

**Making Voice Work:
The Report Card on Bangalore's Public Services**

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Executive Summary

This paper narrates how a "report card" on public services in the Indian city of Bangalore was used by several civil society institutions both to create greater public awareness about the poor performance of their public service providers and to challenge the latter to be more efficient and responsive to their customers. The report card consisted of a sample survey of the users of the city's services (both rich and poor) and a rating of the public agencies in terms of public satisfaction with different dimensions of their services. Public feedback was also used to quantify the extent of corruption and other indirect costs of the services. The end result was an assessment of public services from the perspective of citizens.

The survey was completed in 1993, but the follow up activities continued for the next three years, with the active involvement of several citizen groups and non-governmental bodies concerned about these issues. The involvement of the media in disseminating the findings of the report card, the responses of public agencies to the report card and the joint initiatives to improve services by the agencies and citizen groups are among the subjects discussed in this paper. Similar report cards have since been prepared on several other large cities in India.

The measurement of the impact of the report card on changes in the quality and responsiveness of service providers is not an easy task. The paper examines the problems involved and provides some data by way of intermediate indicators. There is some evidence that public awareness of these problems has increased as a result of the experiment. Civil society institutions seem to be more active on this front and their interactions with public agencies have become better organized, purposive and continuous. As a result, some public agencies in Bangalore have begun to take steps to improve their services. The paper concludes that public feedback ("voice") in the form of a report card has the potential to challenge governments and their agencies to become more efficient and responsive to customers.