

## Editorial

Dear friends,  
Another six months have gone by since we last communicated with you. In this period, CIVIC's work can be summarized as an effort to give a practical shape to the much-talked about ideas of good governance – of ensuring transparency, accountability and people's participation.

We are trying to ensure transparency by working with public authorities to make their suo motu disclosures under the RTI Act comprehensive and effective. For instance, we are attempting to make them disclose to the public their aims, functions and duties; the job descriptions of each of their officials; the standard procedures followed by them in decision-making; their norms of service delivery; the subsidy programmes implemented by them, the criteria for eligibility and the list of beneficiaries of these programmes; their budgets and expenditures; the means available for people's participation in decision-making bodies constituted by them, the means of obtaining information from them, etc. We empower citizens in the areas where we work with this information which enables them to know what their entitlements are.

To ensure accountability, we organize grievance redressal melas wherein we bring citizens, concerned officials and even elected representatives face to face so that citizens, who are now empowered with knowledge of their entitlements, can question officials about the deficiencies in the delivery of services to them. These grievances of citizens and the commitments made by officials to remedy the deficiencies are recorded and submitted to higher officials for their action. If no action follows, we again use RTI to ask for Action Taken Reports on the grievances submitted. This often makes officials attend post-haste to the grievances and the oral commitments they had made. We find that this strategy results in some amount of accountability.

To strengthen people's participation in decision-making, we seek to activate or strengthen the usually dysfunctional platforms for people's participation already foreseen but existing only on paper in most

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## PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES

### Public hearing at Ward 60 (Sagayapuram) on Ward Works on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2010



**Community does social audit of BBMP works  
Mr. Shivashankar, Joint Commissioner, BBMP (East)  
on the dais at the public hearing on ward works  
organized at Sagayapuram ward**

Conducting social audits is one of the strategies being employed by CIVIC to bring in accountability in governance. A public hearing on the ward works of Sagayapuram ward of BBMP during the period 2009-10 was planned. Preparatory meetings in the months of September and October 2010 were held with the Federation of Civil Societies of Sagayapuram (FCSS) members on the process of conducting social audits and public hearings. The information on ward works needed for the social audit and public hearing was obtained under the RTI Act from BBMP. After obtaining the list of works sanctioned and implemented in the ward, the works to be taken up for social auditing were prioritized. Two major works that were prioritized were the development works in Richards Town Park and the housing for SC/STs under the SC Sub-Plan at New Bagalur. The activities to be undertaken to conduct social audit of these two works were listed. Spot inspections and cross verification of the documents were conducted on both the works by teams of FCSS members and the analytical report was shared between the members during meetings.

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departments, be it the School Development & Monitoring Committees (SDMCs) in schools, the Arogya Raksha Samitis or Rogi Kalyana Samitis in hospitals, the vigilance committees attached to each ration shop, the Community Development Societies under the SJSRY scheme, etc. When these bodies are activated, the community itself is able to take charge of bringing in changes in policies and plan, execute, monitor and audit programmes. These bodies also become a platform for grievance redressal.

Where such platforms are still non-existent, as in the planning and execution of ward works in the BBMP, we attempt to create informal platforms which prepare their own plans and lobby with the elected councillor and officials for their implementation. We also use these informal platforms to conduct social audits of implemented works.

We also use the grassroots experience that we gain from these interventions to advocate at government level for additions or amendments to policies to bring in systemic change, be it through suggestions on the new Right to Education Rules, through identification of the gaps between the ground reality Vs. guidelines of the SJSRY scheme, the non-adherence to Indian Public Health Standards in hospitals, or the lack of community participation in the way vigilance committees for ration shops are constituted. In this edition of the newsletter, we give you a sample of some of these attempts at bringing in good governance.

*Social Audit cont'd from page 1*

At the public hearing on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2010, Mr. Shivashankar, Joint Commissioner, BBMP (East Zone) was present with other BBMP officials - Mr. Chandrasekhar, Superintendent, Horticulture Department, BBMP, Mr. Nagaraj, Zonal Health Officer, Mr. Manjunatha, Assistant Engineer, BBMP, and Mr. Jayaram, BBMP.



**Public participating in the public hearing at Sagayapuram ward**

The Programme of Works (POW) that was prepared by the citizens through participatory budgeting activity was presented and compared with the POW of BBMP for the year 2010-11 showing the disparities between these two POWs. Both works that were socially audited were also presented before the officers highlighting the lacunae that existed in implementing these works.

Mr. Shivashankar, JC, in his speech, said that in a representative democracy, the elected representatives are the mouth-piece of citizens. Most of the decisions are taken as per their will and officers merely follow their directions. Thus NGOs should approach their elected representatives to bring in any changes in the system. With these few words, he left the meeting abruptly saying that his tight schedule did not allow him to stay throughout the programme. Other officials also followed their officer and left the programme.

The jury members at the public hearing, Mr. Anil Kumar of Forward 68, Mr. S.R. Venkatram of Supraja, Mr. Ramakanth, President, Kumara Park West Association, Mr. Venkatesh, Dalith Bahujan Movement and Mrs. Kathyayini Chamaraj of CIVIC made the following recommendations :

To display boards on all major/minor works that are undertaken by the BBMP, giving details of the starting and closing dates of the project, names and contact numbers of the AE/AEE, contractors, amount of tender, etc. Also, these details should be displayed at the ward office.

Mr. M. Venkatesh, speaking on behalf of the jury, said that the people were the true sovereigns in a democracy and that elected representatives to truly represent the people's interests had to listen to their voices in planning and implementing works.

### **Project under the SCP Sub-Plan (22.75%) in BBMP: Experience in New Bagalur Layout of Sagayapuram ward (Ward-60);**

Under the Sub-Plan for SC/STs, a housing project is being implemented by BBMP in New Bagalur layout of Sagayapuram Ward. 547 houses were sanctioned under the project during 2009-10. The information on the housing project was obtained from the department by CIVIC through RTI. 9<sup>th</sup> Main of New Bagalur Layout was selected for conducting social audit. Sagayapuram Workers' Welfare Association (SWWA) was assigned the responsibility of spot verification and first-hand observation. Social audit was conducted in three stages, namely: (a) spot inspection and listing of

houses under construction in the street with photo documentation; (b) Verification of ground-level data with agreement copy and work order copy and (c) interaction with beneficiaries, the Assistant Engineer (Civil Works) and contractors. The exercise illustrated differences between ground realities and work order provided by the department.

### **Differences between work order and ground data**

The work order stated that 30 houses were sanctioned in the street. However, from the list of 30 beneficiaries provided by the department, only two were found on the street. As per the work order, work should have been started by January 2010 and completed within 120 days. But on the ground, work was started only in June 2010 and was still under progress in December 2010. Not even a single house was completed in the stipulated time.

Only 6 beneficiaries were available for interaction and only a few of them were aware that the houses were being constructed under a government scheme; but they did not know even the name of the scheme. Four out of the six beneficiaries thought that the houses were being constructed by the Councillor. Only two beneficiaries had filed applications for a house out of whom one had submitted it to the ward office and the other to the Councillor. None of them had received an acknowledgment. They were unaware of the time line for completion of the project, the name of the monitoring officer and the details of beneficiary contribution.

Discussions with the Assistant Engineer revealed that the beneficiary list had been prepared by the elected representatives, namely, MLAs and councillors of the area, which BBMP had accepted after verification of beneficiary records. He said that delay in the work was due to the beneficiaries lacking proper documents and non-clearance of the site by the community. Since officials themselves did not have clarity on how the beneficiary contribution was to be collected, they had stopped asking the beneficiaries for it. There has been no information provided to the beneficiaries on the manner of selection of beneficiaries, the facilities provided under the project, conditionalities for availing the benefits, procedure for clearing and handing over the land for construction, etc. When questioned, the contractor said that the delay in construction work is due to non-clearance of sites in time by the beneficiaries.

### **From the observations on site, the team made the following suggestions:**

1. Community should be given awareness on the

scheme.

2. One person should be designated in the ward office to receive applications from beneficiaries and for officially communicating with the community regarding details of the projects.
3. The specific terms and conditions and procedure for site clearance should be communicated to beneficiaries at least three months before site clearance date.
4. A proper mechanism should be evolved to identify beneficiaries and collect beneficiary contribution from them and to issue them receipts.
5. The housing project should be integrated with the provision of basic amenities such as bathrooms, toilets, water, power, etc.
6. BBMP should make arrangements for transit stay of beneficiaries and should adhere to time-lines in construction to complete the work in the stipulated time.
7. Quality of the materials and work should be tested by BBMP on the spot.

### **Richards Park-Ward 60 Social audit Findings of audit on spillover works 2009-10**



**Status of decorative benches and play equipment of Richards Town Park during social audit**

The responsibility of auditing the works of Richards Town Park was assigned to Richard's Town Citizens' Association and Richards Town Residents' Association. The social audit was conducted in three stages, namely, (a) listing of facilities and qualitative and quantitative analysis with photo documentation; (b) preparing a report on all play equipment that were fitted in the park; and (c) inspection based on the technical specifications that were listed in the POW of the department.

### **Social Audit of the works undertaken in the park revealed that:**

1. Work code 050-10-NGHP-M1-00: New dust bins



to be provided – The work code had no mention of the number of dust bins that should be provided. The spot inspections revealed that no new dust bins were fitted. Only twenty six old bins were found with corroded and hanging bottom.

2. Work code 050-1-N-G-H-P-MI-003: New ornamental benches to be provided - No mention of the numbers. Estimated cost was Rs. two lakh, while the amount paid was Rs 2.1 lakh. No new ornamental benches were found in the park.
3. Work code 050-10-M-G-H-P-MN-004: Repair and painting of chain-link fence - Estimated cost was Rs. three lakh, while the payment was Rs. 3.23 lakh. Only a part of the work is complete.
4. Work code 050-10 NGHP-MI-004: Provision of children's play equipment with estimated budget of Rs 6.00 lakh. But Rs 6.47 lakh has been paid to the contractor. On verification it was observed that the quality of equipment and work were not as per the specifications laid down in the work order. The play equipment was worn out within a year posing dangers to children.
5. Work code 050-10-M-G-H-P-MN-003 - Rs 2.95 lakh was budgeted for the maintenance of the park while the amount paid was Rs 3.17 lakh. The overall condition revealed that there was no proper maintenance of the park.

*CIVIC is continuing its work in two wards (Sagayapuram and Devasandra), and two slums (Desiyanagar and Rajiv Gandhi Nagar), also focusing its main agenda of working under the 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act (CAA) framework on mainstreaming urban poor issues through democratic platforms such as grievance redressal melas (GRMs) and public hearings /social audits / area sabhas. With the experiences and outcomes achieved so far, CIVIC envisages playing an intermediary role of extrapolating field experiences to push for necessary policy changes with the government.*

## **CITY-LEVEL WORKS**

### **Objections filed against BESCO's proposed tariff increase – 25<sup>th</sup> October 2010**

Civic organized a meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2010 to discuss and get feedback and suggestions of citizens on the proposal of BESCO to increase the tariff by 75 paise per unit for the financial year 2011-12 under the multi-year tariff scheme. BESCO had asked stakeholders to file objections by 4<sup>th</sup> November'10. The proposal of the BESCO was presented by

Sri A. Raja Rao, Former Executive Director, BHEL, and Sri Y.V. Aswathanarayana, Former Advisor - Works, Railway Board, Ministry of Railways. As the outcome of this meeting, CIVIC filed objections to the increase in the first two tariff slab rates which would directly affect the poor.



**Sri Raja Rao, Former Executive Director (centre) and Sri Y.V. Aswathanarayana, (right) Former Advisor – Railway Board and Mr. Harish Poovaiah (left) at the meeting on increase in the tariff of BESCO**

### **Planning for state-level seminar with city representatives/councillors of other cities of Karnataka - 18th December 2010**

A preparatory meeting was organized for city representatives of eight city corporations of Karnataka to discuss the objectives of the proposed state-level seminar on 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act (74<sup>th</sup> CAA). Ms. Kathyayini Chamaraj made a presentation on the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA leading to a discussion on how well the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA has been implemented in their respective corporations. They were also provided with a questionnaire to collect information on how their corporations were functioning, starting from conduct of elections, devolution of functions, functionaries and funds, setting up of district planning committees and ward committees, reservations for SC/ST/OBC and women, etc. Representatives assured CIVIC that they would collect the information and forward it to Mr. Gururaja Budhya of Urban Research Centre, who would analyze the data.

## **WARD-LEVEL WORKS**

### **Awareness on 74<sup>th</sup> CA and RTI Act - 7<sup>th</sup> August 2010**

To create awareness on the 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional

Amendment and the Right to Information (RTI) Act to the members of FCSS (Federation of Civil Societies of Sagayapuram), an awareness programme was organized at Anbillam Training Center, Sagayapuram, on 7<sup>th</sup> August 2010. Mr. Harish of CIVIC gave the orientation on the two Acts to the members. The objective of this awareness programme was to enable the federation to participate in local governance and to promote and encourage them to use RTI to get their work done.

### **Grievance Redressal Mela (GRM) at Devasandra ward - 18<sup>th</sup> August 2010**



**Janaspandana meeting held at Devasandra ward**

BBMP issued a circular stating that 'Janaspandana' should be conducted in every ward twice a month, on every first and third Saturday from April 2010. Based on this circular, CIVIC, with support of BBMP, organized a GRM in Devasandra, Ward No. 55, on 18<sup>th</sup> August 2010. The Assistant Engineer and the Jr. Health Inspector of the ward and the Assistant Engineer-Electrical from BBMP participated in the programme. Major grievances that emerged were related to engineering works (road), drainage and street lights. As this was a new BBMP ward, it lacked these basic facilities. The grievances were submitted to officials to resolve them. After the event, CIVIC submitted the event report to BBMP and after one month, a follow-up RTI application was filed asking for an action taken report on the grievances. Officials responded to the RTI application saying that all the issues have been resolved. But when this information was cross-checked with the community, they informed that problems have remained unsolved. CIVIC will follow-up on the grievances again with BBMP.

### **SLUM-LEVEL WORK**

#### **PDS - Commissioner orders Grievance Redressal Meetings under PDS**

Several circulars issued by the government require officials of the Food & Civil Supplies Department to conduct regular grievance redressal meetings for citizens. But citizens are

unaware about when and where these are held. CIVIC filed RTI applications with the Commissioner, Food & Civil Supplies, on the number of grievance redressal meetings (Ahara Adalats) conducted by officials in the Bangalore informal rationing area. Information received showed that no adalats had been held by the Deputy Directors (DDs) during the particular period asked for. A First Appeal under the RTI Act was filed with the Commissioner on this. At the hearing of the appeal on 03.08.10, the Commissioner issued a directive to all the DDs to prepare an action plan for regularly holding the adalats twice a month till the end of the year in each of their zones.

### **Right to Food Campaign gives inputs to National Food Security Act**

CIVIC is working with both the state and national-level Right to Food Campaigns. As part of this activity, Mr. K. V. Ramamurthy, project coordinator, CIVIC, and Ms. Kathyayini Chamaraj, Executive Trustee, participated in the National Convention on Right to Food & Work organized at Rourkela, Orissa, between 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> August 2010. The Convention discussed issues related to hunger, food security and its determinants, control over resources such as land, forests and water, the proposed National Food Security Act of the Government, food and livelihood schemes of government and right to food in areas of conflict and displacement. The resolutions passed at the Convention were submitted to the National Advisory Council (NAC) headed by Ms. Sonia Gandhi to take necessary measures. The resolutions drafted for PDS have been listed below:

1. The Public Distribution System must be universal and the State must guarantee, by law, subsidized food grains to all the citizens of this country. Citizens who are vulnerable must get additional benefits under Antyodaya. This is a non-negotiable for the RTF Campaign.
2. All entitlements must be on an individual basis (14 kg per month for every adult member in the family) even if one ration card is issued for the whole family. Ration cards must be in the name of women.
3. Food grains should be made available based on local production, food habits and preferences of the state. Fortified flour should not replace wheat in the PDS. Nutritious millets should be made part of PDS food grains.
4. Apart from rice, wheat, sugar and kerosene, other items like pulses and edible oil should be made available through PDS, as is being done in some states.
5. All entitlements within the PDS should be available to all individuals irrespective of their location, and migrant workers, especially inter-state migrant workers, should be able to draw all

their rations at any place, irrespective of where their ration cards were issued.

6. Technology can play a potentially important role in the management of the PDS and it must be harnessed appropriately to improve the efficiency of the PDS. End-to-end computerization of the entire PDS network from procurement by farmers to collection by the household should be mandatory.
7. Government must make full disclosures, through on-line or any other means, of the lists of people identified for benefits under the PDS, movement of trucks, redressal of complaints, allocation and off-take details. However, all technology must be pro-poor, non-exclusionary and non-discriminatory.
8. Any new technology developed in the name of ensuring de-duplication and portability, including the UID/biometric cards, should not be allowed if they undermine people's civil liberties by becoming a means of tracking and surveillance.
9. Grievance redressal systems should be effective, transparent and monitored closely. Toll-free help-lines and administrative redressal through existing mechanisms should be strengthened.
10. All fair-price shops should be de-privatized, and should be run with the help of public bodies including panchayats, women's groups, credit co-operatives, and other appropriate village-level institutions.
11. Cash transfers must not replace food transfers under any nutrition-related scheme.

### **PDS shop owner agrees to keep shop open throughout the month**

A Grievance Redressal Mela (GRM) was organized on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2010 on the PDS for the Desiyanagar community to address the problems they were facing in getting their entitlements. Food Inspector Mr. Sadashiva Murthy, shop owner Mr. A. Jeriaum, and community members participated in the programme. A key grievance raised by the community was that PDS shops are open only for 2-3 days of a month. Due to this limited time of functioning, all families in the community rush to get their quota and this leads to jostling and quarrels between the families. As they are unaware of when rations will be given, they leave their cards with their neighbours to collect the grains on their behalf. There is no representation of the

community on the vigilance committee.



**Community member of Desiyanagar speaking to the food inspector Mr. Sadashiva Murthy and shop owner Mr. A. Jeriaum, during a grievance redressal mela (GRM). Mr. Bosco Antony of GRACE is also on the dais**

The shop owner assured them that the shop would henceforth be open the whole month and would not create any further problems to the community. The food inspector told the community that ration cards should not be given to others and only the cardholders should go and fetch their grains. Also, a few names were recommended on the spot for the posts of vigilance committee members.



**Ms. Manjula Devi, Councillor of Devasandra ward participated in the GRM on PDS**

Similarly, a follow-up GRM was conducted in Rajiv Gandhi Nagar on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2010. This GRM intended to discuss the grievances that were still unresolved after the first GRM conducted during February. Along with the food inspector, Ms. Manjula Devi, councillor of Devasandra ward, participated in this event. Families of Sanjay Nagar and Triveni Nagar were also present to share their grievances.