

How RCE Pune tried to do it

Capacity building for participatory budgeting

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Building Capacity

- To catalyze change we need change agents. For which capacity needs to be built.
- Building capacity is a very complex process. We often assume that expert talk alone can effect change
- But CB is not a one shot affair. It is a long journey that makes many demands. At its heart lies engagement, working together, co-creating.

The Pune Story

- In 2006, Commissioner of PMC initiated Citizens' Participation in municipal budgeting for neighbourhood improvement in the city. He held a meeting with citizens to tell them
 - what it was about
 - additional budget allocated for all electoral wards in the city
 - residents could decide what improvements they wanted in the physical infrastructure with the additional funds.
- RCE also attended the meeting, and decided to get involved in a few low-income wards of the city.
- Year 1:
 - PMC officials spoke about budgeting, what they planned to do regarding road improvement, signage, drainage, benches etc,
 - asked the ragtag of people present (hawkers & vendors, residents, commuters) to give their views. The vocal among them did.

Some suggestions were accepted, some were not, and the exercise of participatory budgeting for that year was over.

Pune Story contd.

Year 2: RCE Pune invited by PMC to facilitate the process.

- Discussed process with PMC officials
- RCE identified and gathered residents and users of the areas, told them that it was their chance to influence how the budget was spent
- Officials encouraged the citizens to have their say about needs and priorities
- Some questions asked by RCE to clarify issues
- Similar result

Year 3: more tweaking.

- RCE tried to prepare the citizens by discussing their needs and priorities before hand
- Officials more encouraging, but said citizens uneducated and did not understand the constraints
- RCE prepared a menu of facilities and cost per unit with PMC's help so citizens could use it
- PMC officials more open to and respectful of suggestions
- More of a collective community exercise.

Yearly activity: slow but discernible improvement

The Survey

- In 2013, CEE conducted a survey to assess the status of participatory budgeting, the achievements and identify areas for improvement
- Achievements
 - Simple process
 - Exposed citizens to a democratic process
 - Substantial allocation of budget
 - Some suggestions of the poor accepted, but reason for not considering or rejecting suggestions was not explained
- Areas for improvement:
 - Number and diversity of citizens participating
 - Quality of discussion and deliberation among citizens
 - Transparency of process
 - Implementation of projects

But a new challenge:

Elected officials of the wards claimed that they were the ones who should be mediating, citizens should not be interacting directly with PMC.

How to do it better

In 2015, a workshop on how to improve the process

1. How to do it differently based on survey findings and experiences
2. How to involve diverse and more people
3. How to structure it better so that citizens understand issues in a holistic manner and make more informed and considered decisions
4. How to encourage more shared power in prioritizing projects and implementing them

The workshop

Participants

- PMC officials
- Users of the area: hawkers and vendors, students, disabled, mohalla committee, women's groups, commuters: 60
- NGOs
- professionals e.g. city planners, architects, academics
- Reviewed how the process had been done so far
- Shared good practices from around the world
- Worked in groups to co-create, then shared, and co-created a larger plan

The Challenge

- Elected ward officials continued to be an irritant
- Disrupted budgeting meetings of citizens with PMC
- Did not want to work as partners
- Did not appreciate RCE's involvement

Result:

RCE withdrew

Budgeting initiative continues but has deteriorated

Learning

Capacity building

- Takes time, patience, respect and trust
- Needs conversation and listening to each other
- Each one needs to take responsibility, agency, otherwise things don't move
- Should be a stake for all involved in achieving success
- Projects need to build in sufficient resources for CB, not for just one event
- Failure should be accepted and allowed, move forward from there

RCE Pune now wants to reinitiate their involvement.

Currently seeking funding.

Want to collaborate with an RCE working on urban sustainability issues, especially related to urban transportation and mobility.