OORVANi

Foundation

Community-funded media for the new India

ANNUAL REPORT
2013-14

ABOUT US

Oorvani Foundation is a Bangalore-registered trust set-up by Meera K, Subramaniam Vincent and Ashwin Mahesh, the promoters of Oorvani Media Pvt Ltd in August 2013. The foundation develops and promotes deep-diving journalism on governance, citizenship and society in India at the city, state and national levels.

Apart from developing high quality content, the Oorvani Foundation also facilitates publishing, web streaming, and podcasting such content through the *Citizen Matters* and *India Together* platforms, owned and operated by Oorvani Media Pvt. Ltd.

Oorvani Foundation works with teams of editors, journalists (both freelance and professional), subject matter experts, practitioners, filmmakers, audio producers, and organisational partners. Such content includes investigative journalism, opinion and analysis, interviews, features, films, talks and podcasts.

The foundation also awards fellowships to talented individuals for specific journalism projects. It also facilitates greater participation by citizens – with workshops on topics of civic interest like water, waste management, organic gardening etc., and on citizen journalism.

"This age of information generation and sharing needs to be removed from the clutches of few, and should belong to all, equally in both generation and consumption, without distortions. The importance of neutral media, like Oorvani lies in that. If we do not support Oorvani, we will be slaves to the distorted news that will mislead and derail us from what we are entitled to rightly."

— **Manivannan P, IAS**
Chief Project Officer, Karnataka State Highways Improvement Project

THE NEED FOR OORVANI FOUNDATION

The city-focussed journalism and national development-oriented coverage published in the magazines *Citizen Matters* and *India Together* are pioneering efforts in content. This journalism is defined by what is covered, and how it is covered.

In the process of running Oorvani Media, the firm, the promoters concluded that the traditional revenue for media – depending on advertisers with commercial or vested interests, who believe that their contribution would imply a say in the kind of content that is published – would defeat the purpose of responsible journalism. We have taken a conscious decision not to rely on such sponsors, to avoid the appearance of bias towards advertisers who may want to influence editorial views and positions; And we diligently follow a code of ethics.
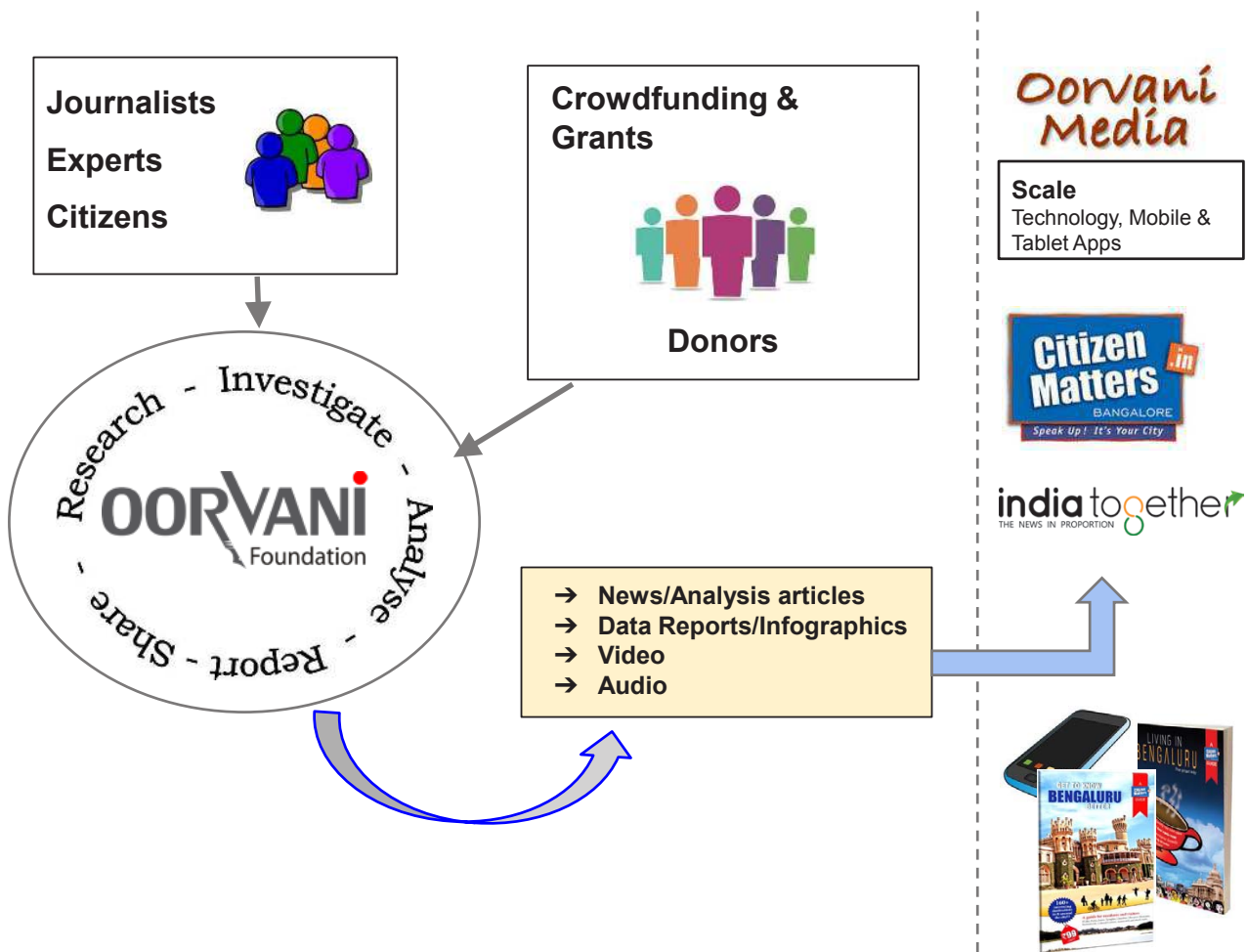
In order to ensure independence and sustainability for such public interest journalism, the promoters of Oorvani Media – Subramaniam Vincent, Meera K and Ashwin Mahesh, setup the non-profit Oorvani Foundation. This keeps the focus on public affairs reporting and analysis, as well as journalism that facilitates and catalyses community and citizen participation in India's cities.

Oorvani Foundation works to ensure a media that can intervene and set the terms of debate and discourse in a sphere dominated exclusively by mainline commercial media, driven by advertising, commercial interests and/or partisan political interests alone.

For media to remain independent, unbiased and non-partisan, the community needs to have stake in it. Our funding comes from the community – our well wishers and readers who believe in us and the work that we do contribute to the trust.

> "The central purpose of journalism is to provide citizens with accurate and reliable information they need to function in a free society."
>
> — **Kovach and Rosenstiel**
> The Elements of Journalism

Journalists
Experts
Citizens

Crowdfunding & Grants

Donors

Research - Investigate - Analyse - Report - Share

OORVANI Foundation

➔ **News/Analysis articles**
➔ **Data Reports/Infographics**
➔ **Video**
➔ **Audio**

Oorvani Media

Scale
Technology, Mobile & Tablet Apps

Citizen Matters .in
BANGALORE
Speak-Up! It's Your City

india together
THE NEWS IN PROPORTION

Operations of Oorvani Foundation and Oorvani Media Pvt. Ltd

ABOUT OUR CITY JOURNALISM

Local journalism funded by Oorvani Foundation focuses on:

- In-depth, investigative and watchdog reporting - highlighting violations and scams that adversely affect citizens, environment and governance in Bangalore. Special focus articles on topics such as the water crisis, migration, infrastructure, waste management and the like. This is our USP.

- Interpretation, analysis and commentary on key governance, legislative, infrastructure and environment topics that impact all citizens.

- Citizen information resources including guides and FAQs on citizen services and community improvements; In-depth information and analysis on elected representatives, constituencies and candidates during elections; Regular tracking of the work of elected representatives (MPs, MLAs, Councillors) at the city level and data on major government projects.

City journalism supported by Oorvani Foundation is published in *Citizen Matters* newsmagazine, online at *www.citizenmatters.in*. Some content is also shared with other media partners.

ABOUT OUR DEVELOPMENT JOURNALISM

The development journalism funded by Oorvani Foundation includes commentary, perspectives, interpretative and analysis articles from experienced journalists, practitioners and experts. It also includes reports from professional freelance journalists, and columns from journalists and people with knowledge in their fields as well as some standing.

This content is published on the national affairs journal, *India Together*, online on *www.indiatogether.org.*

We also award journalism fellowships periodically. Writing from fellows are published on *India Together*, as well as other media with due permission.

KEY ACTIVITIES, 2013-14

Since August 2013, Oorvani Foundation has funded over 450 articles across topics and genres which were published in *Citizen Matters* (295+) and *India Together* (160+).

By February 2014, the foundation's team had begun preliminary work on the Lok Sabha elections. The Bangalore reporting team focused on the city's three urban constituencies, while the national team – lead by one editor and freelancing experts around the country - covered the action from metros of Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai and Hyderabad.

City journalism for Bengaluru

The foundation has supported hard news and community reporting, published in *Citizen Matters*. A good number of citizen shared their stories too. A first-person account by Roopa Ramalingam on her perseverance in chasing offenders was the top story among citizen stories. Yet another citizen's account of harassment by auto drivers in Basavanagudi was popular too. The citizen organisers of Neralu, the tree festival, shared their idea and plan in the run-up to the festival, thus reaching out to fellow tree-lovers. A point of view on the dubbing-into-Kannada controversy was articulated well by Vasanth Shetty and set off a discussion over social media.

Some specific examples of our reporting and its impact

1. **Highlighting abuse of power, wrongdoing, and violations through hard stories:** *Citizen Matters* had broken the story on the multi-crore project on the *Bellandur wetlands* (in March 2013) that violated environmental norms with in-depth reporting and documentation. Bellandur lake is the largest lake in Bangalore. It followed up the story with detailed writeups on the *land use change*, irregularities *in clearances* and permissions, *encroachment* of drain, *traffic issues* etc. Foundation support helps the team *continue chase this story* by following up various leads.

   A similar story was on the case of *another developer* who violated zoning rules by submitting wrong Above Mean Sea Level (AMSL) numbers to Airport Authority, and procured clearance for *extra building height* illegally.

   Our journalists do due diligence and research, ensuring accuracy and objectivity, and verify documents provided by third parties. Citizens have taken these issues to court now, and constructions have been stopped, albeit temporarily. We believe we did our bit in helping the laws of the land prevail by doing good journalism.

2. **Helping people resolve community issues:** We have worked on an array of how-to guides that help people in taking up community initiatives. For example, *how to revive a lake* to *how to start waste management initiatives*, to *how to tackle encroachment* – public interest topics, where citizen participation can make a difference, are the focus of such guides.

Green Tribunal orders an interim stay on Mantri's Bellandur project. Mar 2014

3. **Helping people get multiple perspectives on various issues:** Our writeup on the *housing scheme by Bangalore Development Authority* - the local planning authority is a good example of this. We wrote about BDA's apartment scheme and different views about it. When BDA made allotments, people hard-pressed for details, landed up on the *Citizen Matters* article. When they found no way to interact with the government, they even started interacting in the comments section of this article. Their concerns and doubts encouraged us to follow up with *another article* on the topic.

4. **Publicising important but often-ignored topics:** We published *Metropolitan Planning Committee (MPC) draft rules* when few knew what it was about. We also published different citizen and expert views on the rules. The articles introduced lay citizens to complex topics in simple language.

'News in proportion' is one of our guiding principles. We tell the stories of the urban poor and underprivileged, whose voices are rarely heard by other classes. Stories on *malnutrition among kids in a slum area in Bangalore*, *how urban poor are deprived of all the schemes made for them*, *evictions of*

Aged 6, weighing 12kg, she dies a quiet death. Aug 2013

poor people from government-provided quarters to benefit a real estate baron, *slum dwellers not getting water* etc. are examples of topics, which the mainstream media rarely covers.

5. **Forum for Citizens:** *Citizen Matters* provides active citizens a chance to share their experiences. For example, a *citizen who fought back against eve-teasing*, another citizen who wanted to write about *how the builder did not provide promised amenities*, one more resident who wrote on the care to be taken while *buying under-construction properties*. Those who want to write about *waste management*, *lake protection* and *environment* have found our website a convenient and interactive space to share their experiences.

   Citizen content is also reviewed and verified to maintain high standards of journalism. All these communities co-exist with our professional journalism, and helps create a vibrant knowledge platform. With foundation support, the editorial team anchors and edits such community contribution, and also manages an *interactive forum* where people can post questions or experiences.

6. **Election coverage:** The *2014 Lok Sabha election* season saw us presenting the analysis of incumbent MP profiles as well as candidate profiles. *Our city reporting focused on the three Bangalore Urban constituencies.*

   We interviewed a large number of candidates, followed their campaign trail and actively engaged citizens through the course of the election season. Our informative articles for voters, from candidate profiles to the inaccuracies in the voter roll were very popular - they helped voters get registered online easily inspite of the many bugs in the system and make an informed choice on election day.

Lok Sabha Elections 2014 on Citizen Matters. Mar 2014

The Olympic medals India won and ignored. Jan 2014

Our national-level reportage

The foundation supports the coverage of issues, processes and news pertaining to the Indian public and developmental sphere that gets disproportionately less coverage in the mainstream media.

Whenever something has been the focus of intense public scrutiny, we have probed beyond the mere surface to bring our readers an account of the underlying realities - whether it is behind *India's current account deficit*, *burgeoning food inflation*, *the bifurcation of states*, or the terrible *Uttarakhand tragedy* of 2013.

We cut through the noise to bring readers hard stories from around the country - for example, on the plight of *child workers in Surat's famed*

Uttarakhand tragedy

textile industry, or the *real impact of the National Social Assistance Programme on poor pensioners*, or the *long wait for wages by NREGA workers in Karnataka*.

Our exclusive stories on *India's spectacular performance in the Special Olympics*, the *sole crusade of a young actor against substance abuse by school children* and of the *village with 60 millionaires* touched and inspired many.

An interview with a rape survivor stirred readers across the globe, with an Indian couple based in the UK volunteering to help her out financially with her childrens' education.

During the Lok Sabha election season, *India Together profiled incumbent members in key urban constituencies* (Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Chennai) and tracked their performance in the Parliament in terms of certain well-defined parameters. Writers from across the country presented their analysis and perspectives on real issues, cutting through the noise and hype in mainstream media.

From *protests in Kashmir* to *dam disputes in the south*, from urban planning in *Mumbai* and *Bangalore* to *riots in Assam*, we track, report and analyse developments across the length and breadth of India for the present and the future.

The interviews with historian Ramachandra Guha on India's leaders, Telangana and the communal riots in Uttar Pradesh were well received by readers.

Significant, but hardly enough! Jan 2014

At a time when much of the mainstream media in India and other parts of the world has been compromised on account of pressures from different sections -- large corporate entities, including advertisers, political parties and their representatives and government bodies -- the spaces for independent reportage, critical commentaries and investigative journalism need to be preserved and nurtured.

This is what "*India Together*" is doing and I wish Oorvani all the very best for its future endeavours.

— Paranjoy Guta Thakurta
Author, Journalist, Independent Media Expert

The Daksh-India Together Elections Journalism Fellowship

Oorvani Foundation instituted the *Daksh-India Together Elections Journalism Fellowship*, in partnership with Daksh, a Bangalore-based not-for-profit organization working to improve accountability in politics and governance. The work of the fellows were published on *India Together*, and available for other media for republication with due permissions.

Fellows produced real, objective stories and issues behind the elections, based on data from Daksh and other open sources. Their work can be accessed here: *http://indiatogether.org/pages/ ls-elections-2014.*

Lok Sabha Elections 2014 on India Together . Mar 2014

The fellows

Srinivasan Ramani is a scholar of comparative politics and political thought and a senior journalist with years of editorial and writing experience. He is currently the Senior Assistant Editor with Economic and Political Weekly.

Prabhu Mallikarjunan is a Bangalore-based journalist with experience covering public affairs and rural development issues. Until recently, he was working as a Senior Staff Correspondent for the The New Indian Express, Karwar.

ORGANISATIONAL UPDATES

The heroes among us – our donors

While we consider all our donors our heroes for believing in what we do, there are some to whom we must extend our special appreciation.

In December, one of our readers was a runner-up at the Bangalore Midnight Marathon. She donated her winnings from the race to Oorvani Foundation.

In February, a reader sent us Rs 5,000. This was his second donation since December (he had already contributed Rs 10,000). On sending him the receipt for this donation, he responded with a special note for the team which said, "I'm not sure if you get enough appreciation for what you do. If you don't, that's sad because your work is important and I hope more people realise that. Please do keep up the excellent work that all of you're putting in."

In March, we received a donation of Rs 17,000 from a young architect in his early 20s. He had been working for a year and a half, and every month had been putting away Rs 1000, to donate to a 'good cause'. He picked *Citizen Matters* and donated to Oorvani Foundation to support the cause of good city journalism.

We wrote to him asking if we could feature his story as a blog post on the foundation website and this was his response: "I look forward to following your endeavours. As a citizen, I am proud that we have access to independent media, who look into what matters to us. Please do not consider this as a donation, but as a rightful payment for the content that I have consumed and will continue to do so." What made his donation really special was that this young man did not come in the tax bracket as yet, and yet he chose to donate close to 10% of his annual income to us!

Though we have not named these people, we're sure that they know who they are. These stories certainly make us feel proud and explain why we do, what we do.

The complete list of donors from August 2013 can be viewed *here*.

Staffing

City journalism, Bengaluru

Associate Editor: **Shree D N**
Staff Reporter: **Nikita Malusare**
Community Coordination: **Ganga Madappa**
Research Reporter: **Josephine Joseph (part-time)**

National journalism

Associate Editor: **Satarupa Bhattacharya**

Oorvani Foundation administration

Meera K, Managing Trustee
Subramaniam Vincent, Trustee
Ashwin Mahesh, Trustee

Elections Special Project: Vivek Vaidyanathan came on board as a Special Projects Editor for Election reporting for Bengaluru and was coordinating the MP profiling and analysis project during the Lok Sabha Elections 2014.

FUNDS

Total funds raised by Oorvani Foundation

Total amount raised Aug 2013 – Mar 2014   : Rs 26.03 Lakhs

For full list of contributors, please see: *http://oorvani.org.in/supporters*

Total expenditure Aug 2013 – Mar 2014   : Rs 15.78 lakhs

Amount spent on journalism (staff and freelancers) : Rs 15.36 lakhs

Amount spent on accounting, auditing etc.   : Rs 39,826

Oorvani Foundation is the recipient of a *Google Ad Grants award*. The award entitles us to a fixed amount of in-kind AdWords advertising, to promote our mission and initiatives on the Google search result pages.

Regulatory matters

We have obtained our PAN card and the number is **AAATO4080E**.

We have obtained TAN number from the Income Tax department.

We have also obtained our *12A* and *80G* registrations and our donors are eligible for 50% exemption.

Accounts statement

Oorvani Foundation

N0. 98/1, M M R Plaza, Sarjapur Road, Jakkasandra, Bangalore 560034

Income and Expenditure Account for the year ended March 31, 2014

Expenditure	Amount Rs.		Income	Amount Rs.
Salary and benefits	1,016,866.00		Contribution Received	2,602,574.26
Professional Charges	558,246.00			
Rates and taxes	3,500.00			
Excess of income over expenditure				
transferred to Balance sheet	1,023,962.26			
Total	**2,602,574.26**		**Total**	**2,602,574.26**

Date :   **Oorvani Foundation**   To be read with our report

Place : Bangalore   and notes of even date

                                                for P.N.R. & Co.,

                                             Chartered Accountants

                                             Firm Registration No.002495S

The complete audited financial statement will be shared on request.

Estimate of unpaid services (August'13-March'14)

Journalism cost

Editorial support by Meera K	: Rs 200,000
Editorial support by Subramaniam Vincent	: Rs 120,000
Editorial support by Ashwin Mahesh	: Rs 80,000
Management support by Meera K	: Rs 160,000

Currently these individuals are working pro-bono.

Infrastructure cost

Office space, broadband, computers etc., for the journalism team	: Rs 160,000
Accountant charges	: Rs 16,000

This is currently underwritten by Oorvani Media Pvt Ltd and/or founders.

APPENDIX

About Citizen Matters newsmagazine
Published by Oorvani Media Pvt Ltd.

Founded in 2008, *Citizen Matters* is a city-focused, citizen-oriented media platform; It covers public affairs, community and culture. It has pioneered a hybrid model of local journalism mixing professionally edited news stories with citizen-authored articles.

For a well-governed democracy, you need involved citizens. For citizens to be involved, you need good information. This is what *Citizen Matters* as an independent community media platform, seeks to provide.

Over the last 6 years, the reporting and line of coverage in *Citizen Matters* has helped catalyse change in Bangalore, in a positive way. Its committed journalism has encouraged transparency and reduced corruption. Detailed stories on navigating government processes has helped many citizens get their work done with succumbing to bribes and agents. Citizens reporting their experiences on getting things done have helped others to start their journey too.

Over the years, many hard news reports, from road-widening plans to the hugely delayed Kadugodi flyover, from the BBMP council not following voting processes, to ill-thought out plans for STPs on Bellandur Lake downstream — have had impact, prompting decision makers to take due action.

Articles on environmental topics especially the coverage on lakes has been highly impactful. *Continuous coverage*, with ample citizen reporting, has helped raise awareness on various lakes in the city and their state. They have inspired citizens into taking action, and the government often responded positively. Many lakes in the city are now in the process of getting rejuvenated.

Citizen Matters has a strong focus on community content. Be it a blog *on gardening*, coverage of *lake* news or continued write ups on topics like *cycling* and *solar power*, the website is a knowledge bank for all those citizens who want to make Bangalore better with sustainable development.

Citizen Matters Reader Survey 2014 was conducted in January 2014 and got feedback from 130 respondents. It got an average rating of 7.82 out of 10.

Respondents cited relevance to Bangalore and citizen connect as their reasons for reading *Citizen Matters*. When asked what they liked about *Citizen Matters*, most respondents chose the magazine's treatment of local issues, informativeness, ideas for involvement and citizen voices as their reasons for liking *Citizen Matters*. Selection of news, depth of articles and useful nature of the articles also played some part. Its quality of journalism too, especially on the *SEZ coming up on the Agara lake-bed* and on *lake rehabilitation* in the city, received special mentions from several of them.

Suggestions for improvement included expanding the scope of reporting, publishing more articles and marketing the brand. Several folks also added that they would be interested if we had a television channel.

About India Together newsmagazine

Published by Oorvani Media Pvt Ltd.

India Together is an electronic newsmagazine devoted to coverage of public affairs, policy, and development in India, providing news in proportion to the country's broad development experiences.

Founded in 1998, it provides in-depth information and news on the issues that matter covering 15 major topics and over 24 states. The magazine also helps leaders, experts, practitioners, scholars and artists take their ideas, insights and concerns expeditiously to an interested national and global audience.

AWARDS

2014

Citizen Matters won the *Namma Bengaluru Award for 2013* in the Media Organisation category.

2013

Navya PK, former staff journalist at *Citizen Matters* was awarded the All India Environmental Journalism Competition award for her series of exposes on the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) project by Mantri Developers coming up on the Bellandur wetland - *Mantri's 72 acre project encroaching Rajakaluve: IISc Report*, published on May 31, 2013.

More at: *http://bangalore.citizenmatters.in/pages/citizen-matters-awards-and-recognition*

2008

The Confederation of Indian Organisations for Service and Advocacy (CIOSA) is the Chennai-based corporate social responsibility arm of the MaFoi Foundation. CIOSA awarded its **Seva Mela 2008 Award** for Media to *India Together* for its role in empowering people through Media.

2006

M Suchitra was named the **Developing Asia Journalism Awards' Development Journalist of the Year**, for her article in *India Together* on access to health care for adivasis in Kerala. **Deepa A** won the 'Poverty Issues' award for her article on discrimination that keeps poor children out of school in Delhi.

- See more at: *http://indiatogether.org/awards*

Recognition

Citizen Matters described as Bangalore's *watchdog e-magazine* by the Washington Post, April 2013

The *BBC covers Citizen Matters*. Journalist Jamillah Knowles also *blogs* and features *Citizen Matters* in *a radio show*.

"Based in Bangalore [*Citizen Matters*] is well integrated mix of traditional Journalism and citizen Reporting"

- Jamillah Knowles BBC U.K, August 2009

"Apart from the impact of individual stories themselves, though, *Citizen Matters has also pioneered* in India a model community journalism that many see as the inevitable future"

- Mint, National business daily, Nov 2008

TESTIMONIALS

Citizen Matters

"*Citizen Matters* has not just succeeded in reporting the news, but in changing the news by influencing the course of events through its reporting."

— Arathi Manay Yajaman, Active citizen and Trustee, Puttenahalli Lake Improvement Trust

"*Citizen Matters* has been filling a deep-felt need for in-depth, objective reporting on issues relevant to Bangalore. It has been factual, accurate, fearless and impartial, which are the hallmarks of good journalism. Citizens of Bangalore should extend their support to *Citizen Matters* and become stakeholders in this initiative so that it can continue to remain independent and accountable to the larger public."

— Kathyayini Chamaraj: Executive Trustee, CIVIC Bangalore

"I have been following the activities of *Citizen Matters* for some time now and I find it has been doing good investigative journalism exposing many inconvenient facts in public administration and in public interest.*Citizen Matters* requires all concerned citizen's support."

— Santosh Hegde, Former Justice, Supreme Court of India

"Citizens increasingly want to know more about their City and ways to connect with people. Media all over the world too is becoming more local. In this context *Citizen Matters* is playing a great role in making us aware of our City and surroundings. All of us should support *Citizen Matters* and Oorvani Foundation to sustain this effort and enable us to reclaim our city!"

— T V Mohandas Pai, Vice President, Bangalore Political Action committee

India Together

"Dear *India Together* Team, I have really liked your magazine & appreciate your effort... I am based out of New Delhi and was thinking about going to WB (my birth place) and starting a movement for change, especially after reading some of your articles."

— Rohit Chakrabarti, in a recent email to the editor

"I would like to thank the author and *India Together* for bringing such an important accomplishment into the public eye. I have shared it on Facebook and also urged my friends to share this wonderful news."

— Venkatesh Hariharan on *Pushpa Achanta's article on the Special Olympics*

"Amazing article. Great insight into this complex international issue."

— Raj Shekhar on *Shripad Dharmadhikary's write-up on the Kishenganga hydroelectric project*

"I think after a long time I am reading such a comprehensive, yet concise article. If this is the kind of content to *India Together* - I am killed by your writers!! Hats off!"

— Rashi on *Shankar Jaganathan's article on the difference of opinion between prominent economists, Amartya Sen and Jagadish Bhagwati, with respect to the Food Security Bill*

DISCLOSURES

Organisational Information

Charitable Trust Registration no: BNG-BMH244/2013-14

Date of registration: August 6th, 2013

Trustees: Meera K, Subramaniam Vincent and Ashwin Mahesh

Statutory Information

PAN: AAATO4080E

Income Tax Registrations u/s 12AA: Oorvani Foundation is registered as a charitable trust u/s 12 A of Income Tax Act 1961 Vide No. DIT(E)BLR/12A/H-257/AAATO4080E/ITO(E)-2/Vol 2013-2014 with effect from AY 2014-15. *Oorvani Foundation 12A.pdf*.

Approval for exemption u/s 80G(5)(vi): Any donations made to Oorvani Foundation are exempt u/s 80G subject to limits prescribed under the Income Tax Act 1961. (Approval no. DIT(E) BLR/80G/12A/H-257/AAATO4080E/ITO(E)-2/Vol 2013-2014) with effect from AY 2014-2015. *Oorvani Foundation 80G.pdf*.

We bank with: ICICI Bank Ltd., Koramangala

Statutory Auditors: P N R & Co., Chartered Accountants, No 186/1, J.C. Complex Annexe, Sirur Park Road, Seshadripuram, Bangalore - 560020

OORVANI
Foundation
Community-funded media for the new India