

## **Sanchal Foundation**

### **Annual Report: 2004-2005**

#### **A. Introduction**

Hazards Centre of Sanchal Foundation has been providing technical and professional support to community groups and organisations working with the urban poor in Delhi since 1998. The Centre submitted a proposal, entitled ***“Carrying the Urban Debate Further”***, in February 2004 to the National Foundation of India, in continuation of an earlier project titled “Public Debate on Urban Governance”, with a budget of Rs 25.01 lakhs. The project began in April 2004 with a grant from NFI of Rs 5 lakhs and a promise of another Rs 3 lakhs later on. The Hazards Centre has been able to raise another Rs 6 lakhs through consultancies and sales. Hence, there remains a shortfall of Rs 11 lakhs (or 44%). This final report reviews the performance from April 2004 to May 2005.

#### **B. Objectives**

The project had the following objectives:

- I. Strengthening cultural forms of expression as part of capacity building of the urban poor to survive in the present context of urban renewal.***
- II. Building a systematic research and documentation unit to supplement the above and to explore vexing questions about the future course of development.***
- III. Systematising the institutional debate in different parts of the city with other sections of society and negotiating with policy makers.***

#### **C. Activities and Methodology**

The specific **activities** and **methodology** for achieving the above objectives were defined as follows:

1. Organising creative workshops, mainly with young people and those with artisanal skills, to develop forms of expression in sculpture, art, theatre, and installations which would articulate the understanding of the urban poor regarding their place in the city.
2. Experts from these various fields, who are sympathetic to the idea of “people’s” art, would be recruited to facilitate these workshops. Some local support would be forthcoming from the community organisations.
3. The art forms and installations developed at the local level would be taken around other sites to encourage greater sharing of ideas and concepts amongst communities. They would also be used for presentation of the people’s views before other sections of civil society.
4. Organising other workshops for the imparting of technical and professional skills such as equipment repair, land measurement, pollution monitoring, layout planning, data collection, machine operation and maintenance – both for livelihood opportunities as well as encouraging community work.

5. Putting in place adequate hardware and software to create an efficient and manageable information management system at the Centre. The computers currently available with the Centre could be easily upgraded at optimum cost to achieve this result.
6. Some external inputs would be required both to design the system as well as train Hazard Centre personnel in its use and maintenance. Subsequently, this could become part of the training repertoire of the Centre.
7. A dedicated research programme shall be initiated to explore areas for which critical information is required. This shall enrich the data base – particularly in areas such as employment generation, demographic patterns, and governance.
8. Regular seminars and discussion fora would be organised, particularly in colleges, universities, research institutes, public institutions, and professional bodies to encourage greater debate in civil society on the basis of a better understanding of urban dynamics.
9. A series of simple and illustrated publications in both English and Hindi would be brought out to provide the information, concepts, and arguments that would inform the debate. A tie-up with a publishing house would be attempted to make such publications widely available.
10. The entire exercise would be monitored at weekly and monthly meetings as before, but an annual consultation would evaluate the project towards the end in order to specify what further steps are required to be taken in the coming years.

#### **D. Outputs**

The following activities have been undertaken in the period under review within the context of the **Outputs** expected at the end of the year and taking into account the number of personnel and funds that were mobilized (please refer to Annexure 1 for details of meetings, activities, and publications, and to Annexure 2 for the list of publications):

1. **Six** workshops were to have been conducted, on request, for promoting “people’s art” with community groups. During the year, all **six** workshops have been conducted with different groups, one on collective singing, another on street theatre, a third on water management, a fourth on understanding political systems, a fifth on presentation of installations, and a sixth on the social context of the river. Two of the workshops were conducted outside Delhi, but they contributed to the Centre’s appreciation of how such learning activities can be enhanced. Unfortunately, it was not possible to engage in this activity in any depth, as envisaged at the time of drafting the proposal, primarily because the Centre was not able to generate sufficient resources to organise a range of residential workshops over durations longer than half a day. Consequently, working people with artisanal skills and sympathetic experts could not adequately participate in these workshops.
2. There were to be **twelve** public displays of the works of art created at these workshops. There have been **thirteen** such presentations – though they may not have followed the specific form created at the workshops, they built upon the experiences of the group activity and prepared the results for wider public dissemination. These presentations dealt with pollution impacts, censorship, livelihoods, waste collection, transportation, informal sector, shelter, technology, and urban development. The presentations were made in public spaces as well

as at meetings with policy makers, administrators, and concerned citizens. They helped to give an articulate vision to the voices of the dispossessed, the affected, and the invisible. At the same time, it was not possible to display these presentations, as desired in the conception of the project, on a larger scale at the grass-roots level to permit greater interaction and sharing of perspectives between communities.

3. **Thirty two** skill development workshops with school and college students, and working men and women, have been run by the Centre in place of the planned **twenty** such workshops. The issues covered have ranged from designing survey forms and methodologies, to mapping, tracking urban growth, measuring water land and waste, cadre training, creative writing, in-situ shelter upgradation, sewer hazards, employment opportunities, cooperation, managing water, using the Right to Information Act, disaster management, community health, urban planning, and report presentations. The participants have generally used the skills developed at these workshops to strengthen their own ability to understand their environment and to deal with the larger systems that control their lives. Much of this has been reflected in the increasing ability of men, women, youth and children to effectively intervene at public for a and present their own case with confidence and a degree of assertion.
4. The earlier **data** storage and retrieval system continues at the Hazards Centre, with considerable data expansion. The hardware and software could not be upgraded because of severe financial constraints, which prevented us from buying new computers with the required capacity. Nevertheless, most of the written and visual material available with the Centre has now been electronically documented and can be retrieved fairly quickly. A recent promise of a grant by the Ford Foundation may help to remedy matters significantly in the coming year. It is being increasingly recognised by the Centre that this is one of the critical hurdles in improving the work of the Centre.
5. Since a new data system could not be put in place, the **two** proposed training workshops for Hazards Centre personnel in the system could also not be organised. However, **six** informal training and interactive sessions on countering evictions, water harvesting, the provisions of the Right to Information Act, environmental impacts of river linking, monitoring avifauna, exhibition preparation, map-reading, and techniques of pollution control have been conducted to upgrade the internal technical and professional skills. This has enabled the Centre to respond better to community requests on a variety of related themes.
6. Instead of the **six** planned research studies and reports to be initiated in cooperation with user groups, **eleven** studies have been facilitated on hazardous waste disposal, harassment of ethnic minorities, river pollution, encroachment on the flood plain, effluent treatment plants, the train burning at Godhra, transport systems, occupational health, evictions and resettlement, encroachment on the Ridge, vocational education, land availability for shelter, drinking water quality, and the use of the Right to Information Act. All the above studies have been used extensively by community organisations and alliances for mass education and lobbying for policy changes.

7. There have been over **one hundred** discussion groups and seminars in different parts of the city in collaboration with academic and professional bodies – in place of the proposed **twenty**. The topics have covered a wide range from housing rights, to the changing face of the city, the Right to Food, vendor and hawker policies, employment, education, construction labour, unemployment, women's work, the unorganised sector, water, the growth of slums, the role of media, the nature of voluntary action, and the interface between academics and activism. One of the attempts of the Centre has been to increasingly engage with students and youth so as to sensitise them to the changing face of urban India and how it is likely to affect their own lives in the future. Another focal point has been the attempt to channel research studies being conducted by academic institutions to increasingly document and theorise on the impact of urban change on the poor.
8. **Ten** monographs, **twenty** booklets, and **twenty** leaflets in Hindi and English were to have been published through the project period. **Ten** papers and **sixteen** reports have been produced during this period. The themes cover land and shelter rights, the pollution of the river, the transformation of the city, issues before the electorate, map-reading manual, monthly newsletters, employment, strategies for alliances, and harassment of the unorganised sector. However, the Centre has lagged behind in the production of booklets and leaflets for mass dissemination. Only **five** each of these have been brought out. Partly, this has been because of lack of funds, and partly because the community demand has been for intensive interactions through verbal presentation and dialogue. But some of the material has been disseminated through the publication of the monthly newspaper brought out by the Sajha Manch, an alliance of organisations in the city for whom the Centre serves as a secretariat.
9. **Six** audio-visual presentations was the target for the year. The Centre has been able to participate in the production of **two** documentary films on evictions and river pollution, **eight** power point presentations on the modernisation of Delhi, environmental impact of industries, censorship, informal waste management, transportation, hazardous industrial wastes, disaster management, and the Delhi Master Plan. The limitations of the old computers and software have severely crippled the ability to prepare more such presentations, particularly through the use of GIS techniques.

A summary of the achievements is presented in the table below:

No	Activity	Target	Achieved
1	Creative workshops	6	5
2	Public presentations	12	13
3	Skill workshops	20	32
4	Hazard Centre internal skills	2	6
5	Research studies	6	11
6	Seminars and public meetings	20	105
7	Monographs	10	26
8	Booklets	20	5
9	Leaflets	20	5
10	Audio-visuals	6	10
11	Monitoring		14

10. There were provisions for **two** coordinators, **six** project assistants, **two** administrative assistants, **one** office assistant, and **ten** consultants in the budget. However, both financial as well as personal constraints have enabled the Hazards Centre to retain only **one** coordinator, **four** project assistants, **two** administrative assistants, and **two** consultants. This has also substantially affected the quality of the work.

## E. Conclusions

The performance of the Centre has been regularly monitored through weekly meetings of the Centre's personnel and 14 monthly meetings of the alliance of groups whom the Centre sub-serves. An external evaluation of the Centre was carried out in August 2004 by a panel of eleven persons (3 from mass organisations, 2 from academia, 3 from funding agencies, and 3 from activist groups respectively). The panel discussed the activities, along with inputs from the staff, for two days, and made the following recommendations:

- The Centre should endeavour to build deeper linkages with mass organisations, and women's and children's organisations.
- There should be an attempt to maintain consistent contacts with the media, including mentoring of journalists.
- Advocacy efforts should be strengthened through workshops with government agencies, the judiciary, and legislators.
- The provisions of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment should be systematically incorporated in the Centre's research and training activities.
- A pro-active role should be pursued with other alliances and networks to take the work beyond the boundaries of Delhi.
- A sustained exposure programme with college and school students is necessary to build a core of volunteers for the future.
- Skill up-gradation of the Centre's staff must be made a formalised and continuing effort in concert with the Resource Group.

In the context of the Objectives of this project and the recommendations made in August 2004, a final review of this project suggests the following:

**Cultural forms of expression:** The biggest shortfall has been in the development of cultural forms of expression that we had proposed as the critical component of the project. This has been partially so because of the financial crunch, that did not permit the recruitment of appropriate resource persons or the hiring of suitable and ample residential space to organise workshops. But it also seems to reflect the relatively low priority for this activity in the programmes of our partner community groups and organisations, given the current and graver threats posed to shelter and livelihoods. Nevertheless, the collective evaluation strongly suggests that individual groups and associations of the urban poor are gradually beginning to perceive the linkages of their problems with macro-processes and are attempting to articulate a more organised vision of how the city should look like from their perspective, instead of focusing on isolated issues.

**Research and documentation:** While it has not been possible to upgrade the Centre's infrastructure, nor systematically enhance the technical skills of the

Centre's personnel, the demands for relevant research by the Centre have continued to increase. The Centre has responded to this demand by associating the Resource Group of experts more closely with designing the research activity, as well as encouraging the participation of the community and social activists in collecting the primary data, analysing it, and drawing out the learning experiences, and advocating the policy recommendations. Much of this work is pointing in the direction of developing institutional mechanisms for the participation of people in policy-making, planning, and implementation. In other words, the future work of the Centre has to emphasise research and documentation in the dynamics of the 74<sup>th</sup> Amendment and how urban groups are trying to use it in different cities and towns.

**Public debate:** There is no doubt that the depth and quality of public debate in Delhi is beginning to improve, particularly within and between the community organisations, with whom the Hazards Centre is associated. In addition, the Centre has also been able to contribute to widening the debate amongst other groups and alliances, both in Delhi as well as other cities and towns. The Centre has also been able to participate in the deliberations of national alliances, such as those on Right to Food, Right to Employment, and Right to Information, and to introduce the urban issue into the discussions. Interactions with students of colleges and schools has increased substantially during the project period and a deliberate effort has been made to sensitise them to urban processes and what these portend for the future of the city. Nevertheless, the Centre's attempts to cater to the needs of larger mass organisations, and to involve the mainstream media in disseminating new ideas and concepts, remains weak. This is an issue of concern for future work – although a few developments in the closing months of the project period indicate that there may be a greater willingness on the part of political parties and the language media to respond to the needs of the urban poor.

These issues will be reflected in the future work of the Centre.

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