

# **Association for Promoting Social Action (APSA)**

**Bangalore and Hyderabad:**

## **A Critical Review of the Organisation and its Programmes for the Urban Poor & Vulnerable Children**

**May 2007**

**FORUT, Norway**

# **Association for Promoting Social Action (APSA)**

**Bangalore and Hyderabad:**

## **A Critical Review of the Organisation and its Programmes for the Urban Poor & Vulnerable Children**

**A Report**

**Evaluators:**

**Meera Pillai**

**Richard Whittell**

**Preben H. Lindøe**

**May 2007**

*Commissioned by* **FORUT, Norway**

## Contents

Contents	Page
Executive Summary	4
<b>Part I: A Critical Review of the Organisation and its Programmes for the Urban Poor &amp; Vulnerable Children – Meera Pillai &amp; Richard Whittell</b>	
Acknowledgements	8
Chapter 1: Introduction	9
Chapter 2: APSA – A Timeline of its Development in Hyderabad and Bangalore	16
Chapter 3: APSA: An Overview and Assessment of its Projects	25
Chapter 4: Learnings from the Evaluation: Strengths, Strategies, Challenges and Needs in APSA	83
Chapter 5: Organisational Capacity Assessment	115
Chapter 6: Summary of Major Recommendations	
<b>Part II: Lessons Learned from APSA: Valuable Knowledge and Experience for Others – Preben H. Lindøe</b>	
Chapter 7: Introduction	131
Chapter 8: Transferring Valuable Knowledge and Experience to Others	132
Chapter 9: A Framework for Analysis	135
Chapter 10: Three Experiences of APSA	140
Chapter 11: Discussion of the Cases	149
Chapter 12: Conclusions and Recommendations	159

## Executive Summary

The Association for Promoting Social Action (APSA) is a non-governmental organisation that works with child labourers, street children and other children in distress as well as the larger communities of the urban slums in Bangalore and Hyderabad through a combination of institutional and outreach projects. Motivated by the motto 'For Development without Exploitation', it has worked at the grassroots and the national and state policy levels in partnership with communities to help them realise their rights as humans and citizens for twenty-six years.

The evaluation is a mid-term evaluation, being conducted within the agreement period of 2004 – 2008 between FORUT and APSA. As the current funding agreement period between FORUT and APSA is 2004 – 2008, FORUT thought an evaluation would be a useful supplement for discussions on a new partnership agreement. It was also hoped an evaluation would be a useful tool for APSA internally, with an impact assessment as a valuable input in their project planning for the years to come, and might provide inputs for learning and for further development of the organisation.

The evaluation was conducted in two parts and has two virtually parallel perspectives;

1. The first is a standard project follow up evaluation addressing the progress of the project and the results achieved.
2. The second looks into the hypothesis of whether APSA as an organisation is a *learning organisation*? And if this is the case – is there a connection between this organisation's ability to learn and the impact of its project activities?

### Summary of findings

Overall, the evaluators feel that the evidence from the evaluation reveals that APSA is a very strong and exemplary organization, true to its values in undertaking meaningful and strategic activities to further its mission of supporting and empowering vulnerable urban poor communities, and children and young people in particular. Many of the challenges that APSA faces arises from the change in the development environment in India, which has moved away from a welfare-oriented mixed economy to the pressures of free market capitalism, which is often aided by collusive government officers.

### **Main findings from Part 1**

APSA's work has been successful, innovative and beneficial for its partner communities throughout its wide range of projects and the wide range of issues with which it deals, especially those related to child rescue, care and rehabilitation, youth development and working for the rights and financial sustainability of the urban poor. All this is underpinned and focused by a consistent adherence to the application of a coherent, rights-based perspective. Its list of achievements encompasses, among many others, housing rights for slum communities, education and training provided for children and youths from disadvantaged backgrounds and the creation of a replicable, sustainable group savings model that has led to women from these vulnerable communities accessing national loans totalling Rs 5 crores (approximately \$1.2 million).

APSA's work has been consistent throughout the project, policy and advocacy levels. Beneficiaries and partners communities, from the rescued child labourers who go to school through the education project to the urban homeless communities who have secured voting and food rights with the help of the urban homeless project, expressed a high level of satisfaction with APSA's work and many also noted that, due to the success of APSA's intervention they were no longer dependent on their help. The overall view we gained from external stakeholders such as other NGOs and government officials was of a reliable organisation of probity.

### **Main findings from Part 2**

Part 2 examines the contextual framework for APSA and considers how it might be relevant to others, as well as explores how its specific experiences may be relevant for a more general audience. The experiences and lessons learned from APSA should be interesting for a wider audience of stakeholders and development actors due to the socio-economic context. APSA demonstrates that it is affordable to combine top-down, policy driven and bottom-up, people-oriented development action for the poor. Such a strategy compensates for donor policies and practices that are splitting implementations and channels of money between the state, private sector and civil society. APSA demonstrates that it is a learning organisation, consistently and flexibly applying action-oriented learning from the field in monitoring, evaluation and re-design of policy and practice at different institutional levels. By following a participative and democratic

tradition, APSA opens up for transparent and open communication in decision processes among involved stakeholders.

### **Summary of Recommendations from Part 1 and Part 2**

Needs are primarily related to necessity for consolidation-related measures at this stage, and to secure greater corpus and administration related funding, which can be used to improve areas such as documentation and staff welfare.

The principal recommendations are:

- The board be expanded in size and constitution, and governance and executive functions be separated
- A variety of consolidation measures aimed at improvement and formalisation of governance and internal systems and improved staff welfare
- Staff compensation be improved to take account of increased living costs in Bangalore and Hyderabad
- Focus on documentation and wider communication of APSA's considerable achievements
- Learning from APSA's experience should be transferred among stakeholders in the FORUT-network by the use of case studies and documents that are already available at APSA.

**Part I**

**APSA – A Critical Review of the Organisation and  
its Programmes for the Urban Poor & Vulnerable Children**

*– Meera Pillai & Richard Whittell*

### **Acknowledgements**

An organisational evaluation is, almost inevitably, a process that raises anxiety levels. In this context, the cheerful confidence with which APSA incorporated the evaluation into its routine, during the long two-month process, as well as the frankness and capacity for self-reflection shown by all levels of staff was very heartening, and made the work of the evaluators much easier.

We would like to thank the management and all the staff for providing us immediate access to all relevant documents, comprehensive project presentations, facilitating field visits and arranging access to all relevant stakeholders during the process. We would especially like to thank the coordinators for their incisive and insightful analyses during the organisational capacity assessment process.

Prof. Preben Lindoe was a friendly and supportive presence during part of the evaluation. We are grateful for his insights.

We thank FORUT for their support and the confidence placed in us during this process.

Meera Pillai and Richard Whittell.



## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

#### **APSA**

The Association for Promoting Social Action (APSA) is a non-governmental organisation that works with child labourers, street children and other children in distress as well as the larger communities of the urban slums in Bangalore and Hyderabad through a combination of institutional and outreach projects. Motivated by the motto 'For Development without Exploitation', it has worked at the grassroots and the national and state policy levels in partnership with communities to help them realise their rights as humans and citizens for twenty-six years.

#### **Location**

Bangalore is the capital of the south Indian state of Karnataka. It has a population of over seven million making it the fifth largest metropolitan area in India. Hyderabad is the capital of the central state of Andhra Pradesh and has a population of 6.5 million, making it the sixth largest. Both cities have grown significantly in the last fifteen years in the wake of India's economic liberalisation and continue to grow exponentially. Both cities play host to a wide range of cultures, religions, ethnic groups and languages.

Although Bangalore and Hyderabad have become known as the 'Silicon Valley' and the 'Silicon Plateau' of India respectively, and now play host to many multinational corporations, a significant part of the cities' populations – approximately 30% - continue to live in various forms of poverty which have not been diminished by the substantial economic growth in the cities.

#### **Purpose of / reasons for the evaluation**

The evaluation is a mid-term evaluation, being conducted within the agreement period of 2004 – 2008 between FORUT and APSA. As the current funding agreement period between FORUT and APSA is 2004 – 2008, FORUT thought an evaluation would be a useful supplement for discussions on a new partnership agreement. It was also hoped an evaluation would be a useful tool for APSA internally with an impact assessment as a valuable input in their project planning for the years to come and may provide inputs for learning and for various scenarios for further development of the organisation.

The Terms of Reference for the evaluation lists the following issues to be covered:

**Efficiency**

Examine the relationship between quality and quantity of results achieved, and the resources and means to achieve them.

**Effectiveness**

To what extent the project has achieved or is likely to achieve its objective, including an analysis of processes that have facilitated or prevented this.

**Impact**

Analysis of positive and negative effects in society, whether foreseen or not, relating to all parties affected by the project. Analysis of causes and processes to explain the impact of the project.

**Relevance**

Overall assessment of whether the objectives of the project are still worth pursuing, including an analysis of the consistency of project design

**Sustainability**

Assessment of the likelihood that benefits generated by the project will continue beyond the time of the donor's involvement – i.e. durability of the success.

**Methodology**

The methodology used in the evaluation of APSA was as indicated in the terms of reference, and was carried out over a period of a month – over three weeks. The methodologies were largely qualitative, and included:

- **Sharing objectives.** In initial sessions, the objectives of the evaluation were comprehensively shared with staff in Kannada (in Bangalore) and Hindi (in Hyderabad) to ensure comprehension and rapport building.
- **Project presentations, followed by group interviews of project staff.** Staff associated with different projects made presentations related to the vision, objectives, history, and major achievements, and challenges of the project. This

was followed by group interview of the project staff by the team for clarifications, challenges of assumptions, understanding constraints, etc.

- **Extensive interviews with senior management.** Interviews were carried out with the three directors to understand historical, strategic and context-related issues.
- **Field visits.** Field visits were made to representative project areas in Bangalore and Hyderabad to understand representative sections of the urban poor and areas of the city worked with, nature of service delivery and to interact directly with primary stakeholders of projects. Examples of field visits made include:

**In Bangalore <sup>1</sup>**

- K R Pura huts cluster of the urban homeless
- The community centre in Ambedkar Nagar slum,
- the crèche and early education centre at Koramangala,
- the community centre at which APSA provides services at Hosabalu Nagar,
- children's meeting at Dream School
- the parents' meeting at Kaushalya

**In Hyderabad**

- the Valmiki Nagar slum where APSA has helped to add rooms and other facilities to a school,
- the crèche and early education centre at Palamuri Basti
- Chacha Nehru nagar housing project supervised by beneficiaries themselves
- the Palamuri Basti area where APSA facilitated the provision of housing for a section of the urban homeless,
- the Mahatma Gandhi Nagar slum to meet beneficiaries of income generation projects,
- the Andhra Upper Primary School where APSA provides follow up services for parents, the services of an additional teacher and resources like books and plates and glasses for the mid-day meal,
- the Indiramma Nagar area to meet with different kinds of CBOs and collectives,

---

<sup>1</sup> Fewer field visits were made in Bangalore as both evaluators had made several field visits to APSA project areas prior to the term of the evaluation.

- the computer training centre at VV Giri Nagar
- the tailoring and embroidery training centre at Padmarao Nagar
- areas of work of women's collectives working as sanitation workers in Koti
- areas of work of women's collectives working as parking attendants in Secunderabad, etc.
- areas of work of Asara committees
- **Group and individual interviews with primary beneficiaries.** Interviews were carried out with different groups of beneficiaries related to service delivery carried out by APSA and benefits

**In Bangalore:**

- children from Nammane,
- youth currently training at Kaushalya,
- young people who have been job placed after the Nammane-Kaushalya intervention
- parents of children currently training at Kaushalya,
- young people who are working after training programmes conducted by APSA Hyderabad,
- urban homeless communities at K R Pura

**In Hyderabad:**

- former urban homeless in Palamuri Basti,
- representatives of CBOs in Chacha Nehru Nagar,
- members of women's self help groups,
- members of a men's SHG
- a fledgeling children's collective near Begumpet

- **Interviews with secondary stakeholders, including representatives of government departments and organizations**

Interviews on awareness of APSA's work was carried out in interviews with many different secondary stakeholders including:

- Representatives of local NGOs
  - SICHREM – South India Cell for Human Rights Education and Monitoring – a rights advocacy organisation. The organisation partners with APSA when rights violations occur, or when APSA requires support to hold the government to account.

- Jana Sahyog – works with people living in slums in Bangalore particularly on land rights issues
- Campaign for Housing and Tenurial Rights
- YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association) – works with multiple development initiatives to benefit women and children
- Representatives of multilateral organizations
  - UNICEF
  - ILO
- Representatives of banks
  - Director and officer of Banashankari Mahila Cooperative Bank
  - Senior manager of Canara Bank, West Marredpally Branch
- Representatives from education
  - Principal, Andhra Upper Primary School
- Government departments
  - Joint Labour Commissioner
  - Education officer, Central Board for Workers Education
- Elected local government representatives
  - Councillors of two wards in Bangalore
  - Councillors of two wards in Hyderabad
- Representatives of CBOs
  - Vivekananda Social Welfare Society, Chacha Nehru Nagar
- **Use of instruments to study organizational capacity.** The Discussion-Oriented Self Assessment Questionnaire was used to stimulate discussion and assessment of different aspects of organizational capacity among staff at the coordinators level in Bangalore and Hyderabad in a whole day session
- **Interactive exercises.** Interactive exercises were used for rapport building and reducing stress related to the evaluation, as well as to understand APSA's history and organizational structure.

**Examples of interactive exercises:**

**Collaboratively arriving at an organogram of the organisation:**

All the participants in this exercise were given a Post-It note on which they wrote their own names and designations. They were then invited to attach the Post-It note on a large sheet of chart paper placed on the ground. Participants were then invited to gather around the chart paper and alter the positions of the Post-it

notes so that the eventual arrangement most closely represented the group perception of how the organisation was structured. They could make as many changes as they wished and as often as they wished. When the group stopped making any changes, the diagram was regarded as representative.

The exercise was very interesting for the participants as they struggled with their perceptions of their organisation and reflected on roles and relationships within it, and for the evaluators for the sidelights provided. For example:

- Male staff were much more assertive than female staff during the exercise in Bangalore. About half a dozen “alpha male” staff tended to dominate the exercise in the first few rounds of changes. After the evaluators drew their attention to this, more women participated. However, a few extremely empowered women staff deliberately chose to participate in a very limited way, almost in protest against the alpha male domination tendencies. In comparison, there was far greater equality of participation in Hyderabad. The organisation would definitely benefit from gender sensitivity training.
- The Bangalore organogram started out hierarchical but very quickly was represented as much more circular and organic, and eventually resolved itself into a largely circular, organic diagram with certain projects being more hierarchical than others.

#### **Developing a collaborative timeline of the organisation.**

Several linked pieces of chart paper were laid out in a long line on the floor and participants collaboratively built timelines of both the Bangalore and Hyderabad centres. Again all the participants participated, and the exercise was very enriching in many ways.

- Newer members of the staff, and even several who had been in the organisation for quite a few years learnt about many interesting aspects of the organisation that they did not know about.
- Older members of the staff relived some of their earlier successes and difficulties.
- Several staff members said that they felt very proud of being part of the organisation. The everyday demands of their work were usually so

compelling that they did not often get a chance to reflect on how much the organisation had achieved over the years.

- **Sharing of preliminary findings.** A four-hour long presentation of preliminary findings of the evaluation were shared in Kannada in order to ensure comprehension of staff so that feedback to the draft report could be facilitated.

## Chapter 2

### APSA: A Timeline of its Development in Hyderabad and Bangalore

From our document review, it became evident that the achievement reports of APSA sent to donors every year comprise dozens of pages of close print. The evaluators therefore requested the APSA staff to identify, in an interactive exercise, the milestones that they considered especially significant in the development of APSA in Bangalore and in Hyderabad.

The following table shows major events in the history of APSA, since a group of seven college students, including APSA's executive director P. Lakshapathi were first inspired by a Presbyterian minister to begin working for the development of slum communities.

#### Activities in Hyderabad

1975	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Community development work begun in one slum of Hyderabad</li></ul>
1977	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Expansion of work to more slums</li><li>▪ Collectivisation and unionisation of Class IV employees in church-based institutions and organizations undertaken.</li></ul>
1978	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ The first manifestation of APSA (Association for Promoting Social Awareness) formally registered</li><li>▪ Community organisation work undertaken in slums</li><li>▪ Demolition of Hamali Basti slum stopped</li></ul>
1979	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Community organisation work extended to the Old City in Hyderabad</li><li>▪ A unique housing project for urban poor facilitated with community participation in Raja Narasimha Nagar</li><li>▪ Cobblers' cooperative formed – orders facilitated for making and supplying children's school shoes</li></ul>
1981	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Due to differences in ideology between the welfare and rights-based perspectives, Association for Promoting Social Awareness (APSA) wound up. The second manifestation of APSA (Association for Promoting Social Action) formally registered.</li></ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Success with conscientisation and collective action with peanut farmers in rural Mahaboobnagar</li> </ul>
1982	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Organisation and collective action facilitated for hamalis (loading workers) in Secunderabad Railway Station. AP Iron and Steel Workers Union formed</li> </ul>
1982-1983	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Extensive community organisation undertaken in 20 slums in Hyderabad to take advantage of funds secured by Municipal Corporation of Hyderabad from Habitat International. Facilitated formation of Twin Cities Slum Dwellers Federation</li> <li>▪ Facilitation of action to secure land rights and housing for 20 slums in Hyderabad</li> <li>▪ Facilitated construction of school building in Addagutta slum.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ APSA's operations shifted to Bangalore as large numbers of urban poor from Hyderabad migrate to Bangalore in search of construction work</li> </ul>
1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Operations resumed in Hyderabad. Community development work in 3 slums</li> </ul>
1995 - 1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Work expanded to 9 slums, and later to 16 slums.</li> <li>▪ APSA assists 5 slums to get "pattas" – land tenure documents.</li> <li>▪ Residents of Maruti Nagar and Indiramma Nagar move into 'pucca' houses</li> <li>▪ Chacha Nehru Nagar housing project inaugurated by District Collector</li> <li>▪ Establishment of City Slum Development Association facilitated.</li> <li>▪ Establishment of Jhansi Mahila Abhivrudhi Seva Sangam facilitated.</li> <li>▪ Tailoring training programmes for young people and women established.</li> <li>▪ APSA assists three more slums to get "pattas"</li> <li>▪ APSA collects resources in cash and kind to hand over to the Cyclone Relief Fund</li> <li>▪ Survey of children migrating to the city from rural areas carried out at Secunderabad railway station</li> <li>▪ Seminar conducted with children for the first time for the "Back to</li> </ul>

	Home" programme
1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Self-help group project to promote savings and microcredit started</li> <li>▪ Work expanded to 23 slums</li> <li>▪ Formation of Indradhanassu Balala Sanghams (collectives of former child labourers) facilitated</li> <li>▪ APSA Activities expanded to LB. Nagar municipality</li> <li>▪ Housing programme completed in two areas</li> </ul>
2000-2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identified new areas for work (Cantonment area)</li> <li>▪ Greater focus on livelihood and Income Generation ventures in collaboration with organizations like Jan Shikshan Sansthan and Central Board of Workers Education</li> <li>▪ Formation of Child Rights committees (slum wise)</li> <li>▪ Construction of school building in Morambonda slum</li> <li>▪ 11 defaulting SHGs revitalized and withdrawal from 37 mature SHG Groups</li> <li>▪ Started Creche Home in Palamur Basthi slum</li> <li>▪ 140 houses sanctioned in Palamurbasthi slum</li> <li>▪ Started working with Elected Representative to bring Govt officials to the doorsteps of people in poverty</li> <li>▪ Sponsorship for school going children</li> <li>▪ Rs 3 Lakhs, 80 Thousand sanctioned from Department of Women and Child Welfare to start self employment ventures.in L B Nagar area</li> <li>▪ Sanction of water pipeline worth Rs. 3,25,000,at Vengal Rao Nagar, and Chacha Nehru Nagar slums.</li> <li>▪ Started linkages of SHGs with banks</li> <li>▪ 20 SHGs declared Child Labour free</li> <li>▪ Facilitated the granting of sanitation projects, maintenance of parking lots and maintenance of corporation buildings to DWACUA women's groups</li> <li>▪ Sanction of significant amounts of capital investment for livelihood programmes: 50 tailoring machines, carpenters and dhobis tool kits, etc.)</li> <li>▪ 50 beneficiaries of the Rajakar community get free LIC insurance</li> </ul>

	bonds of Rs. 50.,000 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Adoption of government community halls to provide services like vocational training and literacy classes.</li> <li>▪ Expansion of the the SHG project. Formal registration of SHGs and Mahila Mandalis.</li> <li>▪ Started collectivization and provision of services of the “scavenger” Dalit community</li> <li>▪ Facilitated formation of community monitoring committees to ensure proper implementation of government schemes</li> <li>▪ Started tailoring training centres</li> </ul>
2006-07	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Expansion to from 3 slums in 1994 to 60 slums in 2007, a growth in reach of 1900% over thirteen years</li> <li>▪ Started community eye clinic at Indiramma Nagar in collaboration with the LV Prasad Eye institute</li> <li>▪ Formation of SHGs with men and with people with disability</li> <li>▪ Collaboration with National Institute of Construction and ILO to expand vocational training programmes</li> <li>▪ Started computer training centres in VVGiri Nagar and Padmarao Nagar</li> <li>▪ A documentary of “child rights” created in collaboration with EMRC with conceptualization and logistics management handled by former working children. Documentary telecast on national television.</li> </ul>

#### Activities in Bangalore

1984	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• APSA expands to Bangalore</li> </ul>
1985	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bangalore Slum Outreach Project started</li> <li>• Started collaboration with Concern for Working Children</li> </ul>
1987	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Street Children Project started</li> </ul>
1988	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Screen Printing Training started</li> <li>• APSA and CWC moved to office in Domlur</li> </ul>

1989	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nammane land purchased</li> </ul>
1990	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Started construction of Nammane</li> </ul>
1992	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completed construction of Nammane</li> <li>Screen Printing and Tailoring training started at Nammane</li> </ul>
1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Education Project started</li> </ul>
1995	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Makkala Mela (10 day child rights programme) started at Vibhutipura</li> <li>Ended collaboration with Concern for Working Children - a key point in APSA's history. As the timeline shows, after this APSA rapidly increased its range and quantity of activities.</li> </ul>
1996	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7<sup>th</sup> Standard, Child Labour Centres in the communities, Potential Child Labour Centres extended programmes started through the Education Project</li> <li>Alcohol Drugs and Disability campaign started</li> </ul>
1997	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Electronics Training Unit started</li> <li>Makkala Sahaya Vani (Children/Police Collaboration) started with police – rescued children brought to Nammane</li> <li>Vikas project started</li> <li>Trained police in child rights issues</li> </ul>
1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kaushalya trainings structured as year long courses</li> <li>Job placement programme started</li> <li>Hosamane (street children drop in centre) for drug addicted children started</li> <li>First Hasiru Sanghas (children's collectives) organised</li> <li>Inchara Project started</li> <li>Self Help Group Project started</li> <li>Self Help Group consultation programme with banks at Town Hall</li> </ul>
1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10<sup>th</sup> standard exams taken by children through Education Project</li> <li>Gold tooth programme giving information to street children about toxic substances</li> <li>Disability Project started</li> <li>Hasiru Sanghas (children's collectives) joined National</li> </ul>

	<p>Movement of Working Children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performed street plays to raise awareness on elections, HIV and women rights</li> <li>• Child friendly police programmes conducted</li> </ul>
2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SHG bank accounts opened</li> <li>• Computer Training Unit started</li> <li>• 9 SHGs linked to Micro Finance Institutions</li> </ul>
2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Income generation programme started in Electronic Unit</li> <li>• National Child Labour Project undertaken by Education Project</li> <li>• Navajeevana Nilaya Project started</li> <li>• Street Girl Project started</li> <li>• Account books systems established in SHG project</li> </ul>
2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Street Children Drug Camps started</li> <li>• 12 SHGs linked to twelve groups</li> <li>• Concept and books of accounting system started</li> <li>• Hasiru Sangha participated in making CRC Alternative Report (UNGASS)</li> <li>• Affiliation of Education Project with the Open School system</li> <li>• ChildLine Project started</li> <li>• First mass rescue of children (children from West Bengal were rescued, provided services in transit and repatriated)</li> <li>• High School children participated in preparation of State Action Plan against Child Labour</li> <li>• Inchara Art Exhibition at Kannada Bhavan</li> <li>• SHG internal auditing started</li> <li>• 7 SHGs externally audited by MFIs</li> </ul>
2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Welfare Committee established</li> <li>• 58 child labourers rescued (12 children received compensation of Rs 147900 through CWC)</li> <li>• Amendments to the Inclusive Education Policy and Persons with Disability Acts</li> <li>• Group living for youths started</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dream School – Education Project</li> <li>• Sahayatha Trust loans given to SHG members</li> </ul>
2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SHGs formed under government's Swarna Jayanthi Rozgaar Yojana programme</li> <li>• APSA took up convenorship of Campaign against Child Labour – Karnataka – won the Makkalu Mithra (Children's Friend) state award</li> <li>• Participated in state level consultations for juvenile homes</li> <li>• Disability Project enters into partnership with Basic Needs India to work on the issue of Community Mental Health</li> <li>• Childcare, nutrition and education provided for children from migrant families of construction labourers</li> <li>• Sexual Health Programme started</li> <li>• Amendment on Domestic Child Labour</li> <li>• 36 child labourers rescued (13 received compensation of Rs 120,500 through CWC)</li> <li>• Minimum Wages Notification for Domestic Workers</li> <li>• Formation and Inauguration of alumni of Inchara</li> <li>• High School children participated in the General Assembly Election process</li> <li>• Domestic Workers union started</li> <li>• Suggi festival of slum artists</li> <li>• Book release on child rights</li> <li>• Started giving SHG concept and account books training to other NGOs</li> <li>• Crisis Intervention Centre (Rakshita) established</li> <li>• SHG Quality indicator and self sufficiency training given to group members</li> <li>• Domestic pilot child labour programme started in collaboration with UNICEF</li> </ul>
2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• APSA won the Makkala Mithra (Children's Friend) state award (for the second time)</li> <li>• Coordinated with Education Department for abolition of child</li> </ul>

	<p>labour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formation of first SHG Federations</li> <li>• Conducted school sensitisation programme for 3000 children on child labour issue</li> <li>• 2 acres of government land given for training centre for domestic workers</li> <li>• Initiated parenting role programme</li> <li>• IGP training given to SHG members from Canara Bank</li> <li>• Campaign against Water Privatisation started</li> <li>• Street Play against water privatisation performed as part of campaign</li> <li>• Collaboration with builder running day-care centre at construction site</li> <li>• Infrastructure increased at Kaushalya</li> <li>• Urban Homeless Project started</li> <li>• SHG linkages with Banashankari Mahila Bank</li> <li>• Mobilised civil society participation on child labour issue</li> <li>• Vandematharam scheme – Gunasila Nursing Home (SHG)</li> <li>• Games workshop - Adona baa</li> <li>• Government school children start child rights committees</li> <li>• SHG tailoring centre started</li> <li>• Established Bridge network</li> </ul>
2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sexual Health training programme for pre-test partners in 3 states in South India</li> <li>• Education sponsorship for children</li> <li>• Study of situation of urban homeless in Bangalore</li> <li>• Foster care home established</li> <li>• Life Skills Programme started</li> <li>• Protest against state government on disabled issues</li> <li>• Started Day care centre in Koramangala with Bangalore Club</li> <li>• Drop-in centre for adolescents started</li> <li>• Media Centre started</li> <li>• APSA given convenorship of NGO Forum</li> </ul>

2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness raised on Right to Information Act with urban poor</li> <li>• Child protection pilot programme</li> <li>• Facilitated vocational training centre for domestic working girls and women (on government land)</li> <li>• School children's art exhibition against water privatisation</li> <li>• Disability movement met Karnataka Chief Minister</li> </ul>
------	--

### **Organisational structure**

APSA has an office in Bangalore, with 87 full-time staff and 9 part-time staff and an office in Hyderabad, with 13 full and 13 part-time staff. It has a management team of an Executive Director and two Directors who provide oversight, direction and guidance. All the management are based in Bangalore although the executive Director visits the Hyderabad office regularly. The Hyderabad office is run day to day by a Programme Coordinator. APSA's work is divided into projects, each headed by a project coordinator. In addition, there are accounts and administration departments. Information is shared through weekly staff meetings and monthly meetings between the coordinators and the management.

The projects complement each other and the boundaries between projects are often blurred, especially so in Hyderabad as they have a core team of five members who divide their work primarily by geographical area. Therefore the same staff member technically works in at least four different projects.



### **Chapter 3**

#### **APSA: An Overview and Assessment of Its Projects**

APSA works on child rights and urban poor issues through a variety of projects, combining outreach and institutional components. Below we look at the 16 projects currently running in Bangalore and five in Hyderabad.

After a brief sketch and history of each project we describe its major activities, strengths, challenges and our recommendations. We first look at APSA's child rights issue-based work, followed by their projects with children, and then their urban poor issue-based and project work.

#### **Child Rights**

APSA's work with children is underpinned by its adherence to the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (ratified by India in 1991). APSA's approach is determined by its belief in both the effectiveness and rectitude of child participation. Throughout APSA's work the child is at the centre as both a beneficiary and a participant. This gives its work the coherency and sustainability that a primarily beneficiary based approach would lack as the children themselves become agents of change.

APSA's work with children is based on rights-based principles but also involves service provision such as educational and residential support. This may sound like a contradictory mix but we have found little evidence of conflicting tenets and methods because – and here may be the key to understanding APSA's success in this area – the services it provides to children are themselves based on rights-based principles and are there to fill lacunae in the government's support: they run a hostel but children are encouraged to participate in the running of it; they hold crèches for young children so their older siblings have the opportunity to go to school and children's unions are formed so they can themselves work to prevent child labour. In all APSA's work with children the child is treated not merely as a beneficiary but as an autonomous individual with certain inviolable rights.

The quality of APSA's work in providing services for children also appears to have given them credibility in advocating for the rights of children. While APSA is one of the government's most trusted partners for rescue and rehabilitation programmes - and it has produced models that have been replicated throughout the state - it is at the same time one of its staunchest critics for the lack of attention it gives to the issue. Speaking about APSA's project work, the Karnataka State Government Labour Commissioner told us: 'the only time we have a problem with APSA is when we are dragging our feet about something; they keep knocking on my door until it is sorted out!'

All of APSA's child rights projects and the management are involved in APSA's macro-level advocacy work with the support of the rest of the organisation. The Self-Help Group Project for example provides inputs on child labour and encourages groups to work to make their areas child labour free.

Much of APSA's advocacy on the child labour issue in Bangalore and Hyderabad comes through the Campaign Against Child Labour (CACL - see box). Thanks in large part to the campaign's demonstrations, lobbying and negotiations domestic work has been declared as a hazardous sector, the domestic girl-child labourer issue has been brought onto the government's agenda and it was a prominent advocate for the constitutional amendment enshrining the fundamental right to education of all children. APSA appears to play a leading and authoritative role in these advocacy initiatives. The director of another organisation in the Karnataka chapter of the campaign told us, 'APSA is always our first point of contact on child rights issues; their work with children is of very high quality, especially in terms of child participation'.

In addition one of the Directors, Sheila Devaraj was a member of the first Child Welfare Committee (CWC) in Bangalore, which has the powers of magistrate to award compensation in cases of child labour or domestic abuse. This was the result of the Juvenile Justice Act, passed in 2000, for which APSA had campaigned and given inputs based on its grassroots experience to the National Law School to prepare a draft law.

APSA has won two Makkala Mithra (Children's friend) awards from the state government, one for the work undertaken during its convenorship of CACL and one for

its own work. The directors and other staff members have been honoured many times by various organisations for the service that they have rendered over the years.

APSA's influence on child rights issues can be seen in the number, breadth and authority of the committees of which it is a member. It is represented by the management at the national level on the National Advisory Committee on Child Labour, the National Level Minimum Education Guarantee Scheme, the Childline India Foundation Task Force on preventing child labour, the Department of Women and Child Development's core committee to improve systems in government institutional homes and the National Committee to develop protocols for children in crisis; at the state level on the Karnataka State 'Project Society' advising on provision for child labour issues in the state budget and it is the only NGO on the Karnataka 'High Power' Committee headed by the Additional Chief Secretary.

APSA is currently the convenor of the NGO forum for street and working children, which consists of 23 Bangalore based NGOs.

*APSA was the convenor of the Karnataka Chapter of the national Campaign against Child Labour (CACL) from 2003-2005. During its convenorship the campaign expanded from the city level to the 26 districts and to the taluk and village panchayat levels and broadened its membership base to include organisations that were not necessarily working primarily on child rights issues. 60 villages were declared child labour free. In view of these achievements APSA won the state government 'Makkala Mithra' (Children's Friend) award from the Karnataka Labour Department and the CACL – Karnataka was named as the best chapter of the national campaign by the Executive Council of the Campaign itself.*

*CACL – Karnataka appears to have sustained its success under its new convenor and APSA remains an active member.*

*In 2005 members of the Hasiru Sangha went to the Bangalore Municipality offices to complain about the parlous state of the sanitation in their areas, which was causing waste to flow into their families' houses every time it rained. With APSA's help they*

*drafted a letter and presented it to the appropriate government official. He was not very pleased, scolding the children for implicitly questioning him and saying, 'you are children, don't come here, go and study – APSA is always misguiding children like this!' Still, a few weeks later the council came and sorted the problem out.*

## Child Rights Projects

### Nammane - Bangalore

*'You can say what you want in your report – it doesn't matter. Nammane is our home and nothing you say can change that.'* - A youth staying in Nammane takes umbrage at the idea of Nammane needing an External Evaluation.

Nammane ('our home' in Kannada) was built in 1992 to provide residential support for the street children APSA had previously been providing support to at its Indiranagar office.

Nammane started with 20 street children but it is now providing residential support for 150 child labourers, street children, victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse, runaway children and other children in distress aged between eight and eighteen.

Nammane's work consists of two major components: long term rehabilitation and crisis intervention. Long term rehabilitation involves providing support for children who have been referred by, among others, APSA projects and other NGOs, or those who are studying at the Kaushalya training centre. Crisis intervention support is usually provided for children who have been rescued by Childline. A few of this number may also require long term help.

Nammane is run on principles of child participation. Children are encouraged to make decisions regarding the way it is run. While children and youths are cared for sufficiently they are also given appropriate responsibilities for their age and older youths are encouraged to take care of and provide leadership for younger children.

The holistic approach means that Nammane provides more than just residential support but also helps the children in their personal development. This is furthered by links with the rest of APSA. For example, young people staying in Nammane played a significant part in the right to education and child rights campaigns.

Nammane staff also provide support to children who have come from a variety of crisis situations. This can include children rescued through Childline who are waiting to go back to their native places and groups of up to 100 children who have been rescued together such as those from West Bengal.

At present there are 60 boys and 76 girls. In total Nammane has provided support for 5000 children. Many other centres and government homes have used parts of Nammane, especially the child participation as a model on which to base their institution.

The project staff comprises of one coordinator, three house mothers, one house father and three kitchen staff. Staff have received training in child rights, the 2000 Juvenile Justice Act, counselling, life skills and sexual health.

Nammane was built with funding from FORUT. Rakshitha, the crisis support centre was built with funding from the Japanese Government. Nammane expenditure is covered by FORUT with support from food donations from companies and individuals around the city.

### **Main Activities**

- **Providing care:** children are organised into groups of 20-30 with the support of one house mother or father. House mothers and fathers identify and counsel children with behavioural problems, conduct meetings of the groups to discuss needs and problems faced by the children, address education needs and personal needs of the children and supervise individual activities like nail cutting, teeth brushing, bathing and washing clothes
- **Encouraging participation:** children's committees make decisions with staff on water and sanitation, food and nutrition, reception and health, education and sports and cultural activities.
- **Home visits:** staff undertake home visits to assess the child's background and where possible work with the parents to help the child.
- **Parents meetings** are held every two months to encourage parental involvement even though the children are in the care of an institution, and are quite well-attended with between forty and fifty parents regularly attending.
- **Inputs** are given on various issues such as citizenship and rights.

- Children staying in Nammane participate in many programmes outside such as child rights seminars and police training.

### **Strengths**

- It is very unusual in India to have boys and girls living together. Nammane is very much a front-runner in this regard.
- A good rapport appears to have been built between staff and parents and all the parents interviewed expressed satisfaction at the care given to their children.
- From the interviews with children and youths who are staying and have stayed in Nammane the participatory element seems to have been mainstreamed into the institution. The children and youths showed they felt ownership of the institution while maintaining respect for the staff. The atmosphere is warm and friendly and relationships between staff and children are conducted with respect rather than the servility one may presume from those predicated on a donor-recipient dichotomy.
- Staff cope remarkably well with the demands of children from a variety of different backgrounds, cultures, castes and religions and who speak a range of languages.
- There is a child friendly environment in which the children feel confident and free to express themselves. One employee of the Dutch NGO Kinderpostzegels commented that Nammane was the only children's home he had walked through where the children did not give him so much as a second look.

### **Challenges**

- Nammane now caters for 150 children but it was only designed for 100. This creates constraints on space which are exacerbated by the increase in APSA staff which means Nammane can become very crowded on meeting days.
- Nammane now hardly caters for street children. The increase in the number of ex-child labourers staying there has led to a more organised institutional culture, which has made it harder for street children to adapt to life in a children's home and it is difficult for staff to cater to the specialised needs of street children when they have so much other work to do.

- Concerns related to differences in support at the recently begun group home<sup>2</sup>, which is smaller and therefore can provide slightly more individualised care and Nammane
- Staff working hours are very long especially considering the demanding nature of the work. As the house mothers and father stay in Nammane they are effectively on duty for a large part of the week.

### **Recommendations**

- Establish child and youth safety policy. Although we are not unduly concerned that the children are not safe, a formal, clear policy would further increase safety standards and insure the organisation against undue risk.
- Establish zero tolerance policy for corporal punishment. Again, this would be an important baseline.
- Re-develop a sufficiently inviting and supportive environment for street children. It is difficult to balance the needs of street children with those of children from more systematised (though no less difficult) backgrounds such as child labourers. There are now only a handful of street children staying in Nammane and this is not wholly due to the decrease in the number of street children in Bangalore as a whole.
- Incorporate intensive and varied camp-based methodology (as practiced by Navajeevan Vijayawada) to assist street children with the mainstreaming process
- Due to the high pressure and serious responsibilities of the care-providers a time-use analysis would enable the project to assess if staff are working too much and if more staff are needed.
- Establish protocol to review cases of “difficult” children to ensure fair hearing and arrive at the decisions related to transfer.<sup>3</sup> This would further systematise procedures to the benefit of both staff and children.

<sup>2</sup> In 2006, APSA was invited to participate in a series of workshops on Alternatives to Institutional Care for Children without Parental Care by Cordaid and Stichting Kinderpostzegels Nederland. Based on information received at these workshops, APSA decided to consider alternatives to Nammane for some children. Accordingly, a few children have been referred to an organisation that arranges for foster care, and a small group home has also been started for girl children in need of particular support. Most of these children in this small group home go to school and have the support of two foster mothers..

<sup>3</sup> The number of children who come to Nammane for support is far greater than the institution can cope with. As a matter of course, therefore, children are also referred to other child care institutions in the city, both NGO and government-run. By and large, children prefer to stay at



- Keep individual care plans / on-going documentation for ALL children, in addition to transition plans.
- Recruit trained medical paraprofessionals who will be on-site 24 hours.
- Recruit a professional counsellor. The staff appear to be doing a good job attending to the needs of the children but a professionally trained counsellor would provide a vital service to the children and would allow the other project staff to focus on their other work.

### **Navajeevana Nilaya - Bangalore**

Comparatively few organizations in India are willing to take on the responsibility of girl children. This is because there is a widespread perception that girl children are more difficult to care and plan for than boys. Concerns may relate to multiple factors such as the fear of institutional abuse being greater and the fact that if girls run away, they are more liable to be sexually assaulted or trafficked. Sexuality related taboos and the cultural value attached to virginity in girls means that organizations are unwilling to handle adolescence related issues. In addition, while it is possible for the organization to rationalize looking after boys till they reach the age of 18, and then expecting them to take care of themselves according to cultural norms, the same cultural norms suggest that older girls or young women require the most protection when they are at that age, and hence, if an organization takes care of them up to that point, they should consider support for further protection, most usually, within a marriage. For all these reasons, most organizations regard the care of girls as being a distinctly unattractive proposition.

In the context of these cultural norms and perceptions, APSA requires commendation for not only extending residential support to girls, but also to having girls and boys share the same residential facilities at Nammane, and therefore contributing to gender mainstreaming both within the organization, as well as creating a model for the larger

---

Nammane, because even though it is an institution, extensive child participation in its running makes a big difference. It is important to ensure that “difficult” children are not the ones who are likely to be considered default candidates for transfer to other institutions (since staff shortage means that Nammane staff are under considerable pressure), since if they are having difficulties at APSA, they are likely to face many more difficulties at more conventional institutionalised set-ups for children. Establishment of a protocol would ensure that cases are reviewed thoroughly and “difficult” children are as likely to be retained at Nammane as comparatively more easy-going children.

Indian society. It was this same sensitivity to the needs of girl children and young women, and the possibilities that can exist with a little support that led to the creation of Navajeevana Nilaya.

APSA discovered that young women who had completed the Nammam-Kaushalya intervention and had been placed in jobs could almost invariably find no safe place to stay. The same vulnerabilities that had caused them to be placed in Nammam to start with precluded their return to the same environments. At the same time, the private hostels for working women were beyond the reach of the comparatively small incomes they earned in an expensive city like Bangalore. There are almost no cost-effective safe environments for young women to stay in Bangalore.

Navajeevana Nilaya was therefore designed as a safe and enabling residential environment for young women at risk in the first one to two years of their employment, post-Nammam. The project was conceived and implemented in 2002.

**Main activities:**

- **Provision of residential support.** Currently twenty-one young women find residential support at Navajeevana Nilaya (NJN)
- **Caters to vulnerable young women.** Navajeevana caters to an at-risk group of young women which includes orphans, adolescent girls from socially and economically vulnerable backgrounds, young single mothers, survivors of physical, emotional and sexual abuse, etc.
- **Provision of a range of support services.** In addition to residential support, young women at NJN receive several other kinds of support services including inputs in
  - Community living and participatory management
  - Rights education
  - Job placement and follow up
  - Literacy and continued education
  - Health care
  - Inputs regarding legal literacy, reproductive and sexual health, etc.
  - Life skills education (e.g., conflict resolution, decision making, etc.)
  - Counselling

- Cultural activities and recreation
- **Savings and microcredit.** The young women learn personal financial management by participating in an SHG. This helps them build financial and material resources that can aid them into moving into a place of their own in a year or so.
- **Assuming responsibility.** After living in an institutional setting like Nammam, it is important that the young people learn about financial management and the running of a household. Hence, each young woman contributes Rs. 300 towards the expenses, in the first year, and Rs. 500 in the second year when they become more secure. Each also takes responsibility in turn, for the various activities required to run a household – budgeting, shopping, cooking, cleaning, maintaining harmony in community living through negotiation and grievance handling.
- **Leadership skills.** The girls are divided into groups of eight with group leaders being chosen each month in rotation so that all the girls have a chance to develop leadership skills. The small groups within NJN support each other through sickness, crises, etc.
- **Preparation for group or independent living.** Over the period of their stay at NJN young women learn the skills and acquire the confidence to think of viable alternative living arrangements. They develop the financial wherewithal to move into hostels, rent rooms and create peer group shared housing arrangements or return to their parents.

**Strengths:**

- Addresses a niche that most organizations are unwilling to take on.
- Provides services to a particularly vulnerable group.
- In the absence of prior models, APSA has created a strong and viable model of its own.
- The experience of several years shows that young women can be empowered and enabled to move into alternative living arrangements.
- Gives young people skills that they usually do not develop in institutionalized care.

**Challenges:**

- Navajeevan Nilaya operates out of a space provided by a foundation of the same name. More recently, a facility is being built on land that belongs to the foundation, and the funding for this building is being provided by yet another foundation. While the promoters of the facility are convinced about APSA and have promised to continue supporting APSA with space, there are no agreements in writing. If, due to some unfortunate circumstance, this agreement falls through, APSA would be hard put to find a suitable facility for the girls it supports through Navajeevana Nilaya, given space constraints and high rents in Bangalore.
- For several years, the young women at NJN have been paying a contribution of Rs. 300 and Rs. 500 per month in the first and second years of their stay towards the expenses of the institution, while prices have been rising steadily. At the same time, it is not possible to ask the young women to contribute more, as this phase is also used to encourage saving and improve their material security prior to their living independently or getting married. APSA is thus taking on more and more of the burden of the subsidy on itself.

**Recommendations:**

- NJN is an excellent facility and the APSA management needs to give serious thought to its continued financial sustainability, which might include raising some resources to assist it to continue to provide the subsidy for the young women who use the facility.
- As soon as possible, the management could try to apply pressure and negotiate for a written MoU on the use of the new hostel facilities.
- It would be wise for APSA to think about a contingency plan for shifting NJN and calculate what kind of resources might be necessary, in case a move becomes necessary. The budgeted amount should be raised and deposited in the corpus fund. This could be undertaken as part of risk management strategies under the consolidation phase.

## **Childline - Bangalore**

APSA started operating a help line for children in distress on 31<sup>st</sup> December 1997. In 2002 this became part of the Childline India Foundation of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India. APSA manages the helpline for the south-east of the city.

Childline is a twenty-four hour free helpline that can be contacted by children in distress or concerned people. APSA manages the phones and intervenes where necessary. In 2006 APSA intervened in 1,257 cases through which 261 children were rescued, 489 were provided with shelter, 309 were repatriated, 128 missing children cases were dealt with, 16 were provided with medical assistance and general check-up facilitated to 578 children. In addition educational help was provided to 538 students who called and emotional support and guidance was provided to 451.

APSA Childline has become a model for other Childlines around the country and is a member of the Childline India Foundation Task Force.

The Childline Project consists of one coordinator, seven team members and one para-professional and three volunteers. Staff have received training on child participation, sexual health, violence against children and child development. All staff receive training on how to answer the calls a manual is provided for advice on this.

Very basic services for the project are funded by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, additional support services and interim funding (pending reimbursement from the government) are provided by FORUT, and the Rakshitra building in which the Childline is operated was built with funds from the Japanese Government.

### **Main Activities**

- **Answering calls:** almost 15000 calls are taken every year. Emotional guidance and information is provided if necessary.
- **Organising rescues** with the labour department or the police and picks up child labourers, runaway children and victims of domestic abuse. These children are brought back to Rakshitra for immediate shelter and rehabilitation.

- **Providing support:** project staff give support to the children through the necessary legal procedures including filing the case with the police and taking the children to the Child Welfare Committee, of which one APSA director is a member, to try to claim compensation for the children. In 2006 compensation of Rs 801400 was allotted to 70 ex-child labourers and victims of abuse. In sexual abuse cases APSA helps to file the police complaint, takes the children to the city court and arranges counselling with the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences if required.
- **Organising rehabilitation:** if they cannot go back to their family children stay in Nammane. If children are not from a local area they are accompanied back to their native state or country (some rescued children have been from Nepal and Pakistan). Children who are either too young for Nammane or have special needs are referred to other hostels or government homes.
- **Raising awareness of Childline and child rights** with school children, teachers, parents, auto-drivers and companies throughout the city through workshops, street plays and advertising. In addition, 50 Childline teams have been formed of students in schools and colleges to raise awareness of the helpline and child rights.
- **Providing training to government institutions:** APSA conducted sessions with 60% of the Bangalore police force to train them on child rights issues. These sessions were conducted by APSA staff and children who had been rescued through Childline, turning the usual power differentials on their head and exposing the police officers to issues they had hitherto little considered.
- **Networking** with 27 police stations, four municipalities and various government departments.

### Strengths

- In comparison with other Childlines in the city and around the country APSA runs a well-facilitated, responsive and committed service, as attested to by its membership on the national committee.
- Coordinates well with government departments without compromising on the principles of the project. For example children have been rescued from police inspector's houses and houses of officials of the Department of Women and Child Development in spite of official reluctance.

- Conducting rescues takes a wide range of diplomatic skills and a dogged persistence from staff.
- Excellent coordination with other child rights projects in APSA ensures that the necessary residential, emotional and educational support is provided to rescued children who may have to wait for months in APSA before their case is concluded in the Child Welfare Committee.
- The commitment and sensitivity of the staff in dealing with repatriation cases – when a child from a different state or country is rescued – means the child is accompanied and supported the entire time from being rescued to returning home.

### **Challenges**

- Spreading awareness of the importance of Childline and child rights is a difficult process as child labour is accepted both by a variety of employers and the parents of the child labourers themselves. Many employers will not accept they have done anything wrong and many parents of the children will agree. It is extremely difficult to ensure a child's rehabilitation when the employer and her parents collaborate to obstruct legal action.
- Government lethargy in dealing with cases, especially those pertaining to high-level government employees.
- APSA has frequently been accused of demanding money and profiting from rescuing children. APSA now ensures that in the case of compensation being awarded, the employer writes a letter saying no money is going to APSA, and that the payment is being made in the form of a government bond which the child can claim at 18. Meanwhile APSA bears all the expenses of the child related to education, care, health and recreation.
- Funding coming from the government is often late and is never paid 'up front'. APSA did not receive funds for three years and had to pay salaries out of its corpus fund and FORUT funds.

### **Recommendations**

- As manning the phones can be an emotionally draining experience the creation of a formal protocol detailing the appropriate ways to deal with the varied calls and cases may be helpful to staff and may further the organisation against risk.

- As the media often wants to publish the names and pictures of rescued children, look into the utility of drawing up guidelines to be distributed specifying what the media should and should not do in such cases.

*In 2004 APSA rescued a nine year old girl through Childline from the home of two high-level government employees. After filing the case with the police APSA took the girl to two hospitals and each diagnosed dozens of human bite marks on the girl's body. Due to the connections of the employers progress on the case was painfully slow. To speed things up APSA and a legal services NGO staged a demonstration outside the government office in which the employers worked. The government said they would undertake an internal enquiry, although this came out in support of the employer. Later APSA pushed for the case to be filed in the city court. The girl's family were bought over by the employers and the doctor who had initially diagnosed the bite marks would not reiterate the diagnosis in court. The employers were acquitted and the mother of the girl filed a habeas corpus suit to take her back home (she had been staying in Nammam). For good measure, the employers accused APSA as asking for compensation money to fill its own coffers. APSA has since convinced the National Human Rights Commission to re-open the case. It is still in process. Usually APSA is more successful and does ensure compensation is given but in some cases the institutional obstacles are too great, although that has not stopped them doing their best to ensure justice is done.*



## **Education Project (Dream School) – Bangalore**

APSA's Appropriate Education project came out of its experience of working with street children in the mid-1980s. Realising that the children wanted to learn numeracy so they could gain the right price for their rag picking and other informal livelihoods, APSA started providing non-formal education to the children in the drop-in centre they were using at the time. When Nammane was built in 1992 education was provided there.

In February 2005 the Dream School was built next to Nammane. It now provides free education for 160 ex-child labourers, street children and school drop-outs, approximately 60% of who stay in Nammane. The education provided to the children who have been out of mainstream education is non-formal but when the children have grown sufficiently accustomed to the learning environment they are encouraged to either go back into mainstream education at a government or a private school. Often this will happen after they have taken the 7<sup>th</sup> Standard exams but APSA also offers education up to 10<sup>th</sup> Standard.

There are five classes in the Dream School: National Child Labour Project (NCLP) class (part of a project of the of the government of India), in which ex-child labourers between 10-14 benefit from informal education; a class for "crisis" children who have been rescued through Childline; a class for "migratory" children of the urban homeless living in the surrounding area; and students being prepared for the 7<sup>th</sup> Standard and 10<sup>th</sup> Standard exams, either through the State Examination Board, or the National or Karnataka Open Schools.

In the 2006-2007 school year 79 boys and 68 girls attended Dream School. 29 were in the migratory class, 20 in the crisis class, 33 in NCLP, 15 in 7<sup>th</sup> Standard, 32 in Kannada 10<sup>th</sup> Standard and 18 in English 10<sup>th</sup> Standard. 78 children stay in Nammane and 68 are day scholars.

Pass rates for the 7<sup>th</sup> Standard exams are 100%. However pass rates for the 10<sup>th</sup> Standard have been below 60%. 53 students were mainstreamed back into formal education in 2006.

The Dream School was constructed with funds from Forut and the same organisation funds the running costs. The NCLP class receives funding for the staff and students from the National Government.

### Main Activities

- **Providing education** in Kannada and English languages, in science, literature, maths, geography and social science.
- **Encouraging child participation:** children's meetings held every week with staff for the children to discuss their progress and problems with the teachers.
- **Parents meetings** are held every month to keep the parents involved as much as possible in their children's education.
- **Identifying appropriate students:** surveys conducted every year in local slum communities to find children who may benefit from studying at the Dream School.
- **Providing a holistic education:** sessions on human rights are conducted twice a week for the NCLP and 7<sup>th</sup> Standard students. In addition, games, recreational and co-curricular activities happen regularly.
- **Providing alternative education:** Dream School is a study centre for the Karnataka State Open School as part of the JSS program (Janashikshana Samstha –a Central Government Project). This is for children who have difficulties with formal exams. The Headmaster of Dream School received the award for the best teacher involved in the programme.
- **Providing training for other educational institutions:** Dream School, especially the NCLP class has been taken as a model by other institutions in Karnataka. APSA staff act as resource people for training sessions on how to conduct NCLP classes and the APSA NCLP class has been used as a model for 40 other such classes in Bangalore.
- **Assisting with home placement** of children from crisis situations. In 2006 home placement was organised for seventy children from the crisis class.

### Strengths

- Excellent infrastructure. The Dream School building is a beguiling structure and conducive for learning.
- Very cost-effective: the total running costs come to Rs 200 per child/month.

- Child friendly environment
- The collaboration with the Inchara project ensures the children have cultural inputs and avenues for artistic expression.

### **Challenges**

- Fitting the children back into mainstream education, especially into government schools can be very difficult. Approximately 20% of children come back to Dream School. This is due to a combination of obtuse bureaucracy and a rigid learning environment to which it is often difficult for students who have been in the more flexible and accommodating atmosphere of Dream School to adapt.
- There is a dramatic fall in pass percentage from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> standard. This is because of the ever so slightly more demanding standards expected at this level. This is a major issue which needs to be addressed immediately by the management.
- Using “pass” in examinations as the criterion for education is a very limiting one, especially for non-traditional learners.
- While the staff are undoubtedly committed, they could perhaps do with greater inputs on learning standards and indicators.

### **Recommendations**

- Establish child and youth safety policy as in Nammane
- Establish zero tolerance policy for corporal punishment
- Increase emphasis on quality education
- Develop literacy, numeracy, science and social science education learning indicators to be achieved at different academic levels/after x number of years of schooling
- Need for consistent leadership and monitoring by senior management to ensure that staff internalise and actualise the philosophy of child participation. The Dream School may be more participatory than government schools and other private schools but the ethos of participation has not yet been fully mainstreamed. The children’s meeting we witnessed was more children participating in a teachers’ meeting rather than the other way round.
- Review of recruitment policies and in-service training

## **Child Labour Project – Bangalore and Hyderabad**

APSA work on the child labour issue came out of its more general work on urban poverty in slums through which staff realised the scale of the problem and the causes. APSA's first work was a research study looking at children working in hotels in Hyderabad. It conducted its first rescue of child labourers in 1993 in Bangalore and has been collectivising child labourers, potential child labourers and children in slums into collectives for the past fifteen years.

APSA works to rescue and rehabilitate child labourers but also to prevent children from starting work in the first place. Through its research and experience of the subject it has come to see child labour as part of the broader web of poverty and discrimination. Arguing that every child in a slum is a potential child labourer, it tries to negate future causes of child labour. The importance of this view to APSA's work was stressed to us by the Project Coordinator of the UNICEF's National Domestic Child Labour Elimination Programme, saying, 'APSA works in a coherent, logical and inter-connected way that situates child labour in the context of wider poverty' (incidentally, the Chief of UNICEF's Child Protection India office after seeing the organisation's work asked, 'now just tell me, how do I clone APSA?').

All core staff work on the issue in Hyderabad and a Child Labour Project was started formally in Bangalore in 2004 to work specifically alongside Childline and other projects. There is one coordinator and eight staff members in the Bangalore project.

APSA's work on the child labour issue receives funding from Forut in Bangalore and Hyderabad. The Bangalore project receives additional funding from UNICEF, the State Government's Child Labour Project, IDEB. The Young Women's Christian Association provides support with space and material resources and various individual donations for medical help and sponsorships. The Hyderabad project receives funding from local companies, the Golconda Foundation and ILO.

## Main Activities

- **Working through complementary cluster, sector and area based approaches:** APSA staff work against child labour in a variety of sectors (hotels, domestic etc) and works to make clusters of slums and specific areas child labour free.
- **Collectivising** ex-child labourers and potential child labourers into children's unions and encourage them to discuss child rights and problems in their communities. Representatives of these unions sit on district, city, state and national committees of the National Movement for Working Children. APSA Bangalore currently facilitates collectives in fifteen areas, each with about fifty children each while APSA Hyderabad facilitates them in nine areas.
- **Facilitating child participation at the policy level** in state government's formulation of state action plans for eliminating child labour with representatives of collectives attending policy meetings.
- **Providing supportive background for families:** in Bangalore APSA is working with UNICEF to provide day care centres and are mobilising support from local businesses for crèches in Hyderabad so their siblings do not have to stay at home (and miss school) to look after them.
- **Providing educational support** for school drop-outs to prevent them from falling back into labouring situations. Last year 1100 children in Bangalore and 900 in Hyderabad were re-admitted to school because of APSA's work. 80% did not drop-out again.
- **Raising awareness:** visiting apartment complexes, slums, schools and companies and raising awareness against child labour issues, and putting pressure on them to ensure this through policy and internal monitoring.
- **Networking** with NGOs through the CACL in Bangalore and Hyderabad

## Strengths

- Holistic approach working in tandem with other projects to see child labour as part of a broader continuum of poverty.
- Working with other APSA projects such as education and skill training ensures that APSA can speak and act with authority not just on prevention and rescue but also rehabilitation.

- APSA provides services where necessary but never impinges on the child's right to participate and play a deliberative role in her own future.
- Emphasis on child participation and collectivisation is both innovative and effective and has become a model for other NGOs throughout the state.

### Challenges

- There is still a long way to go before child labour is seen as a major issue among the population at large. The case for child labour – as a good earning opportunity for the child and family – is often put forward in society and in the mainstream media.
- Youths aged between 14 and 18 appear to be in something of a legislative limbo and much of APSA's issue based work with youths is involved with correcting this. The Juvenile Justice Act specifies anybody below the age of 18 is a child and therefore it is illegal for them to be employed. This is also the stance of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child. Unfortunately the National Child Labour Act (1986) specifies that only children aged below fourteen are not allowed to work. APSA position, taken through the CACL is that as there has been a constitutional amendment making education a fundamental right for children below 18 years old, the Child Labour Act is null and void. They are working for a committed and unified policy on the issue so that children can study until 17 years of age, complete a one year vocational training programme and then start work.
- Currently, there is a proposal to transfer responsibility for APSA's outreach work with street children to the Child Labour Project. Partly because working with street children requires certain special skills and partly because the current demands of the Child Labour project are sufficiently intense, the evaluators are concerned that there is a chance the work with street children will lose even more momentum.
- Many families moving to Bangalore and Hyderabad for employment bring their domestic help in the form of child labourers with them. This means the child is not only working but is working in a totally alien environment, often unfamiliar with the language, knowing no one but his or her employers and having no access to recourse procedures.

## Recommendations

- More field level monitoring involvement by senior management.

*As part of their awareness raising work members of the Child Labour project in Bangalore visited a middle class apartment complex containing approximately 1500 apartments. They encouraged residents to raise the issue in residents' welfare meetings and to work to convince fellow residents to stop employing child labourers. As part of the campaign, a resident and an APSA staff member went knocking on doors to speak to people directly. One such door was owned by a police inspector but was opened by a child labourer. The resident collaborating with APSA explained, 'we politely explained the problems concerning child labour but he told us to get lost and said if he ever saw us when he was driving his car he would run us over. The APSA staff did not bat an eyelid. They organised the rescue of the child soon after that. Together we have eradicated 90% of child labour in the complex. The courage with which they work is admirable and they make us feel like we are a part of APSA.'*

## **Kaushalya and Skill Training Project – Bangalore and Hyderabad**

Kaushalya ('skill' in Kannada), APSA Bangalore's skill training centre was started in 1992. The impetus came from the recognition that the employment opportunities open to children from disadvantaged backgrounds, such as those staying in Nammane, were very limited and poorly-paid.

As there were few opportunities for youths to learn a skill, APSA decided to take the initiative to provide training programmes free of cost in suitable skills demanded by the employment market. The first course offered was screen printing and Kaushalya now also provides training in tailoring, electronics, screen printing and computing.

Approximately 100 youths graduate from Kaushalya every year. In total over 1500 disadvantaged youths have passed through Kaushalya and been job-placed.

In addition to the training Kaushalya also contains an income-generation unit which takes tailoring, electronics and printing orders from local businesses. This is staffed by a few ex-Kaushalya students and people with experience of commercial production. In 2006 APSA registered Kaushalya as a company and intends to expand its commercial activities. All profits go back into the training centre and currently cover approximately 15% of Kaushalya's overall budget.

In Hyderabad APSA facilitates skill training for youths by mobilising resources from a range of organisations to conduct skill training at rented centres in the communities. This is done throughout the city and courses include tailoring, computing, screen printing and electronics. At the time of writing over 900 youths have been trained and job placed.

Kaushalya is funded by Forut with equipment donations having been made by companies such as Tata BP Solar, civil society organisations such as the Rotary Club and various individuals. In Hyderabad resources are mobilised from local businesses, the corporate sector, civil society organisations and the community for the space, infrastructure and teachers for the training programmes.



Kaushalya has two coordinators and seven staff members. In Hyderabad five trainers are hired on a part-time basis to conduct the training programmes organised by the core staff members.

### Main Activities

- **Providing professional training:** all APSA's training staff are qualified and most have worked in the sectors relevant to their skills. All the parents and all the youths interviewed in Bangalore and Hyderabad expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the training they have received through APSA.
- **Job placement:** all students are job-placed in reputable companies and given follow-up support for two years.
- **Providing workplace exposure:** students are exposed to companies while they are training in Kaushalya to gain knowledge of life in the workplace.
- **Identifying appropriate students:** youths are selected for all the training centres through an in-depth process which involves APSA staff going to their homes and meeting their families.
- **Working with parents:** parents are regularly contacted and consulted through parents meetings.
- **Providing holistic education:** a variety of extra training is given to the students including life skills, interview advice, financial management and entrepreneurship.
- **Residential support** given if needed: approximately half of Kaushalya students stay in Nammane.
- **Outside experts are regularly called** to give training and evaluate programmes.
- **Kaushalya also provides technical support to training centres in the community** run with the support of the local government.

### Strengths

- Extensive and high quality infrastructure. Kaushalya has more than sufficient tailoring, printing, electronics and computing facilities for all the students.
- In-depth interview process ensures that the youths selected are from the most disadvantaged backgrounds.

- The production unit helps students to see the development of a product from component materials to finished product for sale.
- Holistic support given to students appears to help them prepare not just for future work but for life in general.
- It costs Kaushalya Rs40 per child/day which suggests an efficient use of resources. As Hyderabad runs its courses in the community they are even more cost-effective although they do not offer residential support.
- All the training programmes appear cost-effective with Hyderabad in particular giving quality training to a high number of youths through mobilising funding from a diverse range of sources.

### **Challenges**

- Staying responsive to the job market and making sure the skills taught are relevant, especially in cities such as Bangalore and Hyderabad in which the economy is changing so quickly.
- Keeping the demands of the Kaushalya commercial unit and the training unit separate and maintaining a balance between the commercial and social activities. As the commercial unit grows it is imperative to ensure that the training centre continues to give high quality training to the students.
- Ensuring that staff at Kaushalya feel adequately compensated for their work. Given the high quality of training students receive they often find jobs with higher salaries than those currently received by the APSA training staff.

### **Recommendations**

- Need to ensure separation of staff with clearly defined roles for Production and Training.
- Comparative cost-benefit analysis of Kaushalya and Hyderabad training project and draw lessons for both
- Creation of a professional business plan, sound advice from legal experts, company secretaries, Chartered Accountants for production units

### **Life Skills Project - Bangalore**

The Life Skills Project was started in 2006 to complement the education of youths studying in the Dream School and Kaushalya and for young working women staying in the Navajeevan Hostel.

102 youth attended the first programme in the 2005/2006 school year. 130 youth have recently completed the second programme. It is planned to extend the programme to youths in the communities in which APSA works through coordination with the training centres.

There is currently one trainer and one coordinator. The project is funded by General Electric through the Indian NGO YouthReach. The funding will continue until 2008.

### **Main Activities**

- **Conducting participatory classes in lifeskills:** The project teaches youths in classes of fifteen to twenty and uses participatory methods such as role-plays and group discussions. All the youths interviewed expressed satisfaction with the programme and said they felt it was a useful addition to their lives. For example many expressed that their time-management had improved and they had felt more comfortable in job interviews. YouthReach said that they feel APSA is running the best programme of the five NGOs they work with in India.
- **Providing practical education:** the curriculum, designed by General Electric, YouthReach and the International Youth Foundation teaches 51 topics divided into four categories: personal competencies, effective work-habits, entrepreneurship and information and knowledge.

### **Strengths**

- ♦ Participatory approach appears both effective and enjoyable.
- ♦ Holistic coverage of issues faced by youths.

### **Challenges**

- ◆ GE's funding will stop in 2008.
- ◆ The trainers expressed concern that youths from especially disadvantaged backgrounds found the training difficult to follow.
- ◆ Containing 51 topics the curriculum is somewhat large and the trainer has expressed that it is difficult to cover each topic in the requisite depth.
- ◆ As there is a sexual health component extra sensitivity will be needed in teaching the syllabus in the wider communities.

### **Recommendations**

- ◆ Start to look for funding sources to replace GE in 2008
- ◆ Further integrate the Life Skills Project and the Sexual Health Project to share knowledge and methods as both are youth focused and both deal with difficult issues related to choices, decision-making, staying focused and responsible, etc.
- ◆ Further tailor the Life Skills curriculum to the needs of the youths being taught. There is a need for the development of alternative teaching methods focused on youths from especially disadvantaged backgrounds.

## **Sexual Health Project – Bangalore**

The Sexual Health Project was started in 2005 in response to the general lack of sexual education in South India especially among street and slum children. The project was a combination of APSA's experience with street children and the sexual health issues they faced and the experience of a Dutch psychologist who had researched the sexuality of street children in the city.

The project is based on the philosophy that sexuality is a natural part of life. Its slogan is 'happy, healthy, responsible' and is based on the inviolability of certain sexual rights and responsibilities. It aims to look at sexuality and sexual health holistically as a part of the lives of street and slum children rather than just focusing on aids prevention.

The project aims to provide a comprehensive set of materials that can be used and an intervention model that can be replicated by NGOs in South India to raise awareness of the importance of sexual health and diminish the taboo attached to such issues.

The Project has one coordinator and three staff members.

The Project is funded by the Dutch NGOs CordAid and Stichting Kinderpostzegels, and the Bernard Von Leer Foundation, but integration of the project within APSA uses staff time which is funded by FORUT.

### **Main Activities**

- **Writing an evidence-based comprehensive activities workbook manual** to be used with street and slum children
- **Training practitioners:** intensive staff programme for NGO workers who will be working on these issues. So far training has been given to APSA staff in relevant projects.
- **Networking** with other NGOs in South India to implement the project and designing suitable materials with the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Science (NIMHANS) in Bangalore
- **Dissemination of learnings:** conferences held on sexual health and published reports from them.

**Strengths**

- Coherent approach to the issue that fits in well with APSA's core, rights-based philosophy.
- Excellent documentation of work and communication (through website, posters etc).
- Excellent resource mobilisation.
- Accessible, considerate presentation of sensitive issues

**Challenges**

- Sexuality is very much a taboo issue in India and if handled insensitively the project's work could cause controversy.
- Institutionalising the project within APSA so it can continue after the departure of its present coordinator and instigator.

**Recommendations**

- Further collaboration with the Life Skills Project to fully develop its sexual health components
- Further integration of project staff into the wider work of the organisation

### **Urban poor issue-based work**

APSA's issue based work with the urban poor has been based on rights-based tenets that have not changed since the Indian Service Team was working to unionise railway workers in the late 1970s. At root this is based on the principle that the urban poor have the same rights as everybody else. Practically this involves a focus on the right to citizenship – to be treated as a citizen of the city, state and country – the right to basic amenities, the right to food and the right to livelihood.

APSA's essentially plays the roles of facilitator and advocate. This is based on a consistent awareness of the rights and responsibilities of the citizen and the legitimate space in which an NGO can act. Therefore APSA will work with people to pressurise the government into installing a water supply in their slum but they will not suggest that APSA can provide that water supply, an offer which has been put to APSA by various funding bodies – offers that would have brought a significant amount of money for the organisation – but it has constantly refused.

In the past five years APSA appears to have concentrated on developing its role as an issue-based advocacy organisation. This can be seen in its contribution to a variety of campaigns including those against anti-poor amendments to the slum act, water privatisation, public-private land sharing and recent legislation promoting micro-finance institutions in the place of national banks. APSA campaigns on these issues as an organisation, rather than through individual projects, with a variety of organisations such as mass movements, Dalit groups, Community Based Organisations and NGOs. Through its many projects, especially the SHGs, it can raise awareness and bring demonstrations to the notice of thousands of people across the city, a mobilisation capacity matched by few other organisations.

APSA Bangalore has in the past two years been focusing more on the global dimension to the reforms process and the role of development institutions such as the World Bank and multinational corporations. APSA Hyderabad is becoming more involved in such activities and has recently taken on the convenorship of the Andhra Pradesh branch of the National Alliance of Peoples' Movements.

The issues of the urban poor are far more explicitly political than those pertaining to child rights or youth and it potentially brings conflict with very powerful institutions. A major issue for the future is how APSA will decide to balance its increasingly insistent advocacy on issues of the urban poor with the rest of its activities.

*A significant learning for APSA was their involvement in a study researching the water requirement of the urban poor in Bangalore. APSA's contribution to the study, funded by an international NGO and written by a research centre, was field-based research, conducted by members of the Slum Outreach Project. Their research, which found the extant water supply in four slums to be wholly inadequate and that people were willing to pay a little more for a better service, was used to write a study arguing that water should be seen primarily as an economic good (rather than a fundamental right), which has since been used by private water companies as evidence that Bangalore's water supply should be privatised.*

*When APSA realised what the report was being used for it published a second edition distancing itself from the findings of the first. The experience has made APSA more circumspect when entering into partnerships and revealed how research can be co-opted and misused.*

*In early 2007 APSA heard rumours of labourers from Orissa being held and forced to work in a factory sixty kilometres west of Bangalore. One man had escaped and had contacted ActionAid who in turn told APSA. Two APSA activists travelled to the area and by speaking to locals established the location of the factory and approximately how many people were working. Aware of the political controversy the case could cause APSA contacted a legal services NGO, a Dalit mass movement, the Labour Department and the police. APSA organised the rescue team comprising staff from all these organisations. They also contacted journalists who covered the rescue in newspapers and on the television. The rescue convoy was led by the APSA vehicle as the only people who knew the location were the two APSA activists who had scouted the area:*



*the labour department suggested APSA not tell anybody, not even government officials, as they were worried the information may be leaked and the employer may be notified (they trusted APSA not to do this). On arriving at the factory 45 men, women and children were found. They had left their village in Orissa five months previously having been promised a well paying job but when they arrived they were forced to make and carry bricks for ten hours a day by the employer and his goons. Their bodies were covered with burns and bruises caused by the employer's beatings and the ardour of the work. At night the children were locked up so the parents would not try to escape. After the rescue APSA provided shelter, clothing and food for all the people and organised and accompanied them on their trip back to Orissa. APSA, with the other organisations have been pressing for legal procedures to be taken against the employer but due to his political and social connections progress has been slow. When they went back to the Labour Department to review the case APSA activists thanked the District Commissioner for his help. The DC replied, 'no, no – this was all because of your work – we thank you'.*

## **Slum Outreach Project – Bangalore and Hyderabad**

The Slum Outreach Project was officially started in 1985 but APSA has been working with slum communities since the experience with the unionisation of the Hamali labourers. This was seminal in APSA's work as through this it realised the extent of the insecurity and discrimination faced by the families of these workers and the wider slum community.

In partnership with slum communities APSA works for the rights of slum communities in a diverse variety of areas, spaces and situations, all united by the philosophy that residents of slum areas are not second-class citizens, are an integral, inviolable part of the city and have the same rights as all its other residents.

The need to reach out to slums comes from the institutional, legislative, economic, cultural and social discrimination that these communities face in Bangalore and Hyderabad. These communities face the threat of being moved off their land, which is becoming ever more valuable as Bangalore's economy grows, in addition to the negligence and disinclination of the government to recognise them as citizens and to provide basic amenities and welfare services for them.

The Bangalore project, comprising of one coordinator and three field activists, works regularly in 40 slums and with crisis management work in approximately 25 more. The Hyderabad project works in 60 slums. In Hyderabad all the core staff work on slum outreach issues as do other projects in Bangalore such as the SHG project.

The total slums the project has worked with in Bangalore is around 100 and in Hyderabad 150. When the projects have helped the residents realise their basic rights and access their amenities they stop regular work in the slum, which will by then have formed a functioning Community Based Organisation, comprised of members of the community, to take APSA's place.

The Bangalore and Hyderabad Projects are funded by FORUT.

### Main Activities

- **Collectivisation** through facilitating the formation of inclusive Community Based Organisations and people's Committees in slums.
- **Conscientisation** through raising awareness of the rights of slum dwellers and the legislative and constitutional provisions through which they can secure them
- **Working with the communities to access the relevant government department to gain formal recognition of their rights to land.** This involves contacting government departments to gain formal notification that a slum exists on a certain part of land and working towards gaining formal property rights. In the last five years APSA has helped approximately fifty slums gain land rights in Bangalore and Hyderabad.
- **Working with communities to pressure the government into providing basic amenities** such as water supply and sanitation, electricity connections and accessing government schemes to provide subsidised housing. In the last five years APSA has worked with almost 30 slums in Bangalore and 10 slums in Hyderabad, benefiting around 13000 families to secure basic amenities from the government. In the last five years APSA has helped communities in eight slums in Hyderabad and 6 slums in Bangalore access subsidised housing schemes from the government.
- **Crisis management** is a large part of the projects' work and is becoming more so recently, dealing with various types of crises in the slum (such as when sections of slums or whole slums may be burnt down as a result of accidents – since many houses are semi-permanent and made of inflammable materials, or acts of arson by agents of vested interests like local politicians or the land mafia) or those coming from outside, such as demolitions.
- **Advocacy:** project staff play a significant part in organising campaigns and demonstrations on urban poor issues.
- **Networking** with a variety of different organisations and individuals working for the rights of the urban poor including mass organisations, Dalit groups, community based organisations and NGOs.

### Strengths

- Staff have an extensive knowledge and experience of the legislative and constitutional provisions for the urban poor.
- Project staff have the initiative and capacity for innovation that enables them to quickly respond to crises and design appropriate, effective solutions.
- The project staff have built up working relationships with government officials which allows them to access their departments but also to confront them with credibility on a certain issue when the need arises.
- The range of networking partners allows the project to mobilise support quickly and effectively.
- All current project staff are living in or have lived in slums.

### **Challenges**

- With the present development paths of Bangalore and Hyderabad land is becoming more and more valuable and sought after. The rate of slum declarations has dropped dramatically in the last five years while demolitions by the state have become more numerous. Legislative provisions for the rights of slum dwellers have been diluted. In addition to this there is an increasing sophistication in presenting anti-poor policies, such as public-private land sharing, as pro-poor.
- Maintaining adequate compensation levels for staff that cover all their varied expenditure.
- The current project staff have a wide and comprehensive experience in dealing with problems faced by the urban poor. Replacing them will be very difficult and may result in a diminution in APSA's capacity as an organisation working with the urban poor. While this applies to the organisation as a whole it applies especially to the Slum outreach (and Urban Homeless) project as their work is often necessarily undertaken on an ad-hoc basis and relies more on the personal initiative of staff than the institutionalisation of appropriate systems.

### **Recommendations**

- Learnings and methods of the Hyderabad Gender Issues Project be mainstreamed within Slum Outreach Projects in Bangalore and Hyderabad.
- Hyderabad staff be given more inputs on the various, self-described 'pro-poor' policies in the new climate of pro-corporate 'reform'.

- Full review of salaries and especially to what extent current expense compensation is sufficient.
- As the ideology behind the 'reforms' the project is fighting against are often global in origin it may be productive for the project to form links with civil society groups from other countries in both the South and the North for research and solidarity.
- There has been talk of forming a new CBO through the hiving off of staff from the Project. In the opinion of the evaluators this is not advisable for APSA as an organisation while there are viable, practical and extant alternatives that are already being employed by the organisation.

*APSA's work in 1999 with the slums near the railway tracks close to the Cantonment Station in the north of the Bangalore gave the project and APSA a new impetus and its work since has been more consciously rights-based. Activists heard that slums within two hundred metres of the tracks were going to be demolished by the railway authorities to make way for a new track within three days. APSA, in collaboration with another NGO and a mass organisation approached the Karnataka Slum Clearance Board to prevent the demolitions but the Board said that as they only had records of five slums in the areas there was little they could do. In response activists conducted a detailed survey of the area and found that there were actually 65 slums, of which only 16 were undeclared. With the encouragement of APSA and the other organisations the residents of one slum took the Railway Authorities to court and won the case to stay where they were.*

*APSA started working with the 16 undeclared slums to find out what their precise situation was and to work towards the increased security brought by declaration. At present ten of the slums have been declared and the other six are in the process.*

*From this experience APSA realised that communities could not just submit documents and wait for the government to declare their slum as legal; they would have to be proactive and push officials to do so. It also shows how APSA are prepared to use a mix of strategies – research, advocacy, legal – in partnership with communities to achieve a goal.*

## **Urban Homeless Project**

The Urban Homeless Project evolved out of the previous Street Communities project in 2004. As Bangalore has grown many people have come to the city from rural areas to work in daily wage labour sectors, especially construction while many have been forced out of their previous homes in the city to make way for further development. Families live in tents by the roadside; they are not recognised as citizens by the government and their basic rights are not recognised. The Urban Homeless project works with seventeen communities comprising approximately 1400 families to secure their fundamental rights, represented by, for example, ID cards that allow them to vote and access health and education facilities and ration cards to allow them to buy subsidised food.

The project has been innovative and in a way ground-breaking in Bangalore. Many organisations work with individual street children but APSA was the first NGO to work with street families and the urban homeless in general. The urban homeless face all the problems faced by slum communities but as their status as recognised citizens and their rights to the land on which they live are even more insecure, it is more difficult to obtain basic amenities such as subsidised food and healthcare. This is exacerbated by their lack of collectivisation and political representation and the consequent attitude of policy-makers and government officials that is even more dismissive than that accorded to slum dwellers.

The project is also responsible for APSA's field-based work with street children. APSA's work started in this area in Bangalore from the mid 1980s when they started to informally provide shelter, education and skill training services for children in the area surrounding the office. At that time there were approximately 70000 street children in Bangalore but this number has decreased significantly. APSA now works in the south west of the city with five groups of approximately 10 street children in each.

APSA has worked to see that the environment in which they live is made more supportive and sustainable. This involves visiting the children twice a week, discussing their concerns, ensuring they are as secure as possible and, where applicable, visiting their parents.

If the children want to stop living on the streets but cannot stay with their parents they can either stay in Nammane or they are referred to another hostel or a government home. It has become far less common for street children to stay in Nammane as we described in that project's report.

The Urban Homeless project is comprised of one coordinator and three field activists, one of who works with street children.

The Urban Homeless Project is funded by Forut with additional support from ActionAid.

#### **Main Activities with the urban homeless**

- **Identifying and contacting** urban homeless communities and informing them of the amenities they have the right to access from the government.
- **Working with the communities** to access the relevant government department to gain formal recognition of their rights. This involves contacting government departments to obtain Voter ID cards and ration cards to access subsidised food, healthcare and land rights and subsidised housing.
- **Networking:** in 2005 APSA was involved in conceptualising and forming BRIDGE (Bangalore, Rights, Initiative for Dignity, Gender and Empowerment), a network of 14 NGOs working on urban poor issues with particular attention to the urban homeless. In the first year this focussed on issues of health, food rights, shelter and education. Judging by interviews with ActionAid India, the funder of this network, APSA's involvement appears to have been necessary for the success and development of this network.
- **Advocacy** through encouraging urban homeless communities to take part in campaigns of the urban poor such as that against water privatisation.

#### **Activities with Street Children**

- **Identifying, contacting and supporting** street children in the areas they are living.
- **Working to make their environment as secure as possible** by interacting with local stakeholders – residents, police, landowners – to prevent violence or discrimination against the children.

- **Arranging residential support** if the children cannot live with their parents and if they want to leave the streets. This can be in Nammane or other hostels or government homes.
- **Alcohol drugs prevention:** APSA staff sensitize street children to the dangers and risks of alcohol and drugs, conduct camps to wean them off psychotropic substance abuse and encourage lifestyles that avoid the cycle of addiction.
- **Raising awareness** on issues such as sexual health and life skills

### Strengths

- Courage to work with the urban homeless communities and advocate for their rights at the state level
- As with the Sum Outreach Project, staff have an extensive knowledge and experience of the legislative and constitutional provisions for the urban poor and have to deal with communities from a range of backgrounds.
- Project staff have the initiative and capacity for innovation that enables them to quickly respond to crises and design appropriate, effective solutions.
- APSA's early work concerning street children was innovative and successful, with many of the street children now leading more secure, sustainable lives.
- Staff have been given inputs on a wide range of issues of the urban poor and those relevant to street children such as sexual health.

### Challenges

- The urban homeless are viewed with suspicion and often derision by residents of the city. The diversity and transience of many communities make collectivisation and political representation even more difficult than in slums.
- APSA's work with street children has declined sharply and this is only partly a result of the decrease in the numbers of street children in the city. If the urban homeless and slum outreach projects do merge work with street children will move to the Child Labour project. There is a risk that work with street children will become more marginalised within the organisation.
- Keeping the urban homeless as a key issue if urban homeless and slum outreach projects merge (see below).



## Recommendations

- Review extent of APSA's interventions with street children and redefine APSA's core description if needed. It may not be enough to merely include street children within the existing Child Labour Project.
- If APSA decides to continue working with street children getting activists trained with Navajeevan Vijayawada's Street Presence Project is recommended.
- It is recommended that both the Slum Outreach Project and the Urban Homeless Project seek additional sources of funding or increased grants from Forut in the context of the escalation of challenges faced by the community.

There are plans to merge the Urban Homeless and the Slum Outreach projects into one 'urban poor' project. This seems practical as the divisions between slums and urban homeless communities are themselves blurred and the communities face similar challenges. This may also help to bring the urban homeless more into the mainstream discourse on the urban poor.

*APSA has been working with a community of 46 families for 5 years currently living in the KR Puram area in the east of the city. They were previously living in tents in the centre of the city but the government forced them to move. They had nowhere to go but with APSA's help they negotiated with a landowner and politicians in KR Puram who allowed them to stay for a temporary period. Thanks to APSA's negotiations they are still there and are applying to the government to live securely on land elsewhere. The children have been admitted to local school, they all have Voter ID cards, ration cards and access to the local hospital. None of the children are working anymore and some went to Delhi and Hyderabad to give inputs on child rights as part of the Bangalore children's collective. APSA has encouraged income generation ventures such as collecting and selling human hair to a local trader and making brooms for sale. Nagamma, a mother of 4 told us, 'whatever we have wanted to do, they have helped us. My son is now studying in college to be a journalist. Before we were afraid to go to the hospital as we thought people there would just dismiss us but APSA helped us regain our pride, they gave us the courage to go and access government services. They encouraged our children to study tailoring in their training centre. We have the*

*confidence to do things ourselves now – we will talk to any government official and we have demonstrated against the government with Medha Patkar. Even if they stopped coming we would go and get things done.'*

### **Self-Help Group Project – Bangalore and Hyderabad**

The APSA Self Help Group Project was started in October 1999 in five slums with the aim of helping women from urban poor communities become more financially secure. Currently they are working with 360 groups in 78 slums in Bangalore and 209 groups in 42 slums in Hyderabad (with between 15 and twenty women in each group).

The inspiration came from the success of organisations such as Myrada in organising self-help groups in rural areas and the social and economic empowerment benefits that had followed in many cases. APSA was the one of the first organisations to develop the self-help group concept in Bangalore. For the first groups APSA lent Rs 5000 at 8% interest but since then it has not lent any money or taken any direct responsibilities for the groups' finances. The first linkages with (national) banks were made in April to May 2000 with nine groups opening bank accounts. At the same time nine groups were linked with a micro-finance institution, which offered loans at 24% interest (which at 2% per month was still very much more attractive than the 10% per month charged by moneylenders). Currently APSA self-help groups do not have any extant linkages with micro-finance institutions as the National Banks give far better rates of interest (around 9% for a Rs100000 loan) and the organisation feels that the poor should not have to borrow from 'alternative' credit sources. The success of the project is powerful evidence against the currently hegemonic notion that the poor should take credit from alternative poor-specific sources.

APSA self help groups in Bangalore currently have loans of Rs 4 crores (almost \$1 million) from national banks and Rs 1 crore in Hyderabad. Repayment rates are approximately 99%.

There are currently 16 staff members in Bangalore including 9 field activists under two coordinators, one internal auditor, one account assistant and one trainer. In Hyderabad there is one coordinator and 5 activists.

The Bangalore and Hyderabad projects are funded by Forut.

## Main Activities

- **Contacting potential groups:** project staff are approached by people who want to start self-help groups. The Project usually has a waiting list of around fifteen groups who want to start saving.
- **Organising groups:** APSA helps to organise the women into credit collectives of between fifteen to twenty members. APSA gives accounting training and financial management and savings advice, based on a training programme designed by Myrada.
- **Encouraging savings:** the women within the groups are encouraged to give a small amount of money to the group's savings. Initially women can take loans from the group with interest. After they have proved that the group is sustainable APSA assists them to make contact with a Nationalised Bank to set up a deposit account and take loans if necessary.
- **Visiting the groups regularly:** In Bangalore staff visit the groups once a week. In Hyderabad, due to a lower number of staff they visit once a month.
- **Internal auditing** of all groups is conducted every year in Bangalore.
- **Encouraging income generation activities:** APSA encourages the women to invest the money taken on credit in productive enterprises rather than just using the money to pay off existing loans. SHG projects in Bangalore and Hyderabad have organised the establishment of tailoring training centres for SHG members and the wider community.
- **Sharing best practices:** trainings are given to other NGOs on the concept of self-help groups and accounting systems.
- **Facilitating participation in government schemes.** In Hyderabad APSA has helped self-help groups form and borrow under the DWACUA<sup>4</sup> scheme of the Government of India.
- **Federating:** in Bangalore 10 SHG 'Federations' have been formed of around forty groups to discuss their overall financial health and wider social issues.
- **Inputs are given on a wide range of social issues** and the women are encouraged to act on issues collectively through the groups. Child labour has been successfully reduced in many areas in which there are groups.

---

<sup>4</sup> "Development of Women and Children in Urban Areas" (DWACUA), a government welfare scheme

## Strengths

- Excellent financial record, both in amount of money mobilised from banks and repayment record. This was confirmed by the Bank staff that we met.
- A coherent ideology appears to have been developed throughout the years that the project has been working, making APSA's stance clear: in the past, they have seen microfinance institutions as a temporary stopgap measure to prove to the conventional and conservative nationalised banking system that the poor are credible, bankable, creditworthy sources. As this has been proved repeatedly, they now feel that the poor should be able to receive credit from the same mainstream sources as every body else. Therefore they do not lend money themselves nor do they encourage groups to take loans from microfinance institutions.
- Encouragement of strong networking between the groups which has resulted in significant numbers of SHG members attending demonstrations against water privatisation, land clearances and child labour.
- The project works in many slums in Bangalore and Hyderabad, which means they have to deal with a wide range of languages, cultures, castes and religions. APSA works successfully in Kannada, Tamil, Hindi and Telugu speaking slums and in Hindu, Muslim or Christian areas. However at the same time that they respect the identity of each community, they work to address power differentials within the communities. In many communities in which APSA has worked for a long time for example, one of the most obvious outcomes is the status of women as decision-makers in the community.
- Members of older groups said that in the event that APSA could not keep coming they would be able to function without them.

## Challenges

- The wider political context is making it more difficult for self-help groups to take loans from nationalised banks. National legislation enabling the creation of more MFIs combined with the reluctance of some National Bank managers to give time to the self-help groups is making it far more difficult for the groups to take loans from reliable sources at affordable rates of interest.

- The recent profusion of MFIs has meant that there are many more sources from which women can take loans as often they can take loans without showing proof of assets. This has led to many women either leaving the SHGs or using their money from the groups to pay off the interest they owe the MFIs.
- Staff have expressed the difficulties of the lack of institutionalisation of giving loans to SHGs in national banks. This often means that the accessibility of the bank is dependent on the views of the individual bank manager, with the consequence that often SHGs are turned away without discussion.

### **Recommendations**

- Extensive and intensive documentation of the APSA SHG projects (Hyderabad and Bangalore) and dissemination of the many achievements and methods used. In addition a comprehensive research study on the reasons for the success of the project would be a valuable learning tool for other NGOs and a powerful advocacy tool.
- Consolidation rather than expansion in the next two/three years. We recommend that APSA further de-link from groups that can be self-sustaining and offer services on a consulting basis. Demand for APSA's services is high but while the quality of work currently appears to be of sufficient depth we recommend that only after a group is de-linked is a new group taken on.
- Comparative analysis of the federating processes in Bangalore and Hyderabad for inter-learning.
- APSA Hyderabad should recruit an internal auditor.
- External audit for all groups (not merely for financial probity but for analysis, advice and strategic planning).
- Time-use study to understand the range of responsibilities undertaken by SHG staff
- Seriously consider compensation and expenses levels especially for the first tier of staff, particularly in Hyderabad where salaries are below minimum wage standards. The new MFIs often offer double APSA staffs' current wages as a starting salary.
- Development of new monitoring indicators in the consolidation phase

*A turning point for the Self-Help Group Project and APSA as an organisation was in their relationship with a local microfinance institution. At the start of the project many loans were taken as they were easier to access than those from National Banks, which can be imposing and inaccessible institutions for the urban poor. A total of 212 groups were linked to the institution. Initially the plan was for groups to take one loan from the MFI to prove their credit-worthiness and build up assets that could then be used as leverage to take loans from banks. However when groups were looking to take the second loan the MFI decided that it should continue to be the creditor. APSA immediately questioned this as the MFI was charging 24% interest to the Banks' 9% average and they believed the poor should be able to take loans from the same institutions as the rest of society. This led to a severance of ties with the MFI and since then APSA has linked hundreds of groups of women to banks at affordable rates of interest.*

*APSA facilitated the first women to take a contract to act as car-park attendants for the Municipal Corporation of Hyderabad in 2002. They now have a secure job and are paid Rs 3000/month, quite an improvement from their previous situation as a group member explained: before APSA came we didn't even know how to take the bus. We were all housewives; our only paid work came through shifts as domestic workers, which paid Rs 150-200/month. APSA encouraged us to get together and form a self-help group. We started saving just one Rupee a day: we now have Rs 80000 in the bank! APSA encouraged us to apply for jobs but we were all illiterate and lacked confidence. They organised literacy classes for us and encouraged us to bid for the tender that had come up to maintain the nearby parking lots. The government had never tendered out to women before but APSA convinced them it was worth a try. The tender amount was 1 lakh – we were worried because it was such a large amount and if we got it we would be responsible for 500 cars everyday. Because APSA vouched for us the fee was waived. Usually to get a job like that you would have to bribe officials but because our requests had the APSA letterhead we didn't have to pay one Rupee! Now we read newspapers and we have the confidence to meet and negotiate with government officials. We've got to the stage now where we can do it all without APSA's help, that's how much they've done for us, and they've never asked for anything in return.'*

### Gender Issues Project – Hyderabad

To work specifically against the abuse suffered by women APSA started the Gender Issues Project in 2006. The project was an outgrowth of the SHG project in Hyderabad. Once certain SHGs had reached a certain degree of stability, it was found that several women acquired relatively significant financial wherewithal. This led to the increase of their stature within the family as well as within the community. Some of them developed leadership qualities, which were enhanced by inputs provided by APSA staff and access to leadership trainings. Such women began to be perceived as leaders within the community, mediating and negotiating in times of crisis (e.g., incidents of domestic violence, high-handedness by police officers in slums, harassment of domestic workers by employers, etc.). APSA saw this as an opportunity, and felt that institutionalising this change would give these women greater strength, and encourage more of their peers to undertake such work. Accordingly, the project encourages women to collectivise into committees and provides access to relevant legal NGOs and government provisions.

### Major Activities

- **Collectivising and creation of a community level grievance redressal mechanism:** APSA encourages the formation of women's committees in slums to serve as forums in which women can express their grievances and action can be planned.
- **Sensitisation:** about laws like the Vishakha guidelines and the Domestic Violence Act, so that women become aware of their entitlements, and take up issues like dowry harassment, sexual harassment at the workplace, domestic violence, provision of livelihood support in circumstances of abandonment.
- **Access to legal resources:** APSA facilitates access to free or highly subsidised legal services
- **Advocacy with authorities:** APSA assists slum communities to interact with police and other law enforcement officials so that they can advocate for themselves with less risk of harassment or exploitation
- **Assistance with strategy planning:** When action is planned against erring employers or police, APSA assists with strategy planning.



- **Use of mediation and negotiation:** Creation of alternate dispute resolution mechanisms as compared to the earlier choices of tolerating injustice or being forced to go to the courts – a long, expensive and burdensome process.

### **Challenges**

- Persistent discrimination against women, questioning their rights as humans and their agency, within the community'
- Insufficient support from the authorities in the criminal justice system.

### **Recommendations**

- Network with women's rights organisations to conserve and obtain more resources and get greater support for advocacy measures.
- Document success of Asara committees in depth- this may be one of the few examples of a working grassroots level gender sensitive redressal mechanism that does not have its roots in feudal institutions like the panchayat, but is the outcome of a judicial ruling.
- Share learnings with Bangalore staff and encourage the creation of a similar project in Bangalore.

## **Disability Project – Bangalore**

The Disability Project evolved out of a partnership in 1998 between APSA, the NGO Mobility India and the United Nations' Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). As the disabled are among the most marginalised people within slums the APSA project aims to work with disabled people living in slums to help them realise their rights and live more empowered lives. Essentially this involves ensuring that disabled people are not excluded from life in their community and that they are able to access any specialised help that they may require.

The project was staffed by two people with disabilities and was very successful in reaching basic therapeutic services in a community setting to several slums, as well as linkages for corrective surgeries, obtaining orthotic appliances, etc. In 2002, the project was linked with Slum Outreach. Soon after, it began collaborating with Basic Needs India to provide an added focus on community mental health, in seven slums. This appears to have given a clearer direction, more impetus and, crucially, sufficient staff and more resources.

Presently the APSA project works in twenty slums with 89 men and 104 women who suffer from polio, speech and hearing defects, visual impairment, mental retardation, cerebral palsy, mental illness and other disabilities.

There are currently one coordinator and two community facilitators in the project. Staff have attended a number of training sessions on disabled and mental health issues and appropriate methods with which to address them.

The project is funded by FORUT and Basic Needs India.

### **Main Activities**

- **Sensitisation** programmes through video and audio presentations, wall paintings, workshops and street plays (with the Inchara project) to raise awareness amongst communities and schools on disabled issues and trying to break stigmas associated with disability

- **Organising Community Based Care**, including basic physiotherapy and community-based accommodations and referring people to the relevant care and treatment institution when required.
- **Advocacy** against the government's lack of provision for the disabled and lack of respect for their rights. Persuasion of the government to build disabled friendly toilets in slums.
- **Financial empowerment**: working with the SHG project to encourage disabled people to join SHGs and take up an income generation activity.

### **Strengths**

- Holistic, non-discriminatory, rights-based approach to disability issues gives a coherent framework for the project to work within.
- Networking with range of NGOs and relevant medical institutions.
- Focus on community based care helps to prevent further marginalisation of disabled from their communities.

### **Challenges**

- Attention given by government to concerns of the disabled is currently meagre. At present there is no civil service commissioner assigned for disabled rights and it is often an issue that is seen as better left to NGOs.
- Institutionalising the Disability Project further as an independent and important project within APSA, so it does not have to rely on the support of Basic Needs.

### **Recommendations**

- APSA management to play a greater leadership role in the project's development especially in identifying training resources for staff related to provision of community-based rehabilitation (CBR), provide guidance for expansion of community work, and undertake advocacy initiatives with the government.

## **Inchara - Bangalore**

The Inchara (Kannada for birdsong) Project was started in 1999 to add a cultural dimension to APSA's work to advocate on issues and from the belief that every child should be able to express herself through art or music. It has developed into a project of startling range and innovation, with activities encompassing painting, sculpture, music, theatre and dance that have been mainstreamed into APSA's work.

Until recently there was one coordinator and one activist, a former Kaushalya student, but the coordinator has recently left. The project is funded by Forut.

### **Main Activities**

- **Teaching** Dream School students art, sculpture and music
- **Advocacy:** Designing posters, street plays, wall paintings and other advocacy initiatives for issue-based campaigns APSA is involved in.
- **Presenting social issues** through culture to school children and communication around Bangalore
- **Providing avenues for the poor to showcase their artistic talents** such as organising a cultural festival for slum dwellers.
- **Sharing capacities:** Inchara staff act as resource persons for other organisations. After the Tsunami and the Gujarat riots the Inchara team went to the affected areas and conducted activities with children there.

### **Strengths**

- Innovative attitude means new ways to present and advocate for issues are found, such as the children's art exhibition on water privatisation.
- Staff members are very talented in a variety of cultural media and well-versed in APSA's principles.
- Children meaningfully participate in all its activities.

## Challenges

- As much of the project's success is down to the natural talents of its members it will be very difficult to replace them. One staff member has recently left and it has so far been difficult to replace him.

## Recommendations

- Work to replicate Inchara in Hyderabad.
- Work closely with the Media Centre to further showcase Inchara and APSA's work on the television and the internet.

*In 2004 APSA organised a cultural festival for slum dwellers in central Bangalore. One hundred and fifty people, many of who had not performed publicly before due to lack of opportunity, performed group dances, songs and music. The event gained substantial newspaper coverage and was mentioned as an empowering experience by many of the communities we met. During the festival a book containing children's songs and poetry collected by Inchara activists was launched by the Inspector of Police.*

## **Vikas**

The rich-poor divide has always been a stark one in India. While the massive public and private investments have led to the creation of a large middle-class, in recent years, the pressures on India to adopt free market capitalism have seen the widening of the gap again. Resources that were once seen as part of the commons are increasingly becoming out of bounds for the poor. The crisis in Indian agriculture, the most dramatic manifestation of which are the farmers' suicides, has led to large scale migration of the rural poor into the city which is ill-equipped to handle this influx. The government is less responsive to the needs of the poor than it is to the demands of big business for land and facilities. The situation is worsening as India's corporate public relations mechanism goes into overdrive, and the number of the dispossessed is increasing.

In this context, it is important that activism efforts focus not only on the poor, but also on the middle and elite sections of society. Since securing scarce resources for the poor will mean securing it from those sections of society which have traditionally had access to and tended to commandeer these resources, it is important to enlist the support of these sections, firstly, to prevent opposition, and secondly, so that the strength of the voices of this influential section can aid advocacy efforts.

Vikas is a project that addresses and seeks to lessen the barriers between the marginalized and the privileged sections of society. It seeks to "encourage meaningful interactions" between these sections of society.

### **Main activities:**

- **Arranging for brief seminars** followed by exposure visits to understand issues of the urban poor for students of elite colleges in the city.
- **Arranging for similar exposure visits** for employee of large corporations (e.g., Sasken, Levi Strauss, Hughes Software, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, etc.)
- **Conducting special sensitization seminars** to raise awareness on issues of topical interest like water privatization.
- **Assisting national and international volunteers** to find their feet in the context of working with issues of the urban poor and vulnerable children, and guiding them to provide meaningful contributions.
- **Organising media contacts** as and when necessary.

**Strengths:**

- Vikas plays a meaningful role in engaging civil society in issues related to the urban poor and vulnerable children in ways that go beyond mere donorship.
- As a result of exposure visits, many members of the upper and middle classes are able to set aside many of their prejudices about “poor people” and “slum dwellers” and begin to see a more complex reality. Instead of assuming that it is laziness and lack of drive that keeps people poor, they are able to begin to analyse the systemic and structural factors and processes that tend to perpetuate patterns of poverty.
- Post the Vikas intervention, some are able to think of very meaningful ways to make ongoing contributions – one woman donated her skills as a physiotherapist for a year to the disability CBR project, another provides classes in English conversational skills, several others contribute to APSA’s training centres and offer tutoring services to the children.

**Challenges:**

- Typically, the Vikas project is coordinated by a single staff member. Since there is a perception of Vikas as a “soft”/optional project as compared to some of the key service delivery projects like SHGs, senior management often shows a lack of commitment to quickly filling the vacancy when a Vikas staffer leaves. The position is currently vacant and has been for nearly five months. Prior to that, the position was vacant for over a year
- To arrange for exposure visits, the Vikas project has to rely on other field based projects like Slum Outreach and SHGs, which cuts into their service delivery time. Both in terms of time management and human resource deployment, some streamlining of arrangements for exposure visits needs to occur.
- Very often after the exposure visits, participants are very enthusiastic and wish to think of meaningful ways to contribute. However, handholding volunteers as they support the communities or the organizations is a skilled and time-consuming job, and Vikas usually does not have the wherewithal to handle this.

**Recommendations:**

- The APSA management should begin to see Vikas as a more valuable project than it currently does, and show the change in perception by employing staff as soon as the need arises, and also, possibly increasing the number of staff on the project to two.
- The Vikas project could be seen as part of a larger advocacy unit within APSA.
- The Vikas project should proactively come up with a “shelf of works” – of possible projects (with an analysis of skills required) which potential volunteers could engage in when they are identified.
- Human resources should be found, and the Vikas project should be replicated in Hyderabad in a planned fashion.



## **Media Centre - Bangalore**

APSA inaugurated the media centre in 2006 to advocate on issues using a range of media and to document APSA's work. In addition it facilitates the training of youths and staff in various media.

The project currently has one staff member and is funded by Forut, with infrastructure provided by Adobe, YouthReach and a private individual.

### **Main Activities**

- **Producing media outputs** dealing with the issues APSA works on. So far documentaries have been made on child labour, public-private land sharing, bonded labour and radio programmes have been made on various child rights issues.
- **Training youths** in photography and documentary making through workshops and courses.
- **Networking** with the press

### **Strengths**

- Excellent infrastructure: the media centre has a top of the range video camera and other high quality electronic goods enabling APSA to produce professional quality outputs.
- Range of APSA's work and experience gives the centre a wealth of material for outputs

### **Challenges**

- Disseminating the media centre's outputs into the mainstream press without losing their integrity may be difficult given the short, over-simplified pastiches of social issues that currently dominate.

### **Recommendations**

- Media Centre should be further mainstreamed into APSA's work and become more of a resource centre that is used by APSA staff in their work, rather than being seen as a separate project 'doing its own thing'.

## Chapter 4

### Learnings from the Evaluation:

#### Strengths, Strategies, Challenges and Needs in APSA

The previous chapter presented brief overviews and assessments of the various programmatic and project related activities undertaken by APSA. In addition, during the course of gathering information about programme and project activities and service delivery, the evaluators were simultaneously gathering information related to the strengths, strategies, challenges and needs of APSA as an organization. These insights are presented in this chapter.

#### **Strengths: Conceptual and Functional Base**

- ♦ **Belief in people's capacity to change their life situations themselves.** From the beginning, APSA has had a strong faith in the abilities and energies of the people it works with, and their desire to improve the quality of their lives. It has seen itself in the role of a facilitating organisation, conscientising and giving rights-related education, providing relevant information and knowledge about procedures to access benefits and services from multiple service providers, both government and private; creating linkages and liaisons to make service delivery happen, and only venturing into service delivery itself when there was a significant gap, as it did about fifteen years ago, when it discovered that there was a shortage of safe, empowering spaces for street children and started Nammane, or addressed the lack of vocational training institutes which would be receptive to and sensitive to the backgrounds of children who were vulnerable in many ways to create Kaushalya. But even these spaces and projects were designed to make users not dependent, or even independent, but active facilitators of change in their own communities.
- ♦ **Belief in and commitment to APSA's philosophies throughout the organisation.** APSA has certain core philosophies (be with the people in poverty, and pay attention to marginalised sections within this group – women, children and urban homeless – and reach them their rights and basic services for them to live in dignity). These philosophies are shared throughout the organisation and can be articulated by every one in the organisation, down to the cooks and bus drivers. All staff are committed to these philosophies.

- ◆ **Clarity of vision, mission and goals to all stakeholders.** An associated point is that there is clarity of the mission, vision and goals of the organisation not only among the staff, but among all the associated stakeholders, including the communities APSA works with, and government, non-government and business agencies with which it liaises.
- ◆ **Working with sensitivity and flexibility.** Over the years, the organisation has worked with sensitivity and flexibility to respond to the emerging and changing needs of communities in poverty. E.g. it started Nammam in response to the lack of safe sleeping spaces for street children, it started alternative education programmes when the complex backgrounds of the children it worked with made it difficult for them to fit into mainstream schools, it started working with the urban homeless when more and more of the assetless rural poor started migrating into the city and were forced to live in appalling conditions because of the lack of infrastructure and responsive government agencies, it started working with community based rehabilitation of people with mental illness when the needs of this unserved population was brought the organisation's notice.
- ◆ **Using an integrated approach to meet the needs of the urban poor.** Associated with the previous point, APSA is one of very few organisations that employ an integrated approach to address the needs of the urban poor – from land and housing rights to civic rights and basic amenities to support of vulnerable children, women, people with disability and mental illness to capacity building of and advocacy with government agencies. Most organisations prefer to work in niche segments, or avoid particularly difficult issues to work with such as land and housing rights and the needs of the urban homeless. Many of APSA's projects could be an NGO by themselves. This diversity could have led to a 'jack of all trades master of none' scenario but it works due to the assimilation of the core philosophies described above.
- ◆ **Acknowledgement of APSA's contributions.** The evaluators received repeated testimony that constituencies with which APSA works (children, women in the community, representatives of Community Based Organisations, women's workers collectives) acknowledge and appreciate APSA's contribution as a critical causal factor in the improvement of the quality of their lives.

*When APSA first came to my locality and spoke to my husband, I stood behind him, and peered at Ramesh [APSA activist] from behind his back. I rarely came out of my house, and did not know how to go anywhere. I did not know how to use the city's transport system, or how anything worked. Then my husband died, and things were really difficult. I could not raise even one rupee as credit. Then I became part of an SHG that APSA started. APSA asked the Municipal Corporation to give us a contract to clean the streets and helped us get loans to buy trucks to lift and transport garbage. Today I earn Rs. 2750 per month. I am the leader of the group. APSA has helped the people of our locality, all of us in the group to get water connections. We have gas stoves now, mixers and washing machines. See, I have a mobile phone. All the women in our group now contribute Rs. 50 each as pensions for 15 elderly people in our locality. From having to beg for one rupee, I can now raise 10,000 rupees as credit immediately in my locality just on the strength of my word. And all this change has happened because of APSA, because of people like Ramesh and Shivarani.*

- Venkatamma, leader, DWACUA sanitation group, Koti, Hyderabad.

- ◆ **Recognised as one of THE key players in any discussion/matters related to the child rights in the state.** Representatives of the government, multilateral agencies like UNICEF, as well as other respected human rights organisations in the state acknowledged APSA's importance as a key player in issues related to child rights in the state. "There cannot be any significant discussion or decision about child rights in this state without APSA being invited to share its views," said Mr. Mathew Philip, Executive Director, South India Cell for Human Rights Evaluation and Monitoring (SICHREM).
- ◆ **Tremendous credibility and networking skills.** Government officials, and representatives of other NGOs, multilateral agencies, as well as other funders like Action Aid acknowledged that over the years, APSA has developed tremendous credibility on account of the quality of its work in the field as well as the services offered through its institutions. It is also an able and willing collaborator on projects of common interest. Because of this, APSA is able to network with a number of agencies and garner support for its community and broader-based advocacy work.
- ◆ **Effective advocacy campaign partner.** APSA has developed the strengths and credibility to undertake and be part of important advocacy campaigns. In Bangalore, during its two year period as State Convenor of the Campaign Against Child

Karnataka, it undertook the leadership for a campaign which resulted in 60 villages being declared child labour free and APSA receiving the Makkala Mitra (Children's Friend) Award from the Ministry of Labour, Government of Karnataka. APSA provided both staffing strength and community support for the Campaign Against Water Privatisation, using among other standard strategies, creative strategies like using school children's art to create awareness about the implications of water privatisation for the urban poor and spur interest in the need for a debate on the issue. In Hyderabad, APSA is the state convenor of the National Alliance of People's Movements.

- ◆ **Recognition of APSA's integrity by the government and the community.** APSA is recognized as an honest champion of the rights and causes of the urban poor by both the community and the government. Hence the community is confident about associating APSA in its negotiations with government departments. Likewise, the government looks upon APSA as a guarantor to follow up on community agreements (e.g., in negotiations related to land rights, repayment of land related loans, etc.). At the same time, the government is also aware that APSA will be uncompromising on any issues related to the rights of marginalized people. "They quarrel with us sometimes," said one senior government official, referring to APSA. "But usually that is when we don't follow up after they have given us information. That kind of quarrel with the government is a good thing."
- ◆ **Awareness of the space within which APSA can and should work.** APSA, in its work, is careful not to undermine the rights and responsibilities of the communities and the governments that it works with. There is an increasing tendency in the Indian government to call on NGOs and voluntary organizations to take on many of its development service delivery options. APSA is clear that scaling up of any service delivery option in India to proportions that can make a difference to significant numbers of marginalised populations is only possible through the government. It therefore invests its time and innovative energy to develop models, and then to advocate for their use by government, assisting with training and facilitation to help this happen. Likewise, since any sustainable change must come from within, APSA works to empower communities to work to obtain their rights, instead of undertaking all the work itself. Consequently, instead of building dependency, the process strengthens the community and develops leaders within it who can take up further responsibilities.

- ♦ **Paying consistent attention to the quantity, quality and depth dimensions of the work.** This is another strength observed in APSA. An example is seen in the Child Labour Project, where quantity is attended to by encouraging early enrolment of children in preschools and play schools, assisting with enrolment of children in regular schools at age 5, carrying out education campaigns in communities, undertaking re-enrolment of school dropouts, rescuing children from labouring situations, etc. Quality is attended to by tracking school attendance, maintaining good relationships with school teachers and principals, assisting families with schooling support, taking legal action against employers, providing emotional and counselling support to children traumatized by employers and labouring conditions, etc. Depth is addressed by the combination of activities aimed at prevention, rescue, rehabilitation and advocacy.
- ♦ **A persistent willingness to challenge accepted norms within all spheres in which they work.** This is true of APSA's work with the government, communities, NGOs and donors. For example, using children in police trainings was pioneered by APSA in Karnataka. At a time when NGOs were comfortable with working with slums, because they were at least settled communities, APSA moved into working with the urban homeless, working with families to get them identification documents and encouraging to access healthcare. With no prior experience in providing health services or trained personnel, when it obtained an opportunity, APSA was willing to train itself and work with the issue of providing community support for the mentally ill and their caregivers. When the ILO approached APSA with quite a bit of funding for its training programme, but insisted that APSA reduce the training period to three months, APSA chose to forego the funding rather than deny the young people the chance to acquire the soft skills and additional components which would provide them not only with the ability to earn a livelihood, but acquire the life skills to get a good quality of life.
- ♦ **Imagining spaces for transformative change where none exist, conceptualise those spaces, and then act to create them.** Throughout its history, the Municipal Corporation of Hyderabad had got the city's streets cleaned either using its own employees, or by outsourcing the work to private contractors, who tendered bids to the government for this. APSA felt that groups of illiterate women could undertake this work successfully if provided support. They persuaded a reluctant Commissioner to take a risk and give the idea a try and lobbied with him to get the government to

waive the tender amount of Rs. 1,00,000 payable every six months which would have been too steep for these women to pay. APSA lobbied further with banks to assist the women with loans to buy lorries to transport the garbage. APSA activists supported the women, who were illiterate, with all the necessary paperwork (Later, they organised adult literacy classes for them. Today, 14 groups of 15 women each are engaged in this work, they own seven lorries, and are paid directly by the Municipal Corporation, having completely eliminated the middlemen. These women are perceived as leaders in their community, and have significantly improved the quality of their own and their family's lives. Many of their children are now attending college.

- ◆ **Participatory planning.** Strategic and implementation plans for the different projects and almost all organizational decisions are made in a participatory fashion, with the joint involvement of senior management, staff and other appropriate stakeholders. Since all projects are discussed at the weekly and monthly meetings, adjustments to plans are also decided in a participatory fashion.
- ◆ **Receptiveness to new ideas and skills and excellent internal learning.** APSA retains a humility about the need to stay receptive to new ideas and acquire more skills. Internal learning levels are excellent. Almost every staff member, current or formerly employed at APSA, when asked what he or she liked best about working in the organisation, said that s/he had there was continuous learning as a result of working in the organisation. The organisation has, in the past three years, added on at least four areas of work which require specialised skills – sexual health, community-based rehabilitation of people with mental illness, life skills education for young people and early childhood education. In addition, it has begun working actively in campaign mode against issues such as public-private land sharing and the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission, which has required the acquisition of both new knowledge and skills. After the Chief-Minister of Karnataka talked about land sharing in a speech for example, APSA staff travelled to Mumbai (where it had already been implemented), interviewed people involved in and affected by the policy and made a documentary to be shown in targeted slums in Bangalore.
- ◆ **Good training opportunities offered consistently in Bangalore.** At APSA Bangalore, staff consistently receive opportunities to improve their skills and levels of knowledge, on-site. However, this is less true of APSA Hyderabad, which must rely



on training offered during the joint sessions of the two offices every quarter, or on training opportunities that may arise ad hoc in their region.

- ◆ **Willingness to 'let go' of 'seasoned' communities.** Some NGOs have a tendency to cling to their constituencies, creating situations of dependency, since their survival depends on them. APSA shows a healthy tendency to expect communities to assume more and more responsibilities for themselves as they acquire experience and skills. This is true of the CBOs, stable self-help groups, young people who have passed out of Nammam and Kaushalya, and young women who "graduate" from the Navajeevana Nilaya intervention.
- ◆ **Securing diversified funding.** The organisation has been successful in securing funding from several sources: both individual and corporate local donors, local and overseas foundations, bilateral agencies and multilateral agencies. According to one of APSA's donors, who has funded many programmes, "It's not enough to note that APSA is getting funds from multiple agencies. The question is why does this happen? It happens because people are impressed by the work APSA is doing and wants to be associated with it." She went on to elaborate that APSA's coherent philosophy, ability to strategise for effective outcomes and credibility were responsible for the donor confidence in APSA.
- ◆ **Hyderabad is particularly strong in raising local resources.** It is important to give particular credit to APSA Hyderabad for its exceptional success in raising local resources from government, corporate and local donors. The bulk of the training that is offered through APSA Hyderabad, as well as most of its school support and educational scholarships, is raised from local donors, by local activists, with almost no support from senior management or the board.
- ◆ **APSA's work is environmentally sustainable.** Although APSA does not have any projects that explicitly reference the environmental issues of the day such as climate change, much of their work encourages practices that are environmentally sustainable. This can be seen in their work on issues such as land and water. However while they are not damaging the environment an advocacy area for the future may well be the environmental degradations that the development paths of Bangalore and Hyderabad – and that of India as a whole – are causing. APSA's work on land for example would be well complemented by a focus the unsustainability of urban sprawl and the resource depletion that follows (which is felt most severely by the poor).

### **Strengths: Strategies**

- ◆ **Strategies are planned and aligned with vision, stance on issues, and goals.**

Strategies to address issues or deliver services are regularly planned for five year, annual, half-yearly, quarterly, monthly and weekly periods. These plans are first made at the level of the individual project, pragmatically articulated to the entire organisational community during meetings, with every project having the right to seek clarification or challenge assumptions, strategies or goals. This process of internal dialogue ensures that strategies tend to be consistent with the organisation's vision, stances and goals.

- ◆ **Inputs of constituencies significantly contribute to the design of projects and strategies.**

Strategies for community development are designed in consultation with community-based organisations, women's and youth organisations, or in consultation with individual beneficiaries as applicable. The shelter homes, Nammane, Navajeevana Nilaya and the new small group care home are all run with extensive child participation. Regular children's and youth meetings are held at Dream School and Kaushalya. Alumni of Kaushalya return to provide feedback at regular intervals to offer suggestions from the industry on how curriculum for training should be upgraded.

- ◆ **Recruiting staff from constituencies worked with.**

APSA draws most of its staff not from the pool of trained manpower in social work, many of whom come from middle-class communities, but from the constituencies it works with. Thus it recruits actively from slum communities in Hyderabad and Bangalore, and to a lesser extent from young people who have received APSA interventions themselves. Even when these new staff may not have the requisite skills when they join, if the management feels that they have potential, they are recruited and provided with extensive in-service, on the job training and the benefits of working with experienced supervisors. APSA had found over the years that this group constitutes a committed and loyal talent pool. Staff tend to see themselves not merely as employees but as change agents in communities, and share a commitment to APSA's vision, not merely as members of the organisation but as people who have felt the negative consequences of marginalisation themselves. When trained staff with a Masters of Social Work degree (MSW) are recruited, they usually stay with the organisation for a couple of years to acquire grassroots level experience for a brief while before moving on to

more lucrative opportunities. Thus, this strategy has been the product of both compulsion as well as effective practice.

◆ **Working at the micro and macro levels to meet the needs of the urban poor.**

APSA uses a mix of strategies, working at the macro and micro levels to meet the needs of the constituencies it works with. It provides rescue and rehabilitation support for vulnerable children through Childline and Nammane, but also works at the macrolevel to advocate for better policies, e.g., APSA was a significant contributor to the state's action plan for the elimination of child labour. It empowers communities with information, procedural knowledge and handholding support to secure land rights and housing, and also opposes anti-poor components of policies like the JNNURM. It works to provide educational opportunities for children from at-risk and non-traditional backgrounds, and also opposes short-sighted policies of the government like the proposal to introduce flexi-schools for child labourers.

◆ **Encouraging and organising collectivisation.** Recognising the strength in collectives, one of APSA's major strategies is to encourage collectivisation at multiple levels. Different kinds of collectives are built, including SHGs, CBOs, youth organisations, collectives of former child labourers, child rights clubs, community complaint and mediation cells, women's federations, etc. Even early on in APSA's history, APSA contributed to the creation of collectives like the AP Iron and Steel Workers Union and the Twin Cities Slum Dwellers Federation, and this strategy has consistently served its goals well.

◆ **Providing relevant information.** Early in APSA's history, the organisation realised that lack of access to timely and relevant information was one of the major causes for exploitation of people in poverty. Thus, one of APSA's major strategies is that of conscientisation, of providing people with tools to understand the bases and strategies of their own oppression so that they might begin to counter them.

*When APSA began its work in Hamal Basti in 1978, it discovered that most of the male residents of the slum worked as hamaalis, skilled manual labourers responsible for loading and unloading iron and steel bars and rods at the Secunderabad Railway Station. Workers were paid appallingly low wages, were given no slippers or gloves to handle the goods in the extremely hot conditions in Hyderabad which caused their hands to blister, and no worker's compensation was provided in the event of injury. However, workers were reluctant to stand up to the labour contractor, since they*

viewed him as their annadaata (giver of food). APSA wrote to the two major companies, TISCO and IISCO, which sent the iron and steel to be unloaded, and secured the rates that were currently being paid for loading and unloading. When they shared this information with the hamaalis, they realised that they themselves were, in fact, annadaatas to the labour contractor, since he made such substantial profits from exploiting them. They then organised themselves into the AP Iron and Steel Workers Union and fought for, and secured, better working conditions.

Another relevant story from APSA's early history also has its roots in Hamal Basti. APSA discovered that a number of the residents of the slum were migrants from the arid Mahboobnagar district who had lost their land after they had been unable to pay the mortgages on them. When this story was repeated several times, representatives of APSA decided to visit the area for a fact-finding mission.

They discovered that most of the people in the villages were marginal farmers, producing one or two bullock-cart loads of peanuts every season, which they sold at the local market. The traders at the local market would artificially depress the prices of peanuts every year in for a week in the week following the harvest. Without storage space, or a history of taking their goods to other markets, and with the harvest festival and their families' expectations weighing on them, the farmers would sell their produce at whatever price they could get, pushing them further and further into a debt trap, finally losing their land and forcing them to migrate to the city to eke out a living selling unskilled manual labour.

APSA's intervention was simple. They found out the prices for the produce at the big city market in Hyderabad and shared this with the people. They then rented a house in the village, and persuaded farmers to store their produce there for a few weeks, giving them small interest-free loans to celebrate the harvest festival. When the farmers did not show up at the local market with their produce as usual after the harvest, the puzzled traders, for the first time in the history of the market, turned up at the villages, asking the farmers why they had not come to sell their produce. The farmers shared the prices prevailing in Hyderabad, and told the traders that while they did not, as individuals, have the wherewithal to truck the produce to the city

*market, as a collective, they could hire a vehicle. The traders agreed to pay the farmers a fair price, and the farmers learned strategies to take care of their interests.*

- **Support with negotiating red tape.** Often securing any benefit, assistance or right from the government involves negotiating a lot of red tape and several visits to the multiple government offices that may be involved. For many people who live in the slums, dealing with these procedures tends to be extremely difficult for many reasons. Often, when they go to government offices, they are not treated well or are given wrong or incomplete information because social exclusionary factors and issues of social capital come into play. If they are illiterate, there are many added levels of difficulty. To add to this, since many residents of slums are casual workers or daily wage labourers, taking a day off to go to a government office often implies that they lose a day's wages. To counter these difficulties, APSA offers extensive support to slum communities as they apply for land tenure, housing, water and electricity connections, identification documents, food security benefits or old age or disability pensions. APSA activists provide them with information about procedures, helps them source relevant forms, accompany them to the relevant offices, and advocate for them with officials.
- **Reaching benefits from the government system to people in poverty.** The state, central and local governments have a number of welfare schemes for different categories of people in need. However, these schemes are almost never widely publicised, even less so with the post-liberalisation government disinclined to see itself as a welfare provider. Hence, it is fairly rare even for middle-class communities to understand what benefits may apply, and people in poverty almost never get this information. APSA tries to find out what benefits and schemes are available and tries to reach them to the urban poor. The small APSA Hyderabad team is particularly effective with this aspect of the organisation's work.
- **Mutually supporting institutional and outreach strategies, and development service-delivery and participatory strategies.** APSA functions through complementary and mutually supporting institutional and outreach strategies. The outreach strategies help identify children and young people in need of educational support and training, assist with Back-to-School programmes, and work to strengthen families and communities so that children can be sustained in

school and supportive environments (*Slum Outreach, Urban Homeless, Child Labour, SHG, Disability* projects, etc.). The institutional strategies provide safe and supportive environments to support children in crisis (*Rakshitha and Nammam*), provide education for non-traditional learners (*Dream School*), provide vocational training for young people who have few options within the government and mainstream private service providers (*Kaushalya*), and assist older girls and young women to acquire skills and assets to lead more self-reliant and empowered lives (*Navajeevana Nilaya*). The Inchara project supports both the institutional and outreach projects.

APSA undertakes both development service delivery and facilitation, as well as encourages mass participation and lobbying for advocacy issues.

- **Being prepared to take a stand against the government in favour of people in poverty.** When the rights of people in poverty are compromised, APSA is willing to take a stand against the government, whether on issues like land rights, housing, laws and schemes that discriminate against people in poverty, or failure to protect the interests of particularly marginalized sections of society. APSA does this through several strategies, protests, campaigns, enlisting media support to put pressure on the government to take action, etc.
- **Being prepared to support and collaborate with the government in favour of people in poverty and marginalised sections.** At the same time APSA is also willing to collaborate with and support the government whenever these actions build capacity to support people in poverty better. Thus, instead of taking a constantly combative attitude with the government, APSA provides resources to government schools in Andhra Pradesh, collaborates with the Labour Department in Bangalore in raid and rescue operations to make them as child-friendly as possible, and assists the government with policy making (e.g., in consultations on the 11<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan).
- **Assistance with institutional capacity building of government institutions.** APSA has rendered considerable assistance to the institutional capacity building of government institutions. Both APSA staff and representatives from the children's collectives have offered training for police. Constant linkages and follow-ups to police stations through APSA Childline contributes to keeping the police force child friendly. APSA has offered significant resources and capacity building to the government run homes for children in need of care and protection

and in conflict with the law (e.g., through providing exposure to models followed in Nammam, inputs on child participation, parental involvement in the lives of children in institutional care, on life skills education, etc.) APSA has offered resources in kind as well as institutional support to the Child Welfare Committee. It has also modelled best practices in administering a child helpline with Childline India Foundation and the Ministry of Human Resource Development. APSA has also provided input to the Department of Labour on lacunae on the raid and rescue procedures that it employs, as a result of which these have been considerably improved.

- **Capacitates and supports individuals and institutions outside the APSA framework.** APSA is willing to assist and support individuals and institutions outside the APSA framework if they are working on similar issues and need support that APSA can provide. The Department of Labour was keen that APSA taken on a second NCLP project in addition to the one it was already running, but APSA was reluctant to do so. APSA supported another institution, which was less than three years old and hence ineligible to receive grants, to run the programme, sourcing the funding and providing technical support from APSA. Likewise, some funding for the Vikasana school which provides quality education to children in rural Bangalore is also sourced through APSA.
- **Doggedness and the willingness to stay for the long haul and see things through.** Much of APSA's work involves perseverance and staying power. The handling of the legal case of a single child may take several years. It may take months (and in some cases, years) to track down the parents of a child who does not remember clearly where she came from. The support of a community from prevention of demolition to establishment of land tenure rights to provision of housing to securing of loans to pay for the housing to actually being able to occupy the housing may take several years of relentless follow up with multiple government agencies, not to mention the communities themselves. When presented as an achievement, this may simply read: "Secured housing for 300 families in Havadigara slum", which does not reflect the years of toil and determination that lie behind the statement.
- **Willingness to collaborate with other organisations and individuals and draw on their strengths and resources, without compromising APSA's principles.** APSA is able to enlist support from a number of individuals and

organizations for its activities. The support may be of many kinds. A few examples are:

- networking support for advocacy purposes
- support to increase the range of residential support options for children
- support to place children in short-term foster care or (in rare cases) for adoption
- support to secure employment for young trainees from Kaushalya
- media support to highlight issues relevant to the urban poor
- support from organizations providing livelihood and entrepreneurial training for women in APSA facilitated SHG groups
- support for securing equipment for the training centres
- volunteer support to provide additional inputs (e.g., specialized training) to trainees and students, etc.

While APSA actively enlists such support and welcomes broader civil society participation in its work to assist the development of people in poverty, it does this without compromising itself. For instance, the CEO of a world-famous multinational company offered to raise substantial resources from the USA for APSA if the organization would put him on the board within two weeks (which was when his next trip to the US was scheduled). APSA politely refused.

- **Leadership styles of senior management are participatory.** The three directors of APSA are very accessible to staff and follow a participatory style of management. The walls of their offices are porous: staff and children drop in frequently and may often use the resources in their offices (computers, discussion spaces, etc.). Senior management sit in on all planning and feedback meetings, are friendly, and are supportive of learning and initiative on the part of staff. In discussion, the modes used are rational persuasion, apprising, consultation, exchange and collaboration. Staff are internally motivated and there is no need for pressure or personal appeals to get work done. Staff are convinced about the integrity, and technical, conceptual and interpersonal skills of the senior management.
- **APSA leadership is transformational.** Another strength of APSA is that it is guided by transformational leaders who are friendly but inspire and motivate followers. This is evident in the ability to:



- Articulate a clear and inspiring vision both for organizations and marginalized communities
- Assist with strategizing to attain the vision
- Act with optimism and confidence
- Demonstrate confidence in staff – a lot of opportunities for leadership and initiative are provided to the staff.
- Use dramatic, symbolic actions to emphasize key values (e.g., providing quality care and residential support to the 100 children from West Bengal rescued by the Labour Department from the jewellery industry when the other support organizations were floundering or barely coping, organizing the Inchara exhibition of art by street and working children, using children's art as a form of protest against water privatization.
- Lead by example and not be cowed down by personal attacks and accusations (Routinely, employers of child labourers raise accusations that the APSA management has asked for bribe money to suppress the case).
- Empower staff to achieve the vision.

### **Challenges for APSA**

- **Changes in the broad climate in working with people in poverty.** In the post-liberalisation era in India, and especially over the past five years in which there has been increasing visibility of multinationals in India, and Indian tycoons on the world business stage, and greater recognition of India's potential for global business interests, there has been a substantial change in the broad climate within which to work for the interests of people in poverty,
  - **While being careful about paying lip service as required, government is seen to be more and more reluctant to see itself as a welfare state.** Increasingly, the government is buying into the stance and terminology of large multilateral agencies like the World Bank and IMF, as well as large corporations, and sees itself as dealing with "clients", "consumers" and "users" who must pay user fees and charges for services, rather than with citizens with the right to be provided with basic amenities. This shift in perspective is especially detrimental for the very

poor, and makes the environment much more difficult for organizations like APSA to work in.

- **Government less responsive to and shows less concern for issues of the poor.** At the three levels of policy, allocation of resources, and implementation, the government is showing itself to be less sensitive and responsive to issues of the poor. The almost default trend towards coalition politics at both the central and state governments means that even very important issues for legislation almost never get the time and depth of debate that they deserve, as the exigencies of keeping or destabilizing the current group in power takes up most of the parliamentary time. The increasing criminalization of politics has led to a sharp decline in the calibre in the quality of legislators and ministers. In the past year alone, several legislators have come under scrutiny for accepting money to raise questions in Parliament on behalf of vested interests, a cabinet minister has been convicted of and jailed for murder, and fully half of the new cabinet installed in the state of Uttar Pradesh have criminal records, many for crimes like murder and rape. All this means that big business interests, or even sheer negligence and callousness, can lead to significant detriment to the interests of people in poverty. e.g., 72% of the tribals in Orissa live below the poverty line. Further, as alienation from their land was found to be a major cause for the marginalization of tribals, a law prohibits the sale of tribal land to non-tribals. However, many of these lands are extremely resource rich and are being greedily eyed by Indian and global corporations. Less than a month ago, the government created a loophole in the law to benefit business interests, permitting the mortgage of tribal land to banks, and in the event of bankruptcy, allowing lands to be auctioned to non-tribals as well.
- This general trend also affects the constituencies that APSA works with. For example, the Comprehensive Development Plan for Bangalore was prepared by the BDA and a French consortium without any inputs from the District Planning Committee or Metropolitan Planning Committee, representative bodies mandated for the purpose by the 74<sup>th</sup> amendment of the Constitution, and with no citizens' inputs at all. In this plan, the

areas occupied by the urban poor are termed “shadow areas”! During the formulation of the JNNURM, there was almost no public participation, but there was extensive lobbying by private enterprises including real estate pressure groups and confederations promoting privatized urban water and sanitation projects. This is combined with increased repression by the state machinery of any dissent. At the beginning of 2007 for example residents of a twenty-five years old, declared slum in the J.P. Nagar area in the south of Bangalore found out through a leak at the Karnataka Slum Clearance Board that their slum was about to be demolished by the state government to make way for an apartment complex. The two and a half thousand families that live there were to be moved beyond the city limits, in other words at least thirty kilometres from their present homes. They decided to march from their slum to the centre of the city to make their demands made to the government and the general public but when they reached the Town Hall they were *lathi*<sup>5</sup> charged by the police. Men, women and children were left badly beaten, bloodied and without a response from the government. Trends like these have created whole new areas for work and struggle by APSA.

- **Government wants to hand over many service delivery responsibilities to NGOs.** There also appears to be an increasing tendency on the part of government to hand over many service delivery responsibilities to NGOs. Suggestions about lacunae in delivery of development services often brings a response of “You do it. We will support you.” from government officials. While at some times it may be useful to work on a model system for a particular service, at other times it is important to refuse and exert pressure on the government to discharge its responsibilities. It is a challenge for APSA to make these judgement calls.

- ◆ **Traditional strategies of opposition to the government are becoming less effective.** Since the freedom movement, India has developed a tradition of various

---

<sup>5</sup> lathi – a long, thick cane used by the police as an instrument of crowd control. When police rush into a crowd, wielding these implements in order to control or intimidate a crowd, this action is called a lathi charge.

methods for peaceful civilian protest. However, in recent years, these strategies (signature campaigns, *dharnas*<sup>6</sup>, demonstrations) are becoming increasingly less effective as the government has grown comfortable with them. In some cities, efforts are being made to create designated protest spaces where citizens may protest without it affecting the tenor of the life of the city in any way. Hence, peaceful civil society organizations are finding many of their efforts at advocacy becoming less effective.

- ◆ **Greater and increasingly more sophisticated attempts at cooption.** In the current climate, there is also greater and increasingly sophisticated cooption of positive civil society strategies and movements by government, big business interests and relevant multilaterals against the interests of the urban poor. Methods like consultations with civil society organisations, biased surveys, and weighted community focus group discussions are often used to gain legitimacy for plans developed by government in collusion with corporate interests without inviting genuine public participation, commentary or debate.

*At the end of 2006, the government announced plans for the creation of a Greater Bangalore administrative entity. It appointed a committee to study the proposal. Almost all the members of the committee consisted of elderly, upper-caste and upper class men nominated by the government. There was no representation of women, Dalits, minorities, representatives of organizations of slum dwellers, or other marginalized groups on it. The Karnataka Urban Infrastructure Development Corporation organized a workshop at which civil society organisations were invited to give their comments on or objections to the creation of a Greater Bangalore. However, a week before the workshop, the KUIDFC called for a pre-workshop meeting at which it stated that the purpose of the meeting was to ensure that the workshop went off peacefully. Groups of civil society organizations were requested to make presentations about what they wanted on four topics, the topics being as broad as "Urban infrastructure and basic services". Civil society organisations protested that the current city corporation was unable to do even a reasonably competent job of providing basic services to the geographical area currently under its administration. To be meaningful, the discussion on any one of the basic services, like transportation, or solid waste management or water and sanitation, would need*

<sup>6</sup> Dharna – a means of peaceful public protest, usually a fast, sometimes combined with a protest march

*to take place over several days with multiple stakeholders. Civil society organisations challenged government officials, asking whether the whole process was a fait accompli or a genuine consultation to understand the extent of people's support for the proposal and their concerns and needs. Officials admitted that the Greater Bangalore administrative entity was going to be created regardless of people's wishes.*

After calling a consultation, government will frequently post on websites that it has consulted with various civil society organizations on its initiatives, implying that it has taken into account a broad range of views on issues, and made modifications as necessary. Some organizations in question may have opposed the government plans vehemently, but none of their objections will find mention. Thus cooption takes place. In such a situation, the working conditions for NGOs like APSA become very difficult. On the one hand, it must collaborate with the government to reach many government benefits to people in poverty. On the other, it has to guard against anti-poor policies and initiatives of the government and oppose them and not lend its credibility for their legitimization.

- ◆ **Dilemmas because of insufficient conceptual and attitudinal changes in the larger context.** APSA also suffers challenges from the fact that while it is deeply committed and works from a rights-based framework, India is a society in transition from deeply entrenched feudal and caste-defined systems in which there is both age-old inertia as well as active opposition obstructing the rights-based discourse from taking root. This often results in challenges for APSA.

*In the case of one child (who had been tortured and bitten by her employers), discussed in greater detail in the previous chapter, the child blossomed at APSA, resuming her education, taking part in plays and child rights meetings and becoming a passionate advocate for child rights in external for a during the long legal battle. In the denouement of the case, the child was in a situation of seeing her mother (who had been bought over by the employers) defending her employers in court, and betraying her. The betrayal was doubled when the court granted the mother the custody of the child even though she begged the judge to let her stay in APSA as going with her mother would mean going back to work. Though APSA continues to pursue the case, they have no idea where the child is now, and don't hold out much hope.*

*In another instance, when employers caught wind of the possibility that APSA, aided by police would be arriving to rescue a child working as a domestic help in an apartment, the employers sent her back to her home village in Andhra Pradesh. Further enquiries by APSA revealed that the child was now working at breaking stone by hand in stone quarries in the extreme weather conditions in AP. Such situations create dilemmas about whether it might not have been better to have left the child alone in the first place, since the domestic labour situation was probably far less demanding than breaking stone.*

At the same time, it is essential to continue working for rights that are universally acknowledged and have been ratified by the Indian government. This is a challenge.

- ◆ **Need for greater wariness about and investigation of potential partners.** As ideologies and initiatives that discriminate against people in poverty but are promoted as solutions to poverty become more widespread, a thorough investigation procedure becomes necessary before APSA accepts projects from potential partners. Recently, a water and sanitation specific financial institution tried to persuade APSA to disburse loans to its SHGs (repayable with significant interest) to get paid water connections. Since this is against APSA's stance that the government has a responsibility to provide basic amenities at subsidised rates to the urban poor, APSA had to refuse. Likewise, APSA came under pressure from a microfinance

institution it was partnering with to insist that the SHGs continue to take loans from them at 24% interest even after they had proved their credit worthiness and could now get loans from banks at 11% interest. APSA was forced to dissociate itself from the said microfinance organization.

- ◆ **Ensuring that consolidation keeps pace with growth.** In the past decade, APSA has grown enormously, adding to its institutional and outreach projects, reviving APSA Hyderabad to be a project comparable to the Bangalore project, and increasing the number of staff to over a hundred. Almost all this expansion has been driven by demand from the community. For example, currently, the APSA SHG project has requests from about 30 slum communities in Bangalore that SHG groups should be started in their areas. However, APSA also needs to pay attention to consolidation measures (e.g., ensuring staff welfare, maintaining organizational culture and values, devising multiple methods for diversified funding and financial sustainability, etc.) It is important that growth does not divert attention from the necessary organizational strengthening and reinforcing measures. Further, it is important that the pressures of growth do not detract from the quality of the work, and APSA will need to pay attention to this aspect during the consolidation phase.
- ◆ **Maintaining balanced funding for projects.** Like any other sector, the larger development sector too is affected by dominant trends or 'fashions'. While the 1980s and early 1990s saw donor placing a lot of emphasis on gender in India, from the mid-90s, strengthening panchayati raj and other local government bodies received a lot of attention. Today, a good chunk of the funding is claimed by HIV and AIDS related projects. For APSA, to keep a balance in the resources available to the different projects despite these fluctuations is a challenge. The struggle to secure rights for the urban poor is a continuing and increasingly difficult one, but one that is so far unfashionable except with those funding agencies like the World Bank, IMF and the ADB whose agendas have, over time, proven to be suspect. Hence, to keep a balance in the funding of projects is a challenge for APSA.
- ◆ **Maintaining balanced resources between APSA Bangalore and Hyderabad.** Currently, there is a significant imbalance between the funding of the APSA's offices in Bangalore and Hyderabad. To some extent, this imbalance is because of the costs of the institutional projects run in Bangalore. Further, the Bangalore office has tended to attract other donors and projects because of, among other things, the availability of some degree of project documentation support, which is lacking in

Hyderabad. Even taking into account all these factors, the Hyderabad office's share of Rs. 8 lakhs per annum out of the total kitty of Rs. 200 lakhs is a significant imbalance. In terms of human resources, there is also a marked imbalance between the Bangalore and Hyderabad offices. While the total number of staff in Hyderabad has gone up in the past two years, the addition of entry-level field activists and fairly low level service providers (e.g., helpers and caretakers for crèches) has largely accounted for this, and the major burden of carrying out the core activities continues to fall on about five personnel. This imbalance is especially noteworthy because, in terms of field projects, the Hyderabad office is able to show outcomes almost as strong as those of Bangalore. Further, the Hyderabad office has not allowed its lack of resources to hamper even the creation of institutional projects. While it does not have a fully equipped training centre like Kaushalya in Bangalore, it has set up several mini-training centres, using donated and rented premises and is providing training to almost as many children as in Kaushalya, and offering placement as well. Hence, it is certainly time to review the budget allocations for Bangalore and Hyderabad, identify pressing needs in Hyderabad, locate suitable funding sources and increase budget allocations so that the resource imbalance between Bangalore and Hyderabad can begin to be corrected.

- ◆ **Ensuring staff welfare.** Perhaps the biggest challenge for APSA is ensuring staff welfare. Bangalore and Hyderabad today are very different from the cities they were ten years ago, and are marked by increasing affluence and upward mobility for certain sections of the population, but rising costs for all sections of the population. The spiralling house rents alone are a sufficient indicator. Young people barely out of school, if they have good English speaking skills, can earn far more per month at an entry-level BPO<sup>7</sup> job than a skilled, knowledgeable and experienced APSA activist can after ten years of service. As this disparity is reflected in standards of living, it becomes very obvious to staff. While many staff work to secure housing for the urban poor, only a negligible number of them can afford to secure housing themselves, and most rent accommodation in slums or very lower-class neighbourhoods. At this point, there is enough self-motivation and opportunities for self-actualisation to still keep staff in APSA but ensuring adequate staff compensation and welfare is and seems likely to continue to be a challenge for

---

<sup>7</sup> BPO – Business Process Outsourcing company, often a call-centre company.



APSA, both financially, and in terms of integrity as it needs to walk its talk for the community with its own staff as well.

- ◆ **Organisation vulnerable to having staff poached.** The influx of funding for the HIV and AIDS pandemic, as well as the increasing number of corporate sponsored NGOs has changed the human resource market for NGOs. These programmes are usually able to pay staff much more than grassroots NGOs can. Also, many of these employers have a shorter-term, project-oriented focus, and therefore do not have many of the worries about financial sustainability that constrain NGOs like APSA who have to think long-term. This is a challenge, as APSA is vulnerable to having its staff poached by organizations that can afford to pay them much more (even double) their salaries at APSA. This further pushes up recruiting, induction, training and efficiency costs for APSA.
- ◆ **Taking on/refusing projects and maintaining relationships with stakeholders.** Because of its combination of skills, credibility and accountability, APSA is sought by multiple agencies to execute projects. Occasionally, these projects may not be a good ideological or programmatic fit for APSA. APSA then has the challenge of negotiating the taking on of the project and on what terms, especially if the stakeholders involved are very important for APSA's ongoing work, like the government or UNICEF.
- ◆ **Incorporating better awareness of gender and masculinities into APSA's work.** During the evaluation, multiple sources from within and outside APSA spoke about the extent and high quality of the internal learning within APSA, the steady acquisition of knowledge and skills necessary to do its work well. The one area in which a lacuna was detected, by a few members within and outside the organisation, is the comparative weakness in a sophisticated understanding of gender and masculinities issues and an ability to use these tools well. While the men in the organisation, and some of the women too, asserted that there were no gender imbalances. In the organisation (and to a great extent, the more obvious and obnoxious forms of this phenomenon are absent in APSA), the evaluators concur with those who have identified this deficiency.

While the overall strength of the women among the staff members is healthy, the number of women occupying leadership positions needs improvement. (Currently, less than a third of those attending coordinators meetings are women). With respect

to facilitation of and participation in meetings, men dominate, both in terms of number of utterances and airtime. When female staff members participate, the bulk of the participation is from those who have been in the organisation for many years and new female staff members rarely participate, and few measures are taken to actively involve them. There have been isolated instances of gender-related abuse among the staff, which have been handled by the management, if at all, in a wishy-washy way, rather than in a clear-cut way that would have sent out a strong message about the anti-discriminatory policy of the organisation.

At the level of field operations too, a better conceptual awareness and tools to mainstream gender and masculinities insights will strengthen APSA's work. Currently, empowerment of women is largely defined in economic terms, and is actualised through access to credit and improved livelihoods. A more layered analysis, of how men react to changed status of women in the home after the initial period is required, as is attention to economic and livelihood opportunities for men. There is a need to introduce gender and masculinities training for the children and young people at Nammam, Dream School, Kaushalya and the APSA Hyderabad training centres to address/prevent the gender related vulnerabilities that may arise currently or later when they leave APSA, especially as they play themselves out in vulnerable communities.

Again, it is important to distinguish between the Bangalore and Hyderabad offices with respect to this aspect to some extent. The Hyderabad office has started a Gender Issues project to deal with issues such as dowry harassment, domestic violence, sexual harassment at work, etc., in a positive and proactive way, using the guidelines of the Supreme Court to set up complaint cells.

### **Concerns and Needs**

- ◆ **Concerns related to governance and the Board in APSA.** APSA currently de facto has a four member board (one member lives abroad and does not regularly participate in board meetings). Of these, three members are the directors of the organisation, and the fourth is a close relative of the executive director. The one positive thing that can be said for this situation is that “the proof of the pudding is in the eating”, and so far, APSA has worked very well as an organisation in terms of

management and government. That said, it must be noted that the situation with respect to the Board is not in keeping with accepted standards of good governance. Specifically, the concerns of the evaluators are that:

- ◆ **There is lack of separation of the executive from the governing/advisory body,** and the directors perform executive, managerial and governance functions.
- ◆ **The board is small in size and does not include experts from relevant sectors.**  
In the very nature of its work, APSA challenges vested interests and those in authority, thus inviting backlashes to a greater or lesser degree, several times a year. To protect the organisation, as well as to proactively undertake public relations a board of eminent advisors would be helpful. Likewise, in spite of adequate financial management measures, the organisation needs to build a stronger financial base. A stronger board could assist more with fund-raising. Financial and legal experts, retired senior government officials and fund-raising experts would all be useful assets on APSA's board.
- ◆ **There are no representatives of the urban poor on the board.** This is a lacuna in an organisation that describes itself as partnering the urban poor.
- ◆ **Organisation's operations in Bangalore have the potential to be stretched too far/ Need for consolidation** The APSA operations in Bangalore have currently reached a size (with about 14 projects) and 91 staff, at which it is good for the organisation to begin to worry about quality and supervision issues. Also any further expansion, in the current financial state of APSA may put a greater financial strain on the organisation. Hence there is a need to focus on consolidation in Bangalore for at least three or four years.
- ◆ **Consolidation measures should address improvement and formalisation of governance and internal systems in both the Bangalore and Hyderabad offices.** This broad point is explained in greater detail in the points that follow.
- ◆ **No Human Resources staff.** For an organisation that currently employs over a hundred staff members, APSA employs no staff dedicated to Human Resource Management. "The moment I have twenty staff, I would feel the need to employ one person to look after staff concerns, which would otherwise take up too much of my time. For the next twenty, I would need another dedicated HR staff person. Without this, you cannot take care of staff welfare.," said one of APSA's collaborators, identifying the gap. The lack of dedicated staff also means that the smallest issues have to be handled by the directors, which is a waste of their time and skills. While

the standard crop of HR professionals churned out by local business schools are trained to think along corporate lines and may not be suitable for APSA, it is necessary to recruit staff who can advocate for the staff and also understand the realities of running an NGO.

- ◆ **Compensation woes.** While APSA is a fairly good paymaster compared to other grassroots NGOs in Bangalore, compensation (salaries and benefits) have not kept pace with the financial realities of living even a lower socio-economic class life in Bangalore and Hyderabad. At the same time APSA is functioning on this front in good faith (with some regrettable exceptions with respect to some staff in APSA's Hyderabad office who are markedly underpaid and whose compensation, the evaluators recommend, should be raised with as little delay as possible), and is largely constrained by financial factors. APSA needs to raise this issue with its major funders and a (potentially stronger) board and work out a set of solutions. A comparative analysis of relative increases in compensation between Bangalore and Hyderabad also needs to be done, as living standards in Hyderabad are not cheaper than those in Bangalore as used to be the case.
- ◆ **Need for a suitable (non-monetary) recognition and appreciation system.** In addition to compensation, it must also be acknowledged that a significant number of APSA's staff are self-directed, self-disciplined and motivated in their work by self-actualisation needs. A great deal of the work they perform must be perceived not only as work, but as stupendous feats (e.g., stopping demolitions of slums, and securing housing for the urban poor from an indifferent government). These extraordinary acts have been performed so many times, that there is a tendency among the management to see these as routine and commonplace. The evaluators feel that, based on the comments of many staff members about sometimes feeling unappreciated for their work, there is need for a good non-monetary recognition and appreciation system to be developed and put into place, and for this to be reviewed periodically so that this too, does not become routine.
- ◆ **Time lag in recruitment and filling up of positions.** This is a serious concern. A time lag of a few months is routine for replacement of staff who have left the organisation, and in some cases this extends to many months, years and in occasional cases (e.g., APSA's brief tryst with a formal HR system a few years ago), staff have not been replaced at all. While the multi-tasking abilities and willingness to be stretched of many APSA staff is acknowledged, as a management procedure it

is inadvisable to resort to burdening other staff with the duties of staff who have left except for the shortest possible period. Otherwise, it raises the question of whether there was a need for the additional staff member in the first place, or else clearly impacts programme implementation. APSA management acknowledges that financial constraints often lead to a deliberate time lag in recruitment, this is clearly not a healthy practice.

- ◆ **Need for office facilities for field staff at the base unit.** More than a decade after the establishment of APSA's complex of institutional buildings, APSA's field staff do not have a staff room. When they come to APSA on meeting days, they are forced to sit on the stairs and along walkways, and beg for use of computer time from institutional staff. This is unfortunate, as a great deal of APSA's credibility and prestige comes from its field programmes and the sense that the staff responsible do not have a space within the complex has already begun to create a sense of alienation. The evaluators would like to recommend the creation of a good staff room, with office facilities (working computers, water, toilet, etc.) for field staff in the Nammane complex. There is currently a proposal to allot a room in the new toilet complex being constructed as the staff room. The evaluators would like to stress the importance of symbolic actions in the continued well-being of an organisation, and caution that not allotting a room for over a decade, and then finally allotting one in the toilet complex would send out a strong negative message.
- ◆ **Need for creation of clear HR policies.** As part of the consolidation process, APSA needs a set of clear formal written HR policies, including policies related to gender mainstreaming, grievance and conflict resolution, sexual harassment, staff compensation, etc., and also, in the current context, HIV mainstreaming). Institutional mechanisms like complaint cells and review committees should also be set up to implement the policies, handle complaints related to violations, and determine punitive actions if any. Currently, handling all HR issues is not only a burden on the senior management and the general administration coordinator, the fact that they have to make all the tough decisions not only leads to letting things slide sometimes, but to their being cast as the villains of the piece when action is taken. Setting up good HR systems will relieve them of some of this burden, and introduce staff participation. Good worker training programmes should follow the creation of these policies for effective dissemination.

- ◆ **Grievance and conflict resolution mechanisms.** Related to this point, but repeated for emphasis, there is need to set of clearly defined grievance and conflict resolution and disciplinary procedures. Current methods are informal, and have the potential to be ad hoc, or to lack sufficient follow-up.
- ◆ **Maintaining the special camaraderie.** Both current and former staff of APSA highlight the special camaraderie and spirit of collegial and collaborative action that distinguish working at APSA for them. However, several staff have also mentioned that as the organisation grows, there has been a tendency for this bond to weaken. Hence it might be a task during the consolidation process to think of ways in which this may be maintained and strengthened.
- ◆ **Sustaining the unique and effective organisational culture.** From its inception, APSA has developed a unique organisational culture marked by learning, participation, a belief in rights and the need to support the aspirations of marginalised communities. The sustenance of this culture will need attention.
- ◆ **Inadequate documentation support and need for further dissemination of APSA's experience.** APSA currently has inadequate documentation support in Bangalore and almost no documentation support in Hyderabad. Much valuable information about APSA's achievements is getting lost because of this major deficiency, especially as this is information that could arguably be used for advocacy of the causes APSA espouses and for the replication of best practice by other organisations. The documentation of APSA's extensive knowledge of urban poor communities and the changing needs in the context of shifts and changes in policy in the last twenty-five years and the strategies that work and fail in different contexts would be a valuable addition to the development history of the urban poor in India. If APSA seriously considers expanding in the future, it should think of setting up a documentation, policy analysis and advocacy unit, hiring competent personnel, establishing procedures and designing products for advocacy and public relations, and developing a media strategy plan. This may require separate grants and fundraising.
- ◆ **Urgent need for a website.** As more and more of the world turns to the internet to source information about issues and organisations, APSA needs to treat the creation and regular updating of a website as an urgent priority.
- ◆ **Need to offer English communication skills training to coordinators and activists.** "Several of APSA's activists and coordinators have the skills and

experience to independently run NGOs themselves.” This was a comment from one of the external stakeholders. However, one aspect that handicaps several of APSA’s key staff is the lack of English communication skills. While many of them are excellent in the field, they lack the skills to communicate with funders, benefit from national level trainings and undertake advocacy outside the state. It would be an investment for the organisation to offer staff training in this area.

- ◆ **Need for good quality, consistent plans for in-service staff training in Hyderabad.** The APSA office in Hyderabad needs to develop planned in-service staff training like the Bangalore office offers.
- ◆ **Need to diversify funding further.** While APSA has diversified its resource base tremendously compared to ten years ago when FORUT was its only funder, it remains dependent on FORUT for core funding support to sustain a significant part of its activities, and particularly for institutional and administrative expenditure. For the sake of improved financial sustainability, it is important for APSA to seek out more sources of funding, including more local funders.
- ◆ **Field level monitoring of projects to be tightened.** Both internal and external stakeholders have suggested that senior management be involved a little more in field level monitoring of projects.

Finally, the evaluators would like to comment on an issue that does not relate to APSA as it is now, but does to some current thinking about possible ways for further evolution of APSA as an organisation.

- ◆ **Issues related to decentralisation.** In recent months, there has been an internal discussion, initiated by the senior management, concerning whether some of the most successful projects in APSA should hive off and become independent NGOs on their own, creating more of a mass base as they do so. (*note:* This is merely a proposal for internal discussion at this stage, and does not imply a plan. However, the evaluators sought opinions on the issue from a range of stakeholders and are now offering their learnings). The two primary reasons offered is that, (a) when all is said and done, APSA remains an NGO, and not a mass-based organisation and therefore its capacity to press for big changes is limited. (b) As the government seems to be more and more pro-free market capitalist and corporate-driven growth and less sensitive to the needs of the urban poor or the constitutional commitment to a welfare state, it might be necessary to take on a more confrontationist attitude to

the government. A mass-based organisation would be in a better position to undertake this than an NGO, which might provoke retaliation.

The evaluators would like to record their lack of agreement with the (discussion) proposal of decentralisation as conceptualized in the hiving off of successful projects like the Slum Outreach project and the SHG project. This is for three reasons: (a) The success of projects like the Slum Outreach project and the SHG project is largely responsible for APSA as an organisation having extensive grassroots contact and credibility. If these key projects are taken away, APSA would be depriving itself of one of its major sources of strength and one of the major reasons why it is approached by both the community as well as donors and the government. (b) Even stakeholders who are open to the idea of having the SHG and Slum Outreach projects become independent organisations of their own feel that, even after such a step, APSA should continue offering the services currently provided by these projects. However, with the key staff leaving the organisation, this would mean that the organisation would have to rebuild these two projects all over again, from scratch. This seems like a great waste of time, effort and resources. (c) Instead, APSA is already working through CBOs in all its community development issues, and it can strengthen these organisations to act more independently for larger advocacy issues. If it can facilitate the creation of fora at which groups of CBOs meet, and discuss contentious issues that threaten the rights of marginalised group and devise strategies for opposition, it can achieve the purpose it now desires without weakening the current structure of the organisation.

In conclusion, the evaluators feel that the evidence from the evaluation reveals that APSA is a very strong and exemplary organization, true to its values in undertaking meaningful and strategic activities to further its mission of supporting and empowering vulnerable urban poor communities, and children and young people in particular. Many of the challenges that APSA faces arises from the change in the development environment in India, which has moved away from a welfare-oriented mixed economy to the pressures of free market capitalism, which is often aided by collusive government officers. Needs are primarily related to necessity for consolidation-related measures at this stage, and to secure greater corpus and administration related funding, which can be used to improve areas such as documentation and staff welfare.



With specific reference to the issues listed in the terms of reference:

### **Efficiency**

A variety of external stakeholders commented on how much APSA was able to do with the money it receives. It runs all the above projects at a minimum of cost and is a very efficient organisation: there is little waste. However there are two caveats that must be noted here. The first is due to the concerns about staff compensation levels that we have expressed above and the second is due to the need to widen the financial base.

### **Effectiveness**

APSA's work has resulted in both specific and general positive change for the urban poor communities it works with in Bangalore and Hyderabad. This is largely thanks to the commitment and capacity of its staff, the innovations and appropriateness of its strategies and the coherency of its outlook and principles. Together they have enabled APSA to work with a broad spectrum of the urban poor and achieve an impressive amount of positive results.

### **Impact**

As we have documented above APSA's work has brought lasting, positive change to the lives of a large number, and a wide range, of people. In addition APSA has become a vocal and influential ideas and advocacy organisation in that it has influenced the debate on a wide range of issues, especially child rights. However this influence could be spread even further with greater documentation of their activities and more institutionalised links with media and publication agencies.

### **Relevance**

With India's economy growing at 9% and Bangalore and Hyderabad the darlings of multinational corporations one may have expected APSA's work to have less relevance than in the past. This is not the case as the impressive economic growth is happening at the expense of many of the communities APSA has been working with for the past twenty-five years. The urban poor are not currently enjoying the benefits of the growth

and indeed are suffering from it as their lives become more insecure as their homes are demolished and their old livelihoods are obviated. APSA's rights based work is in this context more relevant than ever as the rights of the poor are being violated with increasing frequency and force.

### **Sustainability**

APSA's work is in many respects a model of sustainability because of its attitude towards legitimate and practical agency and the importance it places on communities and individuals doing things by themselves. The greatest compliment we heard from many of the beneficiaries we interviewed was: 'we are grateful for what they have done and now, if they stopped coming tomorrow we would be alright.' The success of APSA's work lies in the absence of any organisational or individual ego in the relationship between the staff and the communities with which it works: the general acceptance that it is communities, not the organisation that will best address the problems facing them is the foundation stone of the sustainability of the organisation's work.

## Chapter 5

### APSA: Organisational Capacity Assessment

The previous chapter presented the insights from evidence gathered through document reviews, field visits, project presentations and interviews with multiple stakeholders related to the strengths, strategies, needs and challenges of APSA. In addition, through focus group discussions with APSA coordinators (about 25 in all, in Bangalore and Hyderabad) using the Discussion-Oriented Self Assessment Questionnaire, an attempt was made to assess every aspect of organizational capacity, from governance and management issues, through human resources, service delivery, financial management, external relations and sustainability. An overview of the insights gained are provided below.

Area	Assessment	Comments
<b>GOVERNANCE</b>		
<b>Board</b>	Needs significant attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Primarily (with one exception), the directors of the organisation double up as members of the board, leading to insufficient differentiation between the roles of governance and management.</li> <li>- Broader representation from leaders in relevant fields might be essential to create a board that is capable of overall policy direction and insight, fundraising, public relations, financial oversight and lobbying, and add to accountability and credibility.</li> <li>- Credibility would also improve by giving representatives of the urban</li> </ul>

		poor a place on the board.
<b>Mission/goal</b>	Excellent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- APSA has a clearly articulated mission and goals, with realistic strategies aligned with the mission and implementation plans designed in a participatory fashion by all relevant stakeholders</li> </ul>
<b>Legal status</b>	Compliant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- APSA is properly registered according to local regulations (according to the societies acts in Karnataka and AP) and benefits from the financial and legal status as permitted by law.</li> </ul>
<b>Stakeholders</b>	Very good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- APSA's stakeholders are well defined.</li> <li>- APSA recognises the community and other stakeholders as partners and relevant need assessments are integrated into the planning processes.</li> <li>- No representation of primary stakeholders on the board.</li> </ul>
<b>Leadership</b>	Excellent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Leadership style of senior management is complementary and participatory.</li> <li>- Leadership is accessible and responsible to stakeholders, and acts with optimism and confidence.</li> </ul>
<b>MANAGEMENT PRACTICES</b>		
<b>Organisational culture and structure</b>	Excellent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- APSA has a defined organisational structure with clear lines of authority and responsibility.</li> <li>- Management policies ensure that</li> </ul>

		<p>regular audits of organisational development take place, and assess congruence of mission and organisational culture.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All levels of staff participate in decision making and there are systems in place to ensure mutual accountability.</li> </ul>
<b>Planning</b>	Excellent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inputs from appropriate stakeholders go into planning</li> <li>- Implementation plans are based on a larger strategic plan</li> <li>- Plans are regularly updated and adjusted based on a periodic monitoring process.</li> <li>- Resources are planned for and allocated properly</li> </ul>
<b>Personnel</b>	Good, but needs more attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The strategic value of the human resources in APSA is recognized, but not always sufficiently acknowledged and appreciated in obvious ways.</li> <li>- The importance of integrating personnel practices as part of the strategic planning process needs further understanding. Recourse procedures need attention</li> </ul>
<b>Programme Development</b>	Excellent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Primary stakeholders and staff are involved in all aspects of programme development.</li> <li>- Monitoring, evaluation and reporting systems are used and feedback is used to make adjustments and modifications</li> </ul>

<b>Administrative procedures</b>	Good, but needs more attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- While many administrative procedures (especially related to procurement practices, stock management and financial management) exist, others, particularly related to human resource management need work.</li> <li>- Policies and manuals need to be developed and institutional mechanisms set in place</li> </ul>
<b>Risk Management</b>	Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Systems are in place to minimise organisational abuses.</li> <li>- Regular audit and stock taking takes place and recommendations made from time to time to improve management are implemented.</li> </ul>
<b>Information systems</b>	Needs attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Information systems are used for word processing and book keeping but stronger systems are required to collect, analyse and report data and information.</li> <li>- Secondary level processing of data in order to feed into improvement of systems, or for advocacy, needs work</li> </ul>
<b>Programme Reporting</b>	Needs attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- APSA maintains internal activity and evaluation reports and provides narrative and financial reports as required to funder.</li> <li>- Publishes and disseminates information on its work comparatively steadily in the local</li> </ul>

		language and less so in English
<b>HUMAN RESOURCES</b>		
<b>Human resources development</b>	Good, but needs some more work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- For the most part, there is a good match between staff responsibilities and skill requirements.</li> <li>- Most core skills required to perform job functions exist within APSA.</li> <li>- However, some key positions are not filled (counsellors, HR professionals) and for certain others, there are certain troubling aspects (e.g., housemothers are almost always drawn from women who have personal issues and need support).</li> <li>- A participatory and transparent staff appraisal system, based on performance, exists.</li> <li>- Staff training is provided in Bangalore based on capacity, needs and objectives, but a staff training plan needs to be developed for Hyderabad.</li> <li>- Tax and labour regulation requirements are generally respected.</li> <li>- Need for formalised HR policies and grievance and conflict procedures.</li> </ul>
<b>Diversity</b>	Good, but may benefit from more conscious	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fairly good diversity within APSA with respect to class, caste, religious and socio-economic</li> </ul>

	attention	<p>backgrounds.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- People with disabilities have found work as valued members in the organisation.</li> <li>- Gender mainstreaming work needs to happen.</li> <li>- Perhaps some work on developing internal learning inputs on how religious fundamentalism works in slum communities, and strategies to counter these may be timely now.</li> </ul>
<b>Work organisation</b>	Excellent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Staff meetings are held regularly.</li> <li>- Staff participates in management decisions.</li> <li>- Team work is encouraged and happens on a routine basis, work plans are shared across projects.</li> <li>- Communication is open and inter-hierarchical and shared freely among all staff members.</li> <li>- Staff members are encouraged to take initiative and be self-motivated.</li> </ul>
<b>FINANCIAL RESOURCES</b>		
<b>Accounting</b>	Good, but can do with some more support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Financial procedures and reporting systems are in place and function.</li> <li>- Account categories exist for separating project funds.</li> </ul>
<b>Budgeting</b>	Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Budgeting process is integrated into annual implementation plans, and developed in a participatory</li> </ul>



		<p>way.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Annual financial projections are made.</li> <li>- Annual budget is implemented and controlled on an ongoing basis.</li> </ul>
<b>Stock controls/ Audit</b>	Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Stock control systems exist and are followed.</li> <li>- Procurement systems are in place and used regularly.</li> <li>- Internal and external audits are conducted periodically.</li> <li>- Expenses are controlled by budget allocations.</li> <li>- Good procedures to release stock also need to be developed.</li> </ul>
<b>Financial Reporting</b>	Good, but can be refined further	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Annual financial reports are prepared by a registered firm of chartered accountants and submitted to registrar of societies as well as to donors.</li> <li>- It would be good if a fiscal committee of the board and financial management used these reports to assist in review and long-term planning.</li> </ul>
<b>Diversification of income base</b>	Good, but can be expanded further	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- APSA has multiple funders.</li> <li>- A limited cost recovery plan is in place through the production unit.</li> <li>- However, there is no dedicated unit or time allotted for fund-raising, and given that APSA has a very small core fund, this may need to be considered seriously.</li> </ul>

SERVICE DELIVERY		
<b>Sectoral expertise</b>	Excellent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- APSA has relevant sectoral expertise (working on child labour, care of vulnerable children, slum outreach, microfinance in urban settings, etc.) and its expertise is recognised by the full range of stakeholders.</li> <li>- The organization is capable of adapting programmes and service delivery to the evolving needs of stakeholders.</li> </ul>
<b>Stakeholder commitment/ ownership</b>	Very good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Programme priorities are based on actual need, services are defined in collaboration with stakeholders.</li> <li>- Programmes are efficient, adequate, cost-effective and timely.</li> </ul>
<b>Assessment</b>	Good, but can do with more attention in some sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collaborative development of indicators for each programme objective and results are disseminated as relevant.</li> <li>- In certain projects, like the Dream School, a system of learning standards needs to be developed (apart from merely "passing" from one grade to another). Baseline and impact evaluations must be undertaken to make adjustments to the programme.</li> <li>- Some kind of longitudinal tracking study of children who have</li> </ul>

		passed through the Nammane and Kaushalya interventions may be timely at this stage.
<b>Marketing and awareness building</b>	Good, but can do with more attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- APSA actively educates and builds awareness among primary and secondary stakeholders.</li> <li>- However, marketing and awareness building to the larger public, including development of a suitable plan for strategic use of the media, may be undertaken on a much more systematic and strategic basis.</li> </ul>
<b>EXTERNAL RELATIONS</b>		
<b>Stakeholder relations</b>	Excellent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- APSA is seen as credible and a valuable resource by stakeholders.</li> <li>- Its relationship with stakeholders is one of partnership for a common purpose.</li> </ul>
<b>Inter-NGO collaboration</b>	Very good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- APSA networks and shares resources with national and international NGOs.</li> <li>- It plays a key role in promoting coalitions and networks and participates in advocacy activities.</li> </ul>
<b>Government collaboration</b>	Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- APSA has contact with decision makers and is able to engage in dialogue with policy makers.</li> <li>- The government and APSA exchange resources.</li> <li>- APSA's inputs and</li> </ul>

		recommendations are sought and incorporated into the government's development plans (e.g., Child Labour Action Plan, 11 <sup>th</sup> five year plan, etc.)
<b>Funder collaboration</b>	Excellent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- APSA has a proven track record, has established its credibility and is invited by funders to contribute to discussions on sectoral issues.</li> <li>- It has diversified contacts within the funding community, is seen as a valuable resource and has opportunities to engage in open and frank dialogue with funders.</li> </ul>
<b>Public Relations</b>	Good, but can be improved further	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- APSA has a positive image among stakeholders, its goals and objectives are understood by stakeholders and information is disseminated about its activities in Kannada.</li> <li>- Better documentation in English and Telugu and wider dissemination among general public would be very useful for the organization.</li> </ul>
<b>Local resources</b>	Good, but can be improved further	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- APSA draws support from the local private sector and government agencies but projects still depend on continued support from external funders.</li> <li>- It has limited relations with the private sector for technical expertise and human resources, and more extensively for material</li> </ul>

		<p>resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It participates actively in community partnerships and has structures in place to facilitate working relations with civil society.</li> </ul>
<b>Media</b>	Fairly good, but needs more attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- APSA has contacts in the media which it uses when it wishes to inform the public about important issues</li> <li>- but does not have a comprehensive media strategy plan.</li> <li>- It has received positive media attention,</li> <li>- but needs to establish its stature so that it becomes a resource which the media consults regularly and reliably on relevant issues.</li> </ul>
<b>SUSTAINABILITY</b>		
<b>Programme/ benefit sustainability</b>	Very good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- APSA's programmes are being supported by those being served and there is a sense of ownership of benefits by the community.</li> <li>- It has developed systems for the continuation of its programme activities in accordance with changes in the community, and for continuation of the programme in the medium-term.</li> <li>- As relevant, phasing out strategies for beneficiaries have been devised.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It pays consistent attention to local level skills transfer.</li> </ul>
<b>Organizational sustainability</b>	Excellent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- APSA has a shared vision of its role in society.</li> <li>- It is a member of key NGO networks.</li> <li>- It shares information in a proactive manner.</li> <li>- It is participant in the dynamic development arena in India.</li> <li>- It has linkages with international NGOs, educational institutions, government entities, research institutes, parastatal, civic institutions and the private sector.</li> <li>- It has the capacity to review its structures in response to organizational development needs</li> <li>- It is aware of legislations affected the NGO sector</li> <li>- It contributes to the development of an enabling environment for the development of the NGO sector</li> </ul>
<b>Financial sustainability</b>	Fair, needs more strategic attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- APSA has the ability to access diversified resources to contribute to its activities.</li> <li>- Where appropriate (but occasionally), it builds subsidized fee for service mechanisms into service delivery</li> <li>- Local fund raising opportunities have been identified and used</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It has the capacity to develop proposals and seek funding</li> <li>- However, it needs a more systematic fundraising strategy and the capacity to implement this strategy, especially to improve core funding and develop a better corpus fund.</li> </ul>
<b>Resource base sustainability</b>	Fair, needs more strategic attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- APSA has funds for short-term expenses and has a limited medium-term funding plan.</li> <li>- It can prepare a multi-year programme budget but is still quite heavily dependent on a single funder, FORUT.</li> <li>- It is able to recover a percentage of core costs through locally generated resources and some income-generation activities.</li> <li>- It has identified and accesses local resources from government and the private sector.</li> <li>- Needs work on further strategic diversification of resource base.</li> </ul>

## **Chapter 6**

### **Summary of Major Recommendations**

Project specific and organizational recommendations have been provided, with the relevant contexts explained, in Chapters 3, 4 and 5. In summary, the primary recommendations that the evaluators would like to make include:

- ✓ Focus on consolidation, rather than expansion in APSA Bangalore for the next three to four years. Activities to be undertaken during the consolidation phase may include:
  - Identifying suitable candidates for the expansion of the Board including, possibly, representatives of the urban poor, legal and financial experts, retired senior government officials, persons with stature in the human rights activism arena, persons from the upper echelons of society with a proven track record of social commitment and ability to raise funds; inducting candidates; and getting them actively involved in suitable support services for the organization like fund raising and public relations.
  - Suitable modifications for various projects as required. While these have been pointed out in detail in Chapter 3, some examples are:
    - Employing counsellors and medical paraprofessionals in Nammane and hiring more houseparents.
    - Addressing space and facility issues for Nammane children and field staff
    - Introducing and implementing learning standards (literacy, numeracy and science and social science indicators) for students in Dream School.
    - Extensive consolidation and phasing out of support for mature groups in the SHG project, using the time saved to carry out research and documentation into this exemplary urban microfinance project, including its community building and credit plus dimensions.
    - Fairer financial and human resource allocation for APSA Hyderabad
    - Planned in-service training for APSA Hyderabad



- Suitable organizational development activities (discussed in greater detail in Chapters 4 and 5) including:
  - Undertaking more systematic fund raising activities to further diversify APSA's resource base
  - Use improved financial situation to address significant issues such as time lag in hiring key staff
  - Negotiate with FORUT for improved core funding, in particular for introducing suitable staff welfare measures
  - Creating an institution wide child and young people's safety policy.
  - Creation of suitable HR policies including those for gender mainstreaming and conflict resolution and put mechanisms in place for their conflict.
  - Provide additional tools and support for accounting procedures and compliance.
- Acquire a sharper and more focused understanding of concepts and tools related to gender and masculinities, and the challenges posed by communalism and religious fundamentalism, across projects and the organization.
- ✓ Building a strong documentation department, with representatives in Bangalore and Hyderabad, not only to record institutional history and project achievements, but to create a resource base of materials related to the urban poor. This may be further expanded to create a research, policy analysis and advocacy unit.

## Part II

### **Lessons learned from APSA**

#### **Valuable knowledge and experience for others**

Preben H. Lindøe

## Chapter 7

### Introduction

#### The scope of part two

The review and assessment of APSA presented in part one clearly shows many important perspectives of learning, both within the individual projects and in the organisation as such. In addition, comprehensive documentations and studies of some of the APSA projects can be valuable and powerful advocacy and learning tools for other NGOs.

The point of departure for part two is the formulation in ToR with the hypothesis that *APSA is a good example of a learning organisation, meaning an organisation being able to take learning experiences into new methods and approaches, and being capable of making quick adjustments.... We are interested to see if this hypothesis is correct, and if it is, to see how this experience and knowledge can be of use for other organisations and institutions working with similar issues as APSA. Furthermore, we hope that the analysis of APSA as a learning organisation will be useful for APSA staff, volunteers and leaders.*

The first part of the hypothesis of APSA, as a learning organisation is well documented and verified. The scope of part two is therefore to assess *how this experience and knowledge can be of use for other organisations and institutions working with similar issues as APSA.*

The method for transferring lessons learned in APSA to others is to assess and discuss three main areas of concern that may be highly relevant for stakeholders in urban areas:

- State policy on urban renewal
- Child labour
- Socio-economic improvement among women

## Chapter 8

### Transferring valuable knowledge and experience to others

The question of how other organisations or institutions may learn from APSA can be formulated in terms that are more general: How can valuable knowledge and experience be transferred across contextual barriers and borders? In order to answer this question, we need to clarify some presuppositions:

- (1) What is the contextual framework for APSA that may be relevant to others?
- (2) How can *specific experience* within APSA be transferred into *experience* that is more *general* that can be applicable for others?
- (3) What are the most relevant issues or lessons to be learned?

These questions raise methodological issues and challenges inherent in research and evaluation in general. This evaluation report is not the place for deeper methodological discussions; however, a short treatment of each point will be useful.

#### 1.1 The context and framework of APSA

The introduction chapter in part one has given a general description of the location of APSA in its socio-economic environment and the formation of APSA as a *rights based, pro-urban poor organisation with homeless and children as the main beneficiaries*. Its locations, in Bangalore and Hyderabad make the context of APSA's work of special interest since both are examples of fast growing cities in the blooming economy of India.<sup>8</sup>

The socio-economic context framing APSA is a part of the wider economic globalisation with its positive and negative outcomes.<sup>9</sup> Despite economic growth, a rapid increase in municipal revenue, and projects funded by external agents, there are growing disparities

---

<sup>8</sup> Friedman, Thomas L. (2006) *The World is Flat. The globalized world in the twenty-first century*. London: Penguin.

<sup>9</sup> Stiglitz, Joseph E. (2006) *Making Globalization Work*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

of service and infrastructure deficiencies.<sup>10</sup> One of the most striking negative outcomes is the unplanned and escalating growth of mega-cities creating pressure on planning capacity, land resources, infrastructure (energy, water, transportation, etc.), public services such as education, health care and access to and legal support of rights. Out of this melting pot, there are a number of people gaining better economic and social conditions for themselves. However, the other side of the coin is increased impoverishment among underprivileged poor and homeless. Among them women, youth and children are the most vulnerable.

## 1.2 General implications

The global context of the APSA programmes raises interesting questions regarding implications that can be addressed by different stakeholders among donors, authorities and the civil society with communities of Non Governmental Organisations (NGO), Community Based Organisations (CBO) and Grass Root Organisations (GRO).<sup>11</sup> For the purpose and assessment of this evaluation, three questions are raised and are followed by some arguments.

A) What socio-economic mechanisms develop in the backyards of the fast growing cities in developing countries?

- Behind the many winners within the global economy both in the Western World and in developing countries, there seems to be vast numbers of losers. With trade liberalisation and migration, the country as a whole may benefit, but those at the socio-economic bottom are likely to be worse off (Stiglitz 2006: 174).

---

<sup>10</sup> Bangalore is one of nine cities under economic growth that has been assessed in the study, "Urban Governance, Partnership and Poverty" at International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED). Ref. the report by Carole Rakodi, August 1999: "Urban Governance, Partnership and Poverty: Overview of the research issues." ([www.iied.org](http://www.iied.org)).

<sup>11</sup> Distinctions among the three forms are not clear. NGOs can be seen as the most formalised ranging from bigger international organisations such as the Red Cross to national, regional or local organisations such as APSA. Community Based Organisations (CBO) are mostly locally based and anchored in the local community. The discussion of decentralisation in APSA, where expanding activities within the Self Help Group Project can be phased out may illustrate the difference between an NGO (APSA) and a CBO. When the slum residents realise their basic rights and access their amenities, CBO's are formed and comprised of members of the community to take APSA's place. Grassroots organisations are more task or action-oriented in making an impact on service provisions and directly addressing specific poverty issues.

- The positive statistics of the UN's millennium goal of reducing poverty may cover up an unacceptable cost of reduced living conditions for the poorest urban populations.
- Globalisation drives low cost production systems and human labour towards the bottom, which creates an environment for the exploitation of women and child labour.

B) Is it affordable to combine top-down and policy driven planning for the poor with bottom-up, people oriented and action-based implementation?

- Top-down policy planning influenced by global policymakers such as the World Bank and many international donors trickles down the bureaucratic levels from national towards local programmes and projects towards households and individuals. Openness to the imperfections of plans, democratic traditions, cultural values, quality of public institutions, legal frameworks, etc. are factors that should be open for a bottom-up perspective and participatory interventions.<sup>12</sup>
- Donor policies and practices are splitting the implementation and channels of money, between the different sectors of society; state, private and civil society making it very challenging to find holistic solutions on local levels that serve the poor.
- Within the civil society, NGOs may use the weakness of the state and absence of service delivery (education, health, etc.) as legitimate reasons for their own existence and operation. The implication may be isolated islands of an NGO world with weak or non-existent relations to the state and governmental institutions, in their perceptions, planning and implementation.

C) How can action-oriented learning from the field be part of a re-design of policy?

- The democratic tradition is for transparent and open communication regarding decision-making processes, opposition and protests among involved

---

<sup>12</sup> The issue of water privatisation in Bangalore is an illuminating example where APSA is involved.

stakeholders. The Indian experience should be of special interest in the future development of global problem solving.<sup>13</sup>

- One long-standing tradition within the social science research community is participatory, action-research where people involved play an active part in the learning process. Experience with this learning method is highly valuable, regarding both the specific cases involved and the usefulness of the method itself.

---

<sup>13</sup> Kamdar, Mira. (2007) *Planet India. How the fastest-growing democracy is transforming the world*. New York: Scribner International.

## Chapter 9

### A framework for analysis

In order to provide stakeholders with information, analysis and recommendations that are useful and valid, organisational diagnosis must possess the required, relevant understanding of power structure processes, methods and useful models.<sup>14</sup> An organisational framework that may be used as a point of departure for an analysis can be taken from Alan Fowlers model with institutional levels and different areas of development actions as shown in figure 1.<sup>15</sup>

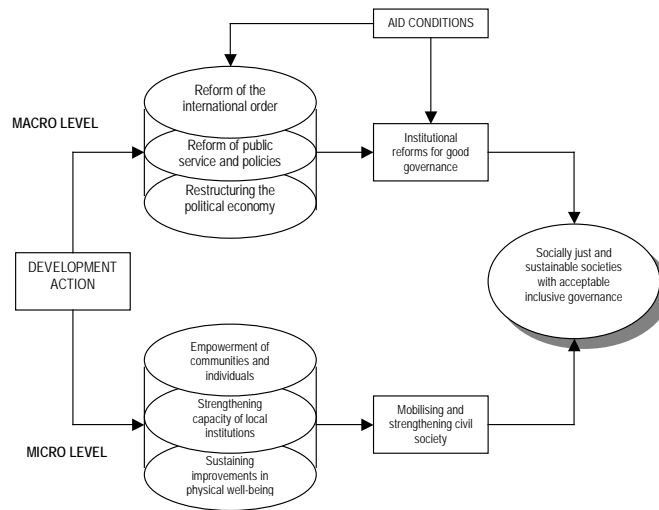


Figure 1 Fowlers framework (Fowler 1997)

At the *micro level*, a key element in the model is the role of the civil society as an array of people, organisations, voluntary associations, clubs, self-help and interest groups, religious bodies and social movements, which may be formal or informal in nature.

<sup>14</sup> Harrison, Michael, I. (2005) *Diagnosis Organizations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

<sup>15</sup> Fowler, Alan. (1997) *Striking a Balance*. London: Earthscan,.



These arenas vary enormously between regions and countries. The civil society is expected to make governance more inclusive and just by providing space for mobilisation and articulate interest by individual stakeholders and groups, providing institutional means for mediating among conflicting interests, channelling and directing social, religious and cultural needs. It may limit the government's tendency to expand their control and nurture democratic values and nurture citizenship and participation in development actions.

Bottom left in the figure shows three types of actions that are supporting and enabling the civil society:

- Improving people's livelihoods and physical well-being in sustainable ways.
- Building up the capacities of people's organisations.
- Empowering individually and collectively, people that are able and willing to make claims on the development process.

At the *macro level*, the purpose of development action is to enable institutional reforms for good governance by different reform programmes. Establishing a system of good governance depends on changes and developments in different ways: (1) Social justice such as democratic rights, an independent judiciary, freedom of speech and press; (2) Economic liberalism with protection of private ownership; (3) Political pluralism with public participation and a functioning democracy and supportive bureaucracy; and (4) Administrative accountability with responsiveness and transparency in decision-making. This can be summed up in the three elements at top left in figure 1:

- Reform of the international order.
- Reform of public service and public policy.
- Restructure the political economy.

The first point may be seen as an impossible mission. However, there is a need for balancing the international and political order in favour of the poorer countries. Market capitalism has been the pre-eminent global economic model and has gained an unrivalled position due to major proponents such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). By setting the agenda in terms of purpose, international assistance and development programmes, these influential institutions create the impression that efficient markets, producing broad-based growth can be

equated with development itself, as Fowler says in the introduction to the framework. There are strong proponents for making the global economic model work better. One of them is the former chief economist of the World Bank, Joseph E. Stiglitz, whose belief is in democratic processes. *An informed citizen is more likely to provide some checks against the abuses of the special corporate and financial interests that have so dominated the globalisation process.*<sup>16</sup>

### **A revised framework from APSA**

Even if the “Fowler model” in figure 1 may be relevant for in some aspects it does not fit very well to the understanding and experience from APSA.<sup>17</sup> The model in figure 1 represents two sets of processes, at the macro and micro levels. These processes are represented as functioning linearly and in parallel. However these two sets of processes, as working in parallel does not convey the reality, as perspectives from the macro and micro can and do inform, influence and change one another. That the perspectives of the macro affect the micro is a truism, that does not require significant argument and support, since macro policies are often backed by money and political will, and therefore work their effects at the micro-level.

However, the reverse is equally true, and as an organization working with the people, this is what APSA would like to emphasize. e.g., The World Bank has significantly pushed for water privatization, tying loans to governments to agreements to privatize water. However, after major protests by the people, such as happened at Cochabamba, La Paz and El Alto, governments were forced to terminate contracts with water cartels. What is more, it caused experts at the World Bank and IMF to re-think their premises. As Wendy Caird points out, “Much of the marketing of privatisation is premised on the superior efficiency and management methods of the private sector. Yet a 2004 International Monetary Fund report on public-private partnerships, found that “while there

---

<sup>16</sup> Page xiii in the preface of his book. Ref. note 9.

<sup>17</sup> The following text and revised model in figure 1b is a response from APSA, written by Meera Pillai, based on interviews and discussion with APSA's Executive Director, P. Lakshapathi, and Director - Programmes, Sheila Devaraj.

is extensive literature on this subject (the relative efficiency of the private sector), the theory is ambiguous and the empirical evidence mixed.” And a World Bank paper in 2005 summarised evidence from the water sector as “there is no statistically significant difference between the efficiency performance of public and private operators”.<sup>18</sup>

At a more local level too, APSA’s campaign against many of the anti-people elements in the rules to Slum Act in Bangalore led to the government’s withdrawing several of them, bringing about change in policy. The diagram in figure 1a does not reflect this complexity.

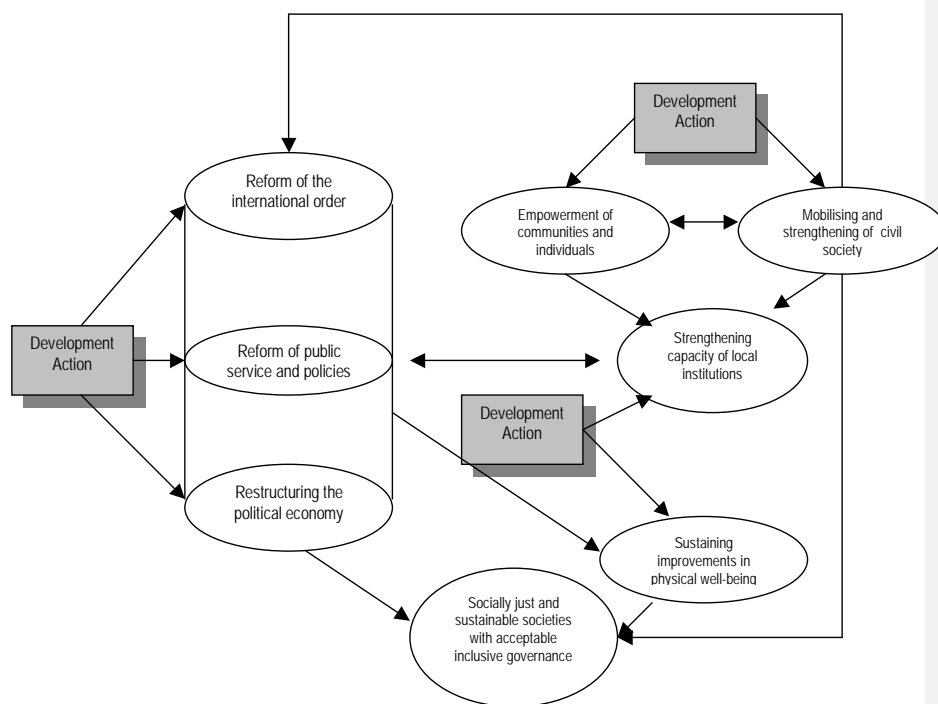
Secondly, APSA feels that in the framework it uses for its work, many of the elements bear a different and more complex, and less linear relationship to each other than is represented in the Fowler framework.

For instance, “the empowerment of communities and individuals” leads to “mobilizing and strengthening civil society”, but in the model used by APSA, the very act of mobilizing civil society is an active tool for the empowerment of communities and individuals, often resulting in the development of extremely creative and inspiring leaders from extremely unlikely places, (e.g., from a group of street sweepers or parking lot attendants).

Hence, an adaptation of Fowler’s model, which might represent APSA’s stance and work a little more accurately, may look like the representation in Figure 2 below.

---

<sup>18</sup> Wendy Caird. Privatisation – The people know best. Retrieved at <http://www.world-psi.org/Template.cfm?Section=Home&CONTENTID=11769&TEMPLATE=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm>



*Figure 2 Framework for analysis: Modified from Fowler (1997) by APSA (2007)*

Apart from the fact that progress towards development does not happen in a linear fashion, but back and forth in multiple and complex ways, and involving (greater or lesser, depending on local conditions) participation by informed communities as represented in the figure, some other notable variations are that:

(i) Sustaining improvements are required not only in physical well-being, but holistic well-being (e.g., institutional changes or collapse of markets can lead to collapse of livelihoods, as is happening in Indian agriculture; or an increased focus on mines and minerals can result in degradation of the environment and fine agricultural land, as is happening in the state of Orissa)

(ii) “Aid Conditions” is not included as a factor in “institutional reforms for good governance”. This is because, while Aid Conditions can and sometimes are a legitimate

and positive influence on institutional reforms for good governance, there have been too many examples of Aid Conditions advocating such institutional reforms that promote not good governance, but conditions of governance that advance free market capitalism, e.g., the aid conditions placed by the World Bank on Bolivia to force water privatization in Cochabamba. As long as this ambiguity with regard to Aid Conditions cannot be adequately represented in the figure, we have preferred to leave it out.

(iii) Development action can and does apply itself at multiple points in the framework for increased inclusiveness, socio-economic development and well-being of communities.

## **Chapter 10**

### **Three experiences of APSA**

From the general discussion above and the availability of relevant data, three cases are chosen where APSA has defined projects and made interventions:

- State policy on urban renewal
- Child labour
- Socio-economic improvement among women

These activities are part of the project-portfolio of APSA and some information and analyses have already been presented in part one. However, in order to address specific issues of the lessons learned it might be useful to repeat part of the documentation.

#### **3.1 State policy on urban renewal**

Throughout its history, APSA has confronted policy issues regarding urban renewal relating to legal rights, housing and access to basic service for slum dwellers. In 1979, they launched a unique housing project in Hyderabad and they started The Slum Outreach Project in Bangalore in 1985. The slum communities face institutional, legislative, economic, cultural and social discrimination and the threat of displacement from land that is becoming ever more valuable as the cities grows. The government neglects to recognise them as citizens and to provide basic amenities and welfare services for them. In partnership with slum communities, APSA has been working in a variety of areas and situations based on the philosophy that the slum residents are not second-class citizens, but an integral, inviolable part of the city and have the same rights as all its other residents. See part I, “Slum Outreach Project” and “Urban Homeless Project”.

## NURM

This long-standing experience with the challenges of the urban slums makes APSA a competent and central actor in the intervention of the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (NURM).<sup>19</sup> That is, a national plan where the Central Government of India wants to kick start urban renewal via commercial and infrastructure development by making cities and towns global investment-friendly. In coordination with staff members of the Slum Outreach Project, Dr. Kshithij Urs has made a critique of NURM as shown in box 1.

### Box 1. Core elements of APSA's critique of NURM

The World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, USAID and others have advocated the measures detailed in JNNURM for a long time. Such is the oversight that JNNURM proposes the same basic reforms for each of its 63 cities, regardless of their individual needs. Aside from the sovereignty issues that this raises, whatever their credentials, policy makers in the international financial institutions will never have the specific knowledge and experience of Indian cities available to government officials, civil society and citizens in general. Unfortunately, the latter two groups appear to have been treated as bodies to be co-opted rather than consulted. Certainly, the structure of the implementation process gives little room for either debate or local input.

*First*, the existence of mandatory reforms suggests that the participation encouraged is one that will help the implementation of the project, not its design. Urban Local Bodies must tick the boxes for these reforms in order to obtain money – no reforms on the JNNURM list, means no money. And these reforms have serious implications. For example, the repealing of the Urban Land Ceiling Act and privatisation of basic services will abrogate the current system of land rights and land usage to the benefit of large-scale real estate investors at the expense of the poor and the middle class; vitiate the democratic functioning of local government and dismantle constitutional responsibilities of the state.

*Second*, in addition to the central government grant, it is incumbent upon ULBs to raise loans to help finance the project. The money itself is conditional upon acceptance of the proposed reforms and it is controlled throughout the project by un-elected nodal agencies, in the case of Karnataka, the Karnataka Urban Infrastructure and Finance Corporation (KUIDFC). This effectively means that decision-making and dispersal of funds is centralised while the repayment of loans is decentralised, leading to indebted ULBs, stripped of their capacity to withstand any further conditionality thrust upon them. Result – a disempowered nation at the whims of international vested interests.

<sup>19</sup> The full name is Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM). See Fact sheet in appendix.

With this background the unashamed invocations of the 74<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendment by NURM is a remarkably brazen theft of the spirit of that amendment given the anti-democratic nature of the programme, the financial burdens described above and the pressures to privatise state services.

JNNURM has so far been presented in a way that suggests if you are against it, you are against reform. But to criticize JNNURM is not to deny the need for reform; rather it is to point out the anti-democratic nature of the design and implementation of the programme that will hasten Indian cities' journey down a specific development path, the benefits of which can be disputed. A document written in the language of others, its persuasive language conceals provisions that will help to change Indian cities irrevocably but not necessarily to the benefit of their citizens.

APSA's critique of NURM can be summarised in the following points:<sup>20</sup>

- Diluting the Constitutional spirit and rights
- Overtaking existing state and central laws
- Converting the citizenship into consumers
- Corporate entities taking control over land and other resources
- Government officials to be the agents of corporate entities and foreign investors
- Governmental systems collapse and companies take over the power in the name of Special Project Vehicle

### Objections to anti-poor provisions

Another example of APSA's intervention in policy issues of urban renewal is the process of rules affecting slum areas and slum dwellers. In the document "Objections to the people-unfriendly, anti-poor provision of the Karnataka Slum Areas (Improvement and Clearance) Draft Rules, 2003," they give comments and suggestions for improvements based on discussions with the public. In box 2, an example of objections and amendments regarding the definition of a slum dweller is shown.

Box 2. Example of objections and desirable amendments

#### **Draft Rule:**

A slum dweller

- (i) Whose name is registered in the socio-economic survey conducted by the board, soon after the declaration of the slum area.

<sup>20</sup> The point is taken from APSA PowerPoint presentation.



**Objections based on discussions with the public:**

- While the rules indicate that eligibility of allottees will be determined based on whether their names are registered in the socio-economic survey conducted by the board, soon after the declaration of the slum area, it does not specify the time period within which the survey should be conducted or who is accountable for ensuring that the survey is conducted. There are slums that were declared one or two decades ago for which surveys have not been conducted at all, or for which the surveys are incomplete. If this rule is made to apply even for those communities (i.e., retroactively), it will perpetrate a great injustice on the people who have been living there for many years, besides paving the way for opportunities for corruption by officials.

**Suggestions for desirable amendments:**

- The rules must specify a time period following the declaration of the slum within which the board must conduct the socio-economic survey of the families living in the slum.
- The rules must specify that the families identified through the survey have the legal rights to secure the amenities granted to them by law.
- In the case of slums, which were declared more than a decade ago, but which have not received amenities or housing, fresh socio-economic surveys should be conducted to identify eligible allottees.

**3.2 Child labour**

APSA's work on the child labour issue came out of its more general work on urban poverty in slums. It has been focusing on collectivising child labourers, potential child labourers and children in slums into collectives for the past fifteen years. The first work was a research study looking at children working in hotels in Hyderabad, and APSA conducted its first rescue of child labourers in 1993 in Bangalore. At the same time, as APSA works to rescue and rehabilitate child labourers they seek to prevent children from starting work in the first place. Through its research and experience on the subject, APSA has come to see child labour as part of the broader web of poverty and discrimination. Arguing that every child in a slum is a potential child labourer, APSA tries to negate future causes of child labour by its holistic approach to a child rights project. The Child Labour Project was started formally in Bangalore in 2004 to work specifically alongside Childline and other projects.

## **Interventions on legislative issues**

Youths between 14 and 18 appear to be in something of a legislative limbo and much of APSA's issue based work with youths is involved with correcting this. The Juvenile Justice Act specifies anybody below the age of 18 is a child and therefore it is illegal for them to be employed. This is also the stance of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child. Unfortunately, the National Child Labour Act (1986) specifies that only children aged below fourteen be forbidden to work. APSA's position is that as there is a constitutional amendment making education a fundamental right for children below 18 years old, therefore the provisions of the Child Labour Act which hold that children may do some kinds of work once they are above the age of 14 should be held as null and void. They are working for a committed and unified policy on the issue so that children can study until 17 years of age, complete a one-year vocational training programme and then start work.

## **Rescuing child labourers<sup>21</sup>**

On May 23, 2003, a raid and rescue operation was undertaken to secure 104 children from residential small-scale jewellery units in Nagarathpet in Bangalore. The children had been trafficked from the rural district of West Bengal. The operation discovered more than 400 children living in cramped quarters and working in bad conditions. Of the total group, 104 children were below the age of 14 years and they worked up to 20 hours every day. They had access to school before they joined the jewellery units, but afterward none of them followed any form of formal education. In the operation, Government officials such as the Deputy Commissioner, Bangalore Urban District and the Deputy Commissioner of Police, the Department of Woman and Child Development and the Labour Department were present, together with staff members from three NGOs including APSA. The process of rescue became riddled with obstacles, partly due to ad hoc planning and partly due to the unexpectedly high number of children. The operation revealed the need for a systematic protocol that could help future operations and post-rescue procedures. However, the children were given temporary shelters, and thereafter

---

<sup>21</sup> The presentation builds on the report, "Rescuing Child Labourers." An analysis of the operation undertaken to rescue children trafficked to labour in the jewellery units in Karnataka. Executed by Equitable Tourism Options and APSA, 2004 with support from UNIFEM and USAID.

escorted back to their homes in West Bengal and ostensibly, reintegrated into their families.

A follow-up study was conducted by APSA together with another NGO after the children returned to their homes in order to assess their situation and to understand the families and local stakeholders' opinions about the rescue operations. The most striking result of the study was that most of the children had gone back to cities to find work. Very few had remained in their villages, and only one had gone back to school.

The study clearly reveals the need for a holistic approach to any rescue and post-rescue operation of child labourers. Follow-up on opportunities and support to ensure that they do not return to conditions of labour, and provision of better economic opportunities for the families is needed. However, the well-documented case study with examples of guidelines and protocol provide much insight into the means and effort necessary for making an effective rescue and post-rescue operation.

A less dramatic operation with a positive result is presented in part one when members of the Child Labour Project in Bangalore visited a middle class apartment complex containing approximately 1500 apartments. They encouraged residents to raise the issue in residents' welfare meetings and to work to convince fellow residents to stop employing child labourers with the result of eradicating 90% of child labour in the complex.

### **3.3 Socio-economic improvement and micro-finance**

#### **Self help groups in APSA**

Empowerment is a crucial component of any attempt to tackle the roots of poverty. Self help groups (SHG) established for the purpose of providing the poor with access to savings and credit schemes are catalysts in that process by stimulating economic growth and changes among members.

The Self Help Group Project in APSA started in October 1999 in five slums with the aim of helping women from urban poor communities become more financially secure. The inspiration came from successful organised self-help groups in rural areas with social and economic empowerment outcomes. Currently APSA is working with 27,200 families in 328 groups in 78 slums in Bangalore and 209 groups in 42 slums in Hyderabad.

A turning point for the SHG-project and a lesson learned by APSA was their relationship with a local micro-finance institution (MFI). At the start of the project, many loans were taken at the MFI, as they were easier to access than those from national banks, which can be imposing and inaccessible institutions for the urban poor. A total of 212 groups were linked to the MFI. Initially, the plan was for the groups to take one loan from the MFI to prove their credit-worthiness and build up assets that could then be used as leverage to take loans from banks. However, the MFI decided that the groups should continue to borrow from them when they were looking for their second loan. APSA questioned this policy, as while the 24% interest charged by the MFI was attractive when the urban poor had no other credit sources than money lenders, who charged 10 per cent a month, or 120 per cent a year, once they had proved their credit worthiness it was unfair to expect the poor to pay the 24 % interest, instead of the average of 9% charged by the nationalised banks. APSA's value based policy was that, as soon as possible, capacity should be built so that the poor should be able to take loans from the same institutions as the rest of society. This led to a loosening of ties with the MFI and since then APSA has linked hundreds of groups of women to nationalised and cooperative banks at affordable rates of interest.

Currently the SHG's do not have any extant linkages with MFI's as the national banks give far better rates of interest (around 9% for a Rs100,000 loan) and the organisation feels that the poor should not have to borrow from 'alternative' credit sources. The success of the project is powerful evidence against the currently hegemonic notion that the poor should take credit from alternative poor-specific sources.

### **The empowerment process of SHG**

As a part of its strategy, APSA has promoted a study of the SHG's and their impact on the empowerment process among women in slums.<sup>22</sup> The findings can be summarised as follows:

- Many members reported a shift in their way of thinking and an evolution of their potential to look to the future with their ambitions and goals. This change was

---

<sup>22</sup> Jasmine Burley, Self Help Groups: An Assessment of their Impact on the Empowerment Process. APSA, 2006. The methodology used was group interviews of 12 groups from three slum clusters in which APSA works and the sample group was geographically spread across different areas of Bangalore. Representatives from banks and MFI's were also interviewed and in all, 25 interviews were conducted.

closely linked to their participating in the SHG and a shift in gender roles within the household and in the wider community.

- Members spoke of their experiences of learning from each other. With a prior life confined to the home and their immediate family environment, the experience of speaking and interacting with other women appears to have been extremely empowering and transformative. However, two-way learning processes between SHG members and the project staff members was limited.
- The shift in gender relations and the increases in freedom of movement have given the members of some groups greater control over their lives with increased capacity for decision-making and planning for the future. However, the real picture is mixed and there is evidence that it is not true for all groups and individuals.

#### **The MF development and regulation bill 2007**

The government of India has prepared a "Micro-Financial Sector Development and Regulation Bill 2007," which was passed by the cabinet early in 2007. Praven Vishwas and Dr. Kshithij Urs made a substantial analysis and critique of the bill from the perspective of the nation's poor.<sup>23</sup> They conclude their analysis by making statements presented in box 3.

#### **Box 3. Statement regarding the "Micro-finance Bill 2007"**

- Even if the bill has an enormous impact on the poor, it has been drafted, passed the cabinet and tabled in the parliament without any public discourse or debate and there is hardly any mention of the poor in the bill. Its primary purpose is to enable MFI's to reach the market segment usually called the "sub-prime" population and not to the poor.
- The bill has underplayed the significance of the SHG movement and has not leveraged the legacy that this movement has brought to the evolution of micro-finance in India.

<sup>23</sup> Praven Vishwas & Dr. Kshithij Urs: *Micro Financial Sector Development and Regulation Bill 2007, which was passed by the cabinet early in 2007. A bill that institutionalises financial discrimination against the poor.*

- Similarly, the bill has undermined the role that the nationalised banks have played in creating groundwork and institutionalising micro-finance in the country. The bill does not define any significant role for the banks in the future landscape of micro-finance.
- By allowing MFI's to mobilise resources through savings, the bill has effectively elevated them to the level of banks. This aspect could easily attract individuals and institutions who do not relate to social responsibility but who are looking at short-term profit.
- Without a focus on the interest rate charged by these MFI's, the situation for the poorer sections of society is not going to be significantly altered since high interest rates have been one of the biggest problem areas for the poor.
- Overall, the bill limits its scope to defining the micro-finance space and providing a legal framework to conduct business.

They recommend the bill be withdrawn and to have a national debate on what the bill is trying to achieve including the key players. A redrafting of the bill should be viewed as a social initiative and a mechanism that addresses financial inclusion and upward social movements. Further, the bill should address the unique model of SHG lending in a more comprehensive way, involving the SHG's and their federations to bring their experience and learning to the table. Based on the experience that banks have been in the forefront of developing micro-finance in India they should also have a role in defining the future, considering their reach and the goodwill they enjoy among local populations.

## Chapter 11

### Discussion of the cases

The three cases presented above; state policy on urban renewal, child labour and socio-economic improvement through SHG and micro-finance are examples of development actions and interventions fitting into the framework as presented in figure 2.

These development actions can be looked upon from the perspectives taken in chapter three by the issues raised on (1) Intervening in the socio-economic mechanism operating among the urban poor; (2) The combination of a top-down (macro) and bottom-up (micro) intervention strategy; and (3) An action-oriented learning process.

#### 4.1 APSA's approach in socio-economic interventions<sup>24</sup>

Socio-economic intervention by APSA is based on a strategy of development with the participation of traditionally deprived communities and coined in the motto, *For Development without Exploitation*. The holistic approach with interconnected projects combines interventions from micro to macro levels in order to promote human and democratic rights through advocacy and planning initiatives as shown in figure 3.

---

<sup>24</sup> This part is based on a) APSA's self-presentation for award applications and b) APSA PowerPoint presentation.

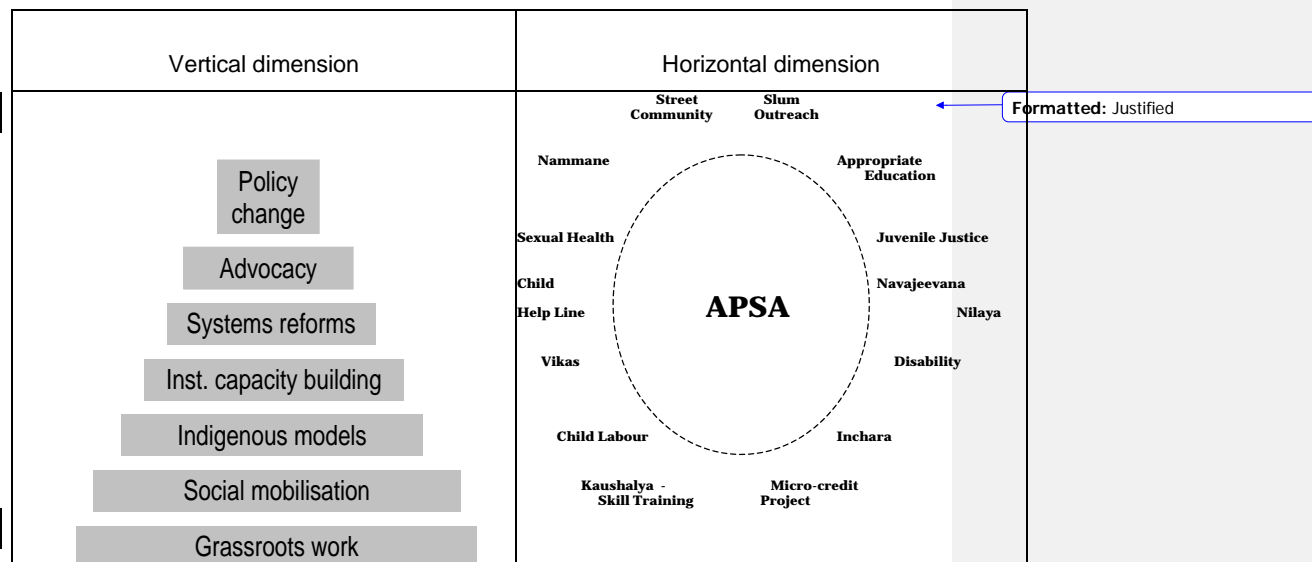


Figure 3 The holistic approach of APSA

The left part shows the vertical dimension of the holistic approach: From grassroots work and social mobilisation, APSA designs indigenous models of institutional capacity building aiming at system reform and advocacy for the poor with the final purpose of policy change. The right part of the figure shows the horizontal dimension where projects are linked together with mutual reinforcement and synergy as a result.

The holistic approach of APSA can be illustrated by assessing how they handle child labour, a complex problem with no single magic solution and where no single project can be conducted in isolation.

### APSA's strategy for intervention with child labour

#### Enrolment in schools

In all the slum areas, APSA's workers undertake a serious and systematic drive at the beginning of the school year to ensure that all children age five and older are admitted to the local schools. Various advocacy measures, including door-to-door campaigns and



street plays by former child labourers are used to encourage parents to send their children to school.

### **Back to school programmes**

Using its network of activists, APSA locates children who have dropped out of school. Often, reasons for mid-year student dropout include the inability of parents to pay fees, and buy books or uniforms. APSA tries to help families in poverty find solutions to these problems and motivate the students to go back to school.

### **Potential child labour centres**

APSA looks upon all children out of school as child labourers, whether they are employed outside the home or not. In addition, it holds that even children in poverty who are in school are at risk for becoming child labourers. A small negative change in the family's economic position or in the child's academic performance makes a big difference. Potential child labour centres provide tutoring and mentoring support to ensure that children do not fail at school.

### **Working to improve the quality of mainstream education**

APSA activists have begun working with government schools to support teachers and improve the quality of education due to the often child-unfriendly procedures, and uninteresting pedagogical methods that cause children to drop out of school.

## **4.1. Working with SHG and community development**

APSA got involved with micro-credit via its interest in and work with the issue of child labour. For years, APSA has worked with the socio-political and cultural issues affecting child labour. APSA accepts that poverty is only an immediate cause for children joining the labour force. Then they started micro-credit groups (SHG) among the women in the slum communities in 1999. Consequently, several of these self-help groups have now been declared child labour free. Development of the communities in the slums as a whole will help greatly to prevent child labour. Hence, activists engage in social mobilisation of women and youths through sanghas, development committees, etc., and

help them address long-term issues like land rights, housing, identification documents, securing basic amenities like drinking water, sanitation, etc.

#### 4.2 Combining interventions at macro and micro levels

As documented in part one, APSA uses a mix of strategies combining work at the macro and micro levels to meet the needs of the constituencies. Examples are rescue and rehabilitation, support for vulnerable children through Childline and Nammam, and work at the macro level to advocate for better policies as a significant contributor to the state's action plan for the elimination of child labour. Other examples are information, procedural knowledge and support to secure land rights and housing, and opposing urban poor-unfriendly components of policies like the NURM. It works to provide educational opportunities for children from at-risk and non-traditional backgrounds, and opposes short-sighted policies of the government like the proposal to introduce flexi-schools for child labourers. Table 1 summarises development actions from the three cases in chapter 3 showing examples of interventions on macro and micro institutional levels.

*Table 1 Macro and micro level interventions*

	Development actions from APSA		
	Urban renewal	Child labour	Economic improvement
Macro level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critique of NURM</li> <li>• Objection and amendment regarding rules to the Slum Act</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocacy for intervention on legislative issues defining child ages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critique and intervention on micro-finance regulation</li> </ul>
Micro level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intervention with landless on housing projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rescuing child labourers</li> <li>• Establishing Childline</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting SHG's</li> </ul>

### **The double relationship with government**

By combining interventions at macro and micro levels, APSA manages to combine a supportive and capacity building relationship with the government with the role of opposing what they see as wrong policies and practices. Examples of these relationships are:

Helping poor obtain benefits from the government.

- In most countries, the state has different welfare schemes for people in need. However, in most cases the government seldom informs citizens about these schemes. Hence, it is rare for people in poverty to get this information. APSA tries to find out what benefits are available and thereafter introduces these schemes to the urban poor, and supports them with the application process, including securing supporting documents, so that they can benefit from the schemes.

Support and collaborate with the government.

- APSA collaborates with and supports the government whenever these actions build capacity to support people in poverty. Instead of taking a constantly critical attitude towards the government, APSA provides resources to government institutions such as schools and departments, police, etc.

Developing models for interventions.

- The only sustainable way of scaling up any service delivery in India (or other countries with high proportions of poor) to a degree that can make a difference to significant numbers of the marginalised populations is through governmental programmes and interventions. Therefore, APSA invests time and energy to develop innovative models for interventions, advocates for their use by government, assists with training and facilitates implementing the models.

Taking a stand against the government in favour of poor people.

- When the rights of people in poverty are compromised, APSA is willing to take a stand against the government as shown by the issues presented above. Whether it is about land rights, housing, laws and discriminating schemes or failure to protect the interests of particularly marginalised sections of society, APSA may

intervene through protests, campaigns, enlisting media support to put pressure on the government to take action, etc.

### **The case of water privatisation**

The issue of water privatisation illustrates how the work of APSA with local projects at the micro level has turned them into critical interventions at the macro level. The “Urban poor issue-based work” presented in part one illustrates how APSA conducted a study on water requirements of the urban poor in Bangalore, documenting that the water supply is wholly inadequate and that people were willing to pay a little more for better service. When the study was used to argue that water should be seen primarily as an economic good (rather than a fundamental right) supporting private water companies as evidence that Bangalore’s water supply should be privatised, APSA published a second edition distancing itself from the findings of the first.<sup>25</sup> This was a multi-level learning experience for APSA and the beneficiaries in the slums. Consequently, APSA is engaged in interventions on multiple institutional levels with critiques and amendments on:

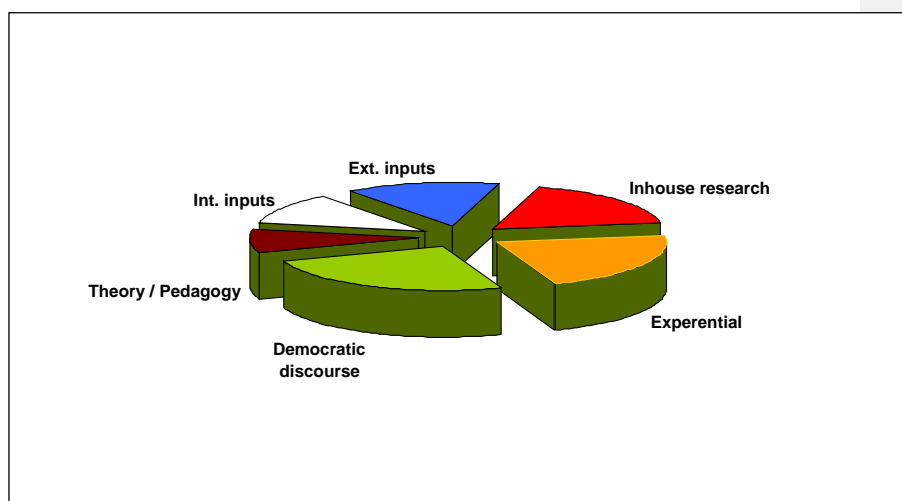
- Proposals to privatise promoted by the World Bank, USAid, etc.
- Indirect entry through aid conditionalities and progressive reforms.
- Misleading studies on inefficiency of state service providers, willingness to pay, coping costs, etc.
- Insidious destruction of institutional capacities of local water boards.
- Cooperation in corporate driven local projects like Thames Water and Unilever’s WSUP.
- Grants and soft loans to NGO’s for on-lending to the poor to access water services.
- Infiltrations into governance systems by corporate anti-poor interests at all levels.

### **4.3 Action oriented learning processes**

---

<sup>25</sup> The first edition was written by Sita Sekhar, Meena Nair and Venugopal Reddy: “Are they being served?” Citizen’s Report Card on Public Services for the Poor in Peri-Urban Areas of Bangalore. APSA and Public Affair Centre, Bangalore, 2005. In the second edition, comments and amendments were written by Dr. Kshithij Urs and Richard Whittell, 2006.

APSA has six elements of organizational learning: Theory and pedagogy, external inputs, internal inputs, in-house research, experimental learning and democratic discourse. The ways these activities are distributed is presented in figure 4.<sup>26</sup> Internal learning processes and continuously learning from the development actions characterise APSA. Almost every staff member, current or former, said that the continuous learning was his or her best experience working in the organisation. The addition of at least four new areas of work requiring specialised skills, in the past three years; sexual health, community-based rehabilitation of people with mental illness, life skills education for young people and early childhood education; confirm this capacity.



*Figure 4 Organisational learning in APSA*

Internal capacity building follows a scheme of weekly and monthly meetings with specific objectives as presented in table 2.

<sup>26</sup> APSA PowerPoint presentation at APSA.

Meetings	Objectives
<b>Weekly</b> 5 working days + 1 meeting day every week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Day to day activities</li> <li>• Project review</li> <li>• Weekly plan</li> <li>• Crisis intervention</li> </ul>
<b>Avalokana</b> (Introspection) <b>Monthly Coordinator's meeting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall project review</li> <li>• Inter-project program listing</li> <li>• Staff issues</li> </ul>
<b>Monthly General</b> One or two days as required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisational review</li> <li>• Review of Strategies</li> <li>• Campaigns and Network review</li> <li>• Open house on new incidents, events, happenings in the projects</li> <li>• Monthly reporting and proposing of articles to Newsletter</li> <li>• Planned internal inputs on relevant topics</li> <li>• Staff credit group meeting</li> </ul>

*Table 2 Internal meetings with objectives*

### **Action oriented learning**

The action oriented learning in APSA seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice in participation with beneficiaries and stakeholders in the pursuit of practical solution to issues of pressing concern to poor people. A primary purpose of APSA is to produce practical knowledge, useful to these people in their daily life by creating new forms of understanding that may mobilise them to intervene. APSA staff members and field workers are involved in this process of questioning, exploration, documentation and supporting actions contributing to change.

As opposed to standardised approaches, action oriented learning may contribute to non-standardized tools for planning, monitoring and evaluation focusing on participatory and

dialogue-oriented processes.<sup>27</sup> This implies a shift of focus in power relations and an orientation from focusing on objects to focusing on people, from blueprint to process and from standardisation to diversity. The dialogue-based process implies that APSA needs to have the legitimacy as both participants (on the micro level) and critical observers and opponents (at the macro level). The staff needs to facilitate planning processes, to negotiate, listen, interview and train participants on the micro level. Playing its role partly as a positive change agent - partly as a critical spectator, there is a risk of mixing up the roles and that may result in uncertainty and misinterpretations between officials and stakeholders at macro levels as well as beneficiaries at micro levels.

To handle inconsistent expectations, the APSA needs to be trusted and respected by gaining a legitimate position and authority to act in both roles. In this respect, it may be useful to handle different role sets by making a distinction between an active role as a change agent and a more passive role as critical observer.<sup>28</sup> Clarity of roles can be linked to an understanding of the different phases of an intervention programme. The idea behind an intervention programme is a planned effort of moving from one state to another through a planned change process. However, if we look at organisational learning as a process, we do not define an end state, but the organisation continually generates new states of problems to be solved.

In Table 3, the tasks are grouped according to this main role-set.

This change process can be described as an experimental learning circle.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> This approach is similar to the tradition of Action Research (AR) or Participatory Action Research (PAR). See: Reason, P. & Bradbury, H. (2001) *Handbook in Action Research*. Newbury Park, California: Sage; and Whyte, W.F. (Ed.). *Participatory Action Research*. Newbury Park, California: Sage.

<sup>28</sup> Olsen, O.E. & Lindøe, P. H. (2004) Trailing based evaluation: Phases and roles. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 27, p. 371-380.

<sup>29</sup> Kolb, Rubin & McIntyre. (1984) *Experiential Learning*. Englewood Cliffs NJ: Prentice Hall.

Table 3 Two types of roles and critical issues

Roles	Critical issues
<i>Active Participation as Change Agent</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarifying rules and roles of the intervention process</li> <li>• Forming arenas for dialogue and facilitating the dialogue among stakeholders</li> <li>• Establish mechanisms to feed forward the lessons learned into new actions</li> </ul>
<i>Distant Observing Spectator</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical investigation (Devil's Advocate)</li> <li>• Assessing a system for continuous monitoring</li> <li>• Summary evaluation at the end of the intervention process</li> </ul>

A concrete experience is based on how we perceive the world through our senses. It is followed by a conscious reflection or reflective observation that has to be modelled in a process of abstract conceptualisation. Intervention is an active experimentation where one is taking action into the real situation – which leads to new experience and the cycle continues.

#### 4.4 Means, ends and learning<sup>30</sup>

The many projects presented in part one and the three cases above are all means to fulfil the vision of APSA: for development without exploitation. Learning from the APSA experience implies an understanding and awareness of the internal human and organisational factors discussed in chapters 4 and 5 in part one. There is a dependency between the identity, values and beliefs in APSA and how to manage, relate to others and doing the project work as summed up in the four elements in table 4.

<sup>30</sup> Lindøe, P.H. (2006) *Organisational Learning and Capacity Building*. In Lemvik, J. Enabling Organisations, Stories, Tools and Supporting Articles, Oslo: Norwegian Mission in Development.



*Table 4 Themes and core concepts in organisations*

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Core concepts</b>
<i>To be</i>	<i>Purpose, values and approaches, etc.</i>
<i>To do</i>	<i>Services, activities, level of efficiency, etc.</i>
<i>To relate</i>	<i>Partners, donors and local people.</i>
<i>To manage</i>	<i>Managing human and financial resources, etc.</i>

These themes may be further developed and sorted into sub-categories as almost the same as those used in chapter 5 in part one.

In the three cases illustrated there has been a focus on what APSA *does* and how it *relates* to stakeholders (constituencies, local government, etc). In any effort of transferring learning experiences from APSA one should bear in mind a holistic understanding of the interdependences of core elements such as identity, purpose and values (giving legitimacy to stakeholders) as well as management systems including leadership, decision-making and internal organisational learning.

## Chapter 12

### Conclusions and recommendations

The conclusions of this case study can be drawn upon the perspective of the three questions raised regarding the context and framework of APSA as presented in chapter 1.

First, the experiences and lessons learned from APSA should be interesting for a wider audience of stakeholders and development actors due to the socio-economic context. Unplanned and escalating growth of cities creates enormous pressure on capacity, resources and infrastructure in many developing countries around the world. As a consequence, impoverishment and homelessness increases and among these, underprivileged women and children are the most vulnerable.

Second, APSA demonstrates that it is affordable to combine top-down, policy driven and bottom-up, people oriented development action for the poor. Such a strategy compensates for donor policies and practises that are splitting implementations and channels of money between the state, private sector and civil society. By taking a holistic approach in the programmes and projects, APSA shows effective and sustainable solutions in the challenges of serving the poor. By modelling service delivery that can be taken over by governmental agencies, they show how to turn the weakness of the state into positive solutions.

Third, APSA applies action-oriented learning from the field in monitoring, evaluation and re-design of policy and practise at different institutional levels. By following a participative and democratic tradition, APSA opens up for transparent and open communication in decision processes among involved stakeholders. That opens up for development action where the people involved play an active part in the learning process. Such experience is highly valuable, even if the national, regional or local environment is not always supportive.

Learning from APSA's experience should be transferred among stakeholders in the FORUT-network by the use of case studies and documents that are already available at APSA.

These experiences seem to be valuable for a wider audience of stakeholder and NGO's nationally and internationally. One means for a wider transfer of the experience is the establishment of an APSA-website as recommended in part one. The arguments in this part of the evaluation confirm and enforce that point.