



Environmental Social
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Participate in a workshop on

Ward Committee Roles and Responsibilities for a Greener, Cleaner, Safer, Water secure and Healthy Bengaluru

Thursday, 22nd May 2014, 10.00 am - 4.00 pm

at

Environment Support Group - Training Centre

1575, Intermediate Ring Road, Banashankari 2nd Stage, Bangalore 560070

Why this workshop:

Bengaluru is increasingly becoming an unaffordable and difficult city to live in. Never ending traffic congestion, expensive public transportation, garbage lying everywhere, no water in taps, borewells running dry, lakes getting polluted (even disappearing overnight), heat, noise and air pollution everywhere, rampant tree felling has become a feature of every neighbourhood. Women, children and senior citizens feel rather unsafe going about the city, and it has become impossible for children to play safely on streets or cycle. In addition, housing and education has become unaffordable for the poor and also for the middle classes. Yet enormous wealth is being generated in the city, evident in the massive explosion of apartments and housing estates, commercial complexes, public infrastructure and so on. But this is benefiting only a section of the population.

People everywhere are looking for change and willing to work to drastically improve civic administration and ensure a better quality of life for all. But there does not seem to be any major effort to improve the way our city is governed and made to work for all. Is there a way out of all this? In fact there is.

A key guarantee of the Karnataka Municipal Corporation Act, 1976 and the Nagarapalika Act, 1992 is that Ward Committees involving local residents headed by the Corporator must become the basic functional unit of civic governance. These statutory Committees have to constantly involve local people in overseeing many aspects of civic administration and governance and making democracy truly work for the people. The Ward Committee is also empowered to oversee important civic functions such as solid waste management, road safety, protection and conservation of lakes, greening neighbourhoods, slum upgradation, overall environmental management, upkeep of public properties, protecting and managing parks, playgrounds, civic amenity areas, etc. Most importantly, Ward Committees are required to develop a 5 year Ward Vision Plan, and also develop budgets to support the activities, based on consultation with local residents.

Various Governments in Karnataka failed to act in fulfilling this progressive legal requirement since 1992. The result has been increased intransparency in civic administration, massive mismanagement of urban affairs and colossal losses to public exchequer due to corruption. One indication of this awful state of affairs is garbage lying everywhere unattended, and that even after enormous expenditure is incurred by BBMP to render this critical environmental and public health service.

The Karnataka High Court acknowledged the critical importance of Ward Committees in addressing poor civic administration and issued directions¹ to the Karnataka Government, in January 2013, to immediately constitute them in

1 These directions were issued in a PIL filed by Environment Support Group and ors., W.P. No. 46523/2012 and other



every ward of Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike. Complying, members to the Committees were appointed, but they could not work as Rules to make them functional were not framed. It was only in March 2014 that Ward Committee Rules were finalised. It is now only a matter of time for Ward Committees to become functional and act in responding to peoples needs and demands.

Making decentralised governance work for all is only possible if Ward Committees function efficiently, effectively and with absolute transparency. This is a major step forward and we need to take it with a lot of responsibility, care and a vision that comprehends short term and long term needs of the Ward.

What you gain by participating in the workshop:

Towards assisting in making Ward Committees work democratically and genuinely for all local residents, Environment Support Group is organising a workshop on 22nd May 2014 (Thursday), a day that is also commemorated as **World Biodiversity Day**. Corporators, Ward Committee Members, Administrators, Engineers, Lawyers, Researchers, Students, Naturalists, Urban Planners, Limnologists and just about anyone keen to make their Ward Committee work is welcome to this workshop. A variety of resource material will be made available for participants and the workshop will be based on interactive sessions drawing upon best practices from cities around the world. The workshop will help participants in appreciating various possibilities towards making neighbourhoods safe, functional for all and culturally and economically vibrant spaces.

The workshop will also specifically address how streets can be made safe, traffic movement improved, lakes and parks protected, garbage managed and composted to make valuable manure, water conserved in every household, every street, open space and building greened to improve biodiversity value and reduce energy demands – all this by making Ward Committees working with local residents without the need for any foreign expert or investment. The workshop will help participants appreciate how such efforts will incrementally add up to making Bangalore a true leader in people centred planning and governance.

While we would not want to charge any participant, we would suggest a voluntary contribution of Rs. 500/participant to help us cover the costs of the workshop.

If you would like to participate in the workshop, please fill out the attached form and send it to shashi@esgindia.org. We would request only those who will participate for the entire workshop to register. For clarification call on 080 26713559 ~ 61.

With best wishes,

Shashikala Iyer, Davis Thomas, Pushpalatha, Prashanth, Mallesh K. R., Bhargavi S. Rao and Leo F. Saldanha
Environment Support Group