
Civil Society Forum's Manifesto for Lok Sabha Elections – May 2014

Secretariat:



(Regd., Public Charitable Trust No 599 / 94--95 IV)

#6, Kasturi Apts, 2nd floor, No.35/23, Langford Road Cross, Shanthi Nagar, Bangalore 560025

Telefax: 080-41144126, E-mail: info@civicspace.in, Internet: www.civicspace.in

Contents	Page No.
To all political parties	5
Corruption	5
Liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation	6
Neglect of basic needs and human development	6
Electoral reforms	7
Poverty line	7
Land and livelihood issues	8
Labour rights	8
Migration	9
Human rights	9
Bonded labour	10
Homelessness	10
Decentralisation	11
Right to housing	12
Right to food	13
Right to water	13
Right to education	14
Right to health	15
Women's development	15
Children's issues	16
Child protection	16
Children's nutrition	17
Child Labour	17
Children's right to participation	18
Adolescents and Youth	18
Dalits	18
Rights and welfare of forest-based tribals	19
Issues of the differently-abled	19
Protection of environment and sustainability	20
Conclusion	20
List of participating organizations / individuals	21

Civil Society Forum's Manifesto for Lok Sabha Elections – May 2014

To all political parties:

We, the civil society groups as well as a few individuals from different sectors of urban and rural constituencies from Karnataka met in Bangalore several times to discuss on the civil, socio-economic and political situation of the nation in view of the forthcoming Lok Sabha election.

Our desire is to make a difference to the politics of the country by actively engaging in the perspective building of political manifestos in the coming elections of the Lok Sabha and later aim at working with the government and its agencies in shaping the governance structures.

The recommendations that have been raised have been taken from critically viewing the last ten years as well as the development of the country in the past years.

We herewith request you to include our following demands in your manifestos for the coming Lok Sabha elections in May 2014. Once you are elected to the Lok Sabha, whenever you get an opportunity to participate in constitutional bodies and take decisions regarding the development of the country, we request you to include our demands and take decisions in favour of them.

Key overall concerns

Corruption

Key concerns

Democracy, as envisaged in the Constitution stands vitiated in the nation in the current political scenario since many years. People's representatives at all levels, abdicating their constitutional obligations, are engaged in massive corruption resulting in unequal distribution of resources - that leads to pauperization of the masses. The nation has witnessed large-scale scams for the benefit of private, foreign and crony capitalists and the looting of natural resources. These undemocratic processes are shaking the very foundations of democracy in the country. No attempt is being made to recover the trillions of dollars stashed away in foreign banks and tax havens which could wipe out the entire foreign debt of the country and the current account deficit.

Key demands

- *An effective Lok Pal and Lok Ayuktas in states should be created who have true autonomy to file cases without seeking sanctions, investigate and prosecute those indulging in corruption and maladministration.
- *Measures should be undertaken to recover the unaccounted, illegal money that is stashed away in foreign havens.
- *All kinds of major and minor mineral mining should be nationalised immediately to save natural mineral deposits for next generations to come. State and local governments and communities should have a say in the decisions regarding all such projects.
- Avenues for people's participation at all levels of governance to make governance transparent and hold officials accountable should be created.

- Comprehensive framework for grievance redressal and accountability needed, including the passage of the Grievance Redress Bill.

Liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation

Key concerns

The mantra of LPG (liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation), propagated by the global financial institutions like World Bank and IMF have brought in neo-colonial hegemony by giant corporates and MNCs and driven local farmers to suicide and led to destitution of small-scale producers and industries. It has resulted in abdication of the state's responsibility and large-scale privatisation of the essential government services of water supply, health, education, etc. FDI results in greater outflow of funds as profit to MNCs and other investors than it results in inflow of foreign exchange.

Key demands

- *FDI should not be encouraged in India especially in the retail, agriculture, financial sectors and defence which would be dangerous to our national security. FDI in insurance and banking should be stringently regulated and pension funds should be kept out of market linked speculative activities. Indian banks are flush with funds and this is enough to finance all projects.
- *The Central government should scrap forthwith unreasonable subsidies, tax waivers and tax exemptions to corporate and business establishments which do not create additional employment in proportion to the investment made, do not export more than the imports they have made or are making sufficient profits and are not in need of government support. Private educational and health care institutions should be regulated.

Neglect of basic needs and human development

Key concern

The preoccupation with GDP growth as a panacea has led to neglect of basic needs, the social sector and human development.

Key demands

- *All basic rights and entitlements, such as food, water, child care, education, health, employment and social security should be universalised.
- *These should be delivered by the state machinery ensuring universal access, availability and affordability and not privatised. The budgets required for universalising these should be estimated realistically, earmarked and implemented through a law and not merely through schemes or sub-plans.

Electoral reforms

Key concerns

The corporate lobbies in various sectors are using their ill-gotten money to fund political parties to buy votes during elections, and then to buy legislators to gain political power. This is resulting in the corporate sector exercising undue influence on policy-makers and is favoured with unreasonable subsidies, tax exemptions and waivers even when it is not generating the promised additional jobs.

The ill-gotten money from corporates is vitiating Indian democracy and has led to the criminalisation, corruption, money, muscle power in the electoral process. Black money has become the source of electoral funding which is used to bribe voters and then recover it manifold during the stint in the government. The other concern is that elections are often being won with as little as 10% of the votes due to the First-Past-the-Post system.

Key demands

- *We demand that the Representation of the People Act should be amended such with criminal records or cases pending against them are to stand for elections and that a fast-track court is set up to try cases against such candidates.
- *We demand that laws be amended to bring in proportional representation so that every person's vote gets counted and various interest groups and marginalised sections get their due representation.
- A law regulating political parties to make them accountable and transparent about their funding should be passed.
- There should be state funding of elections at all levels.

Poverty line

Key concerns

The criteria for determining the poverty line are confused and unrealistic. They do not take into account all the basic needs of the poor and the multiple deprivations they face. The income criteria for BPL, where used, are not indexed to rise in cost of living. Several genuinely poor are hence falling through the gaps.

Key demands

- *Poverty criteria need to be based on the new multi-dimensional concepts of poverty, incorporating locational, social, physical and occupational vulnerabilities and should be indexed to the rise in the cost of living. Where there is a need for fixing a poverty line based on income to establish eligibility for any benefits, this should not be less than the need-based minimum wage level as per the 15th ILC norms calculated by the VI Pay Commission for the Grade IV government workers which was Rs. 350 per day at 2009 prices.

The definition of poverty should not change from one scheme and department to the other. It should be held as a common data-base which is accessed by all departments for identifying the poor for various schemes and benefits.

Agriculture, land and livelihood issues

Key concerns:

The rate at which land and money is being given to SEZs and industries, it is doubtful if any land will be left for agriculture, housing for the poor, etc. Though land is being acquired in the name of SEZs and industries, the real aim of these land acquisitions is real estate. People, mainly tribals and adivasis, are being displaced without proper resettlement and rehabilitation even before these projects take off.

Key Demands:

- *Farmers should get a minimum monthly income guarantee taking into consideration investment and basic needs of farmers' households.
- *No agricultural land, even single-cropped land should be acquired for SEZs, industries, FDI, defence, etc. Only wastelands should be given to industries and infrastructure projects such as airports.
- *Proper resettlement and rehabilitation of those displaced by development projects should precede the acquisition of their land with the prior informed consent of the local communities.

Labour Rights

Key concerns:

Neo-liberal policies have hurt the working class the most. Secure jobs have given way to increased contractualisation and casualisation of workers and increase in the workforce in the unorganised sector. With jobless growth characterising all development, workers' bargaining power has reduced. Minimum wages fixed have no bearing to the cost of living or a worker's basic needs. Casual workers get easily deprived of minimum wages, ESI, PF and other social security measures. With increased migration to urban areas for work, the living conditions of migrants are pathetic. The colonial viewpoint of considering beggary from a criminal angle needs to be given up.

Key demands:

- *All wages should be linked to rise in cost of living index. Minimum wages need to be fixed as per the VI Pay Commission calculation as per 15th Indian Labour Conference to cover all basic needs of a worker and his family which works out to about 350 Rs./worker/day at 2009 prices.
- *In the hiring of workforce for government's basic duties, the state should not engage any kind of contractual or honorary labor.

- The practice of fixing minimum wages sector by sector should be given up and a general minimum wage for unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled work fixed for all sectors.
- Working conditions based on core labour standards regarding working hours, rest day, leave, overtime, safety at workplace, freedom of association and collective bargaining, freedom from exploitation, social security, etc., need to be uniformly set for all sectors.
- *There is a need to rationalise, integrate and re-design the several splintered social security schemes for the unorganised which have limited coverage, varying eligibility criteria, nature and quantum of benefits. All nine benefits delineated in the ILO Convention on Social Security need to be made accessible to all workers in the unorganised sector in a decentralised area-based approach through workers' facilitation centres.
- The colonial law on beggary needs to be repealed which criminalises it.

Migration

Key concerns

The current development trajectory of jobless growth, large displacements due to development projects, natural disasters, etc., have resulted in increasing levels of forced inter and intra-state migration, as people move in search of livelihoods as a response to mega development projects or to escape violence or natural disaster, inequitable distribution of resources, services and opportunities; and, the further marginalisation of the poor within rural and urban settings, both.

Key Demands

- *The state should bring in policy measures to curb distress migration, like effective implementation of employment guarantee and other schemes.
- *A renewed commitment to address the issues and aspirations of the poor and displaced needs to be made in concrete terms. They need to be assured basic services and other support, such as access to decent wages and shelter, in order for them to realise their potential and live with dignity.
- *Measures to provide them with an identity card and the right to vote from wherever they are currently located should be implemented. Strict enforcement of the Inter-State Migrant Workmen's Act has to be insisted upon. Intra-state migrants should also be provided with the same facilities as envisaged for Inter-State migrants.
- Onus to ensure the education of school-age children either at the source of migration or destination should be placed on the contractor.

Human rights

Key concerns:

- All Human Rights Institutions/Commission and the women's, children's and minorities' commissions are weak and dependent on the parent departments for their funding. Their constitution is political in nature and not diverse and their recommendations are not binding on the government.

- Right activists, defenders and whistle blowers are being targeted and eliminated systematically by the state and non-state actors.
- Police reforms as per Supreme Court directives in the Prakash Singh case need to be effectively implemented by all States. There is a requirement for the police force to be proactive towards women and other marginalised communities. More women, marginalised and minorities should be represented in the police force.

Key Demands

- *Human Rights Institutions/Commissions should be strengthened and headed by persons from judicial backgrounds and made independent of departments for their resources. There should be mandatory and adequate representation from civil society/activists from among women's groups, SC/STs, disability organisations and other marginalised on these bodies. Their recommendations should be made binding on the government.
- *All other Human Rights Conventions, such as UNCRC, CEDAW, UNCRPD, should be included in the definition of human rights by making suitable amendments to the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993, and reservation placed on key articles should be withdrawn.
- FIRs with regard to human rights violations to be registered within 24 hours and police/AHTUs to be made accountable for investigations and action.
- Police reforms should be implemented as per SC guidelines as in Prakash Singh's case.
- UID scheme to be revoked till constitutional validity is granted.
- Freedom of press and media to be safeguarded. Unnecessary cases and harassment of media to be curbed at the earliest.
- Repeal Sec.377 to protect the human rights of sexuality minorities.
- Communal Violence Bill which is still pending in the parliament to be passed.
- Abolition of death penalty through ratifying the Opt. 2 of ICCPR (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights).
- Human Rights education to be included in regular curricula in school and colleges. To be made mandatory for state officials attached to the state.
- Paris Principles to be followed (in relation to setting up of IHRIs)
- Armed Forces Special Powers Act and Disturbed Areas Act to be repealed.
- Approach of the government towards addressing Maoist insurgency to be re-looked into and viewed from a lack of development viewpoint in those regions.
- FCRA - India is a democratic republic. Therefore, everyone has a right to be part of the political process. Curbs on effective functioning of Civil Society Groups through draconian FCRA provisions to be removed, which is an onslaught on people's right to organize, freedom of speech, and freedom of association.

Bonded labour

Key concerns

- The Bonded Labour (Abolition) Act, 1976 (BLA) has been underutilized resulting in continued perpetration of the crime of bonded labour, resulting in human right abuse,

loss of wage and loss of freedom for the mainly SC/ST communities who migrate from one state to work in another state.

- There is lack of accountability of the District Magistrate and his delegated subordinates who have the duty to abolish Bonded Labour in their respective jurisdictions.
- Most of the bonded labourers are being trafficked and exploited.

Key demands

- *A permanent inspection machinery should be there, for example with labour inspectors, vigilance committee members and other ground-level officials, to continuously monitor and identify bonded labour with duty to immediately report instances to the District Magistrate. District Magistrates and their subordinates should to be held accountable for immediate rescue of these victims, arrest of perpetrators, time-bound disbursement of immediate relief, compensation and rehabilitation of victims. Under the guidelines of Ministry of Home Affairs, the State Anti-Human Trafficking Units is to respond immediately to complaints of trafficking for labour by rescuing victims, filing of FIR and arresting perpetrators as per Section 370 of IPC, Criminal Amendment Act, 2013.
- *Amend the Immoral Traffic Prevention Act to expand the definition and include trafficking for child labour, bonded labour, organ transplantation, child pornography, paedophilia, child sexual abuse and trafficking in the name of religious sanction (devadasi system), etc. Establish CWCs and JJBs in every district to monitor and track child abuse and ensure their independence, transparency, accountability and effective functioning in the best interest of the child.

Homelessness

Key Concerns

- Homeless people in our cities virtually are non-citizens forced to live and sleep each night under the open sky braving the bitter winter cold, the merciless summer heat and the deluge of the monsoons. The largest majority of homeless people sleep on pavements and sidewalks, under ledges of shops and homes, in market corridors, at bus-stands and railways stations, and outside places of worship, often in daily danger to their lives from rash and drunken drivers.
- Needless to add these populations do not possess any legal documents including election cards or ration cards and do not have access to proper health and educational opportunities or to the benefits of social assistance programs such as old age pensions, widow pensions, maternal benefits, etc.

Key demands

- *The National Programme for Shelter and other Services for Urban Homeless is now a component of NULM which incorporates the NAC recommendations viz. every one lakh urban population to have at least one permanent and well equipped all weather shelter for 100 persons or two with capacity for 50 persons, all necessary infrastructural facilities to be put in place, location of shelter to be close to the concentration of homeless persons and their work places etc.

- The guidelines should reach the concerned city corporations immediately and be strictly implemented. Guidelines to issue identity cards to access government welfare schemes should be issued to the state governments.
- As per NAC recommendations, the homeless and evicted people should be given RAY houses on priority basis.

Decentralisation

Key concerns:

Article 243G of the Constitution visualizes panchayats/urban local bodies (ULBs) as institutions of self-governance and to prepare, plan and implement schemes for economic development and social justice including those in relation to matters listed in the Eleventh & Twelfth Schedule of the Constitution. However, this seems to be far from reality as devolution of all 3 Fs – Funds, Functions and Functionaries has not happened to the Grama Panchayats/ULBs to the fullest extent.

However, giving due consideration to the federal structure of our polity, most of the financial powers and authorities to be endowed on panchayats have been left at the discretion of concerned state legislatures. These provisions combine representative and direct democracy into a synergy and are expected to result in an extension and deepening of democracy in India.

Panchayats/ULBs have a vital role to play in the welfare and development of the weaker sections of the society viz., women, SCs and STs. Greater representation of marginalised sections at these levels has enhanced their voice in these bodies thus paving the way for ensuring inclusive governance which is critical to inclusive growth. Currently the freedom to plan their own development is being denied to PRIs/ULBs through executive orders and guidelines from both the State and Centre on projects, schemes, missions and tied funds.

Key demands:

- *All the subjects along with the 3Fs must be transferred to the Panchayath Raj Institutions/ULBs based on the Principle of Subsidiarity (which means that what is best done at the lower levels of government should not be centralized at higher levels). This shall enable effective financial and administrative empowerment of Panchayat Raj Institutions/ULBs in the country.
- *The institution of the Gram Sabha/Ward Sabha and District Planning Committees need to be strengthened to enable people's role in planning policies and development projects, and evaluate the performance of elected and Government functionaries. Fiscal decentralisation of PRIs/ULBs should be ensured through allocation of untied funds.
- In order to ensure transparency, accountability and credibility in PRIs/ULBs there is a need for an appropriate social audit system and incorporating gender concern through gender budgeting at the Panchayat/ULB level.

Right to Housing

Key concerns

With urban land prices having risen incredibly, lands where slums are situated are being eyed by builders. The guidelines of Rajiv Awas Yojana (RAY) have been so diluted that the original spirit of having slum-dwellers' participation and legal right to land has been completely given up. The much-maligned Slum Rehabilitation Authority's (SRA) model of handing over 50% or more of the land on which slums are situated at throw-away prices to commercial, profit-driven developers has been brought back. Slum-dwellers are being evicted from prime lands to the outer periphery of cities without their consent thus depriving them of their right to life, shelter and livelihood.

RAY Guidelines make it mandatory for all States to pass laws to reserve land in all public and private housing layouts and master-plans for the EWS and LIG and also provide Property Right to Slum-dwellers

Key demands

- *The SRA model and forced evictions without prior informed consent should stop and the entire land occupied by slum-dwellers should be handed over to them to build houses on their own with guidance in designing and planning to make them liveable habitats. We demand that community participation be done mandatorily from the planning stage itself.
- *States should pass the law on Property Rights to Slum-Dwellers immediately after putting it in public domain and consulting the public and slum-dwellers' federations on it.
- Centre should not approve DPRs or release money to States under RAY as long as the mandatory laws have not been passed in conformity with the guidelines and communities have not been involved in the planning.

Right to Food

Key concerns

At a time when the government's godowns are full with about 60 million tonnes of food grains and several tonnes of it are rotting in the open without adequate storage space, the government, through its National Food Security Bill has reduced even the meagre quantities of food grains being doled out through the PDS in violation of the SC directive that at least 35 kg of food grains should be given per month per family. Worse, it is intending to provide cash transfers instead of food grains. This will only worsen the current poor nutritional status in the country and also disincentivise the growing of food crops by farmers, threatening the food security of the entire nation. It will reduce the support being provided to farmers through the procurement of food grains at minimum support prices and further impoverish them. Corporatisation of agriculture and emphasis on cash crops and GM foods is threatening our food security.

Key demands

- *The PDS should be universalised in the National Food Security Act to reduce exclusion errors. Those who wish to avail themselves of the PDS should get self-selected as in the MGNREGA.
- * As per the National Nutrition Policy and as per ICMR, each person should be entitled to 14 kgs food grains per month per person or 50 kgs per family; 800 grams of oil per person month or 2.8 kgs per family; 1.5kg pulses per head per month or 5.25 kgs per month per family.
- Alternatively, near universalisation should be strived for by setting clear and unambiguous criteria for exclusion of persons such as income tax payees and those with regular government jobs.
- As far as possible, all food items should be locally procured, stored and distributed, with preference to local varieties and local eating habits of people to maximum extent possible. The State should refrain from covertly or overtly encouraging corporatisation of agriculture and GM foods.

Right to water

Key concerns:

The United Nations General Assembly, in 2010 has adopted a resolution declaring Right to water and sanitation as 'human rights'. The Supreme Court has held that Article 21 of the Constitution includes the right of citizens to Water and Sanitation. We endorse this and maintain that any proposal to privatise water is unconstitutional. Primary aim of private water lobbies is to turn water into a commodity and make profits out of it.

Key demands:

Water supply

- *Immediate steps should be taken to stop the process of privatisation of water supply and depletion of ground water
- *Rejuvenate all kinds of water resources to answer the shortage of water. Licences of national and international MNCs should not be renewed

Right to education

Key concerns

- Equitable common schooling should be the primary objective of the state policy. Formal education is the right of every child and it is the state's obligation to enable all children to be enrolled, retained and complete their learning by providing qualitative, contextual and appropriate education which addresses the requirements of children with special needs, from differing social backgrounds, and in difficult circumstances such as migrant, working and children within juvenile justice systems.

- Lakhs of children still drop out before completing eight years of compulsory education. There are no mandatory protocols to be followed by officials for retaining them in schools by assisting their parents to send their children to school or by putting the children in free government hostels or residential schools.
- Children completing compulsory education of eight years find themselves ineligible for skill training or employment as most of these require minimum education up to Class X (SSLC).
- Tampering of history in text-books and curricula should be prohibited.

Key demands

- *State should ensure a common schooling system to bring about a just and equitable education system and society.
- *Proper protocols should be developed to ensure retention of all children, especially SC/STs, girls, children with special needs (CWSN) and minorities facing economic, social and cultural barriers, and officials not following these should be held accountable for every drop-out child and penalised.
- *Enhanced conditional monthly scholarships, assistance to parents or lump-sum amounts at the end of compulsory education should be given to all vulnerable children, especially SC/STs CWSN and girls, to off-set the opportunity cost of child labour and to enable all children to attend schools. All children failing to attend school despite enhanced scholarship, etc. should be placed in free government hostels or residential schools.
- Increase the age of free and compulsory education to 16 (Class X) and gradually to 18 (Class XII).
- Secondary education from the age of 15 to 18 years should be compulsory in either of two streams, academic or vocational, based upon the best interest of the child.

Right to Health

Key concerns

- Health is a fundamental human right. But the nation's spending on health continues to be around 1% of GDP. Despite the fact that out-of-pocket expenditure for health has reached catastrophic proportions, the Centre continues to push several privatization strategies in the name of improving efficiency and quality of health care even though there is evidence that these policies are pushing people to the mercy of market forces thereby leading to further impoverishment and destitution.

Key demands

- *We endorse the concept of Universal Access to Health Care that ensures free, just, equitable, quality health care (preventive, protective, curative, rehabilitative) to ALL citizens where the State is the primary provider and regulator of all health care services, thereby fulfilling its Constitutional mandate of ensuring and protecting the health care rights and

entitlements of all citizens.

- Primary, secondary and tertiary care should be linked through a robust referral system ensuring continuum of care.
- Free, essential, generic medicines to be provided to all citizens in all public health institutions.

Women's development

Key concerns

Acknowledging that women are 50% of our population and that no development can be meaningful without their active, informed and fearless participation, the safety and empowerment of women and girls is a priority. This will be enabled by creating an environment that respects and protects women and girls; provisions their active participation and consultation in political spaces and while drafting policies and laws; provides them with access to educational and skill development opportunities; panchayat/ward centres for training in self defence; mechanisms for speedy redressal of grievances and complaints regarding the violation of their rights; swift action against offenders; and by setting good examples.

There are enough laws to protect the interests / safety of people (especially women and children) in the state, but there is no proper mechanism to implement and monitor those laws. Government should work towards this aspect on priority basis.

Key demands:

- *Anti-Sexual Harassment in the Workplace Act and Protection of Women against Domestic Violence Act should be implemented strictly and the sexual harassment complaints committee set up in all workplaces where women work as mandated under Vishaka Judgment of Supreme Court of India.
- *We demand the immediate passing of the 33% Reservation Bill for women in Assemblies and Parliament and which should be increased to 50%.
- We demand that fairer access should be provided to women in productive resources and employment opportunities.
- Fast track courts must be set up and ensure that the cases of violence against girls and women be resolved within two months.
- 50% representation of women in other government structures like judiciary and police at all levels through affirmative action should be there.
- A larger effort to challenge and change patriarchal mindsets and attitudes through incorporation of such material in all school and college curricula, training material for the police, judiciary, bureaucracy should be undertaken through inc the main concern.
- Political parties should also pave way for more participation of women and provide them space to contest elections.
- A one-stop assistance centre should be established at government and private hospitals to assist victims of sexual harassment and women in distress.

- A 24/7 centre to be opened at assist women in police stations. Sahayavani centres in the police stations could be made 24/7.
- Efforts should be made to sensitize police personnel immediately after they take over their duties to enable them to tackle women's issues.

Children's issues

Child protection

Key concerns

- Thousands of children are becoming victims of sex-selective abortions, infanticide, trafficking, bondage, child marriage, devadasi system, physical and sexual abuse. Rampant female foeticide has led to skewed sex ratio.

Key demands:

- Issues concerning sex-selective abortions, infanticide, child marriage, devadasi system, corporal punishment, domestic violence, etc., need to be emphasized so that we have an integrated approach to child protection.
- Awareness needs to be created on POCSO and it should also be implemented effectively.
- Children's courts as envisaged under Commission for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005, need to be set up.
- Bodies set up under the Juvenile Justice Act (JJ Act) need to be strengthened.

Children's nutrition

Key concerns:

Though the country has one of the highest growth rates of GDP in the country, it has the shameful record of a large proportion of children dying of hunger or growing up malnourished. According to statistics of the Women & Child Development Dept. itself, **more than 45%** children are suffering from malnourishment. The ICDS, despite being operational for more than 30 years has hardly made a difference to children. There is a need to strengthen all the services of the ICDS to pregnant and lactating mothers, adolescent girls and children in the 0-6 age group, especially of SC/STs, if the blot of malnourishment has to be ended in the country. We believe that those that are closest to the children concerned are the best suited to provide this service as they have a vested interest to ensure that their children obtain the highest in quality and that cleanliness and hygiene and maintained. There is need to review the quality of the food provided and the delivery mechanism.

Key demands:

- *As per the SC order in the Right to Food case, establish one anganwadi centre/sub-centre 'on demand' for every 400 population wherever there are 40 or more children aged 0-

6, within three months, beginning with the SC/ST hamlets and slums, to universalise the ICDS.

- *Convert anganwadies into full day-care centres for children 0-6 to help all working women and their children. Employ a second anganwadi worker in every anganwadi to take care of 0-3 children. Anganwadi workers' posts should be regularised and they should be paid minimum wages and other social security benefits.
- *Higher allocations for children need to be made in national budgets with special reference to education: 6 % of the GDP and 4%+ for health and an increase in the especially low ones for child development [ICDS, crèches etc.] and protection.
- The responsibility to prepare and distribute food should be restored to Self-Help Groups and Mahila Sanghas in each hamlet/ward as per the Supreme Court order.
- Anganwadi workers who contest elections and get elected should choose one of the two posts if elected.

Child Labour

Key concerns

- There is no coherence between the RTE Act and the Child Labour Act. While RTE Act says all children should be in formal schools, the Child Labour Act has not fixed a minimum age for general employment which corresponds with the age of completion of compulsory education.
- Child labour exists because of sustained poverty that requires the child to work in order for the family to survive. Clearly, therefore, it cannot be removed by simple prohibition. We must take flanking measures to ensure that child labour is no longer necessary in order to supplement the family income. These measures include the protection of vulnerable families; and their access to support and social services. Hence the State Action Plans on Eradication of Child Labour should be reviewed and its appropriateness, rate of success and conformity and compliance with the UNCRC and ILO evaluated and suitably redesigned.

Key demands

*A minimum age for general employment in any sector. including in agriculture, animal husbandry, etc., should be fixed in consonance with the age at which compulsory schooling ends.

*The minimum age for work in occupations listed as hazardous should be raised to 18 from 14.

Children's right to participation

Key concern

- The right to be heard in policy and law building has been widely neglected and violated for children in the age group of 14 and above and young persons above 18 years of age. In the spirit of inter-generational equality the State needs to re-consider its approach to children and youth related matters. Recognising their enormous energy and potential we

feel there is an urgent need to create an environment that nurtures and harnesses their vitality towards a constructive and far-sighted approach to democratic nation building

Key demand

- All policy and law building must be undertaken in a democratic partnership with elected leaders from children's and youth collectives

Adolescents and Youth

Key concerns:

- Children in the age group of 14 and above and young persons above 18 years of age have been falling through the cracks as they are the most neglected by policy and legislation.
- We recognise that only safe and dignified work as apprentices in the vocational stream of education can be a learning arena and that it is important for adolescents to be prepared for the world of work through exposure to skills as a part of formal education.

Key demands:

- *Adequate facilities for vocational training that combine formal education with skill and entrepreneurship training need to be established for adolescents between 15 to 18 years.
- Youth should also be involved in assisting the elected members of Gram Panchayats to collect information related to issues of concern to the Gram Sabhas, conduct surveys and spread information and awareness on important topics of democratic principles that will encourage people's participation and responsible citizenship.

Dalits

Key Concerns:

The Dalit communities (SC/ST) who work in the unorganized sector continue to be oppressed by those more powerful resulting in them losing their freedom, dignity and right to life. Despite the Sub-Plan for SC/STs, benefits are not reaching them and they remain educationally, socially and economically disempowered. Convictions under the SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act have been less than 6%.

Key demands

- *The SC/ST Sub-Plan should be given statutory status by passing Central legislation in this regard, as in Andhra Pradesh. A separate authority should be set up at State level for its effective implementation.
- *SC/STs without land, house, water, anganwadi, health, education and jobs need to be identified and schemes should reach those who are currently deprived of these
- Skill training in arenas where there is demand should be given to SC/ST unemployed SC/ST girls and boys and placement should be assured by the training centres.

- Self-employment and entrepreneurial training should be given to SC/STs and 75% grant should be given for taking up self-employment.
- 5 acres of land should be given free to every landless SC/ST family.
- The SC/ST (PoA) Amdt. Act pending before parliament should be passed.
- Safai Karmachari Commissions need to be set up at the state level.

Rights and welfare of forest-based tribals

Key concerns

So-called development pursued since decades has been at the cost of the livelihood and shelter mainly of the scheduled and primitive tribes of the country. They have borne the brunt of displacement from their traditional sources of livelihood without proper alternatives or rehabilitation being provided to them. Community and individual rights certificates to the areas where adivasis have been living traditionally, assured under the Forest Rights Act 2006 and Rules of 2008, should be provided within one month of elections. The new cabinet should take a decision to declare the areas occupied by adivasis as Scheduled Areas under Fifth Schedule annexed to PESA Act. Budgets earmarked for their development under the Tribal Sub-Plan is not reaching them as the money is being diverted and used for other purposes or allowed to lapse.

Key demands

- *Ensure that the Forest Rights Act and PESA Act are implemented consistently and in letter and spirit.
- *A law to ensure that budgets set apart as per the population of adivasis under the Tribal Sub-Plan should not be diverted or allowed to lapse should be passed speedily (as in Andhra Pradesh).

Issues of the differently-abled

Key demands

- *The new Disability Act should be passed immediately with amendments suggested by civil society. 3% of the budget should be earmarked for the sector and not allowed to lapse.
- *3% of local body, Assembly and Lok Sabha Constituencies should be reserved for the disabled.
- Standing committees should be created for the disability sector at local bodies, Assembly and Lok Sabha headed by the disabled and with adequate representation from the disability sector.
- Reservation in employment for the disabled at Block, State and Central level should be fulfilled as per mandated percentage. The differently-abled should be appointed as functionaries in all urban local bodies to work on disability sector.

- A grievance redressal officer to hear grievances and penalise officials not performing duties towards the differently-abled is necessary at taluk and district levels.
- Sign language to be mandatory during proceedings of Assembly, Lok Sabha and other public meetings to aid the speech and hearing-impaired.

Protection of environment and sustainability

Key concerns

- Sustainability, needs to be the thrust of the development planning and works undertaken. This implies the need to ensure the protection, preservation and growth of natural resources in all development undertakings. In specific, a thrust to ensure tree cover is maintained and increased; garbage disposal is handled with a scientific integrated waste management approach that allows for maximum recycling; and, the water tables are renewed through the urgent enforcement of mandatory policy regarding ground water recharging and water harvesting.
- Development that has a severe impact on the environment is no development at all. Any development initiative that is ecologically sustainable would be sustainable in other ways also and ultimately benefit a larger number of people for a longer period of time.

Key demands

- *Facilitation of genuine public consultations in the case of all large investments, especially industries and infrastructure projects
- *No more new nuclear power and other projects should be taken up in India under any circumstances. We urge all existing nuclear projects should be phased out in a time-bound manner, since they are proven to be time bombs built by our own government to explode on our own people.
- Existing flora and fauna should be protected as the natural heritage of the country.

Conclusion:

Commitment towards strengthening democracy by engaging in fair electoral practices

Parties need to make the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections free and fair by:

- Not engaging in any kind of influencing of voters by way of kind, cash, favours or threats to citizens
- Ensuring that all promises made to the citizens during the course of the elections and as mentioned in the manifesto are legal and constitutionally valid
- Ensure democratic practices within the functioning of the party
- Adequate representation of women and people from marginalized sections in the list of contesting candidates
- Committing to reduce the influence of money power in elections – by not exceeding the ceiling on expenditure incurred during election campaigning

- Prohibit candidates with criminal charges from contesting the elections
- Supporting a provision for the Election Commission to forward the assets and liabilities information declared by the candidates to IT department and Enforcement Directorate for action against illegal possession of assets.
- Parties should ensure that tickets are given only to persons with a clean record of service, who are non-communal, who have no charges of sexual harassment or criminal cases pending before them, and who will take active part in the sessions of the Lok Sabha.
- Political parties should not indulge in horse-trading post elections. All alliances should be made prior to elections and no change in party alliances allowed post elections.
- Above all, they should abide by Constitutional values and rule of law.

We, as members of civil society organizations, wish to be the catalyst for change and are proposing the above recommendations and proposals because we think it is time for us to speak and partner the rulers. We cannot allow society to move ahead in the path of corruption, injustice, communalism and discrimination.

We need to cherish, follow and uphold the ideals in the Constitution and swear by its tenets. We hereby request all political parties longing to come to power to consider the above-mentioned recommendations and add them in their manifestoes.

List of participating organisations / individuals		
S.No	Organization	Participant / representative
1.	ANANYA Mahila Okkoota	Ms Brinda Adige
2.	Association for the Physically Disabled (APD)	Mr. Lingappa
3.	Association for Promoting Social Action (APSA)	Mr. Lakshapathi / Mr. Suresh Kantha Borkar
4.	Centre for Informal Education and Developmental Studies (CIEDS)	Mr. Bhoga Nanjunda
5.	Citizens Voluntary Initiative for the City - Bangalore (CIVIC Bangalore)	Ms Kathyayini Chamaraj
6.	Fourth Wave Foundation	Mr. Ravi, G.
7.	Global Concerns India	Ms Brinda Adige
8.	International Justice Mission (IJM)	Mr. P. William Christopher, Ms Esther, Ms Reena Mathai
9.	Paraspara	Mr. K.C. Venkatesh
10.	SUGRAMA	Ms Padmini Ananth

11.	The Hunger Project	Mr. Justin Johnny
	Individuals	Designation
12.	R. Manohar	Consultant
13.	Rajani Srikakulam	Consultant