions of the Area Sabha include regular monitoring of services and infrastructure in their area and identify and inform about deficiencies. It should assist the municipality in public health activities and tax-mapping etc. and organize and mobilize people to participate in the development of their own locality.

d) Rights and Powers of Area Sabha

An Area Sabha, subject to the procedures, exercises the following rights and powers, namely:

- To get information from the officials concerned as to the services they will render and the works they propose to do in the succeeding period of three months after the meeting;
- To be informed by the Ward Committee about every decision concerning the jurisdiction of the Area Sabha, and the rationale of such decisions made by the Ward Committee or the Government;
- To impart awareness on matters of public interest such as cleanliness, preservation of the environment and prevention of pollution;
- To promote harmony and unity among various groups of people in the area of the Area Sabha and arranging cultural festivals and sports meets to give expression to the talents of the people of the locality; and
- To co-operate with the Ward Committee in the provision of sanitation arrangements in the area.

e) Facilitating creation, regularization and functioning of Area Sabhas

Two wards were chosen in every city to carry out the interventions. They were selected on the basis of the criteria that a substantial population of low-income group communities should reside in the ward. Also, as PRIA had been working in some of the areas in these cities in the previous year too, the choice was made from among those areas in order to take leverage from our previous knowledge and relationship with the community. Another criterion was to choose one ward with a female councillor.



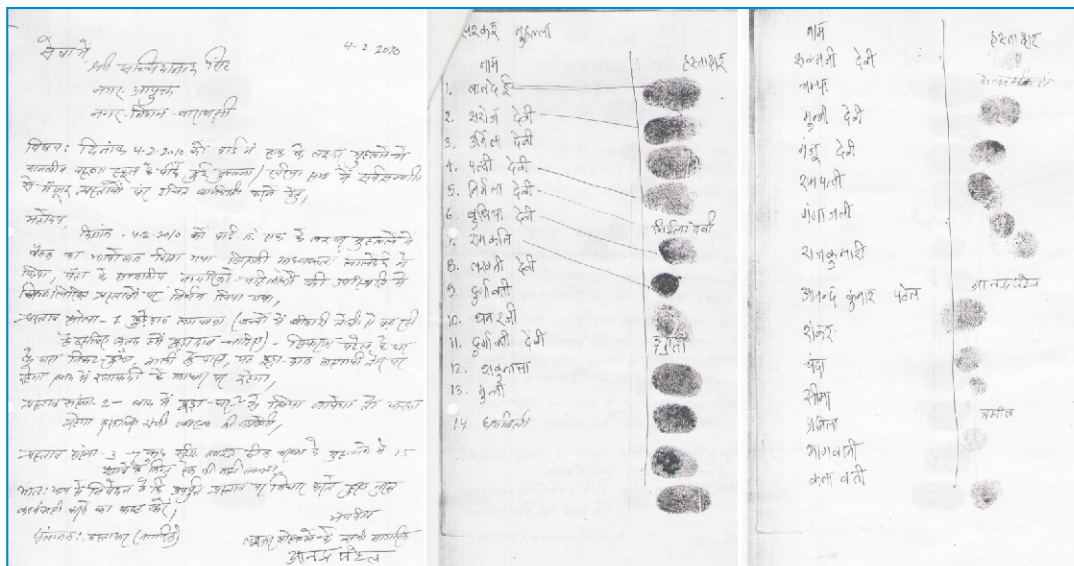
Area Sabha held at Ward 33, Ranchi

Area Sabhas were held in all areas of the two selected wards in every city. Holding the Sabhas on a regular basis has helped to mobilise people and has also helped to increase the involvement of the ward councillors and identify local citizen leaders. Now, people and citizen leaders are conducting these meetings on their own. *On an average, more than ten Area Sabhas have been held in every ward, in every city.*



Area Sabha in progress in Varanasi with the help of local partners and the citizen leaders

The regularity in these Sabhas has further given a boost to the peoples involvement and their concern over the local level issues. There have been positive results in the form of the *proposals* and the *Area Sabha Resolutions* that have been made by the community themselves and were taken up to the respective municipalities to further take the appropriate action.



Area Sabha Resolution passed in Varanasi at Lashker mohalla of Indrapur ward, for repairing street lights and placements of dustbins

f) Election of the Area Sabha Representatives

The role of citizen leaders (as explained in the previous sections) is of great importance, as they are the first people that citizens can relate to within the wards. The citizen leaders would eventually become Area Sabha representatives and represent their local areas at the Ward Sabhas and also become members of the respective Ward Committees that would link the ULBs to the citizens.

In some wards, the area sabha representatives were chosen by nomination during an open meeting, whereas in others a proper process of voting by the citizens is carried out to choose them (*Refer to Case Study III in Chapter IV*).

g) Formation of Ward Committees

Almost in all the cities, a number of changes have been brought about by holding of these meetings (Sabhas) – not only in the confidence of people, but also in their increased interaction with the local government, demanding better services.

Although this is an ongoing project of PRIA, there have been some significant developments, like, the formation of Ward Committees in the two cities of Jaipur and Patna among the rest of the intervention cities. This is a major achievement for the project; as the Ward Committees would act as a platform, carry forward their concerns and issues to the highest tier of the urban structure, that is, the municipal authorities (who have the decision making power with themselves).



**Ward Committee meeting being held at Idgah,
Ward No. 1 at Jaipur**

The next Chapter illustrates on the achievements and the experiences gained while working on the project. It also elaborates on a few of the lessons learnt in the process of making spaces for citizen participation.

Picture Story - 1



Picture Story - 2

नवभारत रायपुर शुक्रवार 19 फरवरी 2010

सायरा बानो चुनी गई क्षेत्र सभा प्रतिनिधि

◆ नवभारत समाचार

रायपुर. स्वयं सेवी संस्था 'प्रिया' के राज्य संसाधन केन्द्र रायपुर द्वारा इन दिनों शहर के गुरुगोविंद सिंह वार्ड नंबर 34 व पं. सुंदरलाल शर्मा वार्ड नंबर 66 में मतदान केंद्रों के आधार पर क्षेत्रवासियों के सहयोग से सहभागिता कानून के तहत क्षेत्र सभाओं का गठन किया जा रहा है। इसी कड़ी में गुरुवार को वार्ड नंबर 34 के मतदान केंद्र क्रमांक 332 में क्षेत्र सभा का गठन कर क्षेत्र सभा प्रतिचयन किया गया। इसके लिए कुछ दिनों से इस मतदान के घर में पंचे बांटेकर प्रतिनिधि लिए नाम आमंत्रित किये गए पर क्षेत्र से तीन व्यक्तियों

इस मतदान केंद्र के अंतर्गत शामिल दंतेश्वरी भवन में आज मोहम्मद यासिन की अध्यक्षता में क्षेत्र सभा की बैठक हुई। बैठक में उपस्थित सभी मतदाताओं के बीच बांटे गये पर्चों में सभी ने अपनी-अपनी पसंद

झारखंड

शहरी विकास में भागीदार हुए नागरिक

महानगर विकास बोर्ड के अध्यक्ष रायपुर के शहरी विकास में नागरिकों की भागीदारी को बढ़ावा देने के लिए शहरी विकास समिति का गठन किया गया। इस समिति के अध्यक्ष रायपुर के शहरी विकास अधिकारी हैं।

आज 30 दिसम्बर, 2009

महिला पार्षदों को दी गयी नेतृत्व क्षमता की जानकारी

(आज समाचार सेवा)

पटना। पटना नगर निगम की महिला पार्षदों के लिए राजनीतिक सशक्तिकरण एवं नेतृत्व क्षमता को लेकर कार्यशाला आयोजित की गयी। कार्यशाला में महिला पार्षदों को नगरपालिका अधिनियम की जानकारी दी गयी।

कार्यशाला में दस महिला पार्षदों ने भाग लिया। 'हमलोग' संस्था की परवीन अमानुल्लाह ने कहा कि नगरपालिका अधिनियम नगर निगम में विकसित होगा। वार्ड नंबर 34 के पार्षदों ने कहा कि पार्षदों को आम बैठक बुलाने के प्रस्ताव को नगर आयुक्त नजरअंदाज कर रहे हैं। पार्षद आभा लता ने कहा कि बिहार नगरपालिका सशक्त स्थायी समिति कार्य संचालन नियमावली अभी

पटना नगर निगम की महिला पार्षदों के लिए कार्यशाला का शुभारंभ

प्रभात खबर बिहार जागे... देश आगे

12 फरवरी, 2010 (बुधवार) - बुधवार पृष्ठ 14 संकाय 20066

पटना, राँची, जमशेदपुर, धनबाद

6 पटना सिटी

जनता की अदालत में अधिकारी

अपर निगमायुक्त को नागरिकों ने खरी-खरी सुनायी

रायपुर. पटना नगर निगम की जनता की अदालत में नागरिकों ने अपर निगमायुक्त को खरी-खरी सुनायी। नागरिकों ने अपर निगमायुक्त को खरी-खरी सुनायी। नागरिकों ने अपर निगमायुक्त को खरी-खरी सुनायी।

नगरपालिका जयपुर 30 दिसम्बर, 2009

महापौर के वार्ड में प्रशासन शहरों के संग शिविर से अधिकारी नदर

शिकायतों की अनसुनी पर मेयर का घेराव

महापौर के वार्ड में प्रशासन शहरों के संग शिविर से अधिकारी नदर

महापौर के वार्ड में प्रशासन शहरों के संग शिविर से अधिकारी नदर

महापौर के वार्ड में प्रशासन शहरों के संग शिविर से अधिकारी नदर

Chapter 4

Initial Impact and Lessons Learnt

4.1 Achievements in the Wards

The continuous citizen engagement and mobilisation over local issues within the wards generated a number of positive and significant impacts. These developments can be considered remarkable in terms of the efforts that the people have put in, and the willingness that the community has shown towards improving the situation of their wards in particular, and the city in general.

Each of these attempts by the community portrays the strength and importance of collective action, the efforts of an informed citizenry, and also the fact that if pursued in a correct manner the local bodies (for example, the municipalities) in every city respond to the needs of their people. Hence these developments can also be attributed to the increased and regular interaction between the citizens and the ULBs of the respective cities. A few of these important achievements have been illustrated below in the form of case studies.

Case Study 1: Urban Community in action in Varanasi

A number of Mohalla/Area Sabhas have been held in various project cities that have led to increased involvement of the citizens in the issues concerning their area, one such Mohalla Sabha was organised in the Lashker mohalla (Indrapur Ward) in Varanasi. During the meeting the residents discussed issues related to sewerage, water supply, sanitation facilities, streetlights etc. After two rounds of community consultation a common consensus was made on approaching the Varanasi Municipal Corporation (VMC) to solve the issue of lack of proper streetlights and dustbin. The community finalized a common place for dustbins. With some support and facilitation, the citizens themselves prepared an application for repairing of streetlights and also for placing two dustbins in the area. Two representatives of the community gave this application to the Municipal Commissioner. With continuous and sustained efforts of the citizen leaders, the municipality repaired 5 streetlights. Also, with regards to the dustbins, the municipal corporation has promised a quick provision.

It is a result of such sustained efforts that the community gets mobilized to take collective decisions and actions that lead to the betterment of their area in general and the society as a whole.



Area Sabha in Process in Varanasi (left); Citizens being facilitated to prepare an application to be submitted to the municipality (right).

Case Study 2: Ward committee meeting held in Patna and Jaipur as a result of the collective demand from the Ward

The councilor in one of the wards in Patna proactively participated in the formation and conduction of a Ward committee meeting. He got a 'handbill' printed on his own that addressed every issue, which could be discussed in the forthcoming meeting. The handbills or pamphlets were distributed in the ward among the people to include them in the decision making process. The purpose of this meeting was to identify the issues and build appropriate strategies to put pressure on the local authorities. The members of the ward committee were asked to present the problems of their respective area. They also listed down all possible recommendations and suggestions that can be carried out with respect to local area development.



Ward Committee meeting held at Patna

Another such ward committee meeting was held at Ward No 55 in Jaipur, which was attended by the area sabha representatives and the ward councilor. The main agenda of the meeting was to strengthen the formation of the ward committee. The issue of participation of representatives from all the areas of the ward was also discussed. Concerns regarding the lack of water supply during the summer season were raised and the problems related to sanitation facilities were also discussed. It was decided to set up a



Ward Committee meeting held at Jaipur

notice board in a strategic location within the ward. The board would provide information and contact number of important people, like the ward councilor, the safai karamcharis (sanitation workers), the contractor of the water supply tanker etc., which would be of great help to the residents of the ward. It was also resolved to hold the ward committee meeting on a regular basis, preferably every month.

Case Study 3: Installation of a Water Tank with the Joint and Rigorous Efforts of the Citizens



Water tank with two taps installed in Ward no. 34, Raipur

PRIA and its local partner facilitated intensive and frequent meetings in Raipur. The citizens conducted one such area sabha in Satnami Mohalla. The main issues discussed

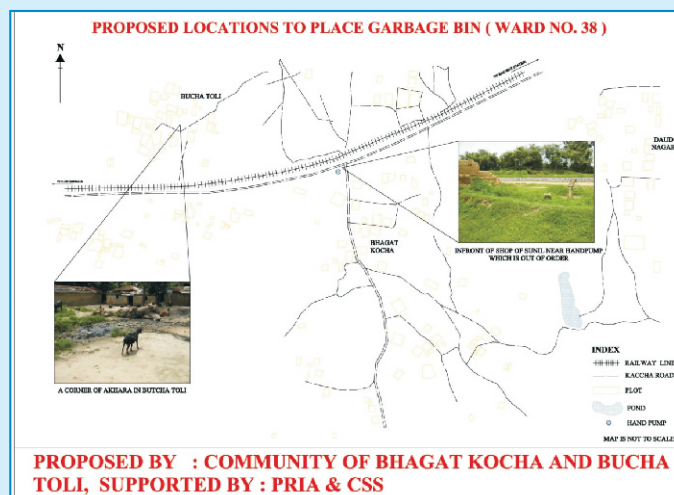
were related to the poor water supply in the area, as there was only one boring connection, which was not in a good working condition. Citizens were then asked about the possible solutions also, whether, they had made any efforts from their side to complain about the service delivery, which they had not. They were then informed about the grievance redressal mechanism of the Raipur Municipal Corporation that had recently opened single windows for complaints in all the eight zones of the city.

The people, especially women got together and prepared a resolution note of the Area Sabha that enlisted all the service delivery related issues and highlighted the need to repair the boring connection and get a new water tank. With PRIA's support they submitted it to the zonal municipal office. All the members of the area sabha had signed or placed their thumbprints on the resolution. The ward councilor also supported the whole process and felt empowered due to the collective energies that the people put in this. After two days, the Zonal Commissioner visited in the Satnami Mohalla, accompanied by the ward councilor. He checked the boring connection and inspected the situation of water supply in the area. People were amazed to see that the municipality promptly addressed their grievance. Not only was the connection soon repaired, a water tank (1000 liter capacity) with two taps was also installed in the Satnami Mohalla within a week's time.

The women leaders in the area were mainly instrumental in submitting the complaint and taking this forward whereas participation of men was negligible. The women involved in this success story have been asked to come and relate their experiences in other Mohallas too so that people get encouraged to amplify and collectivize their demand for better services.

Case Study 4: Community Proposed Locations for Garbage Bin

There are two mohallas, namely Bucha Toli and Bhagat Kocha in Ward No. 38 in Ranchi. The ward does not have access to most of the basic services of the Municipal Corporation, except collection of garbage from households in some mohallas. In these areas, household garbage is disposed in vacant plots of land or on the sides of roads.



Map Showing the Locations of the Bins Proposed by the Community

Earlier this year, community monitoring meetings were held in both the mohallas and the findings were shared at ward meeting in the presence of Deputy Mayor of Ranchi Municipal Corporation. The issues discussed were related to the absence of garbage bins, poor roads, lack of community toilets, no drainage and sewerage lines, etc. The Deputy Mayor appreciated the efforts of community and asked to prepare proposals at the community level.

As a follow up of this event in both the mohallas, several meetings were held. Two locations for placement of garbage bins was decided in the meeting with common consensus in both the mohallas. Citizen Leaders facilitated and energized the process. When the proposal came to PRIA, it was further enhanced with some technical inputs and a basic map was prepared. Map (Figure 6) of both the tolas (mohallas) shows the proposed location for garbage bins.

The community, then submitted the proposal to Dy. Mayor and he assured that the garbage bins would be provided for both the locations soon.

Case Study 5: Democratic Selection of Area Representatives through Community Held Elections

The deepening of the democratic process through continuous and sustained community mobilization is visible through this remarkable effort by people of different polling booth areas in both the wards 34 and 66 of Raipur. Initially, the people of both the wards were mobilised and pamphlets with information and details about Area Sabhas were distributed among them (Annexure 1).

Later on, the communities fixed a date for elections of area representatives for their respective areas. People showed up in large numbers to choose the representatives of their choice. PRIA facilitated the entire process of elections and prepared a ballot box and distributed slips for voting. When the voting was over, the counting of the ballots was done in front of the people to keep the entire process transparent. Afterwards, a citizen leaders who were nominated by the people to preside over these meetings announced the results, and thus, people elected a representatives of collective choice.

In certain other areas in other cities the people nominated the area representatives as there were not many people who opted to do so. Raipur stands as a unique example where the citizens of these wards are so aware and concerned about their neighborhoods, that many came forward and opted to take up the responsibility of an area representative.



Area Sabha in progress in Raipur where the members of the community are casting their votes to choose their area representative (left); Counting of the ballots (right).

Case Study 6: Initiative of Area Sabha to Reopen Community Toilet

In 2007, Sulabh International had constructed a community toilet in Ward No. 33 at Badka Toli, Hesal Akhara, Devi Mandap Road, Ranchi. Sulabh International also had the responsibility of the operation and management of this community toilet. For the same, it started taking a user fee from the people of the neighbourhood and also the surrounding slum population for using this facility. However, this was not acceptable to them, as the majority of the population of this area consisted of the low-income group or of the slum residents. Therefore, people protested against this user fee. Since the matter became serious and this dispute between the Sulabh International and the residents of this neighbourhood was not solved, the toilet was kept locked.



Sulabh Community Toilet at Ward 33 in Ranchi

When PRIA's initiative of formation and strengthening of Area Sabha in this polling booth area commenced, one of the foremost issues that the community raised was regarding this toilet. The citizen leaders of the area facilitated in mobilising the people's opinion and discussed this issue. After several community meetings, members of Area Sabha collectively decided to reopen the toilet and also fixed a user fee. The importance and necessity of this user fee was also explained to the people, as to how it would help in operation and maintenance of this facility.

Now, the sanitation situation has improved for the people living in this locality. Open defecation has reduced considerably. It has become quite convenient for the women and children for whom this was a daily hassle, , since they are able to use this facility. Gradually, the efforts resulted in developing a sense among the people that a platform like Area Sabha could be instrumental in making collective decision on local developmental issues and bringing about a change in their quality of life.

Case Study 7: Jan Adalat held at Ward no 68, in Patna

In order to mobilize the community and address the grievances of the citizens related to basic services at ward level, PRIA along with Humlog Trust organized a "Jan Adalat" or 'public court' with support of Urban Development Department and Patna Municipal Corporation (PMC) in Ward no. 68 in Patna. This meeting was attended by the CEO and other officials of the PMC. The gathering comprised of around 300 people including citizens, CSOs and government officials. The people of the ward collectively wrote about 170 applications for fourteen different infrastructural services. The CEO gave assurance to the people of timely redressal of their grievances within 15 days.

Several issues were raised in the Jan Adalat, including irregular collection of waste; no sweeping in streets; lack of monitoring of cleaning staff, water logging problems and pending cases of registration and transfer of land. It was emphasized that it is important to include the ward councilors whenever the authorities make schemes regarding the development of the wards or the city as they are in direct contact with the people and represent their needs effectively.

This Jan Adalat is a good example of the importance of a strong interface between the government and the citizens. It also shows how collectively and through participation, solutions to many issues can be found. It further depicts that even in the absence of a functional grievance redressal mechanism or if the municipality is in the process of setting up a such a system, then, initiatives like these can turn out to be a boon to the citizenry at large.



Jan Adalat in progress in Patna

4.2 Lessons Learnt

Citizen participation suggests that citizens can govern themselves by influencing decision-making processes that affect their lives, their livelihoods, their communities, their environments and their societies. They have governments to rule them, but they have a right to ask questions and demand their rights. They also have roles and responsibilities as citizens that they can collectively carry out in a better way.

The “crisis of legitimacy” of government institutions in relation to the poorest and most marginalized sectors points to the need for re-configuring government institutions to involve citizens especially in the planning, production, and provision of public goods and services.¹

Under such circumstance, Area Sabhas provide a legitimate space for citizens' participation and collective decision making. *This body can be considered as an urban parallel of the Gram Sabha.²* The efficiency of such a body needs to be maintained, as it proves to be effective in improving information levels of the community, provide opportunity for marginalised sections (the lower income group, the women, the physically disabled or handicapped, etc.) and have positive outcomes for the poor, while working with rich in the same area. Area Sabhas also make citizens accountable, as now the citizens are more involved and informed.

With multi dimensional problems of urban existence, especially for the poor, the process of Area Sabha formation and strengthening was not simple. Getting people,

¹ “Citizen Participation in Governance”, Retrieved from <http://www2.ids.ac.uk/logolink/resources/downloads/PP%20topic%20pack/Section1.doc>

² The Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992 has added a new part IX consisting of 16 Articles and the Eleventh Schedule to the Constitution. The amendment envisages the 'Gram Sabha' as the foundation of the Panchayat Raj System to perform functions and powers entrusted to it by the State Legislatures. It provides for a three-tier Panchayat Raj System at the village, intermediate and district levels. All men and women in the village who are above 18 years of age form the Gram Sabha.

mobilizing them, building their interest in the Area Sabha formation was not that easy. There were various constraints and challenges that were encountered, and it was only through the collective will of the community that we have come this far. Some of these crucial constraints are:

- ***Inclusive and Effective Participation is a time taking process:*** Convincing the community about the positive impact and benefits of organising themselves and conducting Area Sabhas on a regular basis is a time-consuming activity. A large amount of time has to be dedicated to build the interest and trust of the community and to mobilise their engagement. There is also a need to devote more time to proper inclusion of the more marginalized members of the community. Infact, the initial interaction and environment building must be devoted the maximum amount of time in the entire process for it to become a people's process.
- ***Heterogeneous character of the urban areas:*** The process of Area Sabha formation posed various difficulties in the selected wards, owing to the heterogeneity by the people in terms of their income levels, social backgrounds, cultural beliefs etc. A few of them have well constructed houses with good toilet facilities, whereas the rest reside in houses with no toilet or drainage facilities. Thus, in accordance to their living standards and lifestyles they have differences in the basic services available to them, the services that they want to improve and also, sometimes there is a marked difference in the services they need. The binding factor for these people was the area they were residing in as any local development would impact all of them in some ways.
- ***Sex Ratio in Area Sabhas:*** The number of women attending the area sabhas was more than the men in most of the meetings. At some places in the sabhas, most of them were unavailable at the time of the meeting, being engaged in their jobs or some other economic / slash income generation activity. Some of the men showed absolute lack of interest in the issues being discussed in the Area Sabhas. Their lack of interest could be attributed to:
 - i. Their faith in the system had diminished considerably (as found mostly in Varanasi).
 - ii. Their previous experience with some other CBO's that had organized people for political gains (the situation found true in Ranchi)

The women in the intervened wards were quite proactive as compared to their male counterparts. They were keenly interested in the issues discussed in the meetings; they turned up in large numbers as they are directly affected with the problems of the water supply and sanitation (they are usually the ones who fetch water from the sources like the community well/pond or the public stand posts). Women were available in majority in most of the places because they were either working from home (in Household industries like the agarbatti / papad) or worked only during morning and evening. Some women were always available as they were not engaged in any external economic activity. In Jaipur, due to the patriarchal setup, there were more men in meetings and as citizen leaders as compared to women.

- ***Inhibition of the ward councillors:*** In a couple of intervention wards, the ward councillors were not very supportive, as they felt threatened by this process and that their powers shall be reduced if people start making their own decisions.

- **Unclear demarcation of polling booth areas:** The Area Sabhas are conducted on the basis of the delineation of the polling booths. But in most of the project cities, this demarcation was either not defined or not clear. As a result, whenever the Area Sabhas were conducted, it was hard to choose – its geographical extent.

Some situations became hard to handle especially, when the people of a neighbourhood were keen to attend such meetings and be a part of them. They often have shown annoyance about the fact that such processes are not taking place in their ward. Citizen leaders helped us to delineate the mohalla or the neighborhood for every area sabha. Under such situations, the Area Sabhas were often conducted in the form of various Mohalla Sabhas within the same ward. Yet there were people from neighboring mohallas and even wards who also wanted to be the part of the process.

- **Organising the people and the sabhas:** Even though the sabhas are held in the interest of the people, a considerable amount of time and effort on campaign, pamphlet distribution and other means of organizing people are adopted to disseminate information about the date when people have to gather for the sabha. Even on the day of the sabha, assembling people for the meeting becomes a rigorous and time-consuming activity, sometimes going from house to house repeatedly.
- **Effects of weather on meetings:** Conduction of Area Sabhas becomes extremely difficult in the hot summers. Even during the monsoons, the date of the meeting gets postponed indefinitely. It has been noticed that early evenings are the best time to conduct these sabhas, especially over the weekends, when people can conveniently attend these meetings in large numbers.

Another significant impact that the weather has on the area sabhas is seen in extreme weather when there is scarcity of water during summers or water logging during monsoons, that limit the people from conducting the meetings in the form of sabhas, rather they are conducted in the form of 'area walks'. People walk to the site of the problem in the wards, have a discussion and try and resolve the issue.

Some other significant positive impacts of the Area Sabhas are given below:

- a) **Widened public spaces:** As excellent platforms for interaction, the sabhas provided spaces to discuss public problems and issues, and people are not only more aware of the problems that exist in their neighbourhoods, they can articulate them better and demand for solutions. They have got a chance to have better face-to-face interactions with their ward councillors and often with the other elected representatives of the ULB and discuss issues with them.
- b) **Interest and eagerness among people of adjacent wards:** As only two wards have been covered in every city, people from neighbouring wards have come and requested PRIA to facilitate similar Area Sabhas in their wards. This kind of ripple effect was extremely positive and helped in scaling up the efforts for effective citizen engagement. In many areas the Citizen Leaders have been facilitated to conduct the area sabhas on their own.

- c) **Sense of responsibility and belongingness:** This whole exercise has helped to develop a sense of responsibility and belongingness among the people towards their neighbourhood. There is more ownership and collective monitoring towards any new services they may procure as a result of these efforts.
- d) **Sense of ownership over the process:** Citizens feel a part of the decision-making and thus become more willing to accept their existing strengths and limitations. They develop the sense that they are fighting for what they deserve and start considering themselves as citizens and political agents. They do not like to be ignorant anymore. They have realized the power of awareness and have become information – hungry.
- e) **Increased accountability and transparency:** In such a participatory governance process, public power is made more visible. It is most visible in the form of creating and disseminating information. Increased transparency and visibility facilitate to simultaneously increase the efficiency of the local government, as illustrated in the case studies in the previous section. This promotes greater trust in the government among citizens and also contributes to the strengthening of democratic institutions.

4.3 Conclusion

There is an increasing recognition of the need to involve citizens in the process of decision-making. It has now become an integral part and a major contributory factor in the progress towards sustainable development of a nation, as it requires cooperation, consensus and the participation of all actors in society including civil society. Without such active involvement, it is not be possible to bring about the kinds of societal change needed to make a real difference. *The challenge for the CSOs, like PRIA, is to learn how to transfer its knowledge to the population and enhance citizen engagement.*

Thus, it is important to have a clear view on the concepts and practices of participation and citizenship. Whenever, an organization is involved in strengthening these spaces for participation, it becomes important to note the nature of interaction between citizens and governments and explore mechanisms of enhancing it while keeping in mind the existing barriers to such participation.

In conclusion, it is also important to mention that having a law or legislation is not enough unless there is a clear road map for the implementation of the legislation in all the diverse contexts that our country presents. The civil society is now a force to reckon but scattered interventions by different organizations result in small successes and stories of best practices. This will not change unless the government and civil society become partners in the process of including citizens in governance. The civil society needs government support to scale-up such efforts for larger impacts and the government needs to acknowledge and use the experiences and learning that CSOs have gathered through years of work with people. This is specially needed in the urban domain where such recognition has just started taking place. This Occasional Paper has presented an intervention in progress where all the three: citizens, government and civil society come together to make positive change happen.

Annexure 1

Area Sabha Pamphlet

एरिया सभा

सम्माननीय नागरिकों रायपुर शहर जवाहर लाल नेहरू शहरी नवीनीकरण मिशन के तहत चयनित शहरों में से एक शहर है, जहां समुदाय सहभागिता कानून के तहत एरिया सभा एवं वार्ड समिति का गठन किया जाना है।

क्या हैं एरिया सभा ?

- एरिया सभा वार्ड के अंतर्गत आने वाले विभिन्न मतदान केन्द्रों में से एक या दो मतदान केन्द्रों की सीमाओं को मिलाकर बनाई जाती है।
- नगरीय निकाय चुनाव घोषित होने के चार सप्ताह बाद वार्ड के प्रत्येक एरिया से एरिया सभा प्रतिनिधि का चुनाव किया जाता है।
- मतदान केन्द्र के सभी मतदाता एरिया सभा के सदस्य होते हैं।
- एरिया सभा प्रतिनिधि वार्ड समिति का सदस्य होता है एवं पार्श्व वार्ड समिति का अध्यक्ष होता है।
- एरिया सभा का कार्यकाल नगर निकाय के कार्यकाल जितना ही होता है।



क्या है एरिया सभा के कार्य ?

- अपने एरिया सभा के दायरे में आने वाले विकास संबंधित प्रस्तावों को आमंत्रित करना तथा प्राथमिकता तय कर वार्ड समिति को भेजना।
- कल्याणकारी योजनाओं के क्रियान्वयन के लिए सही लाभको का चयन करना।
- प्रकाश, पानी, नल, कुंआ, आदि नागरिक सुविधा अपने एरिया सभा के एरिया में कहां देना है इस संबंध में सुझाव देना।
- एरिया में मौजूदा पानी एवं स्ट्रीट लाईट संबंधी सुविधाओं की कमियां ढुंढना एवं इस संबंध में पर्याप्त जानकारी देना।
- एरिया में टैक्स मैपिंग में मदद करना एवं टैक्स भुगतान करने के लिए लोगों को प्रोत्साहित करना।

कब होती है एरिया सभा की बैठक ?

- एरिया सभा गठन के बाद प्रत्येक तीन महीने में एरिया सभा की बैठक होती है।

अतः आप अपने एरिया के जिम्मेदार नागरिक होने के नाते एरिया सभा की बैठक में भाग लेकर अपने एरिया के विकास में सक्रिय भागीदारी निभायें।

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