

Strengthening Participatory Governance in Pune

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People have a right to participate in civic decisions that affect their lives. In our country, we have a system of representative democracy which is a work-in-progress, with improvements being made over time in public decision-making processes, to achieve a better quality of life for all.

An important aspect of such refinements is **how participatory is our public decision-making**.

Centre for Environment Education (CEE) is working with individuals, students, professionals and organizations, acting collaboratively and in diverse ways, to strengthen participatory governance. The approach is to bring in multiple perspectives, knowledge bases and skills to strengthening participatory governance. The initiative is supported by the Hanns Seidel Foundation. CEE is a national institute and centre of excellence of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Govt of India.

The Vision

To see our city engaged in processes to be a better, sustainable, and economically, socially and ecologically just place to live in, for everyone.

Proposed Journey

- Enhance awareness and understanding about opportunities of citizens' participation in public decision-making, such as the annual Participatory Budget, review of Environment Status Report
- Work to integrate public deliberations in existing opportunities for public participation

Methodology

- Undertake studies and analysis of different documents (PMC annual budget, Environment Status Report, City Development Plan etc) and status of municipal services so as to be better informed when making use of public participation opportunities
- Hold workshops to enhance understanding of city governance
- Explore public participation opportunities in selected wards through PMC's annual Participatory Budgeting process, street design exercises and other platforms
- Support active, sensitive citizens to develop their skills to act as Community Mobilizers /Facilitators

What is our understanding of participation?

- Participation needs to go beyond complaints, raising demands for services or giving suggestions.
- Citizens should be able to assess civic issues in their neighbourhoods and the city as a whole, and have opportunities to be informed about and deliberate on different perspectives on these issues, and contribute their considered views on what public decisions should be taken

Why is the budget the starting point of intervention?

Almost every project needs money to get implemented and once budgeted for; it is likely to be implemented. Hence, budget becomes the starting point for intervention. An organization's budget document is an operational guide and monitoring tool. A budget reflects the real policy of an organization. It can communicate more than text reports. By studying the budget and relevant policy documents (such as on biodiversity, education, energy, transport, water, waste, etc), we can understand

whether projects being implemented or constructed are in line with policies. With this understanding, citizens groups may be in better positions to demand critical projects and works which would help to achieve developmental goals.

What do we want to change?

- Perception of citizens' engagement as a time taking process to valuing citizens engagement as a meaningful and integral part of public governance
- Strengthening formal and informal platforms for citizens' interaction into meaningful dialogues and deliberations amongst citizens, administration and elected representatives.
- Format of budget book to make it simpler, understandable by lay people
- Systems to support participatory budgeting to enable tracking of submissions and feedback to citizens, to ensure transparency

What do we not want to change?

The current system of representative democracy; however, we do want to enhance its effectiveness.

You can Help - Join the initiative!

CEE is looking to associate with students, professionals and concerned citizens, through the following possibilities:

1. Volunteering opportunities

Flexible, self-driven work/ tasks, aimed at enhancing your understanding /engagement in civic issues

2. Empanelment as Community Facilitators

Through a selection process, time commitments include attending a training programme, undertaking some studies, and intensive community work

Volunteering

- **Internships and Projects for Students** - Get involved at any level of your comfort/ interest in the ongoing work of information, education and communication about PB and Budget.
- **Professional Workshops and Volunteering Opportunities for those interested in economics, accountancy, various development sectors** – Study and understand the budget document, simplify it, analyse it for the sector of your interest (such as water, waste, energy, poverty, etc) against policies and plans of the same sector, and make recommendations for the budget.
- **Volunteering Opportunities for Concerned Citizens** - Engage in studying civic issues in your ward in a systematic manner, understand the process of participatory budgeting, fill up forms for suggesting developmental works, talk to others in your ward and collectively submit suggestions to the PMC – CEE and its team of Community Facilitators would support you in your efforts

How much time do you have to devote? 5-8 hours a week or 4-5 days in a month, including on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays.

How will you benefit from this? You will be better equipped to act as an active, sensitive citizen through the special capacity building programs organised for you.

Empanelment as Community Facilitators

CEE would like to empanel individuals who are interested in initiating or supporting multi-stakeholder processes in urban areas. Support would be provided to help develop skills of facilitation, methods of fostering dialog among diverse stakeholders, designing collaborative learning programs, etc

How much time do you have to devote?

We envisage that over the coming 6 to 8 months, about 10 to 12 days every month will be needed, perhaps also on Saturdays and Sundays.

What is the role?

Undertake studies, physical surveys of neighbourhoods, communicate with citizens, citizen groups, NGOs, administration officials and elected representative, and build your own capacities and skills.

Education, Experience, Skills Needed

- Graduate in any discipline
- Excellent communication skills, and fluency in Marathi, Hindi and English
- Basic computer literacy
- Open mind, readiness to learn in a group

Is there any remuneration involved?

A modest remuneration will be worked out in discussion with the individuals selected for empanelment

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