

LOK SATTA
People Power

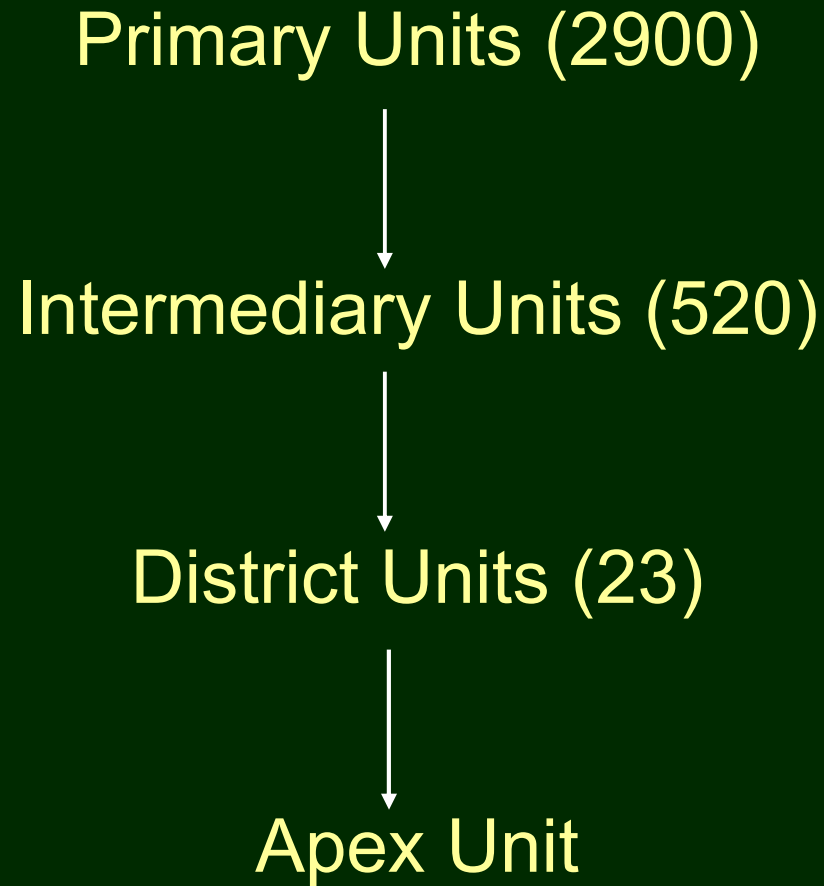
Overview

FNSt Partners' Meet
11–12 March, 2005, New Delhi

Mission

To promote peaceful, democratic transformation of Indian Governance process and enable India to achieve full potential through good governance

Lok Satta's Structure



Key Premises

- Crisis is systemic
Most players are victims of a vicious cycle
- Change of players not enough
Change of rules of the game needed
- Values are not the issue
Institutions are the key
- Resources are not a problem
The way they are deployed is the key
- Focus on governance process and not on contentious policies

Lok Satta's Goals

- Comprehensive electoral reforms
- Empowerment of local governments
- Instruments of accountability
- Speedy and efficient justice

Electoral Reforms

- Process Improvements
 - Preventing polling irregularities
 - Arresting and reversing criminalization of politics
 - Checking abuse of unaccountable money power in elections
- System Improvements
 - Political party reform
 - Proportional representation
 - Direct election of Chief Executive at the State level with clear separation of powers

Survey of Electoral Rolls

- Lok Satta took up detailed field survey of voter registration defects
- Survey – 1999 elections: 56 rural and urban polling station (approximately 56,000 voters)

Errors: 15% errors in rural areas

44.8% in urban areas

Survey – 2004 elections.

- Sample Size -110 rural and urban polling stations
- Population of more than 1,00,000

Survey Area	No. of Constituencies	No. of Polling Stations	Total No. of Voters	Errors of Commission	Errors of Omission	Total No. of Errors-Omission and Commission	
						No	As % of total Voters
RURAL	34	68	68110	1496(2.2)	1996(3.0)	3492	5.1
URBAN	21	39	38915	2099(5.4)	2782(7.1)	4881	12.5
TOTAL	55	107	107025	3595(3.3)	4778(4.5)	8373	7.8

Survey of Electoral Rolls

Lok Satta, along with other friends, is planning to take up a pilot project for voter list verification and corrections with citizen participation in a few constituencies in Bangalore, Mumbai and Hyderabad

Campaign Against Criminalization

- 1999 Election Watch – Post-nomination
- No significant impact on the voting behavior as local factors such as caste etc., play a major role
- 2004 Election Watch – Pre-nomination
- Aim: To restrain political parties from nominating persons with criminal background
- Total potential candidates with criminal record : 51
- Out of the 51 potential candidates, only 29 were nominated
- Out of 29, only 11 candidates were elected

Campaign Against Criminalization

- Generated a fierce debate in the state and for almost 3 weeks, the entire political discourse was centered around this issue
- Political parties were forced to ditch certain candidates due to the intense public pressure and media focus
- But still some of the truly established candidates who have struck deep political roots continued to remain in the fray as the parties cannot contest in those constituencies without them
- Election Watch activities have also been carried out in Maharashtra Elections

Unaccounted Money Power

- Recent Developments
 - The Sept 2003 amendments are far-reaching. India has one of the best funding laws
- Key provisions
 - Full tax exemption to donors (individual or corporates)
 - Mandatory disclosure of all contributions of Rs 20,000 or more
 - Free air time on all electronic media – private or public – to recognized parties and candidates
 - Removal of loopholes under sec 77 of RPA

Funding Law – Unfinished Agenda

- Free media time not implemented as rules are not framed
- No incentive to disclose, except tax exemption to donor. Severe penalties on donor for non-disclosure will be salutary. No donor will risk jail term for undisclosed contributions
- Compulsory statutory auditing of party accounts must be provided for
- Election Commission to be the final authority for determination of compliance

Impact of LOK SATTA at the National Level

- Lok Satta was instrumental in putting Electoral Reforms on the national agenda
- Lok Satta's surveys influenced Election Commission to accept in principle to make post office a nodal agency for voter registration
- Effectively lobbied for political funding legislation

Impact of LOK SATTA at the National Level

- Election Watch made disclosures a dominant public issue leading to litigation and judicial verdicts
 - Arresting growth of criminal elements in politics
 - AP – lower percentage of politicians with criminal charges
- Spearheading the National Campaign for Electoral Reforms eg., the recent candidate disclosure issue
- Emerged as a leading think-tank on governance reforms in the country
- Resulted in a viable National Campaign for Electoral and Governance Reforms

Key Systemic Reforms

- Proportional Representation
- Clear separation of powers
- Political party regulation

Approaches to National Campaign

- Identify reform groups and support
- Focus on key goals and mobilize public opinion and bring pressure
eg: disclosure, funding, alternative model for women's representation, Post Office as nodal agency
- National communication campaign

**“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful,
committed individuals can change the world.
Indeed it is the only thing that ever did”**

- *Margaret Mead*