OORVANI Foundation

Annual Report 2019-20

Not just yet another year!

Here's our seventh Annual Report. Citizen Matters saw another eventful year. 2019-20 was a year of several highs for Citizen Matters, each on the back of carefully conceptualised and rigorously implemented initiatives and expansion.

This year, we registered record views on our site, across our local chapters and the national edition, as our team worked around the clock to deliver meticulous, objective and data-oriented coverage of the parliamentary elections in April-May 2019, and also the Delhi Assembly elections later in February 2020.

In 2019-20 we pursued several 'Special Projects', taking up one key topic at a time and exploring it in depth — through reportage, data, interactions and op-eds. From air quality to women's safety, our comprehensive exploration of the chosen themes wove in inputs from various cities, seeking to inspire thought and action towards solving some of our most critical urban problems.

It was also the year that we offered the Sustainable Cities Reporting Fellowship. Four Fellows chosen from across the country explored sustainability challenges in different cities that impact millions of lives daily, and sought to showcase fresh approaches and solutions based on inputs from civic groups and policy makers.

With 956 articles authored by a virtual network of 237 writers in 40+ cities, this was a year of continuous experiments and focussed hard work that in turn prepared us for a year no one had ever envisaged. Neither had we, of course.

But in retrospect, 2019-20 was the year when we laid the foundations that never saw us falter or lose our way in the difficult times that followed. In fact, it gave us the structure and perspective that enabled us to bring continuous, in-depth reportage and sharp interpretation from our cities in the months that followed, as the whole world struggled in the face of a once-in-a-century pandemic.
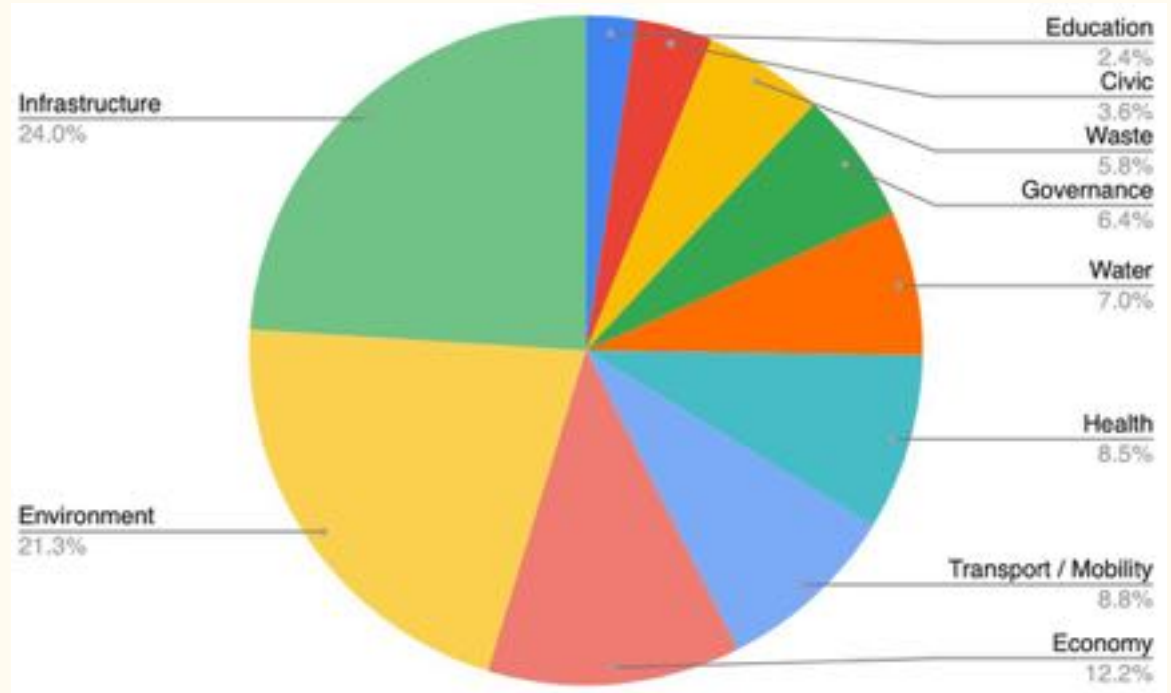
All of the above would not have been possible without the support of donors and well-wishers like you. Thank you.
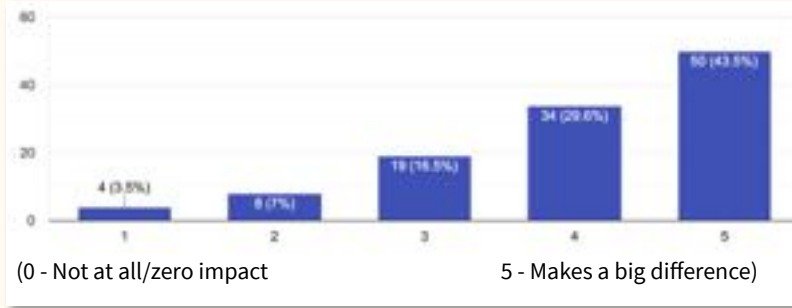
-     Trustees

Our work

Citizen Matters

Reportage in Citizen Matters continued to be wide-ranging, while keeping focus on the systemic causes and drivers of urban issues. This chart shows the proportion of different topics in our publishing.
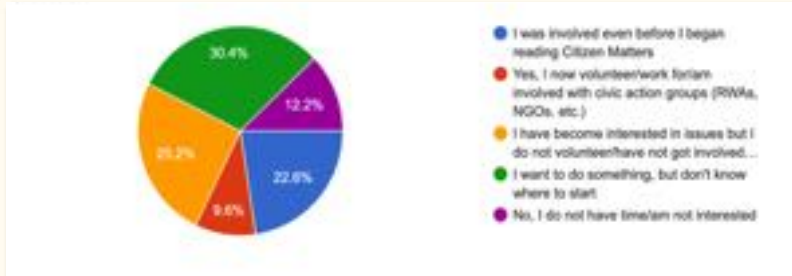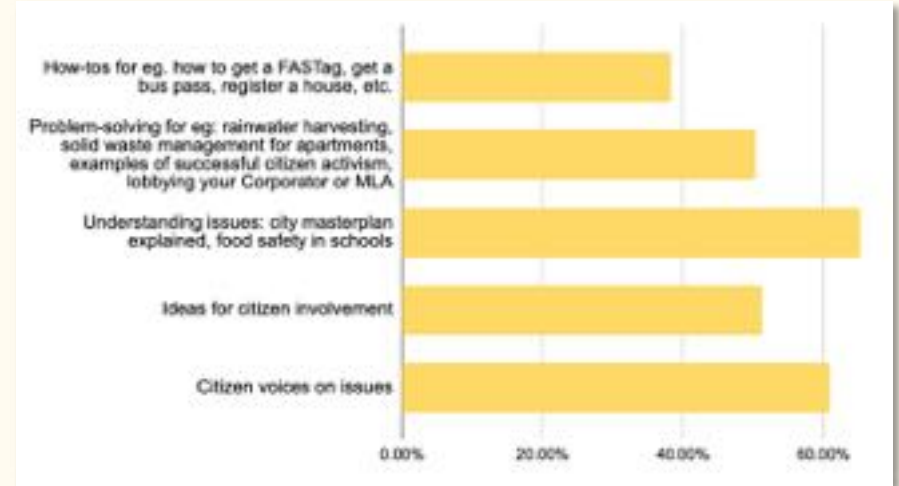

Infrastructure 24.0%

Education 2.4%
Civic 3.6%
Waste 5.8%
Governance 6.4%
Water 7.0%
Health 8.5%
Transport / Mobility 8.8%
Economy 12.2%
Environment 21.3%

Reader Survey 2019

How much do you think good, local reporting in cities impacts our daily lives?

(0 - Not at all/zero impact   5 - Makes a big difference)

Has Citizen Matters helped you get involved in civic issues?

What kind of information do you come to Citizen Matters for?

"The coverage during the parliamentary elections was excellent. That got me hooked on this website initially. Thanks for the fantastic coverage of local issues too. Cutting down trees at a local park in Kotturpuram was gut wrenching, for example." — A reader

Reach and Distribution

Across the three channels of national, Bengaluru and Chennai, Citizen Matters clocked an average monthly page views of 596,811 in 2019-20, a growth of 56.4% from the previous year. The average views per article increased by 33.2%.

A selection of our most popular articles

- FAQ: All you need to know about the CAA and its link with the NRC
- Traffic jam at 13000 feet: What summer tourism means for hill towns in Himachal!
- Udta Himachal: Is Shimla set to be the new drug capital of the country?
- What's making the water in Shillong oily and undrinkable?
- All about BMTC's relaunched student bus pass service: From online application to collection – Bengaluru
- How the upcoming Satellite Town Ring Road will affect lives and livelihoods around Bengaluru
- The economics of being a cab driver in Bengaluru
- Coronavirus scare: Is Chennai prepared to halt the disease in its tracks?
- Chennai Metro has failed to boost the city's economy; here's why
- Pallikaranai apartment shows the way towards greener living - Chennai

We continued sharing many of our stories with media partners through the Open Media Initiative. Mongabay, Scroll, First Post, The News Minute, Himachal Scape, Srinagar Observer, Babushahi etc republished a number of our stories over the year.

Firstpost

Mumbai's low-cost housing crunch: As activists blame weak political will, MHADA insists its flats continue to be popular

In Mumbai, slums, lacking in basic infrastructure and amenities like water and electricity continue to proliferate, even as huge numbers of luxury housing units remain unsold.

Safety of women in Indian cities

Across all Citizen Matters sites, we took a critical look at the status of women's safety. Despite the growing number of crimes against women, many measures to create a safe environment seem to remain on paper.

Across cities we analyzed various aspects such as the instances of crimes against women, safety at the workplace, barriers to reporting of crimes, state of investigations and the legal mechanisms available. We also examined the utilization of the much-touted Nirbhaya funds.

Special Project: Safety of women in Indian cities

Bengaluru's women factory workers can now do night shifts, but will it help them?

As per a recent state government notification, women factory workers can now do night shifts. While the progressive move has been lauded, there are concerns that it could lead to more exploitation of workers

Civic change and urbanisation across India

We publish 80 stories from across 10 Tier 1 and Tier 2 cities (in additional to the core cities of Bengaluru and Chennai), thanks to a grant from Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies.

By end of 2019, we publish reports on a wide-range of topics, while keeping focus on the systemic causes and drivers of urban issues. We gained insights on the pattern of urbanisation and civic change across these cities.
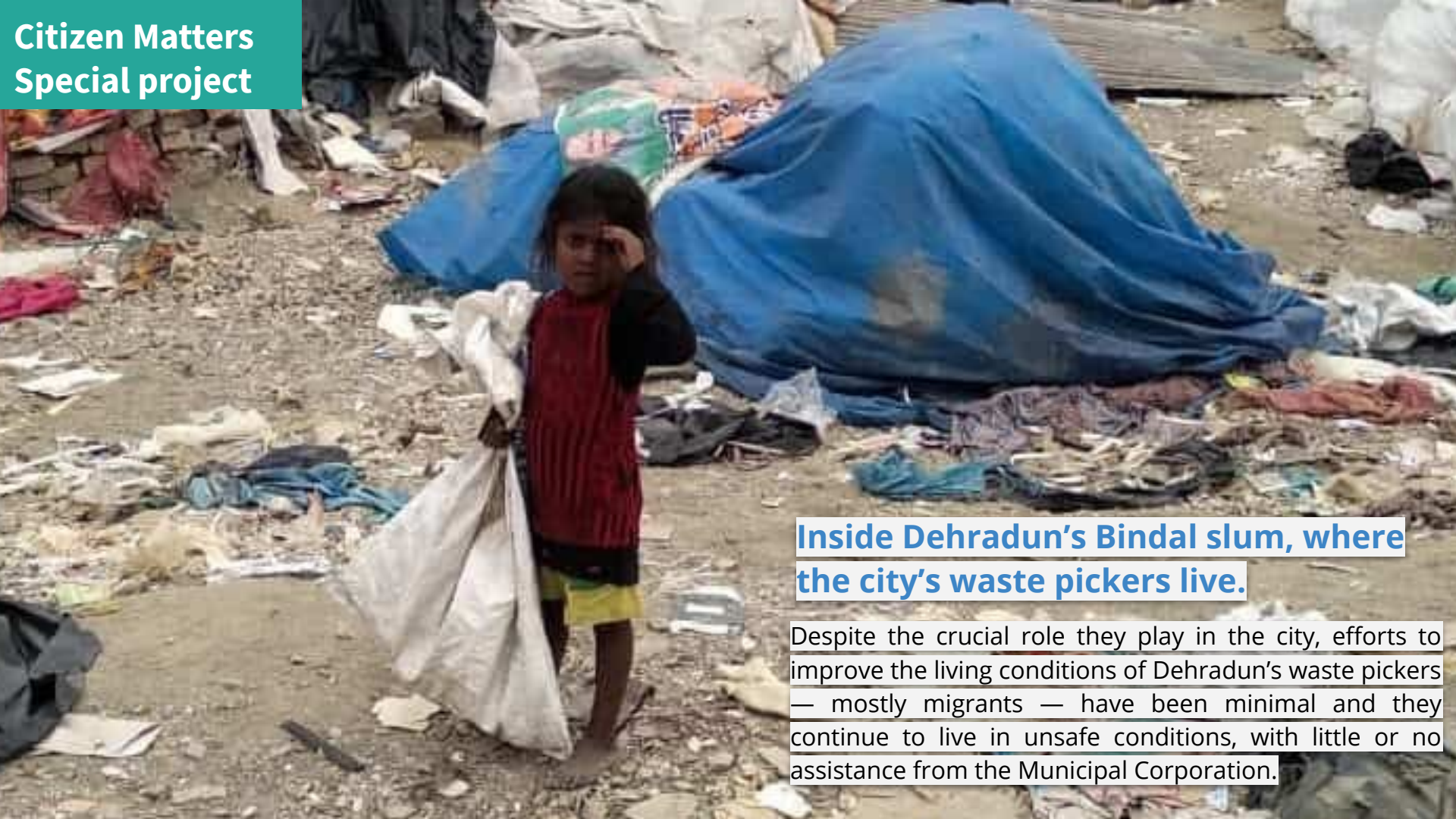
A selection of stories in this series

- [Traffic jam at 13000 feet: What summer tourism means for hill towns in Himachal](#)
- [Udta Himachal: Is Shimla set to be the new drug capital of the country?](#)
- [How a fire in Surat has shaken up the 'coaching' industry in Bhopal](#)
- [Why Bhopal wants its BRTS corridor to be dismantled after spending Rs 329 crore on it](#)
- [Inside Dehradun's Bindal slum, where the city's waste pickers live](#)
- [Bulk of Dehradun's e-waste ends up with unauthorised recyclers; here's why](#)
- [Eight months after launch, Kolkata's 'pink taxis' hardly in the pink of health](#)
- [How released female prisoners in Kolkata are trying to build a new life](#)
- [Why fishermen in suburban Mumbai find their catch shrinking steadily](#)
- [People in this Mumbai slum barely make it to 40; here's why](#)

People in this Mumbai slum barely make it to 40; here's why.

For decades, waste has been Mumbai's teeming, unsolvable problem. Slums around the city's dumping ground are now Asia's largest, exposing ragpickers and the general population to serious health risks. All plans and commitments to waste management, meanwhile, appear figurative.

Inside Dehradun's Bindal slum, where the city's waste pickers live.

Despite the crucial role they play in the city, efforts to improve the living conditions of Dehradun's waste pickers — mostly migrants — have been minimal and they continue to live in unsafe conditions, with little or no assistance from the Municipal Corporation.

Election Coverage

We continued to provide quality in-depth coverage on various elections that took place over the course of the year. We examined the performance of the incumbents, major electoral issues, profiled the contestants in the fray and outlined key issues.

Our special coverage of three elections -- Lok Sabha, Maharashtra and Delhi Assemblies -- from the perspective of urban issues and mandates received keen attention from readers and led to annual peaks in viewership.

Lok Sabha elections 2019:
https://citizenmatters.in/delhi-assembly-elections-2020

Karnataka Elections 2019:
https://bengaluru.citizenmatters.in/karnataka-assembly-by-elections-dec-2019-bengaluru

Delhi Elections 2020:
https://citizenmatters.in/delhi-assembly-elections-2020

COVID-19 Coverage

If there is one thing the pandemic-caused crisis has highlighted, it is how much more we all need to know about our cities and their citizens. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit India beginning early March, Citizen Matters stepped in to provide timely information for citizens.

We produced important guides for citizens on various subjects including procedure to get COVID tests, guides on safe home isolation, information on containment zones, important dos and don'ts and guidelines for travel within and outside states.

- Guides on safety in markets, hostels and apartments, public transport, waste management
- Citizen journalism on what citizens did to help those in distress during lockdown
- Guides on documenting migrant workers, RWA powers (Banning domestic workers, forcing quarantine: Can your apartment RWA make these 'special' COVID rules?)
- Preparedness during the early stages of the pandemic, how citizens can help each other during lockdown, economic impact on various sectors.

https://citizenmatters.in/covid-19

The Citizen Matters report, [Rs 550 crore spent on clean up, yet Ludhiana's polluted Buddha Nulla only grows more toxic](#), has led to the resurgence of the citizen movement in and around Ludhiana.

The comprehensive write up acted as a catalyst to give a momentum to the clean Buddha Nullah drive. It also resulted in authorities taking cognizance of the issue and the demands placed by activists and citizens groups. A delegation of the Naroa Punjab Manch, the newly formed group of citizens at the forefront of cleanliness drive met Union Minister for Jalshakti Gajendra Singh Shekhawat with their plea. The issue was subsequently taken up in the Parliament by Ganganagar MP Nihalchand Meghwal.

"*Presently, the level of involvement and activities related to this drive is more than what I have seen in the last 25 years*", says Jaskirat Singh, activist and member of Naroa Punjab Manch.

Citizen Matters Impact: Buddha Nullah restoration in Ludhiana gets new life

Coverage of the long-pending issue of Buddha Nullah gave a boost to attempts by a 50-member umbrella organisation to restore the Sutlej tributary, and the government appears to be listening too.

Udta Himachal: Is Shimla set to be the new drug capital of the country?

50-60 percent of youth in Shimla are caught in a massive drug menace, as addicts, peddlers or both, says the owner of a rehab centre in the city. Other surveys yield similar findings. What has led to this and why is an effective crackdown missing?

Citizen Matters Impact

The Citizen Matters article: **Udta Himachal: Is Shimla set to be the new drug capital of the country?** was republished in HimachalScape - a local magazine. The report spurred the the state government to look into the matter and take concrete action through multipronged measures.

- *High-Level Meeting:* A meeting of Chief Ministers of Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan and Jammu & Kashmir at Chandigarh was convened to evolve a common strategy to deal with drug abuse, trafficking and information sharing.

- *Treatment Centre:* A decision was taken to set-up a regional Drug Dependence Treatment Centre on the lines of the National Drug Dependence Centre at AIIMS New Delhi. One such centre already made functional at Sri Ram Hospital with help of Social Justice and empowerment department.

- *Tougher Laws:* The government also amended the NDPS Act to deny bail to those arrested with drugs irrespective of the quantity

- *Awareness:* Started an aggressive mass awareness campaign to reach out to youths in schools and colleges in urban and rural areas

- *Policy intervention:* Framed policy for drug-addiction and rehabilitation of youths, Started a Nasha Nivaran toll free helpline to get information of drug trafficking, drug abuse cases and help in rescue of drug addicts.

- *Monitoring:* Set up a high level Nasha Nivaran Board, a statutory body under the Chief Minister, to monitor measures on tackling drug menace in the state and ensure inter-departmental coordination, besides evolving outreach strategies .

Water conservation in apartments

This heartening article about how an apartment cut water consumption by 52% with just three measures caused a buzz that continued for months to follow.

Our coverage of water issues in Bengaluru has been one the most comprehensive, going wide as well as deep into water sourcing, delivery, access and planning.

Recently, we reported on the city's impending Day Zero and how it can be averted, on the state's pollution watchdog failing to keep the city's water safe, and tussles between city administration and private operators leading to entire neighbourhoods going without water.

Guides: Accessing potable water is a persistent issue across the city. We have featured a large number of knowledge-sharing articles as well as citizen solutions to this key challenge. Water is also a health issue, and our explainers have covered questions of water safety as well.

We also reported on the cholera outbreak that preceded Covid-19, with a guide to staying safe, as well as a detailed citizen submission on how one apartment saved Rs. 300,000 annually and also ensured full borewells year-round.

CITIZEN MATTERS ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು

Bangalore is where Citizen Matters was born, and it is where our roots and relationships are deepest. We understand this city better than most. From being the first platform to carry news of the city's masterplan to being its most relentless reporter on water and waste management, to doggedly investigating administrative impropriety that endangers the city's environment, we have brought width and depth to news coverage of Bengaluru.

This year, coverage spanned a wide variety of topics that covered mobility, employment, local economy, civic infrastructure and the workings of various civic agencies.

- During the pandemic, our coverage spanned important guides on markets, hostels and apartments, helping citizens make informed decisions on public safety
- During the anti-CAA protests in the city, we examined Bengaluru's history with dissent and public protests and produced a guide to holding safe protests as permitted by law
- We provided insights into the implications of various issues such as ward delimitation, reduction BMTC fares, lake revival efforts and the city's waste management infrastructure
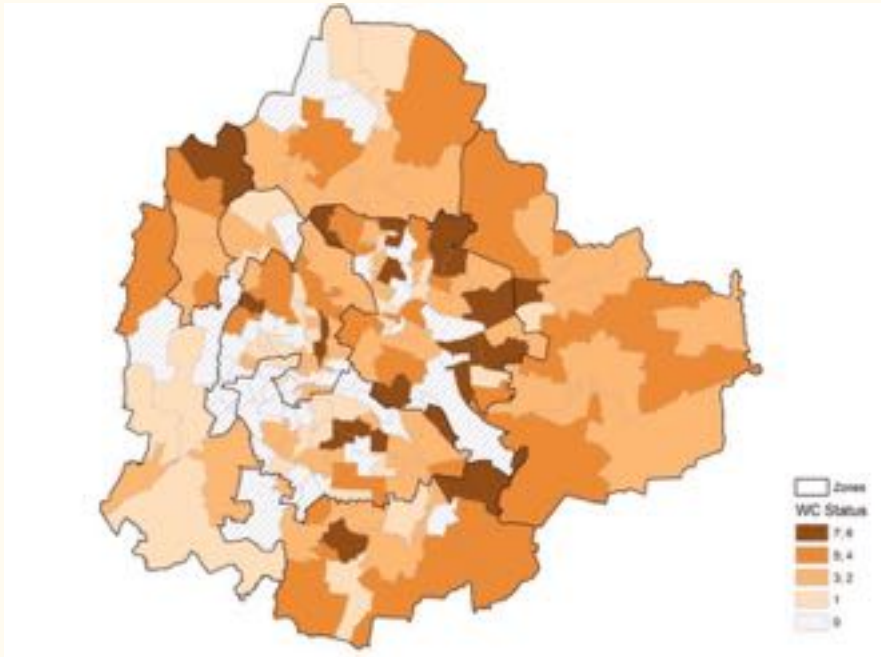
Understanding governance

A complex administration and a bureaucracy bogged by legacy have made it a challenge to understand how Bengaluru is managed. In addition, planning flaws, interest lobbies and short-term vision mean that corporation election promises have remained just that for years. Our reporting has repeatedly questioned and demonstrated gaps and shortfalls, while also covering successes.

Ward Committee Meetings: Recently we asked why Bengaluru's corporation ward committees are not yielding results

BBMP Ward Delimitation: A report on the delimitation exercise in Mahadevapura, showing how the method was flawed and would not change much for that beleaguered neighbourhood.

Guide: A guide to understand how BBMP wards were redrawn in the delimitation draft

Number of ward committee meetings, December 2018- June 2019

One of the pillars of our work and what sets us apart from other local news organisations is our record of citizen journalism. Here are some recent examples for how thorough and impactful these reports can be.

Waste to Energy Plants: This uncovered reasons why Bengaluru's upcoming Waste-to-Energy plants could fail. Such citizen alertness is the first in the line of defence against bad planning and official apathy. One particular waste-to-energy plant in Chikkanagamangala has residents especially worried as BBMP entrusted the incineration process to a company that has no experience in it, and a contract was signed when the company was not even incorporated.

Comprehensive Mobility Plan: Citizen journalists find the draft Mobility Plan based on faulty data, and financially unviable.

Elevated Corridor: How the project got an Environment Clearance certificate in record time and what the government did not consider before issuing the certificate

Bengaluru's proposed Parking Policy actually encourages private transport

A review of DULT's draft parking policy proposal highlights many issues – it is not based on data and lacks an implementation strategy. Is it designed to fail, like earlier plans?

CITIZEN MATTERS சென்னை

Our coverage in Chennai focussed on pressing issues including waste management, transport infrastructure, urban poverty and civic activism.

During COVID-19, we examined the preparedness of the city during the early stages of the pandemic. We produced guides on how citizens can come to the aid of each other during the lockdown and looked into the economic impact on various sectors.

We continued to raise questions about the city's mobility infrastructure, including uncovering that Chennai lacked enough buses for its population. We examined deficiencies such as the lack of footpaths and researched what makes a good footpath. We also covered positive developments in the city's waste management plan

[Water workshop](#), Chennai in partnership with ADDA. Participants learnt how to implement rainwater harvesting, reuse treated water and reduce water consumption in their communities!

We published original stories from Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Ludhiana, Srinagar, Shimla, NCR, Gurgaon, Kolkata, Mumbai and Pune. Our coverage examined various aspects of urban life and the impact of many policies pursued by the governments at all tiers.

We looked into the devastation caused by the months-long internet shutdown in Kashmir, highlighting the plight of the common man and businesses.

Pollution is another facet of life in Indian cities that we have covered in detail. Right from the menace of e-waste in Dehradun to the mountain of waste haunting Delhi, our pages have features pressing concerns. Environmental concerns such as fight to save Aarey in Mumbai, ground-water depletion in Kolkata and toxic pollution in Sutlej river took center stage.

We continued to published useful explainers on subjects of public interest such as an explainer on the spread of COVID-19, growing of Miyawaki forests and safeguarding citizens from fraud.

Other Updates

Outreach & engagement

At the panel on Collaborative Networks for Local Journalism panel, [Global Investigative Journalism](#) Conference at Hamburg, October 2019.

Meera K shared Citizen Matters' hybrid model where we work with professional journalists (both staff and freelance), experts, practitioners and citizen reporters and how to build true partnership with the community.

"Our urban crisis remains marginal to the political debate" – Peter Dreier

As part of World Resource Institute's Connect Karo 2019 conference, Citizen Matters hosted the [Citizen Matters' Roundtable on The Urban Agenda](#) at the India Habitat Center, New Delhi on March 29, 2019.

Fundamental urban issues are rarely part of the political discourse. While candidates are besieged by demands to fix the roads or provide water supply, root causes—leaky policy, broken planning and structural issues—underlying the daily problems of voters are too often ignored. What changes do people want in their cities? For those changes to happen, what do candidates need to be pushed to think about?

Outreach & engagement

Bengaluru Solution Series is a regular public programme we organise in partnership with Vidhi Legal, hosted at Bangalore International Centre.

This year saw two panels - on Sustainable, Equitable Access to Water and Making Bengaluru Safer

Outreach & engagement

Other public engagements

- Panel on Media Ethics, Christ University, Bengaluru and Panel on Responsible Journalism, MOP Vaishnav, Chennai
- Consultation – Healthy Air Coalition Bengaluru HEAL/St Johns Research Institute
- CSTEP panel on Air Quality
- Symbiosis Lit Fest, Hyderabad
- Climate Tracker Media Workshop, Chennai

Bangalore's Annual 220 fundraiser - Time to recycle, reduce, reuse, renew, rethink!

The Annual 220 Fundraiser

IN ASSOCIATION WITH

Citizen Matters, Bengaluru

Don't discard. Repair. Restore. Refurbish. Re-imagine.

Don't waste. Share and rebuild.

Before you buy new, discover the charm of the old.

Shop upcycled products. DIY workshops. Exchange, share things and ideas.
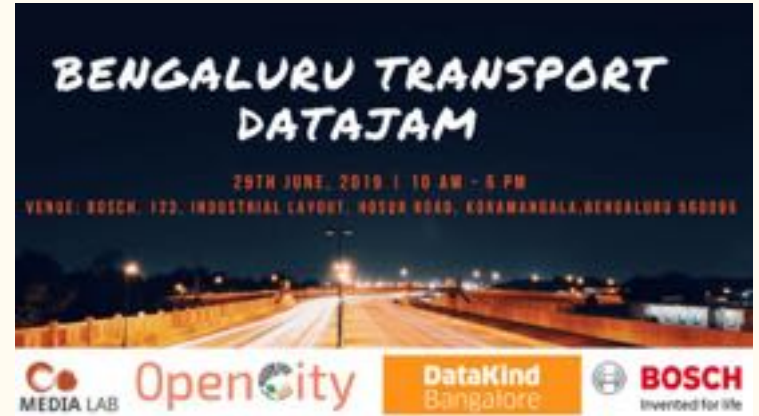
Date: 27 July 2019
Time: 10AM to 6PM
Venue: Rangoli Metro Arts Centre, MG Rd, Bangalore

220

CITIZEN MATTERS

Open City

- 2020 Numbers: 114,750 monthly pageviews
- Events: 2019 June: Mobility Datajam Part 1: in partnership with Bosch, Oct: Mobility Datajam Part 2: in partnership with BMTC
- Awarded Tech4Dev grant

Co Media Lab

Co Media Lab, our joint initiative with Radio Active CR 90.4 MHz, was part of an international project on community media. The project, supported by the Australia India Council (AIC), was spearheaded by Prof. Usha Rodrigues, Deakin University.

At the International Conference on Citizen & Community Media, hosted by Deakin University, Australia and supported by India Australia Grant and Community Broadcasting Association of Australia, we presented papers on the "Role of editorial stewardship in citizen journalism" and "Community Radios for Communicating the Sustainable Development Goals"

Other activities included the Visible Women Wiki campaign: Wikipedia editathon. We also organised a workshop on Solutions Journalism, Christ University by Fulbright scholar Holly Wise. Other workshops covered Community Radio and Podcasting, Misinformation and News Verification, Data Journalism and RTI .

Financials

Oorvani Foundation

Charitable trust registration no: BNG-BMH244/2013-14

Date of registration: 6th August, 2013

Registered office address: 63 Abshot Layout, Palace Road, Vasant Nagar, Bengaluru-560052

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.

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.

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

Oorvani Foundation

NO. 98/1, M M R Plaza, Sarjapur Road, Jakkasandra, Bangalore 560034

Income and Expenditure Account for the year ended March 31, 2020

Expenditure	Amount Rs.	Income		Amount Rs.
Consultancy charges - Professional	52,06,680	Contribution Received		
Consultancy charges - Freelance	1141906	Donations	5851564	
Technical Operation - Expense	36506	Professional receipts	410000	6261564
Rent expense	30000	Interest on IT Refund		2077
Bad debts written off	21200	Excess of Expenditure over Income		271415
Audit fees	30000			
other expenses	9000			
Accountant fees	24000			
Other expense	35764			
Total	**65,35,056**	**Total**		**65,35,056**

		Oorvani Foundation - 2019- 2020		
		Balance Sheet as at March 31, 2020		
Liabilities	**Amount**	**Assets**		**Amount**
	Rs.			**Rs.**
<u>Corpus Fund</u>		<u>Current Assets, Loans and Advances</u>		
Contribution from Trustees	3,000	Bank Balance in Savings Bank Account with		
		- ICICI Bank A/c No. 100805000796		4,18,971
<u>Current Liabilities and provisions</u>		TDS receivable AY 2019-20		46,845
Consultancy Fee payable	5,53,135	TDS receivable AY 2020-21		41,000
Audit Fee payable	90,000	<u>Amount receivable</u>		
TDS payable		Climate Trends LLP		99,000
- TDS - Consultancy/Professional charges	99,734			
		<u>Excess of Expenditure over Income</u>		
		Trasnferred from I & E for the year	-	
		Less : Balance in the account as on 1.4.19	1,31,362	(1,31,362)
Total	**7,45,869**	**Total**		**4,74,454**

Team updates

We welcomed new members to the team to strengthen to our editorial, reporting and citizen engagement work.
New additions included Bhanutej N, Ekta Sawant, Siddhant Kalra, Rishabh Srivastava and Bhavani Prabhakar.

Team

Aruna Natarajan, Bhanutej N, Bhavani Prabhakar, Ekta Sawant, Laasya Shekhar, Manasi Paresh Kumar, Navya PK, Nishanth C, Rishabh Srivastava, Satarupa Sen, Siddhanth Kalra and TR Gopalakrishnan

Trustees

Meera K | Meenakshi Ramesh | Ashwin Mahesh

My work helps to decipher the happenings of the city through in-depth reports and analysis. I love working with like-minded people with a nose for the truth, to make citizen's voices heard, to reclaim people's rights and to catalyse change.

Bhavani Prabhakar

For over four decades, particularly as Editor of The Week magazine, my focus was on the political games being played out in Delhi. Those power games are not what concerns Citizen Matters. How these affect the ordinary citizen, in terms of quality of life, does. Here is where the ordinary citizen matters the most -

TR Gopalakrishnan

I have always wanted to give back to society. When I joined Citizen Matters, I knew I had arrived at the right place. Everyday we engage with citizens from diverse backgrounds, experts in various fields, and civic organisations and agencies to bring you what matters the most.

Ekta Sawant

www.oorvani.org

foundation@oorvani.in