

CIVIC in Action - Annual Report - April 2019 to March 2020

Social Accountability Resource Unit (SARU) Activities

74th Amdt. Awareness Activities

- 13.4.19 - an awareness programme on the 74th CA and Action Plan to take it forward was conducted in Mysuru in collaboration with the JSS Law College. Mr. Y.G. Muralidharan and Ms Kathyayini Chamaraj addressed the gathering.
- 11.05.19 - An awareness programme on 74th CA was conducted in Hubballi-Dharwad on 11th May 19 in collaboration with Rashtrottana Sankalp and KLE Society's Law College which was attended by HDMC Commissioner, Prashant Kumar Mishra.
- 12.05.19 - Training on 74th CA was conducted on 12th May 19 in Belagavi in association with Janapara Seva Sanghatane and Mahila Kalyana Samiti of Belagavi.
- 04.06.19 - An awareness programme on 74th CA was conducted for staff of CFAR
- 22.06.19 - An awareness programme on 74th CA was conducted for Ward Committee members of Nagarabhavi ward and ASHA and anganwadi workers. Mr. Mohan Kumar, the ward councillor, attended and expressed his support for ward committees. Training in other four wards where CFAR is active is scheduled.
- A circular was issued by BBMP Commissioner that fines will be imposed on officials not conducting monthly ward committee meetings. A letter was written to BBMP Commissioner on non-holding of monthly meetings by Shanthinagar ward committee and asking for fine to be imposed on the concerned authorities. As a result, monthly meeting was held.
- Staff of 'Fields of View' were contacted to prepare attractive IEC material for trainings on 74th CA. Staff of 'Sensing Local Foundation' were contacted to develop data-bases of two wards, Shanthinagar and Nagarabhavi.
- On 14.7.19, CIVIC's Executive Trustee was one of the citizens asked by 'Citizens for Bengaluru' to honour corporators for conducting most number of ward committee meetings at a ceremony named 'Corporator #1' at the Town Hall. Justice Santosh Hegde was the Chief Guest.

Ward Tool-kit planning

- Draft of a Training Booklet on 74th CA, Ward Committees and Area Sabhas was prepared. A scoping study of Section 4, suo motu disclosure under the RTI Act, of eleven municipal corporations of Karnataka has been prepared. A national consultation to release these tool-kits has been planned.

- In an effort to rope in law students as volunteers, Mr. Nikhil Dey and Rakshita Swamy of SARU arranged a meeting at NLSIU with Prof. Babu Mathew. Law student volunteers deputed by Prof. Babu Mathew were met to discuss about enlivening our ppt on 74th CA. Prof. Babu Mathew and principals of three law colleges were met to see how law students could be involved in ward-level activities. But things did not work out as planned as law students would be available only for short periods of time in a year during their holidays.
- On 5.7.19, a meeting was organized at ISI by Mr. Nikhil Dey, to rope in Citizens for Bengaluru, CFAR, Fields of View, etc. to collaborate in implementing ward budget planning and social auditing in a few wards of Bengaluru.

Institutionalising grievance redressal at ward level

CIVIC set up a Grievance Redressal Desk, from 10.30 AM to 11.30 AM, one hour before the Ward Committee meeting in Shanthinagar ward on 19 Oct 19. Several citizens submitted their grievances to Councillor, Ms Soumya Shivakumar, which were given a tracking number and acknowledgement by the Ward Committee Secretary. Action Taken Report on the grievances will be followed up at next ward committee meeting.

The Councillor agreed to devote one hour every month before the formal and official ward committee meeting to hear and receive grievances of citizens. Currently, the Ward Committee Rules do not permit residents to speak during the Ward Committee meeting and there is no provision for a separate 'Janaspandana' programme where citizens can speak. Hence, allocating a separate time for listening and recording grievances is the via media.

In many other wards, the Ward Committee meeting itself is being converted into a Grievance Meeting, which is against the Rules. Also, the grievances are often not being recorded, no acknowledgements with tracking numbers and no Action Taken Reports are being given which makes the whole meeting fruitless. Many citizens are complaining that nothing happens after most ward committee meetings. Adopting the Shanthinagar model will make the ward committee meetings meet their objective and bring about more effective decentralisation.

- Action Taken Reports were also asked for next month which were given. This too is an improvement as no ATRs used to be given earlier. The issues used to be heard and no replies given.
- The ATR was an incremental step forward but was still short of the ideal as the Secretary only reported the action taken by her in forwarding the grievances to the concerned officials. But there were no reports from the concerned officials of having actually attended to the grievances!
- Serious issues of the marginalised, such as the use of the reserved 23%+ funds for the SC/STs for allotting houses to them and the issuing of hakku patras for their houses were also raised and discussed by the representatives of the SC/STs.

- There were incremental improvements in the manner of holding the meeting in December 2019. The notice for the meeting was issued four days in advance and not on the night before, as was being done earlier. This was an improvement though the notice was not sent seven days in advance as required under the Rules.
- However, while this process was in vogue for two months, the process had to be discontinued as I was removed from the ward committee and was no more getting intimations of when the ward committee meetings were being held. Meetings were also not being conducted regularly on the first Saturday of the month as prescribed.

Annual Review of Social Accountability Resource Unit (SARU) Fellows

- From 29.8.19 to 31.8.19, CIVIC's Executive Trustee attended the review meeting of the Social Accountability Resource Unit (SARU) at Bhim, Rajasthan.
- From 12th to 13th September 2019, CIVIC's Executive Trustee attended the launch of the 'Jan Soochana Portal' (People's Information Portal) of Rajasthan government at Jaipur, Rajasthan, along with SARU Fellows.

Election campaigning on Ward Committees and Area Sabhas in Davangere and Mangaluru - 02.11.19 to 04.11.19

- Municipal elections were going to be held to Davangere Municipal Corporation and Mangaluru Municipal Corporation on 12th November 2019. In a pioneering and innovative step, CIVIC collaborated with Nagarika Shakti and local groups in Davangere (Nirmana) and Mangaluru (MCC Civic Group) to educate voters by having press conferences to support only those candidates, who commit to governance through Ward-Committees and Area-Sabhas in their wards. Press conferences were held on 2nd November in Davangere and 4th November in Mangaluru.
- In order to get candidates' commitment to support the formation of ward committees and area sabhas in these cities if they are elected, party presidents were met and signatures were taken from candidates on citizens' manifestoes saying that citizens will vote for them only if they agree to allow citizens' nominations to ward committees, conduct regular ward committee meetings, empower ward committees to monitor works and the usage of funds, empower area sabhas to do bottom-up planning and do social auditing. Mr. Narendra Kumar of Nagarika Shakti conducted the activities which were sponsored by CIVIC. I could not go because of my fall and leg injury.
- In a great achievement of the MCC Civic Group in Mangaluru, the BJP, which won a majority in the November 12th election to the Mangaluru City Corporation, and the Congress, had both included in their Manifestoes that they would form ward committees and area sabhas in all

the wards if elected. Thanks to citizens like Nigel, Ajoy, Ullal, Rajendra & Roopam, Team MCC, formation of AS & WC is certain in Mangaluru.

- In Hubballi-Dharwad, subsequent to our awareness programme, citizens pressurised the HDMC Commissioner to issue an advertisement calling for applications from citizens to serve on ward committees. A format for the application form was also given by HDMC. Several hundred citizens have applied and an RTI application was also filed to get the details of the numbers of applications, etc. and also asked what the guidelines will be for selecting the members. In a salubrious development, the HDMC Commissioner has written to the UD Secretary asking for guidelines to be issued.
- Taking note of the development in Hubballi-Dharwad, citizens of Mangaluru also presented a petition to their Commissioner to issue a similar advertisement in Mangaluru and also presented him with a format for an application, developed by CIVIC.

Awareness programmes on 74th CA in Bengaluru

21.11.19 - 74th Awareness Programme was done in Binnypete ward

30.11.19 – Ward planning meeting with CFAR

On 30.11.19, CIVIC collaborated with CFAR in speaking to members of five wards on how they could plan for their ward. Ms Renuka Viswanathan was a guest speaker

11.12.19 – Awareness programme on 74th CA in Chalavadipalya ward, Ward 138

On 11th Dec 19, CIVIC along with CFAR conducted an awareness programme on "Citizen Participation through Ward Committees and Area Sabhas" for ward committee members and residents of Chalavadipalya, Ward 138. Ms Rekha, the councillor, was also present.

Release of ward-level data of 5 wards by CFAR in collaboration with the Planning Department of Karnataka - 19.12.19

CIVIC participated in the release of ward-level data of 5 wards by CFAR on access to services by marginalised groups in collaboration with the Planning Department of Karnataka on 19.12.19. CIVIC pointed out that memoranda had been submitted to BBMP Commissioner to set up Single Windows and grievance redressal platforms at ward level in BBMP to receive all applications for services and address grievances of marginalised groups. The Deputy Chairman of the Planning Board agreed to write to the BBMP Commissioner to set up the Single Windows in all 198 wards. Planning Secretary, Ms Shalini Rajneesh, has agreed to give CIVIC an appointment to discuss the broader Social Accountability Bill incorporating the Single Window, Grievance Redressal Mechanisms and social auditing.

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4.1.20 – Presentation to B.CLIP candidates on “Citizen participation in urban governance”

CIVIC took a session on "Citizen participation in urban governance" for the potential and aspiring leaders of the B.CLIP programme on 4th Jan 20.

5.01.20 - 74th CA awareness in Tumakuru city

Many councillors and citizens in cities which have become municipal corporations recently in Karnataka are unaware of the Nagarapalika Act and the requirement to constitute ward committees and area sabhas in their cities. There were press reports recently that the Tumakuru Municipal Corporation Council passed a resolution at its council meeting that they do not want ward committees! CIVIC collaborated with Saras Foundation of Tumakuru to organise an awareness programme on the Nagarapalika Act for civil society activists of Tumakuru on 5th Jan 20. Three elected councillors also attended the programme. Citizens took them to task for having passed a resolution against a Constitutional requirement. The councillors defended themselves saying one or two councillors only had said that there was no need for ward committees but that the Member-Secretary had minuted that a Resolution had been passed by the council. No such Resolution had been passed by the Council, they said. They promised to get the minutes corrected at the next council meeting. Citizens promised to follow up with their Commissioner about the formation of ward committees in their city. Mr. Y.G. Muralidharan, consultant of CIVIC, told them about the poor proactive disclosures made by the Tumakuru municipal corporation under Section 4 of the RTI Act on its website and asked them to get it improved.

Later, citizens' groups of Tumakuru met their Commissioner and demanded that he constitute ward committees and area sabhas in Tumakuru.

5.1.20 – Awareness programme in Tumakuru

Ms Farida Begum, councillor, expressing support for ward committees

Tumakuru citizens' groups petition their Commissioner on ward committees

26.2.20 – Citizen Participation in urban governance for Youth – Presentation to PG students at Jain University

Social Accountability Bill

- Extracts of the Social Accountability Bill, asking for a Single-Window Information Centre in every ward and grievance redressal system at ward committee level was presented to the Mayor, Ms Gangambike, and Commissioner of Bengaluru, Mr. Manjunatha Prasad, on 2nd Aug 19. This is being followed up with the new Commissioner. This has received support from the High Court of Karnataka which has asked BBMP to set up an effective grievance redressal system at ward level.

- Citizens of Shanthinagar have been asked to submit grievances at a desk to be set up by CIVIC at the ward office of Shanthinagar to informally activate Single-Window system at ward level for receiving grievances and hearing them before ward committee meetings.

Presenting Social Accountability Bill extracts to BBMP Commissioner, Mr. Manjunatha Prasad and Mayor of Bengaluru, Ms Gangambike

Constitution of Ward Committees and Area Sabhas in other cities – PIL WP 53244/2018

- A favourable order was obtained from the High Court of Karnataka on 08.08.2019 in the PIL filed by CIVIC and others in WP 53244/2018 directing constitution of ward committees and area sabhas in Mangaluru immediately after elections are held there in mid-November. As a result of the PIL, notices were issued to the State Government and all the commissioners of eleven municipal corporations of Karnataka on why no ward committees and area sabhas had been formed in those cities. As a result of the notices, the Urban Development Department issued fresh circulars asking the municipal commissioners to form ward committees in their cities.

Areas for Mangaluru notified by UDD

- Since no Areas had been notified by UDD despite the HC order, Mr. Narendra Kumar filed a Contempt of Court petition for not notifying the Areas as directed by the Court. In a landmark development, which will enable every voter of Mangaluru to participate in the governance of his Area, the Urban Development Department of Karnataka notified Areas for Mangaluru city, for the first time in the State. The notification was issued two days after Mr. Narendra Kumar filed his Contempt Petition.
- Areas have been notified by the UDD, as per the KMC (Amdt.) Act of 2011, combining three to four polling stations. A total of 121 Area Sabhas for 60 Wards, which makes it two per ward, have been notified. However, this means that about 4000+ voters constitute one Area Sabha, which is definitely an impractical number. No quorum has also been specified for a meeting of the Area Sabha. We do welcome this action from UDD, but will do all that we can to get a more practical number of voters notified for each Area.

21.01.20 - Press conference to announce notification of Area Sabhas

CIVIC conducted a press conference on 21.01.20 to announce the notification of Areas for Area Sabhas in Mangaluru as per the notification of the Urban Development Department as a result of our PIL to ensure citizens' participation in the city's development. Mr. Santosh Nargund of RISE from Hubballi-Dharwad and Mr. Narendra Kumar of Nagarika Shakti also participated.

Larger PIL on ward committees and area sabhas for all municipal corporations dismissed by HC

Unfortunately, our larger PIL asking for ward committees and area sabhas to be constituted in all other municipal corporations of the State, guidelines to be issued for the formation of ward committees and removal of veto power of councilors was rejected by the HC saying that there were too many prayers, etc. We were given the liberty to file a fresh petition as there was merit in the case. We are in the process of preparing the fresh petition, one to be filed by Narendra Kumar and one to be filed by CIVIC, splitting the prayers.

Applications sought from citizens to serve as ward committee members

- Rashtrottana Sankalp of Hubballi-Dharwad came to know that the Hubballi-Dharwad municipal commissioner was forming ward committees. It questioned the secretive manner in which he was going about nominating names for ward committee members. This resulted in the Hubballi-Dharwad Municipal Corporation, for the first time in the State, issuing a public advertisement calling for applications from citizens to serve on ward committees. A sample application form was also published by them. This was an unheard of precedent in the State.
- As a result, Mangaluru Civic Group petitioned their municipal commissioner to also issue a public advertisement calling for applications from citizens, citing Hubballi-Dharwad example. They also asked the Commissioner to follow guidelines, suggested by former BBMP Commissioner Ashok Dalwai, and procedure for nominations suggested by CIVIC while forming ward committees as per High Court order.

RTI on applications of citizens to serve on ward committees -23.1.20

- Our network partner in Hubballi-Dharwad, RISE, had filed an RTI application with the HDMC seeking details of applications of citizens to serve on ward committees from every ward. The HDMC never cared to reply. Hence RISE filed an appeal under RTI Act with the First Appellate Authority. And after almost 3 months they got information that as many as 615 applications were received for the 67 wards of HDMC. However, HDMC has failed to provide other information sought, including the certified copies of application from all wards. Another interesting thing is that HDMC has written to the DMA seeking Guidelines to appoint the WCs.

Lok Sabha Elections 2019

Manifesto Release - On 9.4.19, Civil Society Forum's Manifesto for Lok Sabha Elections was presented to political parties at SCM House. All mainstream parties sent their representatives except the BJP. Mr. L. Hanumantharayappa (INC), Mr. Safiulla (JDS), Mr. Basavaraj (BSP), Mr. Gurushanth (CPIM), and Independent candidate Mr. Prakash Raj, attended the event. Mr. H. S. Doreswamy presided over the function. It was attended by more than 140 CSO members.

- On 25.4.19, Executive Trustee of CIVIC was invited to be a panelist at ISEC's seminar on "Elections 2017". Dr. Ravindra, Mr. M.J. Vinod, Dr. Anil Kumar, Mr. Muzaffar Assadi were the other panelists.

Petitions to Election Commission of India (ECI)

- Upon the request of Ms Aruna Roy and Nikhil Dey, two petitions, one on 'Count Every Vote' by counting the VVPATs instead of the EVMs, and one on Section 49MA, were prepared under the banner of Civil Society Forum facilitated by CIVIC. A delegation of three met Mr. Sanjiv Kumar, the CEO of Karnataka on 15th May 2019 and presented them to him. He felt that there was no need to doubt the EVM machines and do 100% count of the VVPAT slips. About Section 49MA, he said that the 6-month's punishment is there for voters only to prevent frivolous or malafide complaints. During the Karnataka Assembly elections in 2018, out of four crore voters, four persons had complained about wrong display by the VVPAT slip but no FIR was filed against them and none of them was prosecuted or jailed. He said that presiding officers would look into the genuineness of a complaint and prosecution was not automatic and hence we need not worry.

The Supreme Court had ordered that VVPAT verification should be undertaken in 5 booths per Assembly constituency. Ideally to ensure transparency, this verification must happen before all the votes from all EVMs are counted, but the Election Commission said that they would do the verification count AFTER the EVM counting process! It was felt that this was pointless and would lead to a lot of conflict. Therefore, a petition was submitted by CSOs of Karnataka, to which CIVIC was a signatory, on 22nd May 19 to Mr. Sanjiv Kumar, CEO-Karnataka, demanding that this verification be done before counting and in the absence of a match, the counting be stopped. CIVIC led the delegation.

Submitting petition to CEO-Karnataka on “Count every vote”

Out-of-School Children’s (OoSC) case in the High Court (PIL WP 15768/2013)

Several hearings were held by the Chief Justice’s Bench in the High Court on the suo motu PIL on out-of-school children in which the Executive Trustee of CIVIC is a party-in-person. A total failure to implement the protocol for retaining children in school, developed with the aid of CIVIC by SSA, was observed by the Court and strict instructions to follow the protocol enunciated in the amended Rules 6A, 6A, 6B, 6C and 6D were issued. The CJ also directed the government to implement the “Policy on Education of Migrant Children” developed with the aid of CSOs, which was pending for more than two years. The SSA Director, Mr. Reju, was met and briefed on the earlier directions of the HC and the changes in RTE Rules effected as per the HC’s Directions, of which he appeared to be not aware. The CJ also directed the government to re-convene the “High-Powered Inter-Departmental Coordination Committee” meetings under the Chairmanship of the Chief Secretary, to monitor the progress on OoSC, which had not been held for two years. As a result, the Executive Trustee of CIVIC was able to participate in the meeting of this Committee which was re-convened on 3.7.19. The meeting was chaired by the Chief Secretary, Sri T.M. Vijay Bhaskar.

Meeting of the “High-Powered Inter-Departmental Coordination Committee” under chairmanship of the CS, Mr. Vijaybhaskar on 3.7.19

As per the HC direction, the CS announced that surveys would be done every month to track OoSC. On 13.8.19 and 14.8.19 Executive Trustee of CIVIC took part in the survey of out-of-school children in Shanthinagar ward. Four long-term absentees were found who had not been brought back to school by following the protocol.

Chief Justice Abhay Shreenivasa Oka said on 13.11.19 in the Court that the suo motu PIL taken up by the HC on school drop-outs, in which CIVIC is impleaded, is one of the four important PILs being heard in the Court. He has awakened the government machinery to look at basic human rights of citizens like no other CJ in recent times. As a result of his orders the "Policy on Education of Migrant Children" prepared by a coalition of civil society organisations, including CIVIC, more than three years ago, which was lying in the government's cupboards, has been accepted and notified by the government, migration being one of the chief reasons for children dropping out.

The Chief Secretary thought the 25-page document was too long and asked the department to condense it to 2 pages. The Chief Justice was unhappy with the whittling down which had denuded the policy of several of its key provisions. He asked the government to redo the 2 pages. Now the original policy has been resuscitated and approved by the government. Hopefully, this will now provide a means to bring education to all migrant children.

More than 300 vacancies of Education Coordinators, who are designated as Attendance Authorities to bring back drop-outs to school are being filled as a result of his orders.

Upon CIVIC's submission, he has reminded the government to ask all 'local authorities', i.e., the grama panchayats and municipalities to conduct annual surveys of all households and "Maintain a record of all children from birth to 14 years" in their jurisdiction, as per Section 9 of the RTE Act, in the form of Village/Ward Education Registers. The registers have to record whether or not they are going to school, and what action is being taken to bring them back to school. Most GPs/Wards have not done it, though the GOs were issued six years ago.

As directed by the High Court in the out-of-school children's case, CIVIC participated in inspecting data of four districts on their out-of-school children on 11.12.19 at SSA. In Davangere, officials related that children come to school, give attendance and then go away to work in the puffed-rice units (called 'Mandakki Batti' in Kannada) that abound in that city. The DC had hence called all employers of the puffed-rice units and made them take an oath not to employ children. The irony was that more than 15 years ago, UNICEF had a programme there for several years to eliminate child labour in the Mandakki Battis and similar oath-taking programmes had been held then. When questioned why teachers could not lock the gates of the school once the children entered the school, there was no answer.

In Raichur, children continue to work on Bt Cotton farms pollinating cotton flowers. Teachers are again aware of it but seem to be helpless to do anything. Moreover, HMs are also

'Inspectors' under the Child Labour Act and have all the power to file cases against the employers, but this is not happening. Nor are they reporting the cases of child labour to the Labour Department so that they take action.

There did not seem to be any 'institutional memory' in the Education Department on what had happened in Davangere already during the UNICEF project. In the highest echelons of the government also, there is no "institutional memory" of the changes that had been brought about through this court case more than five years ago. Govt. orders that had been issued and protocols that had been developed have all been forgotten, once officials changed, making civil society organisations fight the same battles in cyclical fashion every five years.

16.03.2020 - HC directions on out-of-school children in CIVIC's favour

During a hearing of the suo motu PIL on out-of-school children on 16th March 2020, CJ Oka directed the State government to:

- (i) Ensure that a survey is conducted every year, two months before begin of the academic year, and a data-base of all children from birth to 14 years is maintained by every Grama Panchayat and municipal ward as per the RTE Act. This failing of the State government had been brought to the attention of the CJ by CIVIC. Only if this data-base is maintained, would it be possible for the government to fulfil all other requirements under the RTE Act, the Court said.
- (ii) The Court also upheld our plea that Attendance Authorities should be paid adequate travel allowance to be able to bring parents of out-of-school children before the district-level Child Welfare Committees. (*Report on this in 'The Hindu' below, under press clippings.*)
- (iii) The Court also asked the government to reconsider its decision **not** to accept CIVIC's suggestion that a bond of Rs. 10,000, which matures to Rs. One lakh when the child turns 18 years, if all conditionalities are fulfilled, should be given at the time of enrolment itself to all 'vulnerable children', so that parents have an incentive to retain their children in school until they complete compulsory education.

27th & 28th Jan 2020 - Invited to be Resource Person of RLHP (NGO) at Gundlupet, Chamarajnagar district, on out-of-school children

Was invited by the Rural Literacy & Health Project (RLHP) of Mysuru to share about the Court case on OoSC to their staff, SDMC members, a few councillors and GP members, especially on the policy for education of migrant children, as migration is a big problem in Chamarajnagar. RLHP members shared that while the government's figures on migrant children were 20 for a particular area, they had produced evidence to show that the real number was 53. The government had accepted the figures and funds had been released to start a seasonal school in Kerala for the 53 children who had migrated to Kerala with their parents.

CIVIC as a member of State-level committee on Sustainable Development Goal -2 (SDG 2) - "Ending Hunger" – May 2019

Most of the recommendations made by CIVIC regarding making agriculture viable, ensuring that minimum wages enable food security, that the number of anganwadis should be enhanced to universalize ICDS and that they should be converted to day-care centres to ensure children are not malnourished, have been ignored by the committee. Without showing the NGO members the final papers, these have been presented to the Chief Secretary. NGO Members were also not invited to these presentations.

Meeting of Sustainable development Goal -2 Committee meeting - 27.05.2019

CIVIC as a member of State-Level Solid Waste Management (SWM) Advisory Committee – January 2019

CIVIC has been consistently doing advocacy for more hygienic and aesthetic infrastructure for SWM to prevent loose garbage from being collected, from being exposed to workers, public and the environment, from being dumped on the ground by PKs at collection points, from being manually handled by gangmen, etc. As a result, the Executive Trustee of CIVIC was invited to present CIVIC's views on the Draft SWM Policy prepared by the Directorate of Municipal Administration. Later, CIVIC presented the same to the State NGT Chairperson, Justice Subhash Adi. When the CJ ordered that a State-level Advisory Committee should be set up as per SWM Rules of 2016, CIVIC was nominated to the Committee, along with a few others. CIVIC participated in all the meetings of the Committee and presented several suggestions. However, the final Advisory Committee recommendations which were to be sent to the Executive Committee for drafting the Policy were not shown to the Advisory Committee and nor were we allowed to meet the Executive Committee. On questioning, was told that the Advisory Committee's role is only to advice and the final decision on the Policy would be taken by the Executive Committee.

Meanwhile, the Executive Trustee of CIVIC had submitted an Impleading Application (IA) as party-in-person in 2014 in the on-going PIL on SWM. But the IA had been kept pending but the Executive Trustee had been allowed to make several submissions to the Court by earlier judges. However, the new CJ wanted to dispose off all pending IAs and asked her what her expertise on garbage and *locus standi* was to be party-in-person. He considered her explanations to be insufficient and said that she could file a fresh petition in the name of CIVIC and not as party-in-person.

Meeting of State-level Advisory Committee on SWM with BBMP Special Commissioner (SWM) – 30.01.2019

CIVIC as a member of State-Level Electoral Reforms Committee – July 2019

CIVIC has been nominated a member of a "State-level Committee on Electoral Reforms" by the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO)-Karnataka, Mr. Sanjiv Kumar, IAS. Several meetings were called of the Committee July 2019 onwards. CIVIC gave several recommendations to ensure that migrants and the urban poor lacking address-proof

are included in the electoral roll to ensure that “No Voter is left Behind” by faithfully following the procedures outlined in the ERO manual. CIVIC also suggested that the post office should be the repository of the electoral roll as they are capable of doing continuous updation instead of it being done once a year or just before elections.

In the interim, CIVIC suggested that as part of decentralization, the ward office should be mandated to maintain registers of applications, provide acknowledgements and display applications, etc., and that ward committees and local RWAs and NGOs should be roped in as volunteers in the verification process by BLOs. A set of 17 suggestions agreed upon jointly were short-listed by the CSO members of the Committee and presented to the CEO for his response which is yet to be obtained. Justice Santosh Hegde is a special invitee to the Committee. Final meeting was attended by the BBMP Commissioner and his team.

State-Level Electoral Reforms Committee meeting chaired by Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) - Karnataka, Mr. Sanjiv Kumar, IAS

4th and 5th October 2019 - Mahiti Khanaja portal of e-gov department

When the Jan Soochana (Public Information) Portal of Govt. of Rajasthan was announced, Mr. Rajeev Chawla, Principal Secretary, DPAR and e-gov, called Ms Rakshita Swamy of SARU and expressed his disappointment that Karnataka had not been chosen to pilot this Information Portal. He wanted Ms Rakshita Swamy to work with the E-gov department and help them develop a similar portal for Karnataka. Ms Rakshita wanted citizens’ and CSOs’ inputs to this initiative and hence asked CIVIC to provide a list of organisations that could be invited for a pre-discussion meeting on the portal. A meeting was organized at ALF on 4th October in this regard with several CSOs and inputs gathered. These were then presented by Ms Rakshita Swamy to Mr. Rajeev Chawla at his office on 5th October 2019. Mr. T.R. Raghunandan, Trustee, CIVIC, and Mr. Y. G. Muralidharan, consultant, CIVIC, attended the programme and gave their inputs.

Advocacy on Amendments to KMC Act

16.01.20 – Presentation of Memorandum to Mr. Anjum Parvez, Principal Secretary, UD, on desired C

CIVIC and Mr. Narendra Kumar of Nagarika Shakti had a detailed meeting with Mr Anjum Parvez, IAS, Principal Secretary, Urban Development, on 16th Jan 20. He checked with Commissioners and confirmed that none of the 10 cities, other than Bengaluru, have formed Ward Committees in their cities. He also informed us that none of the cities have notified Area Sabhas, barring Mangaluru. But he assured us that Area Sabhas and Ward Committees will be constituted in all cities.

Mr. Parvez also mentioned about a Cabinet decision that has been taken to pass a law to form Ward Committees and Area Sabhas in all ULBs, even those with less than 3 lakh population. He said that guidelines for nominating members to the ward committees have also been given, but he didn't give us the details. We pointed out that no proactive disclosure while framing this law has been made as per Section 4(1)(c) and (d) of the RTI Act. We also asked how the Bill approved by the Cabinet will be reconciled with the Draft Bill on municipalities framed by the National Law School, which was an assignment given to them by the Directorate of Municipal Administration. In this context, we submitted a Memorandum to him on the Amendments we would like in the Municipal Corporations Act.

We also discussed about the non-constitution of Municipal Councils in many cities, even 18 months after elections being held, to which he wanted us to file a PIL seeking orders from the Hon'ble High Court on this. We will talk to the Chief Electoral Officer of Karnataka to take this forward.

18.2.20 - National Consultation on "Transparency and Accountability in the Paradigm of Urban Governance"

CIVIC hosted a "National Consultation on Transparency and Accountability in the Paradigm of Urban Governance" on 18th February 2020, at BMS College of Law. Nikhil Dey of MKSS and Rakshita Swamy of Social Accountability Resource Unit (SARU) were present to facilitate the dialogue. The following organizations were the co-organizers of the event: B.PAC, CFAR, Centre for Inclusive Development, Citizens' Agenda For Bangalore, Citizens' for Bengaluru (CfB), Civil Society Forum, KRIA-KATTE, Nagarik Shakthi, & Sensing Local Foundation.

Primers/Draft Toolkits on Area Sabhas, Ward Committees, Ward Planning and Proactive Disclosure of 12 Municipal Corporations were presented, seeking inputs from the forum.

Mr. Sunil Panwar of the Centre for Smart Governance came on behalf of Mr. Rajeev Chawla, ACS of E-Governance, and presented the initiatives of the Centre for E-Governance on RTI, Sakala, Mahiti Khanaja and the Grievance Redressal Systems being developed by them.

Dr. Satyanarayana and Mr. Raghu Parthasarathy of NLSIU presented their draft Municipalities Bill which amalgamates the Karnataka Municipal Corporations Act and the Karnataka Municipalities Act. Spirited discussions took place and a way forward was chalked out in the last session, under the chairmanship of Nikhil Dey.

Advocacy with the Building & Other Construction Workers Welfare Board

31.05.2019 - Meeting with BOCW Welfare Board

A meeting was organised on 31st May 2019 by CIVIC in collaboration with CFAR with the Joint Secretary of the Karnataka Building & Other Construction Workers' Social Security Board to review the status of issuance of Smart Cards to construction workers and expedite

delivery of benefits, preliminary to conducting a social audit of its working. Joint Secretary agreed to arrange for a training session for NGOs on acting as facilitators for on-line registration of workers, which has been made mandatory and workers are finding it difficult to do it themselves. The training has eased the process of doing on-line registration.

Meeting with Mr. Chidanand, Jt. Secy. Of BOCW Welfare Board

11.12.19 - Meeting with Labour Secretary on Construction Workers' Welfare Board

CIVIC met Mr. Manivannan, IAS, Labour Secretary, along with Mr. Prabhanand Hegde of Centre for Advocacy & Research (CFAR), and handed over a Memorandum with ten points for improving the delivery of benefits to construction workers from the Building & Other Construction Workers' Welfare (B&OCWW) Board. We were thrilled when Mr. Manivannan immediately agreed to issue GOs covering all 10 points and they have also been issued! Some of the points refer to the building of decent workers' housing colonies for temporary migrant workers, with proper water, sewerage and sanitation, creches for the 0-6 year-old children, transportation to schools for children of compulsory school age, etc. We also sought his support for conducting a social audit of the functioning of the Board in the five wards where CFAR is working, to which he agreed.

19.2.20 - Dialogue with Labour Secretary on conducting Social Audit of Construction Workers' Welfare Board

CIVIC facilitated a dialogue with Mr. Manivannan, IAS, Labour Secretary, GoK, on conducting a Social Audit of the Building & Other Construction Workers' Welfare Board on 19th Feb 20. The Social Audits have been directed by the Supreme Court, based on the social audit guidelines issued by the CAG. Mr. Nikhil Dey of MKSS and Ms Rakshita Swamy of the Social Accountability Resource Unit (SARU) led the discussion.

A preliminary meeting was held between 12 pm and 2 pm on the 19th of February, at Vishranti Nilaya, which was attended by leaders of several unions and NGOs working with construction workers. Mr. Paras Banjara of MKSS presented the findings of the pilot social audits that had been conducted in the city of Beawar and Bhim Tehsil in Rajasthan.

In the afternoon at 3:30 pm, the full delegation met Mr. Manivannan at the Kalyana Suraksha Bhavan in the presence of the Secretary of the Board. Mr. Nikhil Dey and Ms Rakshita Swamy explained to them the protocol to be followed for conducting the social audit and requested them to have a dialogue with all the unions and NGOs in designing the framework for the social audit.

16.12.19 – Launch of 'Mukti' Alliance to end human trafficking and bonded labour

'Mukti' is an alliance to fight against bonded labour & human trafficking'. CIVIC is one of its core committee members. Mukti is in the forefront of getting bonded labourers released. It has

taken the pioneering step, the first in the country, of forming an association of released bonded labourers from across Karnataka called "Udayonmukha".

At the launch of "Udayonmukha" at Ramanagaram on Monday, 16th December 2019, officials from several departments of Ramanagaram district attended and spoke about the various loan and other schemes of their departments and asked the released bonded labourers to apply for them. This is ironical as the officials first of all do not do their duty of releasing the mandated Rs. 20,000 as immediate relief to the bonded labourers and allot them the five acres of land, or Rs. 20 lakh in lieu thereof, within time-frames. Many of the released bonded labourers said that they have not received either the 20,000 or the five acres of land even years after their release.

Officials need to take pro-active steps to reach the schemes of their department to the identified and released bonded labourers on priority instead of asking them to apply for the loan schemes by running from pillar to post.

Mukti launched its Bidar unit on 22nd Jan 20, which ET attended.

Other matters

Annual Convention of Association for Democratic Reforms – 10 to 12.04.2019

Executive Trustee, as State representative of Association for Democratic Reforms attended the annual convention of ADR at Chandigarh from 10.4.2019 to 12.4.2019

Whistleblower Protection Act and Rules - 01.06.2019

A panel discussion on the need for Rules under the Whistleblower Protection Act in the State was organized on 1st June 2019. It was co-organised by CIVIC with CFAR and Karnataka Ex-Sevicemen's Association, Munnade Garment Workers' Union and Sahaya. The support of well-known retired judges, lawyers and a retired IAS whistleblower, Justice Subhash Adi, Prof. Ravivarma Kumar. Mr.Vijayakumar, IAS (Retd.), were enlisted to demand the framing of Rules under the Whistleblower Protection Act. A list of demands was submitted to the Government.

Justice Subhash B. Adi at the meeting on Whistleblowers' Bill.

17.07.2019 – Executive Trustee was a panelist at a Round Table organized by CITU and chaired by Justice Gopala Gowda on the Social Security Code held at the Legislators' Home.

29.7.2019 – Executive Trustee was a panelist at a Round table organised by the Insititute for Social & Economic Change (ISEC) Bengaluru on "Slum Issues of Bengaluru"

18.8.19 to 20.8.19 - National Campaign for People's Right to Information (NCPRI)

Executive Trustee of CIVIC as State Working Committee member attended the Working Committee meeting of NCPRI in New Delhi and gave a status report on RTI implementation in Karnataka.

20.09.19 to 22.09.19 – Annual convention of the Right to Food Campaign at Raipur, Chhattisgarh

Executive Trustee of CIVIC attended the Annual Convention of the Right to Food campaign at Raipur, Chhattisgarh.

7.1.20 - "Namma Bengaluru Award 2020" launched.

January 2020 - Nominated to be a jury member for Namma Bengaluru Awards

With the permission of the Trustees, ET accepted a nomination by Namma Bengaluru Awards Trust to serve on the jury of the NBF Awards.

ET participated in the 'Namma Bengaluru Awards 2020' (NBA2020) Launch" on 7th Jan 2020 as a jury member. NBA is a pursuit for unsung heroes, who have strived to make Bengaluru, a better city, braving all odds. These awards are the city's way of saying 'Thank You' to its Real Heroes, who work relentlessly towards making Bengaluru a better place to live in.

18.01.20 – Collaborated in a "People's Dialogue on SWM for a garbage-free city"

CIVIC collaborated along with 'Sensing Local Foundation' in AAP's [#HosaBengaluru](#) People's Dialogue on Solid Waste Management for a Garbage-Free City on 18-Jan-2020. Excellent citizens' initiatives were presented.

20.1.20 – Addressed students of Karnataka Institute of Technology on "Citizen participation"

23.1.20 - CIVIC asked to take over as Managing Trustee of KRIA Katte (Karnataka Right to Information Activists' Katte

Since many of the trustees of KRIA Katte are no longer able to continue the activities, Mr. Ravindranath Guru, Managing Trustee had called a trust meeting of KRIA Katte on 23.1.20. It was decided by the Trustees to make CIVIC the Managing Trustee of KRIA Katte to carry on the RTI activities.

29.1.20 - Consultation on Construction Workers' Welfare Board by Centre for Inclusive Development at IIM-B

Above consultation was attended by the Labour Minister, Mr. Suresh Kumar. CIVIC was able to share about our work with the Labour Secretary and the GOs issued by him for workers' welfare and also give suggestions.

15.2.20 - Walk for Bengaluru

CIVIC collaborated with B.PAC in a walk from Vidhana Soudha to BBMP for Better Bengaluru on Saturday, 15th Feb from 8AM to 10AM. The following demands were made for Bengaluru 2.0:

1. Powers to decide delimitation and reservation of wards must be given to State Election Commission.
2. Ward reservations must be declared at least 6 months before elections
3. Mayor's tenure must be increased to 5 years.
4. Transparency in formation and functioning of ward committees
5. Metropolitan Planning Committee must be made functional immediately
6. Increase the honorarium of BBMP corporators
7. Use technology to improve transparency in BBMP administration.

27.02.2020 to 28.02.2020 - Participation in the National consultation on "Future of Urban Sanitation in India"

ET participated in a National Conference on "Future of Urban Sanitation in India", and localising Sustainable Development Goals, organised by PRIA (Society for Participatory Research in Asia) in New Delhi on 27th and 28th Feb 20. Sri Hardeep Singh Puri, Union Minister for Housing & Urban Affairs gave the inaugural address. Sri Rajesh Tandon, President, PRIA, in his address to the conference, was all praise for CIVIC and others' PIL in the Karnataka High Court which fetched an order for the first time in the country mandating notification of Area Sabhas and constitution of Ward Committees in Mangaluru City Corporation.

29.2.20 - Panelist at RLHP training on "Quality of Education through SDMCs"

03.03.2020 - Press conference on elevated corridor

CIVIC participated in a press conference at the Press Cub on 3rd March 20 along with Citizens for Bengaluru (CfB), Bengaluru Bus Prayanikara Vedike (BBPV), Bangalore Environment Trust, Whitefield Rising, etc., asking CM Yediyurappa to cancel the elevated corridor project worth Rs. 27,000 crore.

CIVIC highlighted the fact that it is totally unjustified to spend Rs. 27,000 crore to provide signal-free corridors for the 15 lakh private car-owners of Bengaluru when not even Rs. 25,000 crore is spent in one year to meet the basic needs for food, education, health, housing, women & children's development and social security of 6.5 crore Kannadigas of the state. Not even Rs. 3,000 crore has been spent to develop entire Kalyana Karnataka region in the last five years.

CIVIC further highlighted that no cost-benefit analysis justifying the project has been put in public domain as required under proactive disclosures to be made as per Section 4(1)(c) and (d) of the RTI Act and why the costliest measure, which is not even going to solve the problem, is being undertaken when cheaper and more effective solutions are available, viz., incentivising

public transport by focusing on subsidising BMTC and expediting the suburban rail system, which are the real solutions to traffic congestion.

As a result of the press conference, there was no announcement of allocation of money in the budget for the elevated corridor.

Press Clippings on CIVIC's activities

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