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

Margaret Mead
To promote peaceful, democratic transformation of Indian Governance process and enable India to achieve full potential through good governance.
Can economic reforms alone deliver?

Smaller and more focused government will help

But government still has a significant role to play
Why is governance vital?

The government spends Rs. 1800 crores everyday.

Government employs 70% of the 27 million organized employees.

Fiscal deficit (Union and States) - 10% of GDP.

50% union tax revenues - interest payment.

Only 5% of GDP spent on health, education and social security.
Irreducible role of government

Law and Order

Justice

Rule of Law

School education

Primary healthcare

Basic infrastructure
Distortions of state power

Positive power restricted
Negative power unchecked
All organs are dysfunctional

Crisis is systemic

Political process ought to be the solution
But has become the problem itself
Failure of political process

Parties
- Autocratic and unaccountable
- Repel the best
- A problem, not solution
- Choice - Tweedledom & Tweedledee

Elections
- Change of players
- No change of rules of game
- Criminalization
- Money power
- Flawed process
  - Electoral rolls (40% errors)
  - Bogus voting (22%)
Campaign expenditure – India and US comparison

Expenditure for Lok Sabha + all Assemblies – all parties + candidates

Estimated: Rs.2500 + Rs.4500 crores
Total: Rs.7000 crores = $1.5 b
70-80% is for vote buying

US election expenditure in 2000
Presidency + House + 1/3 Senate + 1/3 governors

Estimated expenditure: (Soft + issue ads Hard) $3 billion
80% is for TV advertising.
Actual campaign expenditure: 50% $1.5 billion

Adjusted to our low per-capita income, and high purchasing capacity of Rupee, our expenditure is 60 times that of US!
Campaign expenses – vicious cycle

Illegitimate expenses are often 5-10 times the ceiling or more

(Assembly ceiling: Rs 6 lakhs
Lok Sabha ceiling: Rs 15 lakhs)

Every crore spent illegitimately

↓

Rs 10 crore returns

(to cover ROR, Interest, personal upkeep, supporters, family’s future, next election costs)

↓

Rs 100 crore collected through bureaucracy

(for every legislator, there are 2000 employees who need to collect ‘rent’)

↓

people suffer ten times more.

Payment extorted, on pain of delay, harassment, humiliation, anxiety and greater loss.
Keys to resolution

Change of players not enough, a change in rules of the game needed

Values are not the issue, institutions are the key

Most players are victims of a vicious

Resources are not a problem, the way they are deployed is the key
Way out

- Lok Satta
- Assert people's sovereignty
- Fundamental democratic transformation
- People centered governance
Key governance reforms

- 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

People Power
Electoral reforms

System Improvements

Political party reform

Proportional representation

Direct election of Chief Executive at the State level with clear separation of powers
Empowerment of Local governments

Transfer of funds, functions and functionaries to local governments

Link between

vote ↔ public good

taxes ↔ services

authority ↔ accountability
Judicial reforms

- Limit writ jurisdiction
- Increase number of courts
- Local courts in local language (Gram Nyayalaya)
- Time bound justice
- Independent mechanism for judicial appointments
- Independent crime investigation
Lok Satta

Instruments of accountability

- Right to Information
- Independent crime investigation
- Independent appointment of constitutional functionaries
- Independent and effective anti-corruption agency
- Term limits for public office
- Strict penalties for abuse of office
- Citizen’s Charters
- Stakeholder empowerment
Approaches to citizens’ action

- Collective informed assertion
- Wide dissemination of information
- Effective mass communication
- Strategic intervention
Methods of citizens’ action

- Peoples watch
- Swarajya
- Election watch
- Specific issue advocacy
Impact

Citizen’s Charters in A.P. - 9 departments

A compensation of Rs.50/day for delay in services – first time in India

Short delivery at petrol stations all over A.P. – benefit of Rs. 1 crore/day

Toilets for every household – over 2 million toilets were built in the last 3 years
Influenced public discourse on power reforms in A.P.

Right to Information – legislation in 2002

Election Watch – arresting criminalization in politics

EC accepts in principle to make post office nodal agency for voter registration

Advocacy for political funding reform – a bill is now before parliament

Election watch in several states
Impact

EW work in AP was the basis for movement for candidate disclosures

30-35% passive support in AP

National Campaign for Electoral Reforms (NCER)

Credible platform for national network
What Next? - A.P.

- Mobilizing 100,000 active citizens
- Right to information legislation
- Expansion of citizen’s charters
- Empowerment of local governments
- Legislation for local courts
- Police reforms at state level
- Focus on delivery of school education and public health
- New stake-holder empowerment laws
How to build a state wide movement?

A group of credible persons with excellent track record
Deep insights into political and governance process
An agenda that is acceptable to all segments
Collective informed assertion on specific issues
Full time commitment and professionalism
Building a platform with a brand image
Major activities at national level

- Advocacy for political funding reform
- Advocacy for regulation of political parties
- Changes in voter registration procedure - post office as nodal agency
- Measures to curb polling irregularities
- Proportional representation and separation of powers
- National platform for governance reforms
Road map to reforms

Specific reforms in 3-4 key states

Building of state-wide movements in key states

Creation of national platform

National campaign for a few specific goals
“The punishment suffered by the wise who refuse to take part in the government, is to suffer under the government of bad men.”

Plato