

Civil Society Manifesto for Lok Sabha Elections

The Election Commission of India has declared that the elections to the Lok Sabha will be held in May 2014. As usual most of the political parties will come out with grand manifesto promising several things to the voters, including freebies in the form of free power, laptops, computers, food grains at throw away prices etc. In the recent years several stakeholders like trade unions, industry organisations, professionals and economists have been preparing their own list of demands in the form of manifesto and submitting it to political parties. This is one form of advocacy to pressurize political parties. However not many civil society organisations [CSOs] have been able to come together and frame a manifesto on common issues acceptable to all political parties. With a view to forge an alliance among the CSOs, CIVIC has taken the initiative to mobilize civil society organisations [CSOs] in framing a 'Civil Society Manifesto' and submitting it to political parties. The Civil Society Forum [CSF] has been launched for this purpose.

The CSF is a network of eighteen Non-Governmental and Community Based Organisations, formed a year ago with the purpose of raising important issues related to citizens and the marginalized sections of the society, often neglected by the political parties. The CSF held a series of meetings with stakeholders, took their inputs and drafted the Civil Society Manifesto [CSM]. An interface meeting with representatives of major political parties was held on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2014 at SCM House, Mission Road, Bangalore, to discuss, deliberate and submit the CSM to the political parties. The other object of the meeting was to pressurize the political parties to include the CSM as part of their party's manifesto.

The interface meeting commenced with a brief introduction about the CSF, CSM and the objects of the meeting by Ms.Kathyayini, Executive Trustee of CIVIC. Taking an exception to the style of the functioning of political parties, she said that all these years the political parties have failed the common people. She said that things have come to such a stage that citizens cannot tolerate the neglect of development issues by political parties. Hence the CSF has been formed to raise the voice of the citizens, more particularly the Dalits, Women and tribal people. Four representatives of political parties namely, Mr.Ramakrishna of BJP, Ms.Nina Nayak of AAP, Mr.Nagaraj from CPI, and Mr.Devadas from CPI (M) responded to the invitation and were able to express their views. Later on Mr.Raju Gowda of Cong-I also joined the meeting.

Ms.Nina Nayak of the AAP said that since the Centre is not interested in utilizing the available budget, development projects and social sector is lagging behind. Commenting on malnutrition among children, she said that every year 60000 children die due to malnutrition. Ms.Nina Nayak lamented on the presence of corruption and called for a change to curtail corruption. Answering to a query by Mr.Nagraj of CPI about AAP's view on privatization, she said that the Government cannot take up all works and requires the support of private sector. However she said that she will take up the points contained in the CSM with the AAP.

Mr.Manoj Rai of the Participatory Research in Asia [PRIA], New Delhi, presented his views about neglect of urban governance by successive political parties. Mr.Raju Gowda of the Congress said that he was glad that the CSOs have come forward to frame a citizens manifesto and said that his party is already working for the welfare of the marginalized communities. He said electoral reforms were one of the major issues that he will take up. He said that Foreign Direct Investment [FDI] is a necessity in the present context. However Mr.Raju Gowda said that there was no move to privatise water supply.

Mr.Ramakrishna of the BJP said that he is from the voluntary sector and his party has taken steps to understand the requirements of the people. He said that the BJP has deployed party workers to collect opinions of the citizens and was happy to note that it received more than one lakh responses. Mr.Ramakrishna said that BJP always opposed FDI and said that the party is preparing 2030 vision which will be a guide to the BJP's future work. He suggested that this sort of dialogue between NGOs and political party's should be held regularly and not merely at the time of elections.

Mr.Babu of Janata Dal questioned the necessity of manifesto when political parties that come to power do not adhere to the promises made. He cited the example of a public interest litigation filed in Tamil Nadu questioning the failure of the political parties in delivering the promises made in the manifesto. He said political parties should implement at least 50% of what is promised in the manifesto. Mr.Nagraj of CPI spoke and said that none of the speakers have read the CSM in full. He asked the participants to compare the CSM and the manifesto released by political parties. He was skeptical about implementation of the manifesto. Mr.Nagraj said that his party is against privatization and liberalization policies and quoted other countries to buttress his views. Mr.Devadoss of the CPI said that his party will fight exploitation and agreed to all the points raised in the CSM. Expressing his views about electoral reforms, he said that there is a need for proportional representation instead of the present first-past-the-post system.

The meeting was chaired by Dr.Ambrose Pinto and Mr.Lingappa of APD proposed a vote of thanks.

## CIVIC Survey reveals pathetic conditions of Anganwadis

The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme, a Centrally Sponsored Scheme, was launched in 1975 on a pilot basis keeping in view the need to holistically address health, nutrition and education needs of children. The ICDS Scheme was introduced as a collaborative initiative of the Government of India, State Governments and the community. The ICDS has expanded tremendously over its four of operation to cover all Development Blocks and major slums in the country. ICDS is the world's largest community based outreach programme which offers a package of health, nutrition and education services to children below 6 years and pregnant and nursing mothers.



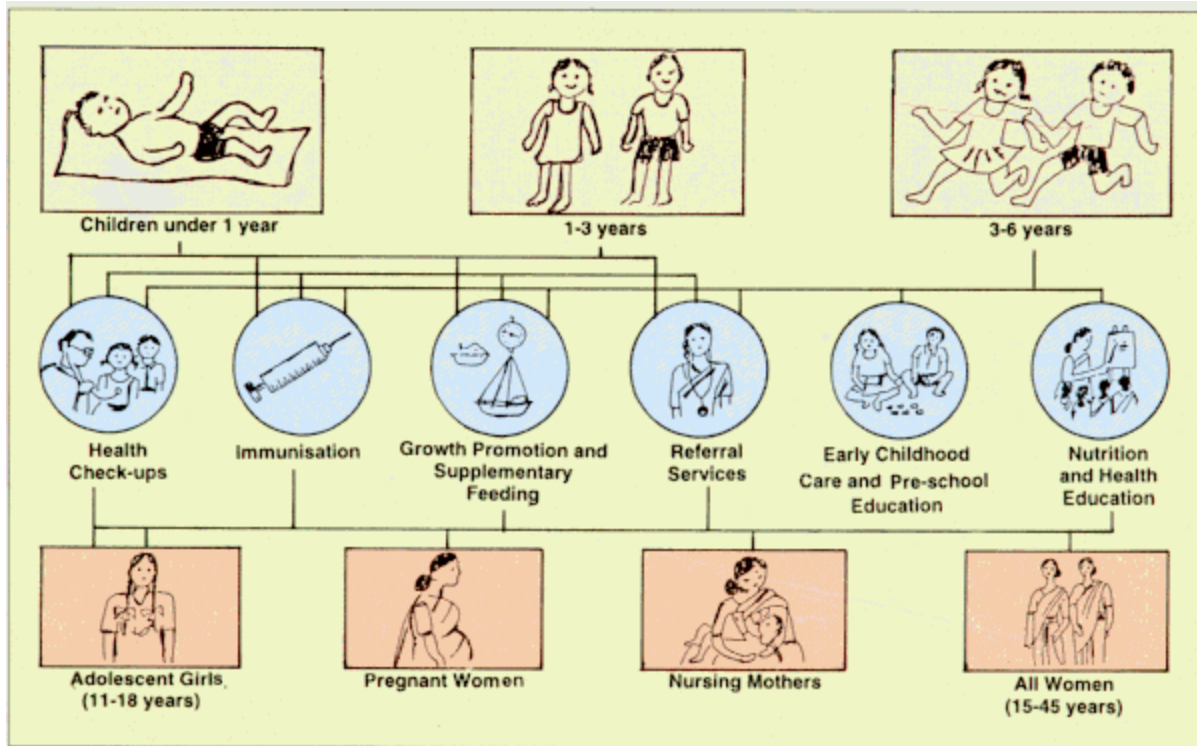
But after four decades the status of anganwadis is pathetic. Can you imagine that in the Silicon Valley of Bengaluru, out of 15 anganwadis, 12 have no toilets and none of them have drinking water facilities? Some of the anganwadis do not have basic information about the number of children in its jurisdiction. These are some of the findings of a pilot survey conducted by CIVIC during March 2014. The object of the survey was to assess the ground realities of the anganwadis, particularly the status of infrastructural facilities in the anganwadis.

CIVIC surveyed 15 anganwadis in eleven slums of four wards [See box]. The survey has revealed that anganwadis do not have basic information about the number of children in its jurisdiction. Only one ward [Nagawara] could provide the numbers.

<b>Details of Survey</b>		
<b>Name of the Ward</b>	<b>Number of Slums</b>	<b>Number of Anganwadis</b>
<b>Nagawara</b>	3	6
<b>A.Narayanapura</b>	4	2
<b>Azadnagara</b>	3	6
<b>Doddnekkundi</b>	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>15</b>

The other three wards namely A.Narayanapura, Azadnagara and Doddnekkundi do not have information In Nagawara ward there are six anganwadis and out of 601

children who are in the age of 0-6 only 179 [86 female and 93 male] are using the anganwadi facilities. This means that only 30% children attend anganwadi. The number of children using anganwadis in A.Narayanapura is 84, Azadnagar is 124 and Doddnekkundi it is 36.



Forget about toilet and water, these anganwadis do not even have proper buildings and LPG cylinder for cooking purposes. Out of 15 anganwadis, 7 have been provided building by the BBMP and 8 are functioning in rented accommodations. In 11 anganwadis cooking gas was available and four anganwadis lacked these basic requirements. Only two anganwadis had name boards and black boards. The scheme provides that children are to be provided with toys and other play things.

Twelve anganwadis did not have any toys and in two anganwadis toys were not used though available. The poor conditions of the anganwadis can be gauged from the fact that six of the 15 surveyed did not have mats for children to sit. The foodstuff supplied to the anganwadis are to be preserved in boxes so that it is wholesome and does not lose its nutrition. Anganwadis are supposed to be provided with facilities for storing the food. None of the 15 anganwadis surveyed had this facility. Bala Vikasa Samithis were constituted in 12 anganwadis and self help groups were found only in four anganwadis.

## Information gaps in Fair Price Shops

A brief survey of the nine Fair Price Shops [FPS] in 11 slums spread across four Wards in Bengaluru has revealed that the Citizens' Charters issued by the Department of Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs of Government of Karnataka are more on paper than in practice. CIVIC visited nine FPS [See table] during March 2014 and found that none of these outlets complied with the requirements of displaying information.

<b>Details of FPS visited</b>		
<b>Name of the Ward</b>	<b>Number of Slums</b>	<b>Number of FPS</b>
<b>Nagawara</b>	3	1
<b>A.Narayanapura</b>	4	2
<b>Azadnagara</b>	3	5
<b>Doddnekkundi</b>	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>9</b>

The FPS are required to display information relating to the categories of ration card holders, stock position, timings of the FPS, the name and address of the officer incharge for handling the grievances etc. None of the nine FPS displayed the list of BPL and Anthyodaya beneficiaries. Similarly none of the FPS visited by the CIVIC team had displayed the retail issue price of commodities. However six FPS did display information about the entitlement of the ration card holders i.e. the quantity of essential commodities for specific ration cards.

It is mandatory for each of the FPS to display the details of the stock of essential commodities received, distributed and balance available. Only two FPS had full details notified in the notice boards. The Department has constituted Vigilance Committees consisting of five ration card holders in each of the FPS. The rules require the FPS to display the name and address of these members on its notice board. Out of nine, only two FPS had displayed this information. Similarly only seven FPS displayed the timings of the FPS.



The department has put in place a scheme for redressal of grievances of the FPS users. The first point for grievance redressal is the owner of the FPS and the Vigilance Committee members. Finally it is the official incharge of the FPS. The department has a toll free telephone number and a consumer helpline. The details of these numbers are to

be displayed by the FPS. None of the nine FPS surveyed had the details of grievance redressal mechanism. The toll free telephone number was displayed only in three FPS. Only one FPS displayed the name and address of the official.

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### CIVIC Activities/Events

CIVIC has been organizing various events on its own and in collaboration with other civil society organisations, government departments etc. Besides, members/staff of CIVIC is also attending programs conducted by other organisations. Some of the events organized by CIVIC during January - March 2014 are highlighted below:

- A workshop on 'Electricity Governance and Planning in Karnataka' was held at Shikshakara Sadana, on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2014 in collaboration with Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru. Mr.Pankaj Kumar Pandey, Managing Director, BESCOM inaugurated the workshop. The object of the workshop was to present the findings of the study on electricity planning in Karnataka conducted by IISC and CIVIC. Ms.Anjula Gurtu of IISC made the presentations.
- CIVIC in collaboration with other civil society organisations had prepared the Civil Society Forum's Manifesto for Lok Sabha Elections. The manifesto was presented to the political leaders in a meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2014. The event was held at SCM House, Bengaluru.
- An interactive meeting with Mr.Nikhil Dey of the National Campaign for Peoples' Right to Information was held on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2014 at Ashirwad, Bengaluru.

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### Forthcoming events

Capacity building workshop on Public Service Guarantee Act [Sakala], Right to Information Act and Citizen Advocacy on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2013.

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