



PAC

Helping public services make the grade

The groundbreaking *Citizen Report Card*, pioneered by India's *Public Affairs Centre* (PAC), uses citizen feedback to make public service providers more accountable – in Bangalore and beyond.

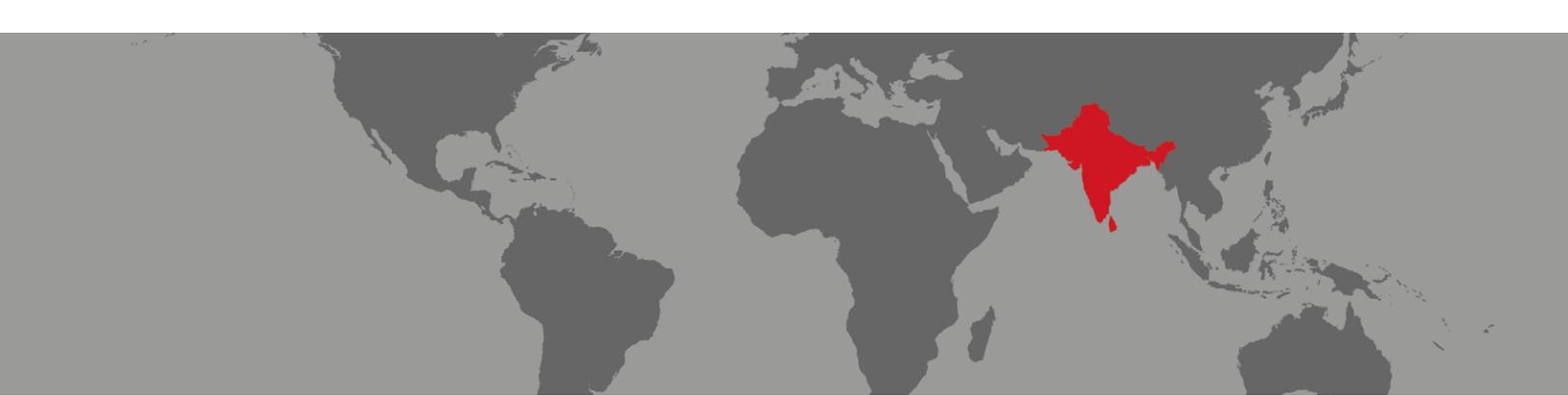
SETTING THE SCENE —At the time of the 1993 municipal elections in Bangalore, India, citizens were frustrated with the quality of public services they were receiving. However, lacking sufficient information and resources, they were unable to hold the government to account. Inspired by private sector client satisfaction surveys, a group led by Dr. Samuel Paul – an eminent economist, teacher and management professional – developed the *Citizen Report Card* as a way to measure and publicize citizen satisfaction with public services. The results, which were overwhelmingly negative, were shared with government and widely publicized, triggering much public debate and media interest. The increased spotlight was enough to motivate several service agencies to review and improve their performance.

The *Citizen Report Card* received national and international attention. Building on the report card's success in the Bangalore elections, the Public Affairs Centre (PAC) was established in 1994 to further develop and promote the approach and methodology. Over the years, the *Citizen Report Card* has been successful in raising citizen aware-

ness and providing evidence on which to base policies and advocacy campaigns. However, PAC and other members of civil society felt the report card would have even more impact if government and other service providers institutionalized it as a way of doing business. They also perceived a need to train other members of civil society in order to increase the coverage and impact of the approach.

WHAT PAC DID —By undertaking numerous *Citizen Report Card* exercises over the years, PAC has generated a critical mass of grassroots evidence to prove the model works. It has used that evidence to promote the report card with key government actors. PAC also helped the government see how it could use the report card for internal monitoring, such as in social audits for a wide range of projects and sectors. PAC is now working directly with some government departments to help design and implement evaluation systems that incorporate citizen voices.

In order to make the model available to the larger community of social change activists, PAC developed and delivers training workshops. It also offers



an online course (www.citizenreportcard.com) to help users develop the basic knowledge and skills necessary to implement a report card exercise.

PAC also continues to use the *Citizen Report Card* to bring attention to poor public services in India. For example, it recently used the report card to address weaknesses in the public system for distributing food and essential materials in the state of Karnataka, an issue that affected the food security of at least 3 million poor families.

THE OUTCOME —There is substantial evidence that feedback from the *Citizen Report Card* has improved government policy and service delivery in and beyond Bangalore. In Bangalore itself, citizen satisfaction improved somewhat by the time the second report card was given in 1999 and by more than 40 percent for the third report card, given in 2003. The more recent report card on food security in Karnataka prompted the state government to formally acknowledge the issues that need to be addressed for the safety net to function effectively. The exercise also helped to mobilize civil society organizations to work collectively on food security issues in the state.

PAC has also been successful in helping government to institutionalize the report card process. With PAC's assistance, the Bangalore Development Authority developed its own report card, which it used to obtain feedback on corruption and to identify weaknesses in service delivery. The Bangalore City Corporation and the Bangalore Development Authority also initiated a joint forum of representatives from NGOs and public officials to identify solutions to high priority problems. In addition, in 2008 and again in 2011, the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission of India urged the Chief Ministers of all Indian states to incorporate citizen knowledge into decision-making and policy formulation, specifically asking them to consider using the *Citizen Report Card* to aid this process.

Thanks to its proven utility and PAC's accessible training, the *Citizen Report Card* methodology has spread beyond Bangalore, and is currently being used countrywide in India as well as in several other countries, including Ukraine, the Philippines and Vietnam.

–

For more information on the Public Affairs Centre and the Citizen Report Card, visit <http://pacindia.org>

TTI's Stories of Influence Series

This series, produced by TTI, shares stories about the impact Southern think tanks have on policy initiatives. All the think tanks featured in this series are supported by the [Think Tank Initiative](http://www.thinktankinitiative.org), a multi-donor program dedicated to strengthening the capacity of independent policy research organizations in the developing world. At www.thinktankinitiative.org, you can find profiles on the organizations in Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia supported by the program, as well as publications, working papers, and general information about TTI.