CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND GOOD GOVERNANCE IN NEW DELHI

By

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Why the current level of citizen participation in Delhi is inadequate and how can we improve it.

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Abstract

Indian governance has been riddled with cases of malpractice and corruption. It is no wonder that when the concept of the *Jan Lokpal* Bill was being proposed, it saw massive support all over India. This is because Indian governance has never had a system where those who govern have had to answer to the public until election year. This research paper investigates the question: Does India need to increase citizen participation in its political decision-making in order to improve governance? This question holds important relevance in a country like India where there is so much diversity in terms of income, religion, and language etcetera. This diversity also breeds serious inequality and poverty issues that have yet to be solved by the various schemes initiated by the government. By improving governance we could potentially change the demographics of this country for the better. My paper argues that citizen participation is an essential component of good governance as it allows for more rational and informed decision-making according to the needs of the public. I also argue that initiatives taken by the government such as the 74th constitutional amendment, Delhi *Bhagidari* scheme and the Right to Information Act have all failed to achieve good governance. Hence India must bring in new reforms that allow for higher levels of citizen participation and higher public impact. I use secondary research along with interviews with stakeholders to arrive at the various issues plaguing the current system. Through interviews with Municipal officials, Resident Welfare Associations and Non-governmental organisations, I try to understand the gaps in the current system of governance and assess if the new models can fill these gaps.

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Introduction

From flooding of roads during monsoon to laws that are ineffectual, Indian governance has been under the spotlight in recent years. The corruption that plagues almost every level of the Indian government has made citizens cynical about the situation getting any better. Even for availing a simple license to set up shop, Indian citizens must navigate through a web of bureaucracy, which often results in massive costs in the form of time and money with no real result.

Recently, we have seen citizens start to be much more vocal about their opinions and needs. The strong support that was rallied for the Jan Lokpal Bill along with the various protests cropping up about different social issues such as women's rights and safety in cities, the need for a more transparent and efficient system of governance is becoming more evident.

Hence in my paper I argue that in order to improve its governance, India must incorporate more citizen participation in its political decision-making system. This is because

1) Citizen Participation improves governance
2) The reforms that India initiated have failed
3) New Models of citizen participation can fill the gap with what is needed

My paper is divided into three sections on the basis of my three arguments above.

In the first section, I define what I mean by good governance and how you can identify what good governance looks like. I then argue that citizen participation leads to good governance. An essential part of my paper is the categorization of citizen participation into different levels of participation that have different levels of public impact.

In my second section, I present the current system of citizen participation at the local level in urban areas i.e. the 74th amendment and critique its implementation in the Delhi NCT region. I argue that the 74th amendment has failed to achieve its decentralization objective. I also argue that other reforms by the government like the Delhi Bhagidari scheme and the Right to Information Act have failed to create a accountable and transparent system like was intended.

In the third section, I present innovative reforms that are taking place around the world and in different parts of India to increase public participation and I argue that these models resolve several of the issues that the current reforms fail to solve.

Throughout the paper, I also categorise the models presented to you whether current or prospective on the basis of where they fall on the spectrum of citizen participation to

emphasize that in order to have a larger public impact, citizen participation must move towards empowering the citizens.

Methodology

My research in this paper is largely secondary supplemented by primary data.

1) Citizen participation improves governance:

- I use secondary literature to define governance and the characteristics of good governance
- I also define citizen participation and the spectrum of public participation
- I use secondary literature to prove that citizen participation improves governance

2) The reforms initiated by the Indian Government have failed to achieve their goals

- I use secondary literature on the 74th amendment to highlight the shortcomings of the act and its implementation
- I use secondary data to argue that supporting reforms like the bhagidari scheme and the RTI Act have also failed to achieve their objectives
- I use my interviews with stakeholders to support my arguments and also highlight the overarching problems faced on the ground even in the face of such reforms.

3) New Models of citizen participation will be able to fill the gaps that are needed

- Using secondary literature I identify some innovative models of increasing citizen participation in governance
- I then analyze the models on the basis of their ability to resolve the issues identified by the stakeholders.

For my primary research I identified 4 stakeholders: Citizens, Resident Welfare Associations, Non-Governmental Organisations and ULB officials

I conducted semi-structured interviews with seven RWA members, three persons representing NGO/Advocacy groups and 2 people who worked with or for the Municipal Corporation of Delhi. My interviews with these stakeholders shed more light on the problems faced by various members of civil society with regards to local governance and also provided support for my argument.

My interview with RWA members was focused around the issues they face with the local governance bodies in their area and with citizen participation. The questions touched upon the structure of their respective RWAs to gauge their inclusiveness and impact on the community. Furthermore, I also proposed to them more participative structures and invited their views on the same in terms of feasibility and impact.

My research paper is not exhaustive in its identification of governance issues or of participative structures in India. It merely tries to suggest ways in which India can increase its citizen participation and improve governance. It does not address the logistical feasibility and implementation in India.

Citizen Participation improves Governance

Good Governance

Governance, in this paper, is defined not in the broad category of how decision-making occurs but specifically how governments conduct the decision-making process. Governance is defined as the process of political decision-making through which important policies and rules are implemented in a country. Governance lays down the basic institutional framework in a country within which citizens live their lives.

Good Governance is governance that seeks to promote the common good of its people. The common good of the people includes maintaining peace and security in society, providing public resources and services and promoting the prosperity of the people (Mundle et al 2012, 41).

Good Governance is built on certain values that try to ensure that the common good of the people is achieved. According to United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (UNESCAP), Good Governance has the following eight characteristics (UNESCAP 2013):

1) Participation: It may be direct or representative. Must be built on the freedom of association and expression.
2) Rule of Law: The Law must be impartial and must protect human rights especially those of the minorities.
3) Transparency: Necessitates proper flow of information between citizens and the government and requires that government follows rules and regulations in its working.
4) Responsiveness: Services must be provided to all stakeholders within a given timeframe.
5) Consensus Oriented: Long term plans must be created keeping in mind the interests of all in the society.
6) Equity and Inclusiveness: All groups must have equal opportunity to advance themselves.
7) Effectiveness and Efficiency: Sustainable use of resources to meet the needs of the citizens.
8) Accountability: All institutions both private ad public must be accountable to those citizens affected by them

As can be seen, several of the above states characteristics of good governance are heavily reliant on each other and this creates a complex scenario, which is extremely idealistic. However various steps can be taken to move into the direction of Good Governance and one of these steps is by making governance more participative.

Citizen Participation

Citizen Participation is the interactive deliberation among citizens, and between civil society and the government in order to affect political decision-making whilst maintaining transparency and accountability (Phillips and Orsini 2002, 3)

Public involvement can be broadly categorized into three ways of information exchange as has been illustrated in Figure 1. Public Participation would represent the highest level of involvement followed by public consultation and public communication (Rowe and Frewer 2005).

Figure 1
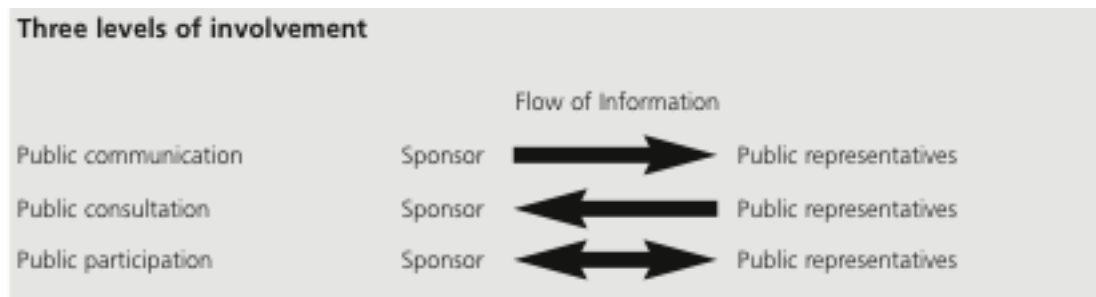
Public Communication is when the public is informed of the decisions taken by the government while public consultation is when the government seeks public input simply to gauge the interests and needs of the public on various issues. Both Public communication and consultation are largely one-way processes. However, public participation is a two-way flow of information where the citizens and government are in a responsive dialogue with each other regarding policies and information from both ends results in shaping of the political decision-making.

Similar to this broad categorisation, the International Association of Public Participation also categorises Public Participation as shown in Figure 2. It is divided into seven stages that progress towards greater public impact as indicated by the arrow:

Figure 2

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
• Seeks to keep the public informed	• Acknowledge Feedback & identify its effects	• Work with public • Create Alterante policies to address their issues	• Look to public for solutions	• Implementation of Public Decision
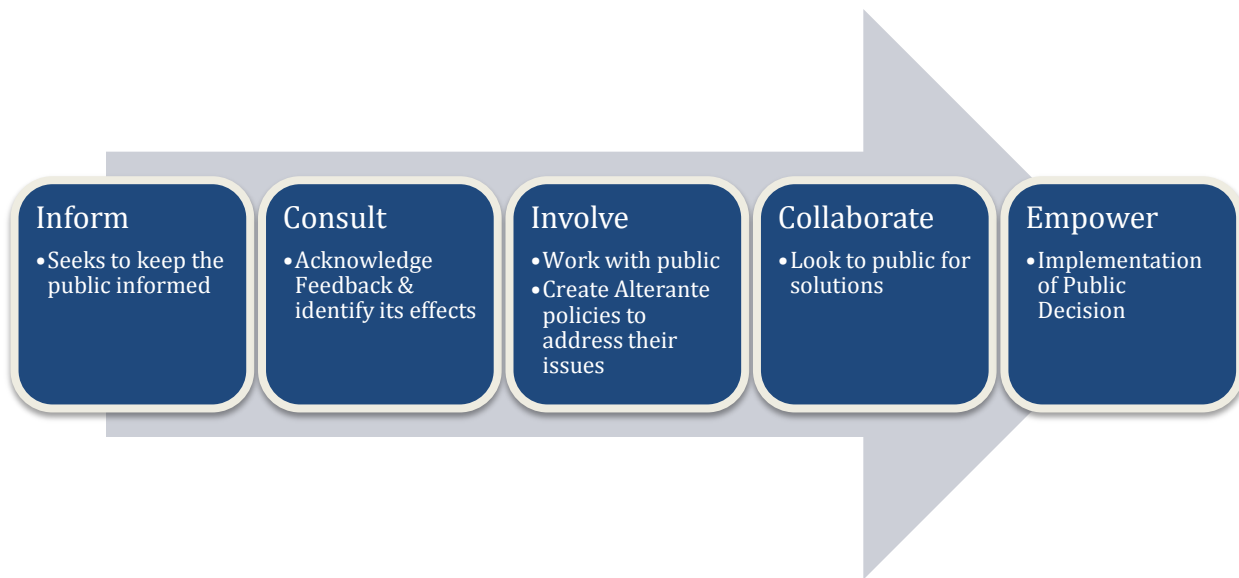
(International Association for Public Participation 2013)

As the involvement increases from inform to empower, so does the impact of their involvement on political decision-making. Hence citizen participation can be enacted at various different levels with varying impacts.

For the purposes of my paper, when I argue for an increase in citizen participation, I am referring to the move from a one-way public involvement to a two-way process or a move towards more collaborative and empowering governance. I will attempt to categorize the various models of public participation that are featured in this paper on the basis of these two categorizations.

Why more Citizen Participation?

Besides the fact that one of the characteristics of good governance is participation, citizen participation also helps realize its other characteristics such as accountability, transparency, consensus oriented governance etcetera. These characteristics have various economic, social and political benefits that create a positive feedback loop and improve governance in the country.

Due to the deliberative nature of citizen participation, more voices are involved in the decision-making process. This leads to more "informed, rational decisions" due to the variety of ideas and points of view that are exchanged in the process (Harris et al 2013, 203). This also leads to a decision that is more publicly oriented as compared to a decision that may be taken with the one sided knowledge of an individual's self-interest.

Taking an example of direct democracies ruled by the process of Referenda and Initiatives, the process of directly influencing policy decisions instils trust between the citizens and government. The citizens have more faith in the government because their feedback affects results of policymaking while the government has more faith in the citizens since they tend to be well-informed and participative when they can bring about real effect in the country (Frey 2003, 5). Furthermore, studies conducted in Canada have

shown that per capita incomes of cantons that had stronger structures of direct participation had higher levels of per capita incomes (Feld and Savioz 1997). Another study conducted reported that citizens in places with higher citizen participation reported higher level of wellbeing subjective to their understanding (Frey and Stutzer 1999)

Although this example is of a specific kind of participatory system, a large reason for the positive effects is the mutual trust between citizen and government that exists when there is more communication between the two parties. This would allow the citizens to hold governments accountable and make the officials more answerable to the citizens with no bureaucratic screens to hide behind.

However several arguments are made against the involvement of citizens in governance processes. Several authors argue that citizens are too emotional, too apathetic, too easily manipulated or just unaware of the intricacies of the issue in order to pass a rational and informative judgment (Frey 2003, 15). Although there may be some citizens who do indeed fit some of these aspects, if there is a structure in place that would allow citizens to affect real change, I would like to argue that citizens would be incentivized to gain more information regarding the issues at hand and think rationally to make informed decisions. Furthermore, in India, citizens have the right to vote for their representative that requires a similar thought process in order to make the right decision. I would go as far as to say that it is easier to be more informed about certain issues than to predict how an elected representative would act in office in order to make an informed decision.

The more economically and socially stable a country is and if the citizens are more trusting of each other and the government, the greater would be the participation. The trust between citizens and government would also incentivize them to work in a transparent and accountable manner under the rule of law. Hence I argue that increased citizen participation leads to good governance.

India's current structure is flawed

Acknowledging the existence of widespread corruption and lack of accountability to the citizens, the Government of India decided to devolve some of the power held by the state by creating a third tier in the system – governments at the Municipal level. This new tier had existed in various parts of the country before the government made it mandatory through the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments in 1993. These constitutional amendments were an important step in decentralizing governance and bringing it closer to the citizens. However the implementation of the act in Delhi and in other states has failed to resolve certain important issues. In the following section I argue that the provisions and poor implementation of the 74th amendment has led to its failure in decentralizing governance. I further discuss Delhi *Bhagidari* Scheme and the Right to Information Act that the government undertook to address transparency and accountability. I support my secondary research with the findings from my interviews with stakeholders.

74th Constitutional Amendment Act (CAA) in Delhi NCT

The 74th constitutional amendment was enacted by the Government of India because it felt that local bodies had become "weak and ineffective" due to various reasons like irregular elections and inadequate powers (India Code Legislative Department 2013). Similar to the 73rd amendment, which provides for Panchayati Raj institutions in rural areas, this amendment also demarcated the various institutions and processes that would facilitate proper functioning of the Urban Local Bodies (ULBs). However due to the vague and unclear nature of the amendment along with the injudicious implementation of this amendment, the results in Delhi NCT as well as certain other states has been less than desirable.

Currently the National Capital region of Delhi is divided into 12 zones that have been separated under Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) and Delhi Cantonment. These zones have been further divided into wards. There are 272 wards under the MCD, 8 under the Delhi Cantonment and 9 under the NDMC (2011 Census). Despite the creation of these Municipal bodies, various essential components of the Act are missing which has undermined the effectiveness of the Act in increasing citizen participation.

First, one of the main goals of the CAA is to decentralize governance. Besides the provision for Municipal corporations and councils, the 243S of the amendment also provides for Ward Committees. The amendment states that "there shall be constituted Ward Committees, consisting of one or more wards, within the territorial area of a Municipality having a population of three lac or more." (India Code Legislative Department 2013) The population of the Delhi NCT region was 1,67,53,235 according to the 2011 Census and there are only 12 Ward Committees in Delhi. This would place, on an average, 13,96,102 people under each Ward Committee. Such a massive population being governed by one Ward Committee misses the point of the 74th amendment that sought to bring governance closer to the citizens and understand their needs due to the closer proximity. Moreover, an interview with Ashutosh Dixit, the president of People's Action, revealed that the MCD is less than willing to comply with this requirement of Ward Committee. People's Action decided to create a Ward Committee much like that prescribed by the JNNURM for implementation of the 74th amendment where the Municipal councillors discussed issues and answered to certain members of the ward that they governed. However very few Municipal councillors took initiative and the proposal was not a success. Dixit argues that it is a structure like a Ward Committee where you involve the residents and allow them to ask questions of the councillors will the ULBs be held accountable and the governance will be transparent.

Second, the amendment also provides for the setting up of supplementary committees that would help the Municipalities and Ward Committees in drawing up plans and providing services to the public. These committees are the District Planning Committee and the Metropolitan Planning Committee. However as of October 2004, the National Institute of Urban Affairs found that there were no District Planning Committees or Metropolitan Committees operating in Delhi NCT area (Mathur 2007, 17-18). This allows ward councillors who are unaware of the needs on the grounds to create proposals on

their whims and fancies. These proposals are not reviewed by any residents of the ward or zone even though these affect the residents itself.

Third, the amendment states that the state legislatures "may, by law" provide the ULBs the authority to "levy, collect and appropriate" taxes and be financially autonomous (India Code Legislative Department 2013). The ULBs are supposed to share their funds among the Ward Committees according to the needs of the wards. However the ULBs in Delhi NCT have not been given enough freedom with certain revenue generating activities such as Property Taxation that have led to the ULBs having low finances (Shah and Bakore 2006, 5). The Municipality authorities have used this situation of low supply of funds and high demand to their own benefit. It has resulted in the rise of political clientelism where the funds are not distributed to wards on the basis of need but on the basis of the bargaining power of the councillors. This lack of finances was a shared concern among the stakeholders I interviewed. Amit Agarwal and Gurucharan Rai, both involved in the Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) of Vasant Kunj and West Delhi respectively, brought up the issue of the Municipal funds being directed towards undesirable projects i.e. those projects that did not meet the needs of the residents. Agarwal argued that in his experience he saw that funds were usually directed to the ward or RWA where the councillor had a supporter of his political party. Hence those councillors that can rally political support in their ward for a particular Municipal commissioner are given the funds (Sundar 2006, 37-38). This has resulted in a lot of inequalities between wards and has made some wards very poor in terms of Municipal services.

Finally, the 243W section of the amendment states that "the legislature of the state may, by law," devolve some of the powers to the Municipal bodies so as to allow them to be self-governing institutions that prepare plans and implement schemes relating to the various tasks that come under the Twelfth Schedule (India Code Legislative Department 2013). The Twelfth Schedule is a list of tasks that the ULBs must perform in the capacity provided to them by the State Government. These responsibilities are shared by Ward Committees according to the discretion of the Municipal bodies. However the roles of the Ward Committees have not been defined clearly, which has led to the lack of devolution of power to both the Municipal bodies and subsequently the Ward committees.

Hence the vague and unspecific nature of the 74th amendment along with the slack implementation by the government has led to its improper implementation. The amendment has not achieved its goal of decentralizing the government and increasing the proximity of the governance with the citizens but has rather increased the bureaucracy that the citizens must go through in order to avail of public services.

What is its Public Impact?

The Act, had it been implemented with the goal of creating a bridge between the government and citizens through Ward Committees with adequate representation, it would have qualified as a form of public participation according to Rowe and Freyer's definition. Since it allowed citizens to participate in Ward Committees and have their voices heard outside of a complaint redress system, it would have been participative. According to the IAPP spectrum, it would have qualified as a level of participative that 'Involve'(s) since it seeks to work with the public to serve them better. However, the implementation of the

act has rendered it purely a form of Public information where citizens are informed of decisions taken for them after they have been taken. It would also result in the act being classified as 'Inform' on the IAPP spectrum. What could have been a two-way dialogue has been rendered one-way. This has left the citizens cynical and the government unresponsive.

This has essentially reduced the accountability and transparency in the governance processes allowing various malpractices in the same. The government's need to amend the existence of bodies that have become "weak and ineffective" has not been realized (India Code Legislative Department 2013). This lack of effective results has led the government to adopt various other methods of increasing accountability and transparency and these have been the Delhi *Bhagidari* Scheme and the Right to Information Act.

Delhi *Bhagidari* Scheme

The *Delhi Government initiated the Bhagidari scheme in January 2000*. It sought to "devise institutional forms of citizen-government partnerships and increase efficacy of representational forms of participation." (Bhagidari 2006, 13) The term *Bhagidari* itself implies a collaborative partnership between citizens and the government.

Under the B*hagidari* scheme, the Chief Minister's office is responsible for interacting with citizens and resource mobilization however this task has now been devolved to the Deputy Commissioner (Bhagidari 2006, 14). Discussions in the form of a Large Group Interactive Environment (LGIE) are held between the government officials from various departments of the Municipalities and various citizens' associations like RWAs and the Market and Trade Assocations (MTAs). The meetings are held to discuss common issues being faced by the various parties in attendance and arrive at a consensus regarding the solution that can then be implemented.   The *Bhagidari* fund is also used for distributing information regarding the progress of various schemes and activities that are started under the *Bhagidari* scheme.

The Delhi NCT Government conducted a study in 2004 to check the progress of the *Bhagidari* scheme. Although most RWAs surveyed deemed the concept of *Bhagidari* good and several also reported improvements in public services, these benefits were not observed uniformly across the Delhi NCT region. As was seen by the responses, the improvements in services due to the *Bhagidari* scheme were observed most in Central Delhi and the least in East Delhi (Bhagidari 2006, 20). This indicates that there was a low involvement of the urban poor and squatter colonies that dominate the East Delhi region.

The Scheme has hence been largely criticized for being captured by the middle class RWAs and MTAs that don't necessarily represent several other factions of the population residing in Delhi NCT region (Lemanski and Lama-Rewal 2010, 5). Furthermore, since the *Bhagidari* scheme has been initiated, several new RWAs have popped up in the same residential areas hinting at the increasing politicization of the RWAs (Bhagidari 2006, 21). The scheme has been criticized for becoming a political tool that helps elevate certain *Bhagidars* and impacts those areas that are already developed and planned while ignoring the poorer areas that require funds (Bhagidari 2006, 21). The President of the RWA of Gaurav Apartments in Saket, B.S.S. Dixit supported this argument since he relayed to me that in order to get work done in his district he would need to communicate with the

heads of departments through his connections having worked in the government before. He often spoke directly to the Municipal Commissioner of Delhi if his letter applying for funds from *Bhagidari* for a certain project were denied.

Furthermore, since this scheme was an initiative by the Chief Minister Sheila Dixit, several tout it as a political move. Ashutosh Dixit firmly believes that the *Bhagidari* Scheme has been a way to placate the RWAs of Delhi and create a false sense of participation and engagement. The scheme has not yet laid out a structure that would facilitate the same interactions in the advent of a new government which points at its temporality and lack of a solid foundation.

What is its Public Impact?

The *Bhagidari* Scheme in its implementation falls in the Public Consultation category since the scheme acts as a portal for complaints, that too from mainly middle class RWAs. The Scheme has low public impact since it is largely consultative on the IAPP Spectrum. The scheme has not led to involvement of the residents, barring the politically inclined ones, in the decision-making processes of their residents.

Right to Information Act

The Right to Information Act was launched in 2005 to make the government more accountable and transparent to the Indian Citizens. The Act allows citizens to file applications asking for information regarding a public authority, the definition and limitations of which have been defined in the Act. The application if filed through the Public Information officer (PIO) and the response must be given within 30 days of the application. In the case that the response is unsatisfactory or delayed, the citizen can then appeal to the Appellation Committee who are also required to respond with their verdict within 30 days. However the implementation of the RTI has been less than ideal.

In a study conducted by the PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PWC) on the implementation of the RTI, they found that only 13% of the rural and 33% of the urban population was aware of the RTI in 2009 (PriceWaterhouseCoopers 2009, 6). This lack of awareness among citizens regarding a scheme that directly targets their involvement is large hurdle in this scheme ever achieving its goal of increasing accountability and transparency.

Furthermore, the public authorities under the RTI are responsible for proactively providing information that is frequently sought without the need of an application however 43% of the PIOs were unaware of this provision and 45% claimed that they had not been trained for the RTI (PriceWaterhouseCoopers 2009, 8). 26% of the citizens also claimed that they had to pay more than 3 visits to file an application and the behaviour of the staff was unhelpful in the process (PriceWaterhouseCoopers 2009, 7). Such poor service in RTI increases the citizens' costs of applying for information, some of which should have been readily available and hence discourages citizens from applying at all. When considering public services, since the cost of filing an RTI is individual but the benefits accrue to the group of residents, the individual has less of an incentive to file an RTI. An RWA might be

the solution to this since they do claim to represent their residents however given the lack of funds the RWA would not take up the filing of the RTI either.

Plus, the record keeping of public authorities has also not been timely and they have not implemented the use of Information-communication technology to make the process more efficient (Shreyaskar 2013, 19-20). This has resulted in 75% of the citizens studied being unsatisfied with the responses they got from the POIs (PriceWaterhouseCoopers 2009, 7). 47% of the citizens also reported that they had not received the response from the authorities within 30 days (PriceWaterhouseCoopers 2009, 9). Such poor implementation of the RTI that forces citizens to appeal to the appellation committees who have backlogs of several months only increases the costs of applying for information and reduces the trust in the working of the RTI and the government.

Without the citizens applying for information, the government departments and officials have no incentive to keep records of data and transactions, and indulge in ethical practices. Hence despite the existence of the RTI structure, it is the citizen participation that provides it with its strength to increase transparency and accountability. In order to increase citizen participation, the working of the RTI must be fixed.

What is its Public Impact?

RTI Act was intended to be Informative according to the IAPP Spectrum and Communicative on the Rowe and Freyer categorization. However due to the low awareness regarding the Act and the discouraging performance of the PIOs, the act has been struggling to perform even that role. It has had a low public impact according to IAPP as compared to other avenues that the Indian government could explore.

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Interviewers with Stakeholders

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In order to understand the problems faced by citizens and the stakeholders of governance at the local level, I decided to interview them. My interview with all seven of the RWA members indicated a one-way process of public involvement namely public consultation. The consensus between all the stakeholders interviewed was that due to the lack of funds with the RWA, they cannot affect change and hence have to look to ULBs who are also financially weak. The only function of the RWA seemed to be the redirecting of complaints and grievances of the residents towards the concerned government authority and ensure the problem is fixed. In return, the MCD seemed to only consult the public in terms of grievances and complaints where there is no guarantee for redress.

With regards to relationship of citizens and RWAs with their local government, the following were some of the issues raised in my interview:

No Need Based Projects: Gurucharan Rai brought up the disconnect that exists between the citizens and the local government which often results in projects being undertaken that do not comply with the needs of the residents in that specific area. Such projects are taken up in the locality without the approval or assistance of either the residents or the RWA and given the lack of finances, is extremely detrimental to citizens.

Bureaucratic Web: Citizens need to go through a web of bureaucracy in order to get complaint redress. Hence many RWAs choose to politicize and create connections with the MLA/MP of the district to circumvent the bureaucracy. Anita Bhargawa and Ashutosh Dixit were both of the view that politicians themselves are not the biggest hurdles for development since they would garner more votes if they presented a good policy and even if they didn't there still existed a mechanism to change them every 5 years. However it is the bureaucrats who have the incentive of indulging in malpractices since there is no effective performance measure that penalizes them or serves as a good check. The current structure as has been described above does not provide any circumventing of bureaucracy even in structures of the RTI.

Lack of interface (between citizen and government officials): Atul Asthana, who works with the government to eradicate slums in Delhi, pointed to the fact that the government does not invite participation of dialogue with citizens. Although some would say that *Bhagidari* does in fact create interface, given that the biggest benefiters of the scheme have been upper middle class RWAs who do not represent every member of their residence, this interface is moot. 6 out of the 7 RWA representatives I spoke to considered more involvement of the citizens and interface with the government necessary and important for bringing about proper development.

These three issues directly affect the citizens and arise due to the inadequacies of the current structure. They create a cynicism among citizens regarding any sort of reform of the system. It also results in them withdrawing from any participation further. Since the poorer sections of society are much more dependent on government services and provisions, they would choose to be more involved however the structures to cater to the poorest sections as has been seen from the *Bhagidari* scheme. Moreover, those who can function daily without looking towards the government choose to not vote or engage with the government despite the presence of structures albeit faulty ones. This cynicism and further withdrawal from engagement with government officials coupled with the issues discussed above perpetuate the lack of accountability and transparency that already exists in the structure.

Lack of accountability and transparency: This creates a positive feedback loop where if the structure of governance itself does not provide citizens the possibility of keeping a check on the bureaucrats, the structure will be corrupt which will further de-incentivise any attempts at structural reform from the side of the public.

Hence in order to create a system of governance, the current systems should definitely be strengthened and the legislature should specify a structure where citizens can participate in a dialogue with the government, circumvent bureaucracy and demand need-based projects. While the current systems of *Bhagidari*, RTI and the 74th amendment can be reformed to improve their provisions according to the needs stated above, in the next section I will present to you certain other innovative forms of public participation that have been implemented around the world and in India.

Reforms can resolve current issues

In this section I suggest certain models that have been adopted in various regions of the world and on various levels of the government. The models have been categorized on the basis of where they fall on the citizen participation spectrum defined by the IAPP mentioned earlier to assess if they would be able to provide a higher public impact.

Participatory Budgeting

Participatory Budgeting offers a format where local governments incorporate citizens into the budgetary process for their locality. The structure allows the citizens the power to vote on proposed projects for their locality and increases their stake in local governance.

This type of citizen participation takes advantage of the decentralized government structure by creating a budget more responsive to the needs of the locality. Such a structure has been instated in several regions of the world in various capacities.

How is it organized?

- Citizens of the locality or Municipality are invited to regional meetings where they are provided with the technical and financial information required to make an informed decisions about their budget (Wampler and Avritzer 2004, 299).
- Each Municipality is allotted a budget out of which the head authority of the region decides the percentage of the total budget that would be under public control.
- Citizens then discuss within themselves to plan and prioritize the budgetary needs of their neighbourhood. They also elect a representative for their locality (Wampler and Avritzer 2004, 300).
- These plans and proposals are then presented and put to a vote and implemented by the regional authorities within a time frame.

What issues does it resolve?

- Need-based projects: The public nature of the process and the time frame within which plans are to be implemented allows the public to witness the outcome of its governance and participation.
- Bureaucratic Web: Participatory Budgeting would reduce the cost both in time and money that it takes to get a project implemented in the locality since a part of the budget would be directly in the hands of the public.
- Interface between government and citizens: It would increase interface since the budgeting process would allow the officials to work with the citizens and understand the needs of the locality. Since the meetings would also be public, other citizens not involved in the budgeting process would be able to attend the meetings and voice their opinions.
- Accountability and transparency: For countries like India, where the decision-making process is plagued by clientelism, the public nature of the proceedings and budgetary process allow the public to see how the funds are being allocated, making the system more transparent. If a citizen approved plan is not

implemented by the Municipality then the citizen has the right to inquire regarding the reasons for it not being implemented thereby increasing accountability.

These together instil a trust between the government and citizen and create a sense of community, which increases citizen participation (Ebdon and Franklin 2006, 441). The process also teaches citizens about the budgeting process. The study done by participatory publics showed that after the implementation of the Participatory Budgeting, more people claimed to receive services and less people reported having to use political connections for the same (Wampler and Avritzer 2004, 305-306).

What are its shortcomings?

- Like any participatory reform, the system requires the will of the local authorities and concerned bureaucrats.
  The study conducted by Expanding accountability studies Porto Alegre, Recefe and Sao Paulo and observed that while the Municipal commission in Porto Alegre allowed the public to deliberate on the entire budget; in Recife only 10% of the budget was put up for public deliberation and there was no guarantee for prioritization of the citizens' suggested plans. Furthermore Sao Paulo Municipal authorities were against the devolution of power and hence the system of participatory budgeting was ineffectual (Wampler 2004, 88,91,94).
- Unless a proper system of Participatory Budgeting is put in place, the structure can become informative and consultative as opposed to participative. Hence the medium of interaction between the authorities and the public must include focus groups, public meetings and citizen advisory committees in conjunction so as to prevent a one-way system of involvement.
- It is the stake of the citizens in the process that gives the structure its power and hence CSOs must create awareness for the need for face-to-face deliberation.

Despite the various shortcomings, if the Participatory Budgeting structure is implemented properly it can bring about amazing turnaround for various localities and even in the case of weak implementation, it provides the CSOs with a voice.

What is its Public Impact?

Participatory Budgeting can be categorized as Public Participation and falls on 'Empower' on the IAPP spectrum since it allows citizens to take decisions regarding their regional budget and the Municipalities are merely expected to implement these decisions. Hence Participatory Budgeting would have a high public impact.

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Referendums and Initiatives

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Referendums and Initiatives (R&I) are the system of direct democracy where the citizens are allowed to vote for a particular policy or law and the majority rule is instated. In a country like India, where elections occur every 5 years and the representatives cater to special interest groups that fund their campaign, the voice of the citizen is often not represented. Hence R&I provide "a political mechanism to ensure that citizens' voices can provide a counterbalance to a legislature unresponsive to people's interests." (Bhushan and Marlena 2012, 35)

Switzerland was the country to first implement the system of R&I as far back as 1848. Now there are approximately thirty six countries who implement it at the national level and various others that implement it at the state or regional level (Bhushan and Marlena 2012, 34).

The R&I is important in communicating the voice of the people to the government and intervening to create reforms where the representative themselves do not have an initiative to do so such as reforms in governance laws.

Several arguments are often raised in opposition to such a system of direct democracy. Writers question the competence of the citizens in making direct decisions about policies however this doubt is easily debunked by stating the fact that citizens make decisions about choosing the leaders of the country and supplementing R&I with informative campaigns can easily fix any lack of knowledge. Furthermore, such a directly democratic process that relies on majority ruling could put minority interests at risk however this caveat can also be resolved by certain conditions where the R&I must conform to certain constitutional rights and ideas.

How does it work?

Referendum:

- Citizens who want to put up a policy or law for direct vote can collect signatures of a pre-specified percentage of the electorate.
- The policy or law is then put up for a direct vote of the entire electorate.
- The majority ruling in favour or against the repealing of the law is then held as binding and must be obeyed by the government (Bhushan and Marlena 2012, 34).

Initiatives:

- The people draft a proposal for a law or a policy.
- Signatures in support of the bill from a pre-specified percentage of the electorate are required.
- The bill is put to a direct vote of the entire electorate.
- If the majority supports the bill, the government instates it.
- Sometimes the bill is amended and reviewed by the parliament before being put up for a direct vote (Bhushan and Marlena 2012, 35).

What issues does it resolve?

- Need-Based Projects: Since the public decides on the laws and policies, only those proposals that the public deems as necessary are approved.
- Bureaucratic Web: The citizens do not have to go through a chain of bureaucrats to have their voice heard, a simple vote takes care of that.
- Accountability and Transparency: Since the decision is being taken directly by the electorate and not being swayed by a specific interest group lobby, the decisions are more representative. If a specific law is not passed despite gaining popular support, the citizens can questions their leaders as to why it was not passed.

Furthermore, studies have shown that elections that have referendums have higher voter turnouts possibly due to the belief that citizen participation would indeed affect change

(Smith et al 2007). Certain studies conducted in Switzerland and US also conclude that in regions that hold R&I, the citizens are more politically informed.

What are its shortcomings?

- Requires a structure to be put in place by the government itself
- This structure requires the setting up of an independent body that would frame questions in an unbiased manner and that would be answerable with a Yes/No (Bhushan and Marlena 2012, 36).
- Laws would need to be instated regarding the funding of campaigns such that electorate decision isn't misled by the highly funded campaign of a particular interest group (Bhushan and Marlena 2012, 37).

What is its Public Impact?

Referendum and Initiative is the form of a direct democracy and falls on the 'Empower' on the spectrum. Citizens vote directly to affect policies and changes in political decision-making. Hence R&I has a high public impact.

Tax Payer's Choice

In India, the proportion of Indians who pay tax is just a small proportion of its total population. This is because India has a high level of tax evasion. The two main reasons for tax payer dissatisfaction which in turn leads to tax evasions is that the tax paid by an individual provides collective benefit to all and that tax is imposed and is not a voluntary choice (Lamberton 2012, 2).

By allowing citizens a voice in how their payments to the government are allocated, the government can help increase citizen satisfaction and reduce tax evasion.

How does it work?

- Taxpayers receive a receipt in return for their payment.
- They can then allocate a predetermined amount of their tax to the various expenditure categories provided on the tax receipt.
- The planning committees then approve the tax allocations.

The study was conducted that found that providing citizens with the choice of allocating their payments especially if they are not by volition increases satisfaction more than when they are merely informed of the benefits their taxes will go towards (Lamberton 2012, 3). The study also found that the tax rate on individuals did not overwhelm the satisfaction incurred by choice (Lamberton 2012, 16).

What issues does it resolve?

- Need based projects: Since tax allocation will partly be in the hands of the citizens, the allocation may be more need based and less swayed by the lobbying of special interest groups.
- Accountability and transparency: Since citizens have a voice in the system of tax allocation, any allocations that are not approved or overturned by the planning

committees can be questioned and the committee would be required to defend their decision.

Furthermore, this system also provides the citizens with a sense of agency that would reduce reactance and helps align the preferences of the citizens with the needs of the community (Lamberton 2012, 2-3).

What are its shortcomings?

The system requires the citizens to –

1) Make trade offs between various allocations, which they are naturally averse to (Lamberton 2012, 8).
2) It requires a base knowledge and numerical fluency in order understand the amount of money being allocated and its possible impact (Lamberton 2012, 8).
3) It also requires the government will to create such a provision and it is not something civil society can enact on its own.

What is its Public Impact?

This structure would be considered collaborative on the IAPP spectrum since it allows the citizens to directly have a voice in how their tax money is spent for societal issues. Hence it has the potential to have a high public impact if implemented correctly.

VoterMedia

In order to create a participative democracy, we also require citizens who are well informed about the issues at hand and can hence make judgments based on unbiased information. This information should ideally be available by governments themselves however since the goals of the government are often not directly aligned with those of the citizens, we look towards the media and the news to provide us with information on the current issues.

One way in which the quality of citizen participation, whether voting for the national elections or voting for a budget in the local committee meeting, can be increased is by making sure that they receive quality information. Since voting is a collective action, and individuals do not have the incentive to go out of their way to procure in-depth knowledge about every issue, they often make 'sub-optimal' decisions that may hurt them; this is where news providers come in (Latham 2007, 3).

If citizens are allowed to incentivize the news providers to provide truthful and valuable information, the quality of the democracy can improve. One model for such incentive creation is VoterMedia. It is a structure where voters are allowed to decide how public funds would be allotted to specific media outlets based on their content and reputation.

How does it work?

This model can be structured and manipulated for various levels of news providers however the following is the basic structure (Latham 2012, 5) –

1) The interested news providers would participate in a 'competition' to win voter interest through their content.
2) A vote would be held, separate or paired with another election, where citizens cast their votes on how much of a certain amount of money must be awarded to each contestant on the basis of their content and reputation.
3) The news providers would be allotted their funds depending on the majority vote.

This structure would allow voters to fund various news providers hence creating a system of check and balances. This would also create a competitive atmosphere that would incentivize the news providers to not only provide the best information but also refrain them from expressing biased opinions; instead their information would try to target the median voter to gain the most votes.

Such a system can be used in decentralized structures like participatory budgeting to spread awareness and dissipate information about the processes and the budget. The news and media would hence be incentivized to create more discussion around it. Furthermore if the vote for the news providers were coupled with the vote for the budget, the news providers would be motivated to target those who participate in Participatory budgeting process.

What issues does it resolve?

Public determination of Media funding incentivizes the media to highlight the various issues regarding corruption and bad governance practices. It can shine a spotlight on the siphoning of funds, corruption of bureaucrats, bad government services and other malpractices occurring in society. Hence a system like VoterMedia can lead to

- Need based projects: When voters are more aware regarding the policymakers and their proposed projects, they can make an informed decision regarding which candidate to support
- Accountability and Transparency: The politicians would also be incentivised to promote their policies on the basis of its merit rather than opt for the route of paid news and misinforming citizens about their proposed plans.

What are its shortcomings?

The process of public funding of Media may not prove to be very useful if the amount of money that the news providers receive from specific government departments or political candidates for their support is more than the funds allotted by the public funding process. Hence the system must create structure more appealing than paid news.

What is its public impact?

The concept of VoterMedia creates a structure where citizens are asked about their opinion on how they want to be informed. Hence such a structure would 'Involve' the citizens and work with them to create a more informed structure that would directly affect the decisions that they make.

Citizen Monitoring

Another method through which citizens can be included in the governance process is by acting as checks on the government by creating citizen-monitoring systems. These citizen-monitoring systems would create not only a standard by which the performance of the particular government service is measured but also provide feedback on the same.

Performance management is essential in order to assess whether the outcomes of your service meet the intended goal. This is similar to how corporate institutions especially those that serve consumers like to incorporate consumer feedback through questionnaires and surveys in order to increase their customer satisfaction. However due to the monopolistic nature of government services, the governments tend to forego citizen feedback (Paul 1993, 290).

Since citizens depend on the government for important and essential services and resources, citizen satisfaction is essential for good governance. Hence a government can and should incorporate citizen feedback by keeping them informed about the department standards and allowing them to assess whether the department meets its goals.

How is it organized?

Citizen monitoring can be organized in several ways depending on which department the citizens are monitoring. However for good governance every department that comes under the purview of the government must have citizen monitoring at some level. The following are the basic steps that would be involved in a citizen monitoring system (Ho and Coates 2004, 32):

- Citizens must be informed or must learn about the various duties and responsibilities of the government departments so as to create performance markers.
- Citizens would then identify important elements of the public service that are essential in their satisfaction.
- These elements are then converted into measurable indicators and citizen feedback surveys are compiled.
- Data is collected from citizens and presented to the respective government departments.

The citizen feedback allows governments to assess what parts of their services are most important to their customers and they can change their department goals accordingly. They can also create more realistic and achievable goals for themselves.

I learnt about a similar structure that is being implemented in Punjabi Bagh or Ward 103 in Delhi. The structure, which is being implemented by Anita Bhargawa who works for the MCD Councillor, is similar to the one stated above where the citizens score various local services like sanitation, maintenance of the local parks etc. on a scorecard created by the team of MCD. Every locality in the ward gets a score for each service and rewards are given to the areas with the best performance. This creates a performance-based incentive to increase the score of your locality and motivates people to monitor the locale more closely.

What issues does it resolve?

A study was conducted by Samuel Paul to measure citizen satisfaction with quality of government services and the costs associated with availing services in Bangalore. The surveys were conducted before the Citizen Report Cards were started in Bangalore in 1994 and after the third report card was collected in 2003.

It was found that the middle-income household satisfaction with public services increased by 40% while slum household satisfaction increased by 70% between 1994 and 2003. In both cases the level of corruption or bribes paid decreased and the satisfaction with the behaviour of the staff increased. There was no significant change in income or economy during the period (Paul 2006, 335-7).

Such citizen monitoring improves citizen satisfaction with the government through the following:

- Need based projects: Since the citizens provide feedback to the government services regarding their projects, it can result in the government using this feedback to channel its funds into projects are more need based.
- Bureaucratic Web: In order to file complaints or disapproval of certain government services, the citizen monitoring and report cards allow the public to circumvent grievance portals and directly communicate with government departments.
- Interface between citizens and government: Allows for a responsive dialogue between citizens and government departments about their performance.
- Accountability and transparency: Since the government services come under the criticism of the citizens and the reports are made easily available to other levels of the government and media, the departments are under added pressure to improve their performance.

The added pressure also motivates the government to take their own initiative in scoring themselves evidenced by the creation of a 'Bangalore Agenda Task Force' by the newly elected Chief Minister of Bangalore months after the second citizen report card was issued (Paul 2006, 339).

What are its shortcomings?

- Lack of bureaucratic will since the government departments could choose to not reform their system even in light of feedback from citizens

Furthermore, reforming government services takes some time since it is heavily dependent on government funding. Given the long-term nature of the reform, it would prove challenging to keep the citizens interested in monitoring the services.

What is its public impact?

Citizen Monitoring would qualify as a form of public consultation or 'Consult' on the IAPP spectrum since it involves the government department seeking feedback from the citizens. However it is different from other methods of consultation since the citizens circumvent the bureaucratic web and are also in charge of creating the measures depending on what elements of the service are most important to them.

Role of Citizen Society Organisations

In order to implement structures of citizen participation, the citizens must be informed and motivated to participate in such structures. This is where the role of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) becomes imperative for the success of the implementation of these suggested models.

Although in the case of 4 out of the five models suggested, the structure for participation must be provided or supported to a large extent by the government, these structures would be ineffective if the citizens aren't aware of them or if the citizens participating are the ones with only a special or vested interest thus skewing the results towards minorities. Hence in such cases, CSOs like Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and advocacy groups play the role of facilitators. Since CSOs also have a vested interest in increasing citizen participation in governance and can often specialize in the various ways of increase participation, the CSOs can offer invaluable logistical, technical and structural support and expertise to the governments implementing models. CSOs can also rally citizens and inform them about the need for their participation and the knowledge that is needed to make the optimal choice for themselves and the community.

Janwani is one such NGO that facilitated the implementation of the participatory budgetary model in Pune. Before the participation of Janwani, the Municipal Corporation of Pune had already implemented the budgeting model however they soon realized that citizens lack the know-how to design effective plans or were not motivated to participate. However Janwani arranged workshops for awareness and increased the participation in the model. The increased participation eventually led to a higher percentage of the budget being allotted to the citizens (Janwani 2013).

Hence although citizen participation is essential for improving governance, the lack of current citizen participation creates a gap in the logical solution and this gap is filled by CSOs.

Conclusion

As I have argued, Citizen Participation is not only a necessary characteristic of good governance but it also helps resolve issues of accountability and transparency; makes the

public services and government officials more need-based, allows the citizens to circumvent bureaucracy and creates an interface for the citizens to communicate with the government.

Citizen participation has been shown to have several economic, social and political benefits. It requires citizens to stay informed about various prevalent issues in their society and form their own views in an unbiased manner. It also allows citizens to see how their views and decisions would affect other people in the community.

New reforms are required because the current decentralization practices in India are flawed and inadequate. The 74th amendment has not been implemented properly. Instead of improving public services for those who most need it, it has bred political clientelism and bureaucratic malpractices. Additionally the Delhi *Bhagidari* scheme and the Right to Information Act, which were created to ensure that citizens could act as checks on the bureaucrats, have also not achieved their objectives. Hence I suggest new models being practiced around the world that could possible be adopted in India.

While the 74th amendment, *Bhagidari* scheme and the RTI remained largely one-way mechanisms of communication, mainly of consultations and complaint redress, I argue that new models that venture into higher levels of public participation and higher public impact would solve various issues currently faced by stakeholders.

Participatory Budgeting, and Referendum & Initiatives are models where the government is empowered. The citizens take their own decision regarding policies and proposals either at the national or local level and the government then implements these decisions.

Taxpayer's Choice is a model that sees to collaborate with citizens. There are several issues of social and economic importance prevalent in India today. By allowing citizens the choice to have some say in how their tax money is allocated to resolving these issues, the government can allow citizens who witness the issues on the ground to make an informed decision.

Models like VoterMedia and Citizen Monitoring are models where the citizen might not be making a direct policy decision but is facilitating better governance by participating in subsidiary sectors of information delivery and performance assessment respectively. The first one involves citizens in determining how they want to be informed about policies while the second model allows citizens to score government services for better future delivery.

Hence, India must incorporate higher levels of citizen participation to have a higher public impact from its finances and services. After all, it is the citizens who know best about what they need and it is time the government listened.

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