

# **Slum Sanitation in Pune**

**A Case Study**

**by**

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### **Introduction**

This case study looks at a major experiment carried out in Pune city, the educational and cultural capital of the State of Maharashtra. Pune is 120 miles away from Mumbai and has a population of 28 lakhs, of whom about 40% live in slums. About two years ago, a new Municipal Commissioner, Ratnakar Gaikwad, was appointed and he began a massive programme of building toilets in slums through community participation by giving contracts to non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The case study seeks to describe the way in which the programme was implemented and draw lessons for urban governance.

### **The Context**

In Indian cities, the local bodies – Slum Boards, Housing Authorities, Development Authorities and Municipal Corporations – are charged with the responsibility of building toilet blocks and maintaining them in slums. However, the number of toilet blocks built in any year does not seem to be based either upon an assessment of need according to population or available budgetary resources. The requirements are much larger than what is planned but even so, allocated resources often remain underutilized. The traditional method of building toilet blocks has been for the Corporation to estimate the cost of construction according to a government-prepared schedule of rates and then call for tenders from contractors. The engineering wings of local bodies have largely dealt with these matters and there has rarely been any community participation. For example, the issues of location of the toilets, their design, agencies for physical construction and maintenance are matters that have been decided by municipal bureaucracies without reference to the communities concerned.

Municipal Corporations have ‘Conservancy’ Departments whose duty it is to clean and maintain toilet blocks, drains, streets and so on. However, it has been widely recognized that this staff is usually remiss in its duties and hence the toilets soon fall into disrepair and disuse. Since the local community does not have any control over the sanitation staff, the latter do not respond to their concerns. Often, communities have to pay additional money to the same workers to persuade them to clean the toilets – the job they are in fact paid to do. Municipal bureaucracies are large and cumbersome, making the job of supervisory staff very difficult and attempts to impose discipline almost invariably fail. Slum dwellers themselves are left out of all decision-making processes regarding the toilets and have, therefore, no sense of ownership of them. Local bodies have traditionally seen the toilet blocks as their property and no effort has been made to involve communities even in maintenance. Moreover, the quality of construction is frequently poor, the availability of water is limited, sometimes there is no access to drainage and most often,

there is no garbage dumping area. The toilet areas become the dumps and all these problems add to the early deterioration of the few working toilets in the city.

The consequences of this way of doing things are there for all to see: in most of our cities, there are few operational toilet blocks and people perforce have to squat and defecate in the open. The sight of bare behinds along railway tracks and other public spaces is a common experience in the city. Women often have to wait till it is dark to perform these natural functions to protect their modesty. As a result, gastric disorders are widespread amongst them. Children squat anywhere and everywhere and human excreta are spread all over the place. These insanitary conditions and environmental hazards take their toll upon the health of the poor. The links between public sanitation and public health are well established.

One of the responses to this situation has been for charitable trusts and other organizations to build 'pay and use' toilets. In many cities, there are agencies who function as contractors, construct sanitation facilities and appoint caretakers, whose job it is to keep the facilities clean. User charges help in paying salaries and buying the necessary materials. This type of arrangement works well at large concourses like railway stations, bus stops and the like. However, it is doubtful whether this is a workable solution in slums because of the high cost of using the toilet – usually Re. 1 per use per person. A family of five would have to spend Rs.150 a month to access these toilet blocks and this is not affordable for the majority of the urban poor. And if a family has diarrhoea, a sizable portion of their daily earnings will go down the drain. As in the case of sanitary blocks built by governmental authorities or local bodies, the question of community participation in 'pay and use' toilets does not arise.

Thus far, we have had these two models of providing and maintaining toilets blocks in slums: the Corporation approach, which is led by engineers and contractors, results in early deterioration and disuse and the 'pay and use' approach, which is not sustainable in slums on account of its high cost. In the former case, slum dwellers are not expected to pay anything at all when they use the toilets though in some cities, they are expected to pay a general tax for the facilities they are given. However, even if public sanitation is free, it is not of much use because it is hardly functional. In the latter case, people cannot afford to use the toilets on a long-term basis. It was in recognition of this sorry state of affairs that Ratnakar Gaikwad started exploring other options.

### **A new beginning**

In an interview with the author, he said, "*When I first came to Pune, my grandfather used to stay in Vishrantwadi and there used to be long queues before the toilet block there every morning.... I used to stand in that queue and so have personal experience of using a public toilet myself.*" He went on to add: "*When I was Additional Municipal Commissioner in Mumbai, I got*

*involved with the Slum Sanitation Programme and interacted with many NGOs.....Toilets are a basic facility required by everybody and especially by poor people....this facility is a must from a human resources development point of view .”*

Since 1992, only 22 ‘pay and use’ toilet blocks had been built in the city, annual expenditure never going beyond Rs.20 or Rs.25 lakhs.<sup>1</sup> A decision was taken to construct 220 toilet blocks with about 3500 toilet seats through NGOs in 1999-2000. This was to be the first phase of the programme. On completion of the second phase (planned for another 220 blocks between November 2000 and January 2001), more than 400 blocks or more than 10,000 toilet seats would be constructed at a cost of more than Rs.40 crores and benefiting more than 5 lakh slum dwellers if we assume that 50 persons can use a toilet seat on a given day. The expenditure incurred on the first phase was Rs.22.5 crores<sup>2</sup> or about a hundred times what was spent in any preceding year. The second phase would cost about the same. About half the sums spent are expected to be recovered as subsidy from the Housing and Urban Development Corporation(HUDCO), a public sector company, and from the Government of Maharashtra.

Advertisements were issued in the newspapers inviting NGOs to come forward and make bids for building toilets. They were expected to quote at less than the cost estimated by the Municipal Corporation; moreover, the 15% implementation fees that were charged by the agency that had been given the contract for the previous several years was disallowed. The rationale was that NGOs were not profit-oriented and hence could do the job with less money. A guarantee was also to be given that the NGO and the community would maintain the toilet block for 30 years by collecting contributions from the community. On receipt of the bids, the list of NGOs was scrutinized with reference to their past history and their potential, and 8 NGOs were selected to carry out the first phase of the programme.

### **Implementation and Monitoring**

According to official statistics, there are 503 slum pockets in Pune out of which only 348 are declared/notified under law. Yet the programme was not restricted to only those slums. The criterion of the Government of Maharashtra that only those slum dwellers are protected who can establish their presence as of 1/1/95 was applied. Those settlements were selected where the majority of residents fulfilled the criterion. First priority was given to those settlements with a minimum population of 500 but had no toilet facilities; second priority was for areas which had facilities but they were so dilapidated that they would need demolition and reconstruction and finally, the last priority was for those slums where there were toilets but in less than the prescribed ratio of 1 seat for 50 persons.

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<sup>1</sup> 1 lakh = 100,000

<sup>2</sup> 1 crore = 100 lakhs

The Municipal Commissioner would himself hold a weekly meeting to monitor the progress of the work and deal with any impediments. All the NGOs, community representatives and the relevant staff of the Corporation would attend these meetings. The message went out loud and clear to subordinates that this programme had the highest priority and, as a result, people worked day and night to complete the programme in a few months.

### **The experience of SPARC, NSDF and MM**

The author of this case study works with one of the NGOs selected and has been involved with the project from inception. In the course of writing this case study, he had an opportunity to interview some of the NGOs, community representatives, the former Commissioner and other officers. The case study focuses upon our experience. It will be inappropriate for this writer to comment upon the work of other NGOs but suffice it to say that the extent to which different NGOs had roots in the communities varied. In at least one case, it turned out that the NGO was actually a front for a contractor and had absolutely no roots in the communities.

Here, we would like to describe our approach. Society for Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC), the NGO with whom the author is associated, is based in Mumbai and works closely with two people's organizations. National Slum Dwellers Federation (NSDF) is made up of pavement and slum dwellers from more than 34 towns and cities in India and Mahila Milan (MM) is a network of women's collectives organized around savings and credit. The goal of the alliance of SPARC, NSDF and MM is to obtain housing and infrastructure for the urban poor by building the capacities of the urban poor themselves so that they might negotiate their entitlements with the relevant authorities. NSDF is also part of Slum/Shack Dwellers International(SDI), an international network of people's organizations that is operative in 11 countries of Asia and Africa.

Over two phases of the programme, the alliance has constructed 114 toilet blocks with more than 2000 toilet seats and more than 500 children's seats. Since we had been working in the city of Pune for more than five years prior to this project, there was a vibrant savings and credit movement in which slum women were deeply involved. There had been a number of exchanges between Pune and Mumbai and other cities, where slum dwellers themselves would visit and learn from their counterparts how to organize savings and credit, search for land in the city, hold house model exhibitions and actually construct houses. In fact, a 3 storey building had been built by slum dwellers with the support and assistance of Shelter Associates (another NGO) and the alliance. Yet, these women had never built toilets before and most were illiterate.

In the beginning, there was a lot of hand-holding. There were engineers and architects stationed in Pune who were always available for advice and guidance. Every site would be visited every day by an engineer who would

sort out problems on the spot. There were regular visits by a team from Mumbai to give overall direction to the programme. Savita Sonawane, a leader, said in an interview, "*In the beginning, we did not know what a drawing or a plinth was. We did not understand what a foundation was or how to do plastering. But as we went along, we learnt more and more and now we can build toilets with our eyes closed.*"

### **The empowerment of women**

The alliance of SPARC, NSDF and MM have two clear focii: the poorest of the poor and especially the women amongst them. Given the patriarchal nature of Indian society, it will be useful to look at the impact this programme has had upon women slum dwellers.

We may consider the empowerment of women in this programme from a feminist perspective: the move from the private sphere of domesticity and the family to the public spheres of the government and administration, to the market and the community. Even though many of the women had been involved in savings and credit activities, housing design and construction, their exposure to the public spheres mentioned above was limited.

### **Government and administration**

Having witnessed their participation in weekly meetings with the Municipal Commissioner, the author noticed the visible increase in confidence. In the earlier meetings, their voices were muted but as they gained experience in the job and learnt all about building materials, RCC construction techniques and so on, they were able to participate in the discussions with greater assurance. The significance of illiterate slum women being able to directly deal with the Municipal Commissioner will be appreciated by all who have an understanding of the place of hierarchy both in the bureaucracy and the society at large. The Commissioner himself was most approachable and not at all protocol-minded.

The relationship with the Commissioner enabled them to deal with the municipal bureaucracy at all levels. Corrupt staff at subordinate levels soon realized that they could not demand bribes from these women for passing a plan or paying a bill because they had regular access to the top person and were not afraid of using it. Malan Kamble, a slum leader, told me, "*When we asked for containers from the municipal staff to remove the sludge in dilapidated toilets, they would ask for a bribe of Rs. 50 for each container. We told them that we would give them the money if they gave us a receipt for it. After that, they stopped asking because they knew of our connections at the top.*" For those readers familiar with the venal ways of the lower bureaucracy, the courage and ability of these women to deal with the clerk, the Junior Engineer and the Accountant, will not fail to impress. In fact, the experience of dealing with the Municipal Corporation has now emboldened them to deal with any of the myriad government offices they have to deal with.

Thakurbai, a slum woman, said to me, “*When we used to go to these offices in the beginning, the staff would not want to ask a group of women for money and they would ask us to bring our men for discussion. Soon, they realized our strength and stopped asking. One of the Junior Engineers made fun of our work but we laughed along with him. Now no one can laugh at our work because of its high quality.*”

### **The Market**

Some of the women took up contracts themselves. One of the cleverer ones appointed sub-contractors for different aspects of the construction process: plinth, RCC, tiles and so on. She and her team kept a close watch on costs by buying the materials themselves. Sometimes, a group of women would go to the market enquiring about prices but the shop-keepers would not take them seriously. As a result, Thakurbai said, “*We had to take our husbands along just to stand by our sides. However, all the negotiations were conducted by us directly with the shop-keepers. Mandar, our engineer, would also come along with us for support and advice.*” A group of women contractors tried to get building materials at wholesale rates but because of the absence of storage space and the fact that different toilets were at different stages of construction, this initiative could not take off on any substantial scale.

Visiting suppliers of different materials, negotiating with them for the best price and handling large amounts of money all contributed to the understanding of these women of the functioning of markets and related transactions. In turn, this boosted their self-confidence.

### **The Community**

It is probably too early to assess any changes in these women’s relationships with the community at large. Yet, they had to regularly meet the elected Councillors – particularly in order to get a date for inauguration of completed toilet blocks. The traditional relationship of a Councillor with a citizen is that of patron and client. Here, there was a qualitative change for no favours were being asked, no hands held up in supplication. Rather, the Councillors were asked to participate in the people’s initiative, reversing the normal order of things. All this happened over a period of time and by a process over which Councillors themselves had no control. The programme of slum sanitation had unpredictable and unforeseen outcomes. The changes that took place in the relationships emerged out of action on the ground rather than rhetoric. Here, there was a shift in the balance of power. This exposure of slum women to the world of elected representatives bodes well for their future interaction for one of the key aspects of good governance is the accountability of those in power to those whom they are meant to serve.

The women of Pune Mahila Milan had to survey about 60 slum locations to assess the condition of and the need for toilets. This meant tremendous exposure to slum communities all over the city and the strengthening of a network amongst slum dwellers. In turn, such exposure and detailed knowledge of different slums made Mahila Milan authentic representatives of slum communities and raised their credibility in general.

The establishment of bonds among the communities is well illustrated by a small incident. Savitabai said to me, “*Once we had gone to survey the areas near a canal where the Wadaris (a socially and economically backward group) live. These people live next to the canal and drink water from it. They offered us that water to drink and though it looked filthy, we drank it so that they would not feel that we looked down upon them.*” The edges of sharpness that divide social groups along the axes of ethnicity, caste and religion are blunted by the mobilization of communities around the secular themes of housing, sanitation and other infrastructure. The shared experience of deprivation and the building of community organization contribute to the formation of secular identities.

### **Changes in The Family**

Most of the women this author interviewed said that they made it a point to involve their husbands. For example, they would take them to the market when purchasing materials. When the toilets were inaugurated, the husbands would see their wives on stage giving speeches and mixing easily with the elected Councillors and the municipal officials. This would make them proud of their women. All the women who had taken up independent contracts ploughed their profits back into the family. One built her house, another repaid old loans, one bought her husband an auto rickshaw and a fourth bought a small eatery. We see from these vignettes how changes are taking place in the private sphere of the family on account of involvement with public spheres. A gradual redistribution of power in the household is taking place.

### **Community participation : design, construction and maintenance**

The picture here is uneven. It takes time for people's processes to develop, for community representatives to learn all about the technology of toilet blocks and the complexities of dealing with the bureaucracy. One Ward Officer, who was interviewed, felt there was no difference between an NGO and a contractor on the reasoning that the end product was the same. Yet, surely this is a narrow view because it focuses exclusively on the product and ignores the process that leads to the product. We have already seen how these processes have led to an empowerment of the women involved.

The municipal administration was under pressure of time. Ratnakar Gaikwad wanted to complete the programme while he was still in office. During an interview, he told this author that had there been no constraints, he would have given time of a couple of years or even longer so that people's

processes could take root. Instead, the programme had to be completed in about 18 months. Naturally, there was not enough time for widespread community participation. Sharad Mahajan, a professional architect who assisted the alliance in the programme, wanted to build rough model toilet blocks to elicit community response but this could not be done for lack of time. Having said that, our experience was that there was significant community involvement, especially when we compare this programme to the models discussed earlier of government-sponsored toilet construction or 'pay and use' toilets. Ranjana Thakur, a key leader, estimated that about half the toilet blocks in the first phase were built by slum communities and about half by contractors under supervision. In the second phase, about three-fourths of the blocks were taken up by slum dwellers themselves

Even if the extent of community participation was limited with respect to design and construction, the area of maintenance is an exception. The programme envisaged the collection of Rs.20 per family per month to fund the appointment of a caretaker and for cleaning materials. The caretaker is to be accountable to the community and is supervised by them. This is in sharp contrast to the model where the sanitary staff of the Corporation does not heed the community voice. Unfortunately, some of the elected representatives have been spreading the populist message that there should be no monthly contribution for maintenance and thus depressing the buoyancy of collections. For the toilets built by the alliance of SPARC, NSDF and MM, a caretaker agency has been appointed which pools together the contributions, centrally purchases supplies and helps appoint caretakers. This arrangement also helps to balance low collections of one area with higher collections of another.

### **The economics of toilet maintenance and future arrangements**

We have earlier discussed how in the government-sponsored, engineering approach, no fees are to be charged and sanitary staff paid by the Corporation has to maintain the toilets. The fact that the toilets are free does not amount to much when the toilets are hardly usable. Again, in the 'pay and use' system, a family of five members has to spend Rs.150 a month at the rate of Re.1 per use per person. This is an unaffordable amount.

The system of monthly passes for about Rs.20 per family scores over both the models. When some asset or amenity is given 'free', it devalues it in the eyes of the community. On the other hand, when the charge is as high as Re.1 per use per person, the poor are priced out of the market and will return to open defecation. It should also be underlined that when there is community control and maintenance, the sanitary staff of the Corporation is no longer required. There will be huge savings for the Corporation as it need not recruit in future.

The alliance of SPARC,NSDF and MM is actively pursuing the possibility of forming a guild of about 10 women and 3 men, who would be trained in various aspects of maintenance like electrical issues, carpentry and so on. This team would manage the technical aspects of maintenance at a city level.

The complexity and size of the project demand such new organizational forms.

### **Innovative Toilet Design**

There have been several innovative features in toilet design. For one thing, a caretaker's room has been provided where a family can live. Given the high cost of accommodation in a city, this room is an incentive for the family that will take care of maintenance. A free room means that the wages paid can be less and therefore, the burden on the community is reduced. In some cases, where space permitted, a community hall has been built that can be used for social and ceremonial purposes in the slum. Some fee could be charged which will become part of the maintenance fund. Having a community center on top of a toilet block also brings pressure upon the caretaker to keep the whole complex clean. Again, where feasible, a flush toilet has been built to take care of the needs of old people and the handicapped. Many toilet blocks also have bathing spaces. And there are clearly demarcated blocks for women and men.

Children's toilets deserve special mention. It is commonly experienced that children cannot compete with adults over using already strained amenities. Consequently, they squat all over the place but particularly in the vicinity of the toilet block. The area becomes environmentally hazardous and health is affected. So the alliance has built common children's toilets adjacent to or as part of the main blocks.

### **Reactions and Responses of Elected Representatives**

When Ratnakar Gaikwad initiated the programme, there was strong opposition from the elected representatives who form the General Body of the Pune Municipal Corporation. In part, this was because of a nexus between some of them, contractors and the lower ranks of the Corporation's bureaucracy. There is in most local bodies, unfortunately, a long and dishonourable tradition of different groups like contractors, engineers, and Councillors getting a 'cut' from projects in their areas. Often, estimates of works are inflated and the excess shared at the expense of the public. In our own case, feelers were received to increase the cost of a toilet seat from Rs.40,000 to Rs.54,000 from a subordinate engineer. Had the alliance gone along with this surreptitious offer, the difference would have been shared by all concerned. In part, there was opposition from the contractors' lobby since they had been done out of a huge contract. Even so, as the work progressed and there was evident satisfaction amongst slum dwellers, the very Councillors who were vociferously opposing the project became staunch defenders of it.

Ratnakar Gaikwad had this to say: *"Some of the Councillors told me they would not have any problems winning the next two elections! One of them said to me that nine toilet blocks had been constructed in his Ward when he*

*could not even get one block constructed in the previous five years. The Councillor told me that all he would have to do during election time was to stand outside the toilet blocks every morning with folded hands and that would be sufficient propaganda for him!"*

The slum dwellers interviewed for this case study said that while on the whole women Councillors were more supportive, their experience of interacting with the Councillors was mixed. Some of the Councillors would make extravagant demands about the arrangements during the inauguration functions with an eye upon their electoral futures. One Councillor asked the women to send their contractor as he found it difficult to openly ask a group of women for money!

In balance, we see how even if some Councillors lost opportunities to make money, they became ardent supporters of the programme when their constituents demanded that toilet blocks be built in their areas and as the recognition grew about the positive impact the programme would have on electoral futures. Some Councillors were supportive throughout.

While the Pune experiment was in full swing, a major contract was pending before the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai(MCGM). Tenders had been invited under the Mumbai Sewage Disposal Project, funded by the World Bank, to build thousands of toilet blocks in the slums of Mumbai through community participation. SPARC had been found the lowest bidder for 320 blocks or 6400 toilet seats and the matter was before the MCGM. Several Councillors were distrustful of NGOs in general and felt that the contract was too large(Rs.44 crores) to be given to one NGO. Some Councillors cited delay in completion of some demonstration or pilot projects of toilet blocks in Mumbai including some of SPARC's

The Additional Municipal Commissioner, Subodh Kumar, suggested to the Councillors that they visit Pune and see the work done by SPARC and other NGOs. Subodh Kumar had earlier experience of working with SPARC and was fully aware about the ongoing efforts in Pune. A representative cross-section of the General Body of the Corporation including the leader of the House and the leader of the Opposition and Councillors from different political parties visited Pune, went around and saw various works and interacted with local Councillors, officials and community representatives. On their return to Mumbai, they cleared the proposal to award the work to SPARC.

The phrase 'seeing is believing' brings home the impact of visiting projects on the ground and exchanging views with the local authorities and the general populace. The alliance of SPARC, NSDF and MM had already organized a number of exchange visits between Pune, Mumbai, Bangalore and other cities but these were mostly of slum dwellers. It was for the first time that Councillors from one city (Mumbai) were to visit another city (Pune) to look at the work being done by the alliance.

Visiting the toilet construction programmes in Mumbai and Pune has also had an impact upon slum dwellers and officials from Bangalore. The alliance has linked up with the Municipal Corporation and Slum Board to build toilets in slums in that city.

### **Public-Private Partnership and lessons for good governance**

In the Pune case, the Corporation is very much alive to its responsibilities for slum sanitation. The first thing to note is the sheer scale of the programme and the fact that it is directly addressing the needs of the poor. More toilet blocks have been constructed and more money spent to do so than has happened in the last 30 years in the city. By itself, this is an impressive achievement. More than 400 toilet blocks with over 10,000 seats have been built at a cost of about Rs.40 crores. Assuming that 50 persons use a toilet seat a day, more than five lakh people in the slums of Pune have benefited from the programme. By any yardstick, this is a stupendous performance.

The relationship between the Corporation, NGOs and communities has been reconfigured. NGOs and communities are not cast in the roles of clients or supplicants but rather are treated as partners by the Corporation. The role of the Corporation is to lay standards for and fund the capital cost of constructions of toilet blocks and provide water and electricity. The role of NGOs and communities is to design, construct and maintain the toilet blocks. This model could have more general implications in housing and the provision of other infrastructure for the urban poor. For example, in the case of housing, the role of government should be to provide access to land, infrastructure and finance at affordable rates and let people build for themselves. Cannot communities be entrusted with the task say of distributing water in the poor areas of a city? Why should we restrict the debate to the opposition of the market and the state and ignore the potential of the community?

The functioning of the programme was remarkably transparent. There were no deals struck behind closed doors. Weekly meetings were held with all the stake-holders and problems ironed out. The poorest of the poor in the city could interact freely with the highest municipal official and use their access to him to scuttle any efforts to make money by the lower bureaucracy and some Councillors. Our experience underscores the importance of forging alliances with progressive managers of cities in order to foil any dirty dealing at other levels.

When grassroots democracy is in place, the accountability of institutions is ensured. Mahila Milan groups were able to negotiate their path with every level of municipal official. The strength and power of their organization held any abuse of power in check. And voices of the poor were heard at the highest decision-making level. The empowerment of poor communities – specially the women amongst them – and the building of their capacities to negotiate their entitlements is surely central to good governance.

As we have seen, the lessons of Pune have been carried to Mumbai as well as Bangalore and resulted in concrete projects on the ground.

### **In Conclusion**

Earlier in the case study, we have noted how the poor are not well-served either by government-sponsored ‘free’ toilets or ‘pay and use’ toilets. This raises the important question of whether the State by itself can reach the poor. We would submit that one lesson from this case study is that it is possible to reach the poor only by linking up with NGOs and community based organizations(CBOs). On the other hand the poor, by themselves, however well-organized and mobilized, cannot obtain basic amenities for themselves either from the market on account of their poverty or from the State because public goods like water, electricity and sanitation are controlled or produced by public utilities and cannot be easily accessed. It becomes apparent then that all the stakeholders must come together in a mutually beneficial relationship. Yet, to describe all these entities – State, market, NGOs/CBOs – as stakeholders is misleading insofar as there is an asymmetry of power amongst them. It is here that NGOs and CBOs with a substantial presence in the communities can participate in decision-making by virtue of their representative and mass-based character. To the extent that there is place at the High Table for these voices to be heard, to that extent do we promote good governance.

The Municipal Commissioner of Pune at the time, Ratnakar Gaikwad, deserves acknowledgement for a path-breaking attempt to address the issue of slum sanitation at the level of an entire city. Further, he did this by involving civil society in a major way. The strategic advantages that different entities have – the Corporation, NGOs and communities – were synergized so that the whole was significantly more than the sum of its parts. We need to examine ways in which the Pune experience is taken by other Commissioners and other Corporations to their cities in an institutionalized and systematic manner. When this happens, it will be in tune with the spirit of the 74<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Indian Constitution, which envisages the involvement of NGOs and other civil society organizations in developmental activities.