

Vote Bengaluru – Launch programme on 8th Dec 2007 by Mr. Seshan T. N.

A Report :

Vote Bengaluru Campaign – a joint venture among CAF, CIVIC, KKNSS, PAC and SWABHIMANA – was launched by Mr. T N Seshan, former Chief Election Commissioner, Government of India in the presence of Smt. Ruth Manorama, Chairperson, Women’s Voices and Sri. Ramasheshan, Chief Electoral Officer, Karnataka, on 8th December 2007 at Yavanika Auditorium, Nrupatunga Road, Bangalore.

It was attended by 275 persons from various RWAs, Federations and NGOs. The media was present in large number and gave a pretty accurate and wide coverage for the event in their 9th December edition. Though 2 TV teams had come from Udaya and TV9, we have no ideas whether they were telecast.

The major points brought by Mr. T N Seshan, both during his talk and the subsequent open house were as follows:

1. Registration of ones name in the voters list must be made mandatory for acquiring ration card, passport etc.
2. Government funding of election expenses can check poll corruption
3. The need to rope in youth into the polling processs
4. Introduction of on line registration system
5. Disqualifying any candidate if he crosses over to another party after getting elected
6. It is undemocratic to make voting mandatory.
7. More than seminars, action is more imperative
8. No need for prescribing minimum educational qualification for aspiring candidates

He wished the campaign all success and he was appreciative of the efforts of the combine.

Ms. Ruth Manorama spoke about the need to include more and more women in these efforts and the poll process. She further lamented the corrupt practices and called upon us to tackle this menace. She offered her support and involvement in our campaign.

Sri Ramasheshan discussed the challenges faced by the EC in preparing the rolls and mentioned that they are proposing to use GIS mapping, on line registration and joint effort with local communities to create awareness etc

The participation by the RWAs and citizens exceeded our wildest expectations and their presence in large numbers was proof enough for the fact that the citizens will get involved if the right issues are taken up and a proper follow up action is initiated. It is now our responsibility to not only maintain the momentum generated by this campaign

but channelising the same into various streams of action to achieve the desired goals of our campaign.

Some of the actions that we have to initiate immediately are:

1. Create a ward wise action group throughout the city for cleaning up the electoral rolls. It is undoubtedly a massive operation but it is achievable provided we initiate a planned approach involving all the RWAs and the media in the effort.
2. Enlist the involvement and cooperation of the urban poor segment to minimize the role of vote bank and corrupting poll practices and usher in issued based politics.
3. Involve the citizens at the individual polling booth level by forming watch dog committees to identify local issues, citizens candidates (wherever feasible) or follow up with the contesting candidates, arrange for interactive sessions and getting them to commit to work as per the citizens charter.
4. During election time start an awareness programme and create an intense awareness among the citizens about the entire polling process to ultimately bring them to the polling booth to exercise their franchise.
5. Start a youth and women oriented action plan with the objective of involving these groups in the polling process.
6. Rope in more number of RWAs, NGOs and prominent citizens to make this campaign broad based and all inclusive and which should ultimately take up all citizen centric issues and shift the entire focus back to the citizens,.
7. A quarterly POA with clearly defined objectives and outcomes should be drawn up for Jan – March 2008
8. Any further suggestions can be discussed in the Tuesday meeting.

The response to the seminar was very heartwarming as 274 persons have registered their names and out of this 161 pledge cards were received and 112 badges were sold. It was very much beyond our most optimistic expectations and it is now left to us to make the most of it.