NATIONAL WORKSHOP ON THE REPORT CARD APPROACH

October 25 -27, 1999

ORGANISED BY: PUBLIC AFFAIRS CENTRE, BANGALORE

RESOURCE KIT

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IMPROVING GOVERNANCE
HOW CITIZENS 'VOICE' CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

The role of the State in the development and progress in developing countries has often been significant and positive. There is, however, a growing concern that the productivity of these investments has left much to be desired and that the dominant role that the government has played has not been matched by a high level of public accountability and good governance. State monopoly has often resulted in non-responsiveness to the people, inefficiency and corruption. Though, the recent changes in economic policy and reforms of government have introduced greater competition in the economy, many sectors and activities of the government will become more accountable and perform better only when citizens and customers of these services play a watchdog role and challenge abuses. A proactive civil society is a strength of many developed countries. Civil society institutions in developing countries have, on the other hand, been less active in challenging the abuses of public power with the exception of the consumer movement and a few dedicated groups that have resorted to public interest litigation in response to this problem.

Public Affairs Centre (PAC) was established in Bangalore in 1994 as an independent initiative to address this gap. Its underlying premise is that the quality of governance will improve only when civil society is aware and active in demanding greater accountability from government and its agencies. It undertakes research in order to enable and strengthen the institutions of civil society to better understand the issues to be addressed and the options to be presented to government. Both research and advisory services are provided by PAC in order to support collective action by citizen groups to improve the responsiveness of service

providers. It networks with concerned organisations in India and abroad in furtherance of these goals. PAC's strength and credibility lie in its independence and commitment to strengthening civil society institutions.

In order to demonstrate what civil society can do in this regard, PAC initiated a project to produce a "report card on urban public services" in Bangalore by its citizens. This entailed a random sample survey of the users of different public services (utilities) in the city, and the aggregation of the public feedback as a basis for rating the service providers. This represented a novel approach that received both national and international attention. The focus on urban public services stems

from the concern about the decay of our cities and the realisation that improved productivity calls for an enhancement of the quality of urban living. This exercise generated much public and media interest in Bangalore and provided a stimulus to several public service agencies in the city to review and improve their performance and attitude towards customers. Report Card studies on the public services in the cities of Bangalore, Ahmedabad, Pune, Chennai, Calcutta, Delhi and Mumbai have been completed. A unique feature of these studies is the ratings by citizens (users) of the major public service providers in the urban areas. Inter-city comparisons of public services and agency ratings have been published both in India and abroad. Media coverage of the study findings has been impressive. Citizen groups have taken follow-up actions in several cities. Dialogues with service providers for reform have been an important outcome of these exercises.

PAC has brought out a study of the municipal budgets of Bangalore. The findings confirmed the poor state of resource management in the city and highlighted how this has contributed to the unsatisfactory municipal services. The results of the study were discussed in a meeting with the

Mayor and her Finance Committee. Though city corporations receive loans and grants from several financial institutions, their fiscal and accounting systems and practices remain outdated and in disarray. Inter-city comparisons of budgets are presently under way.

The Report Card studies seek to provide a benchmark on quality of public services as experienced by citizens. Hence, they go beyond particular problems at hand, and place each issue in the perspective of other elements of service design and delivery, as well as a comparison with other services, so that a strategised set of actions can be initiated for sustainable change.

Report Cards seek to capture citizens' feedback in simple and unambiguous terms by indicating their level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. For example, the most basic but clear feedback that a citizen may give about power supply in Bangalore is total dissatisfaction. To appreciate this feedback, we must relate it to the ratings given to other public services by the same person. For example, water supply may be rated worse than power supply. When we look at these two pieces of information, we can conclude that power supply may be a cause of dissatisfaction, but the priority for corrective action may be on water supply. Hence **measures of citizens satisfaction** across different public services constitutes the core of Report Card studies.

Report Card studies do not stop with measures of satisfaction - they go on to enquire into specific aspects of interaction between the service agency and the citizen, and seek to identify issues that emerge in connection with the same. In more simple terms, it suggests that dissatisfaction has causes, which may be related to the quality of service enjoyed by the citizen (like reliability of power supply, or availability of free medicines in a public hospital), the type of difficulty encountered while dealing with

the agency to solve service problems (like excess billing or complaints of power supply breakdown), and hidden costs in making use of the public service (bribes for getting the fuse connected or investments in filters to purify "drinking water"). Therefore we can see that Report card studies go into different **aspects of performance in interfacing with citizens**, to provide indicators of problem areas in public services.

Report card studies are not merely a means of collecting feedback on existing situations from citizens. They are also a means for testing out different options that citizens wish to exercise, individually or collectively, to tackle current problems. For example, the Bangalore study enquired into whether citizens were willing to pay more or be part of citizens' bodies made responsible for managing garbage clearance. Hence, Report Cards are also means for **exploring citizens' alternatives** for improvements in public services.

An important aspect of Report Cards is the credibility they have earned. The conclusions in a Report Card are not opinions of a few persons who think in a particular manner, nor the complaints of a few aggrieved citizens. The methodology involves systematic sampling across all subsections or segments of citizens - including those who are satisfied as well as the aggrieved - and presents a picture that includes all opinions. This is possible because the methodology makes use of advanced techniques of market research, for selecting samples, designing questionnaires, conducting interviews, and interpreting results. As a result, the report cards are able to provide **reliable and comprehensive** representation of citizens' feedback.

Impacts

The concept of citizen feedback surveys to assess the performance of public services is quite new to India. The responses and spin-offs from

such studies carried out by Public Affairs Centre in different cities and for different sectors have been encouraging. From these experiences, one could perceive the impact at four levels:

I. CREATING PUBLIC AWARENESS

The Report Card findings are generally publicised prominently by major newspapers. Needless to say, agency specific findings and the novelty of the method used were in part responsible for this response. And, of course, news about corruption always makes good copy! A good case in point in this regard was the dissemination of findings in Bangalore. A leading city newspaper, the Times of India, started a weekly feature with a graphic depiction of one of the study findings at a time. This feature continued for about two months, thus keeping the report card phenomenon in public consciousness.

Seminars and meetings are also organised in connection with the release of Report Card findings, involving local activists in civic affairs, representatives of residents' associations and NGOs interested in the problems of the urban poor. Most participants were familiar with the poor performance of the city's public agencies, but did not have the necessary information to grade them or highlight specific problem areas. Report Cards gave this critical segment a handy tool to focus on issues of concern and stimulated them to move from anecdotal and subjective issues to an objective database to put pressure on public service agencies.

II. STIMULATING AGENCY REFORMS

Report Card studies clearly brought to light a wide panoply of issues, both quantitative and qualitative that send strong signals to public service providers. The use of a rating scale permitted the respondents to quantify

the extent of their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the service of an agency. The scale was used not only for an overall assessment of an agency but also for different dimensions of its service. The inter-agency comparisons with respect to public satisfaction and corruption that a report card permits also created a platform to stimulate agency interest in addressing the underlying problems. Quantification and rankings demand attention in a way that anecdotes do not. They focus attention on specific agencies and services that can be embarrassing to those in charge especially because of the adverse publicity involved.

Many agencies used the Report Card findings as a diagnostic tool to trigger off further studies and internal reforms. Inter agency comparisons also acted as 'proxy' market indicators to stimulate competition and better responsiveness.

III. STRENGTHENING CIVIL SOCIETY INITIATIVES

The findings and information provided by Report Cards have largely succeeded in catalysing citizens to take proactive and creative steps. Rather than existing as passive recipients of inefficient and unresponsive services, more and more of them are today organising to involve as active partners and participants. The **Swabhimana Initiative** in Bangalore, launched in the aftermath of the release of the Report Card findings is

one such example. The Initiative, mooted by the then Commissioner of Bangalore City Corporation, is a unique state-citizen forum to improve the quality of civic life in the city. This forum not only experiments with new approaches to solving problems, but also disseminates information widely and performs a watchdog function.

IV. CAPACITY BUILDING FOR PUBLIC INTEREST GROUPS, ADVOCACY NGOs AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS,

Public Interest Groups, Advocacy NGOs and International Organisations are increasingly perceiving the potency of Report Cards in chalking out effective strategies to make public service agencies more responsive and accountable to the citizens. Most of the Report Card studies conducted in various cities by PAC have been in close association with public interest groups and NGOs. For these organisations, the methodology has provided a strong, coherent and credible database highlighting areas of concern that help them to strategise their options and sharpen the advocacy skills. The Report Card on Public Services for the Urban Poor in Mumbai was conceptualised and organised by PAC in close collaboration with the Rationing Kruti Samiti, an umbrella organisation of 40 NGOs and local groups. FEDCOT, a large federation of consumer organisations, associated with PAC in carrying out an exploratory study of the Public Distribution System in the state of Tamil Nadu, using the Report Card methodology; the entire survey was conducted by volunteers of FEDCOT who were trained by PAC and Gallup MBA.

This approach is also being integrated into Public Administration Reform projects in Vietnam and Ukraine.

EVALUATING PUBLIC SERVICES

There is a growing awareness among people in government, academia and advocacy groups on the potential of evaluation for improved decision making and positively influencing the policy environment (see Appendix for a list of major approaches to programme evaluation). Evaluations affect policy decisions through:

- *Developing new information about programme or policy effectiveness*
- *Explaining to the key players the implications of the new information derived through evaluation*
- *Building a reliable data base around which effective advocacy efforts can be designed*

The days when development was conceived mostly in terms of centrally planned investments with a clearly defined hierarchy of decision-making levels, are long over. Today, development is increasingly seen as a participatory process wherein governments are expected to create market-friendly regulatory environments, develop human resources and focus on capacity building. A major area where this rethinking is taking place is the public service sector where there is a definite shift in focus from investment led growth strategies to an emphasis on the role of policy, information and awareness, improved decision making and active involvement of the civil society. This means that results on the ground and sustainability are now the acid tests of performance. Issues pertaining to accessibility, effectiveness and responsiveness have become critical in this context. More attention is paid to impact assessments of the services and greater stress is laid on feedback and dissemination activities.

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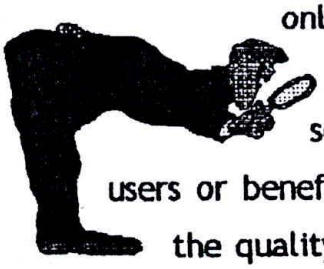
Public services in India, especially in urban areas, are widely believed to be unsatisfactory and deteriorating. This unfortunate trend apart from having severe consequences on the overall well-being of the economy, affects the quality of life of the ordinary citizen in an adverse way. The very fact that most of these services are monopolistic in nature provides the beneficiary with no option to 'exit', but continue to tolerate them. This monopoly power combined with lack of corrective actions by the government and low levels of collective action by the citizens have stifled the agencies' responsiveness to the public and their motivation to improve services even within the limits of available resources.

Though a lot of studies have been carried out on the public sector in general and public services in particular, the majority of them address only economic and managerial perspectives. Seldom does one come across perceptions on the public services from the citizens' perspectives. Because, as users or beneficiaries at the receiving end, their assessments of the quality, efficiency and adequacy of the services and the problems they face in their interactions with the public agencies can provide significant inputs for the improvement of service delivery and management processes.



Major Approaches to Programme Evaluation

Key Values Promoted	Key Audiences	Preferred Methods	Typical Questions
Efficiency, accountability, theoretical knowledge	High-level policy and decision makers	***Quantitative***: Systems Analysis, Cost Benefit Analysis etc.,	Are desired outcomes attainable and attributable to the programme? Is this the most efficient alternative ?
Management/practicality, quality control, utility	Program managers, administrators and decision makers	***Mixed***: Structured and unstructured surveys, questionnaires, interviews and observations	Which aspects of the Programme work well and which need improvement? How effective is the programme with respect to the beneficiaries' need?
Shared Understanding	Programme directors, Staff and Beneficiaries	***Qualitative***: Case Studies, interviews, observations, document review.	How do the different stakeholders find the programme?
Emancipation/ empowerment,social change	Programme beneficiaries, their communities, other 'powerless' groups	***Participatory***: Social Criticism, historical analysis, participatory appraisals	In what ways are the premises, goals, or activities of the programme serving to maintain power and resource inequities in the society?

Citizen Surveys: Rationale & Applications

What do citizens think about the quality of the services they receive? Are clients having trouble getting the kind of help they want? Will residents in a neighbourhood support the setting up of a Ward Committee? Do patients think they have to pay speed money to get better medical services?

Carefully designed surveys can yield an abundance of useful information on these and a variety of other topics and issues in public service delivery. Having accurate information about what citizens think can enable decision-makers to take informed decisions and policy choices and to implement service improvements that respond to citizens, needs and preferences.

What is a Citizen Survey?

There are several methods for discovering what people think. One of the best ways is to ask people directly about their opinions. But personal interviews are expensive and time consuming, especially in large populations or among difficult-to-reach groups. A more practical method is to ask a sample, or a representative subset, of citizens about their opinions, attitudes, perceptions, and behaviour. A citizen survey uses a systematic, scientific method for selecting a sample of citizens, collecting information from them, and making generalisations about a larger population that is usually too large to observe or interview directly.

Opinion surveys are an accurate, affordable way to determine what large groups of people think. Many public administrators conduct such surveys regularly to identify budget priorities; to obtain feedback from citizens, customers, or clients on services and programs; and to acquire information on a variety of issues, problems, and choices that confront their organizations.

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The wide prevalence of opinion surveys is one indicator of their popularity and potential for informing a variety of decisions that relate to management, accountability, and resource allocation. However, not all surveys are equally useful. Though some meet the highest standards of scientific rigor, others are a waste of money and efforts. The latter are those that include poorly written or misleading questions, omit important questions, or have flawed sampling designs. Only if a survey instrument is properly designed and implemented can it yield accurate information about who thinks what and why. Improperly designed and executed surveys can misrepresent respondents' views, and thus can mislead and confuse decision-making. Hence, it is imperative that **those who conduct citizen feedback surveys understand and apply the guidelines that will produce scientifically valid and reliable survey data.**

How do citizen surveys help?

Information surveys can help public officials to address issues in the delivery and maintenance of critical services. It is helpful to begin the initial task of drafting questions by deciding whether the information desired is related mainly to policy formulation, implementation, or evaluation. Though, inevitably there would be some overlap among these stages, they would provide a useful initial framework for thinking about information needs and the kinds of decisions that can be informed by survey results.

It is also useful to consider how opinion surveys can help to broaden the scope of citizen participation in the variety of decisions that confront officials in the public arena.

☛ **Policy Formulation**

Policy formulation involves deciding what to do. Surveys can help public officials to determine what people need, want, prefer, or demand from their government or for their rupees spent as tax. They can then use this information to make choices, set priorities, change practices, and translate popular demands into public policy. Questions that help to inform policy choices often measure the preferences, popularity, or acceptability of singular or competing ideas, actions, choices, or services.

☛ **Policy Implementation**

Citizen feedback can also help public officials decide how best to deliver or provide services. Useful questions in this area may concern the variety of activities and decisions involved in implementing a policy, programme, or service. These can be directed to one or more of the groups with a stake in the issue, such as elected functionaries, management team, employee unions, resident associations and public interest groups.

☛ **Policy Evaluation**

Citizen surveys can also provide useful feedback for evaluation of public policies and programmes. In the business of service delivery, the consumer's perception is the pertinent reality. One could safely assume that the agency responsible for a particular service is not doing it's job well if citizens express dissatisfaction with various dimensions of output effectiveness, such as the quality, timeliness, level, accuracy, reliability, convenience, utility, and price of the service. Survey questions can ascertain what citizens think about the quality of services, who uses services, how frequently they use them, and where specific improvements need to be made. For instance, survey findings might suggest the need to publicize the availability of services that are under-utilized.

Surveys as participation Mechanisms

Surveys can help to broaden the scope of citizens, participation in government decision making. Practitioners know that the citizens who feel they play a part or have some impact upon a policy or programme are more likely to feel they have a stake in its outcome. Citizen surveys are one means of advancing a process of deliberative democracy, where public officials address citizens' concerns up front rather than later, in court. As a method of practising the politics of inclusion, surveys have the potential to enhance the quality of democratic governance. This potential can be realized when the objectives of the survey are clear, when citizens have enough information to make choices and form opinions, and when the findings are publicized and discussed in forums of community outreach.

Planning a Report Card Strategy

As a first step in moving towards data collection, your organization should define an issue focus and a framework for your study. Several questions should be asked to help provide clarity to your research design:

- **WHAT DO YOU WANT TO KNOW?**

- What are the issues or problems that you find the most troublesome in your community (e.g., continued power shortages, lack of access to public bank loans, corruption in local government agencies, etc.)?
- What does your community have to say about those issues/problems?
- Can this research add value to existing studies and/or current action on that issue area(s)?

- **ABOUT WHOM?**
- Do you want to focus on a single public utility or service provider?
- Do you want to gather comparative information from a wide range of utilities?

- **HOW WILL YOU USE THE INFORMATION?**
- What is the purpose of this study?
- Will it re-shape a current program in your organization?
- Will it be used to consider developing new programs?
- Who will see the results of the study (e.g., government agencies, the media, civic groups, research institutions, etc.)?

- **HOW CAN THE DATA BE OBTAINED?**
- What methods (e.g., key informant interviews, focus groups, surveys, observations) are the most effective in gathering the kind of responses you want?
- How will you identify the specific population to be measured (e.g., by locality, income, gender, age, etc.)?

- **HOW DO YOU PLAN TO COLLECT THE DATA?**
- What specific tests, measures and/or questionnaire items are needed to arrive at the desired information?
- Will you use random sampling and/or focus group methods?
- What level of skill is required by your staff and field-workers?

- **WHO WILL PAY THE BILL?**
- Do you have enough resources to finance a project which will take a minimum of 12 weeks with a staff (internal or external) of about 12 people?
- Have you budgeted for unexpected changes (e.g., the need to expand your sample size to increase the reliability of results).

These questions should be discussed within your organization and cast out to a wide net of other public interest groups, donors, your board of directors and selected community residents. This collective brainstorming and strategizing can provide your organization with its own set of feedback, helping you to construct a better project and, in turn, to better serve your community. At this point, your organization will have a conceptual approach and in many ways will be past the most difficult point.

Your strategic plan might vary, but it should include the following points:

A. The Problem: a. background b. importance to you and your community **B. Research Purpose and Objectives** **C. Implications and Use of Findings** **D. Methodology:** a. sample size - who are the target respondents - where do they live b. questionnaire - focus group help to identify issue areas - hard information (structured questions) - soft information (open-ended questions)	c. field workers - number needed d. quality control supervision e. data processing **E. Timetable:** a. when questionnaires will be produced b. when field work will begin c. when raw data will be processed d. when analysis will be complete **F. Costs:** a. pilot testing your questionnaire b. staff salaries c. outside consultant fees, if any

A CHECK LIST ON HOW TO PLAN A SURVEY

Step 1: Framing the purposes & Objectives of the Survey

Considerations
Is the purpose chiefly to explore, describe, or explain phenomena ?
Methods
Workshops
Brainstorming sessions
Group discussions

Step 2: Specifying Information Needs

Considerations
Review the types of information that survey questions can measure, and use these to classify information objectives
Is the survey a one time cross-sectional effort or part of an ongoing longitudinal study?
Methods
Focus Groups
Workshops to review drafts of information objectives and "ideal" items of information desired

Step 3: Identifying the Target Population

Considerations
Determine the unit of analysis
What kinds of screen or filter questions are needed to obtain information from knowledgeable respondents?
What population attributes are important for the study?
How difficult will it be to contact the desired population
Methods
List the types of information needed from various population groups and the kinds of analyse required to determine who thinks what and why. Check to ensure that the intended unit of analysis corresponds with the level of information needed.

Step 4: Selecting the Methods of Contact

Considerations
Review the merits of different types of survey approaches
Determine when survey results are needed
Balance available resources with estimated costs of the desired method of contact
Methods
Ascertain the monetary amount available for the survey project, personnel and staff and decide whether to adjust the time frame for the study and also whether to contract out some part of the project's implementation.

CHOOSING AN APPROACH

The approach you choose for your study should reflect the kind of information you want to gather. That data, in turn, should be based on the objectives you identified in your strategic plan. If you are looking for percentages and averages, you should use quantitative research techniques. If you prefer to focus on individual case studies, qualitative techniques will be required.

The Report Card methodology is rooted in quantitative research methods, but is enhanced by qualitative findings obtained from interviews and observations. Mixing quantitative and qualitative research methods is often thought of as mixing oil and water. Some believe they do not blend. Others, however, see the value in complimenting attitudes with statistics and augmenting opinions with numbers. In fact, many of the advantages of the Report Card's quantitative survey approach are derived from prior use of qualitative methods. Initial sessions with focus groups in Bangalore and other cities provided valuable inputs for the final design of the survey.

How do qualitative and quantitative research methods differ and how do they compare?

(See the comparative table on the next page)

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH *Is a method of information gathering that conveys feeling or insights. It is based on a small sample, usually no greater than 30 people, and thus, is too small to draw valid conclusions about the opinions of an entire target population. It mainly uses observation and unstructured interviews to uncover meanings and insights to problem and issues.* **It is used to:** • Generate hypotheses • Clarify issues prior to undertaking quantitative studies • Assess citizen perceptions of a public utility or service provider • Examine emotional responses of citizens to interaction with public service agency and/or agent	QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH *Is based on statistical principles. It uses sampling methods, questionnaires, and computer based data processing to answer questions of how much, who, where and when. It tends to be more expensive and time-consuming than qualitative research, but provides a certain degree of reliability..* **It is used to:** • Establish the level of citizen satisfaction or dissatisfaction with public service providers • Rank order the agencies according to the level of public satisfaction or dissatisfaction ratings • Propose options and reform with the weight of quantitative backing

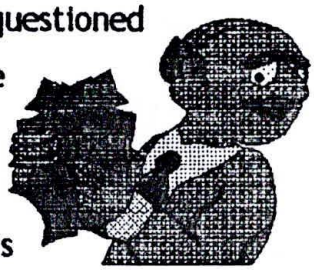
The Report Card methodology combines these two methods of research with two primary (though not exclusive) research techniques: *focus groups* and *questionnaires*. Combining these techniques can enhance the overall validity of your own study by 1) helping to reduce bias, 2) revealing errors in measurement, 3) verifying and cross-checking data, and 4) increasing response rates by producing a better questionnaire.

Basic survey research (questionnaires) is usually accompanied by some form of probability sampling when an entire population cannot be measured. With marginal resources available in both time and money, developing a small but representative data base on a specific problem can serve the interests of your city or community well. This systematic statistical sampling procedure reinforces rigor in the data collection approach. Such rigor is critical because in

the world of policy, numbers are often given more importance than opinions. The survey method can also highlight the quantitative estimates between a problem and its possible causal factors through frequency distributions and regression analysis. Once a problem's size and dimensions are identified (via the findings from the survey), researchers can begin to look at which factors are most closely related to that problem.

Some issues, however, are better addressed through open-ended, exploratory inquiries where factors might not be easily laid out in a predetermined survey-response format. The Bangalore study of slum dwellers, for example, balanced its large-scale survey with focus groups and individual case studies. The unique characteristic of the slum populations required a softer approach to the Report Card study. That is, establishing degrees of awareness, attitudes and beliefs about the quality of public services in the Project Voice survey was as important to the survey outcomes as determining degrees of satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

Although the Report Card methodology is adaptable, it must still abide by statistical conventions. Throwing a questionnaire together quickly and asking nearby residents or passers-by on a "first come, first questioned basis" is not survey research, although it can be quite functional in building good programs starts and cases for action in a community. This method is less rigorous than a sample survey research approach. The trade-off is energy versus rigor.



In mounting the Report Card approach itself, your organization needs to set general parameters related to *sampling units* (e.g. households, bus rides, hospital users), *sample size*, and *the method of interviewing* (by mail, telephone, or in person). Due to the erratic nature of the very services you may be measuring, interviewing may be the only viable data collecting method

in most developing countries. It is important to remember that each of the decisions has cost implications. Sample location necessarily follows from the intentions of one's survey, but sample size and methods often derive principally from financial resources available and how close your organization wants to get to the target community in conducting the project.

HOUSEHOLD INTERVIEWING	
PROS	**CONS**
• By being physically present, the interviewer may convince the person to participate. • Visual materials may be used • Long questionnaires have a better chance of completion (vs. Mailed surveys) • Interviewer may help clarify questions the respondent is having trouble understanding • Selection of sample can be more precise	• Travel time and expense to locate the respondents is high • Interviewer's presence and mannerisms may bias responses • Anonymity is lost; respondents might fear later identification • Field work control and supervision is difficult • Staffing capable interviewers, especially when your study is in distant places, is difficult.

SAMPLING

Sampling is the science of selecting cases in a way that enables the researcher to make accurate inferences about a larger population.

TWO MAJOR DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN IN SAMPLING

- About the kind/ method of sample.
- About the size of sample.

The above decisions are in turn governed by:

- Information needs
- Desired level of confidence and precision
- Available resources

IMPORTANCE OF SAMPLING/ LOGIC OF SAMPLING

Main uses of samples are in:

- Making inferences about the population based on information from a sample.
- Estimation
- Testing of Hypotheses

Sample selection affects precision and accuracy of survey results.

MAJOR STEPS OF SAMPLING

Irrespective of the type of sampling done, this remains a constant. The 7 major steps in sampling are:

1. **Defining the population:** Population means the group you want to generalize the results of your survey to; hence, the group you would sample from. An important distinction that needs to be made here is between the theoretical population and the accessible population. **Theoretical**: Population you would like to generalize to and **Accessible**: Population that is actually accessible to you.

Precision in the definition of the population depends a great deal on **how precisely have we defined our research problem**, which, in turn, is a result of **lack of clear transmission of the purpose or objectives of the study** from the decision-maker to the investigator.

The **3 core parts of population definition** are: (1) which elements (i.e. the units of analysis, like individuals, households, institutions, etc.) to include, (2) where, and, (3) when. The "which" question is important because from a research point of view, each group represents a distinct population with corresponding implications of any information obtained. The "where" and "when" represent dimensions that are designed to define the population more precisely in terms of its extent and time. As such, these dimensions also define which units are to be excluded. It is clear that the population should be defined as precisely as possible. One useful approach is to **first define the population as the ideal one** to meet the study objectives. Practical constraints then enter to **define the study population**. The advantage of starting with an ideal population is that exclusions are made explicit.

Dangers of over-defining the population: Over-defining should be avoided unless it is completely necessary. Over-defining can limit the extent to which findings can be generalized and operationally greatly increase the cost and difficulty of finding population elements.

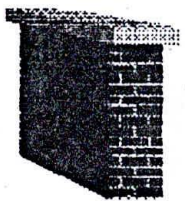
2. Census or sample: Once the population has been defined, the investigator must decide whether the survey is to be conducted among the whole population (**a census**) or only a subset of it (**a sample**). A census may just not be feasible, particularly when it comes to Developmental Organisations. Hence, in most instances, samples are used.

Two main advantages of using a sample are: **speed** and **timeliness.** Firstly, a survey based on a sample, takes much less time to complete than one based on a census. Secondly, in certain instances a complete count may require so much time that, by the time it is completed and is made available for use, it becomes a historical record. Another consideration in whether to use sampling is the **relative cost and effort** involved.

3. Sample Design:

Operationally, sample design is the heart of sample planning, involving both theoretical and practical (e.g., time, cost, labor involved and organization) considerations. Typically, questions to be answered include:

- Type of sample
- Sampling unit: This is the unit that we sample (usually people). The sampling unit forms the basis of the actual sampling procedure The sampling unit may consist of one or more population elements, i.e. these units may be individual elements or aggregates of individual elements. For example, for a Report Card survey, we generally select individual chief wage earners or entire households as sampling units.
- Sample frame: The **physical listing of the accessible population** from which you will draw your sample is called the sampling frame. (e.g., telephone directory in the case of a telephonic survey). In an "on-the-street" consumer survey, the frame may be defined as a 'listing' of people who might reasonably be expected to pass by the interviewer during a specified period.
- Refusals and Non-Response: The sample plan must include provision for how refusals and non-response are to be handled. Of concern is whether additional sampling units are to be chosen as replacements and, if so, how these are to be selected.



4. **Sample Size**: Somewhat related to sample design, but in many ways a separate decision area for the investigator, is the determination of the sample size. In general, size of the sample is directly related to precision. There are 4 general traditional approaches to this determination. The first 3 are: (1) **arbitrary** or **judgmental**, (2) **minimum cell size** needed for analysis, and (3) **budget-based** (particularly when a huge, cost-intensive study is being launched). The fourth approach involves the opposite procedure. That is, by **specifying a desired precision in advance**, sample size can be arrived at.

   An objection the researchers very frequently face is that "the sample size was too small to lead to any meaningful inferences", but the question to be asked is: does adding more respondents to the sample necessarily add value to the results.

Fixed V/s Sequential Sampling: As the name implies, in **fixed size sampling**, the number of items is decided upon in advance in such a way as to achieve some type of balance between sample reliability and sample cost. In general, **all observations are taken before the data are analysed.**

In **sequential sampling**, however, the analyst goes by a decision rule that includes not only the alternative of stopping the sampling process (and taking appropriate action, based on the sample evidence already in hand) but also the possibility of collecting more information before making a terminal decision. Observations may be taken either singly or collectively, the chief novelty being that **the data are analysed as they are assembled and sample size is not pre-determined.**

In general, sequential sampling has the **benefit** of leading to smaller (more manageable) sample sizes, on the average, than those associated with fixed size samples of a given reliability. The **disadvantages** are that: (1) the

mathematics underlying sequential sampling are more complex and time-consuming and (2) the problem may be such that it fixed size sampling becomes preferable to a sequential sampling.

5. **Costs of Sampling**: The sample plan must take into consideration the estimated costs of sampling. Such costs are two **types**: (1) **Overhead Costs**: these are relatively fixed for a sampling procedure, and (2) **Variable Costs**: these depend on the scope of the study. In reality, it is difficult, and perhaps not even reasonable, to separate sampling costs from overall study costs. Consequently, in a typical study, costs from all aspects of the study are usually considered together. (See **Annexures** for a specimen of the survey cost sheet).

6. **Execution of Sampling Process**: This is the last step in sample planning. Here, in short, the sample is actually chosen. There are 2 basic requirements for the sampling process to fulfill. These are:

The sample must be **representative** and **adequate**. A **representative** sample is a relatively small piece of the population that mirrors the various patterns and sub-classes of the population. A sample is **adequate** when it is of sufficient size to provide confidence in the stability of its characteristics.

WHY PROBABILITY SAMPLING?

A probability sampling is a method of sampling that utilizes a process that ensures for the different units in your population, an equal probability of being chosen. It is preferred because such a sample is most likely to be representative.

The various types of Probability Sampling are:

- **Simple Random**: This is the **best known type** of probability sampling. In such a sample, each sample element has a known and equal probability of selection. Here, we use a table of random numbers, a computer random number generator, or a mechanical device to select the sample. A mechanical device may, however, fail to mix the whole set of accessible elements thoroughly and thus limit the randomness of selection. Computer programs, apart from being more perfect, are also less expensive.

The **benefit** of simple random sampling is that it is easy to accomplish and easy to explain to others. Because simple random sampling is a fair way to select a sample, it is reasonable to generalize the results from the samples back to the population.

However, on the **negative side**, it is not the most statistically efficient method of sampling and you may, just because of the luck of the draw, not get good representation of sub-groups in a population. To deal with these issues, we have to turn to other sampling methods.

- **Systematic Random Sampling**: To use systematic sampling in drawing a sample of size of say, 20, the population (say, 100 people) must be listed in a random order. The sampling fraction would be f = 20%. In this case, the interval size, k, is equal to 100/20 = 5. Now, select a random integer from 1 to 5. In our example, imagine that you chose 4. Now, to select the sample, start with the 4^{th} unit in the list and take every k'th unit (i.e., every 5^{th} unit). You would be sampling units 4, 9, 14, 19 and so on to 100 and you would wind up with 20 units in your sample.

The **benefits** of this system are:

(1) you only have to select a single random number to start things off,

(2) it may also be more precise than simple random sampling, and,

(3) In cases where the population is too large or the time available for survey is too limited, it is more feasible to draw a systematic random sample.

- **Stratified Random Sampling (also called Proportionate Random Sampling[1] or Quota Random Sampling)**: This method involves dividing the population into homogenous sub-groups and then taking a simple random sample in each sub-group.

There are several reasons **why this method is preferable to simple random sampling. First**, if one wants to be able to talk about all key sub-groups, especially small ones, this may be the only way to effectively assure one will be able to. **Second**, stratified random sampling will generally have more statistical precision than simple random sampling. This will only be true if the strata or groups are homogenous. If they are, we expect that the variability-within-groups is lower than the variability for the population as a whole. Stratified random sampling capitalizes on this fact.

In the Millenium Survey recently taken up by Public Affairs Centre, a variant of the stratified random sampling was used. Here, while selecting the sample, a four-stage procedure was followed. In the first stage, 6 districts were selected from all over the state. The subsequent stages were:

II. **Block Selection**

On an average, the districts have 9-10 blocks. Under the proposed study, 5 blocks will be randomly selected in each district.

III. **Village Selection**

In each of the selected blocks, 5 villages will be randomly selected.

IV. **Household Selection**

Two options were considered:

Option I

Six districts (30% of the total districts in the state) will provide the universe for the survey. Five blocks in each district, five villages in each block and 20 households in each village will be randomly selected.

No. of sample districts	No. of sample blocks	No. of sample villages	No. of sample households
6	30	150	3000

Option II

Recognizing the need to develop a more comprehensive database for some (say 50%) of the sample districts, it was thought for those districts, 7 blocks instead of 5 would be selected randomly, so that the sample structure looks like:

	No. of sample districts	No. of sample blocks	No. of sample villages	No. of sample households
Comprehensive Distt. level study	3	21	105	2100
State level study	3	15	75	1500
Total	6	36	180	3600

Option II was finally selected for the study.

- **Cluster (Area) Sampling**: This method was invented to overcome the difficulties in doing a random sampling of a population spread over a large

[1] When we use the same sampling fraction within strata, we are conducting proportionate stratified random sampling. When we use different sampling fractions in the strata, we call this disproportionate stratified random sampling.

area. It is used primarily for **efficiency of administration** and lower **interviewing costs**. However, the **reliability of results in this case may not be any better** than in a simple random sampling.

The steps involved in cluster sampling are:
1. Divide population into clusters (usually along geographic boundaries)
2. Random sample the clusters
3. Measure all units within sampled clusters

- **Multi-Stage Sampling**: In cluster sampling, only one level of sampling takes place (e.g., a sampling of blocks) before the basic elements are sampled (e.g., the households). However, if one or more successive samples within the larger area are taken before settling on the final clusters, the resulting design is usually referred to as a multi-stage area sample. That is, even within sampled blocks, households are sampled and only selected households are finally interviewed.

NON-PROBABILITY SAMPLING

Sometimes, non-probability sampling may be needed. Non-probability sampling is different in the sense that it does not involve random selection.

The various types of non-probability sampling are:

Accidental, Haphazard or Convenience & Purposive

Accidental, Haphazard or Convenience:

This is a generic term covering a wide variety of *ad hoc* procedures used for selecting respondents. It includes the traditional man-on-the-street interviews. Convenience sampling means that the sampling units are **accessible, convenient** and **easy to measure, cooperative** or **articulate** and a relatively large number of interviews **can be obtained quickly**. There is no evidence that such samples are representative of the populations one wants to generalize to.

In relation to Report Cards, such sampling is not used except for in those cases where an in-depth case study is being attempted.

Purposive Sampling:

This implies "sampling with a purpose in mind". We usually would have one or more specific pre-defined groups we are seeking. So, when we check before interviewing someone whether he meets the predefined criteria that we have set, we are being purposive. This method can be **useful when** we need to reach a targeted group quickly. But the **downside** is that we are also likely to overweigh the sub-groups in our population that are more readily accessible. Purposive sampling was done by PAC while conducting a study in which the target group was the property tax-payers.

- **Quota Sampling**: The most commonly employed non-probability sampling procedure. Here, the sizes of various sub-classes or strata in the population are first estimated from some outside source, such as from Bureau of the Census Data. For example, one may use census data to find out the proportion of the adult population who fall into various age-by-sex-by-education classes.

  In quota sampling, the interviewer may not select the respondents necessary to fill each quota, on a random basis. This is where it is **different from stratified random sampling.**

  The **benefit** of using quotas is that it makes it **easier and cheaper** for the interviewer to select his respondents.

  Quota sampling can be of two **types**: Proportional and Non-Proportional. In proportional quota sampling, you want to represent the major characteristics of the population by sampling a proportional amount of each. The problem here is that one has to decide the specific characteristics on which to base the quota (such as, gender, age, race, religion etc.). Non-proportional quota sampling is less restrictive. In this

method, you specify a number of sampled units you want in each category. Here, you are not concerned with having numbers that match the proportions in the population. Instead, you simply want to have enough to assure that you will be able to talk about even small groups in the population. It is typically used to ensure that smaller groups are adequately represented in your sample.

- **Expert / Judgment Sampling**: This involves the assembling of a sample of persons with known or demonstrable experience and expertise in some area.

  There may be **two reasons** for doing expert sampling. **First**, because it would be the best way to elicit the views of persons who have a specific expertise. In this case, expert sampling is essentially a sub-case of purposive sampling. **Second** reason is to provide evidence for the validity of another sampling approach you might have chosen. You might convene an expert panel consisting of persons with acknowledged experience and insight into that field or topic and ask them to examine your modal definitions and comment on their appropriateness and validity.

  The **advantage** of doing this is that you have some acknowledged experts to back your decisions. The **disadvantage** is that even the experts can be, and often are, wrong.

(See **Annexures** for more on Sampling-related Terminology)

DESIGNING QUESTIONNAIRES

Designing questions that elicit accurate responses from the respondents could turn out to be a challenging job. Clear, coherent questions with interesting and appropriate response choices prompt accurate and consistent responses. The major challenge is to frame questions that are valid and reliable measures of what you want to know and to avoid things that diminish these qualities.

A Checklist of the Basics

Which structure or format is best for a question? What kind of response choices should be offered? What variations should be incorporated so that the respondent wouldn't be bored? What type of question is best for the kind of information needed? Here are some suggestions:

- Specify and rank order, from most to least important, the information objectives of the survey.
- Enumerate the kinds of information needed from respondents that relate to each information objective. Are they opinions, attitudes, beliefs, or attributes?
- Rank the items in each topical group in the order of their importance to the study.
- For each item in each group, try to answer these questions:
  Why ask this? (How is it linked to the purpose of the study)
  Who in the target population knows about it, and are likely to have an opinion about it?
  How will the responses to this item be coded?
  What kind of statistical analysis will be performed with this variable?
- Place the most interesting item(s) in the most important battery of questions at the beginning of the questionnaire.

Question Type

The two basic question types are open- ended and closed- ended. The respondents answer open ended questions in their own words. For closed-ended questions, the researcher offers limited response choices. The following chart lists out the major advantages and disadvantages associated with each type.

Question Type	*Applications*
Open-ended	Allows respondents to answer in their own words. Useful for exploratory research questions that need to probe people's preferences, priorities, and positions. Appropriate when mutually exclusive and exhaustive response choices are difficult to devise or when such a list increases the complexity.
Partially closed-ended	The most probable or likely choices are presented but the list cannot be exhaustive because there is reason to suspect that opinion delivery exists among a small segment of the population. The question type permits respondents to offer their own answers.
Close ended with ordered choices	Especially useful for determining frequency of participation, intensity of feeling, or degree of involvement or contact. A scale that represents a gradation of a single concept distinguishes this question type. This format is especially useful for a series of attitude and belief questions.
Close ended with unordered choices	Used to help establish priorities, decide on alternative policies, or enumerate behaviours as long as the choices are exhaustive and mutually exclusive.

How to Avoid Bias in Questionnaire Design

A bias is said to exist whenever some feature of the survey instrument or interview process leads to a response that is not a genuine measure of the

respondent's true opinion, attitude, belief, or attribute. The bias can occur in the instructions, question wording, question order, response choices, or the format of the instrument. Some common biases are given below:

Instrumentation Bias: The major sources of instrumentation bias are unclear or vague vocabulary, poor grammar, excessively demanding questions, loaded questions, unbalanced or overlapping response choices, and reliance on a single question to measure complex concepts. Interviewers may also induce an bias through voice inflection that suggests preferred responses or by inconsistently phrasing questions.

Acquiescence Response Set Bias: Sometimes, there is a tendency for people to answer questions in a specific direction. Respondents become bored quickly when they encounter too many questions with the same format, and they may superficially scan for answers they think apply, to end the ordeal quickly.

Straight-Line Response Set Bias: This may occur when a long series of questions or statements with identical answer choices appears on a page. Use of the same "agree-disagree" scale for a long list of items is a recipe for disaster. The respondent may mark the first few items accurately and thereafter, finding the process boring, speed through the rest of the items by marking the same response for subsequent statements. Varying the arrangement, structure, and format of questions, and selecting different types of questions, eliminates straight line response bias.

Framing Effective Questions: The Report Card Strategy

The Report Card questionnaire follows a flow of five basic types of questions to arrive at optimal interviewing efforts:

- **LEAD IN QUESTION(S)**

These serve as an introduction of your interview, starts the flow of responses, and establishes rapport with the respondent.

Example. Greetings! *I am ..... from ..... organization. We are currently trying to understand problems experienced with organizations which provide important public services to you... Could I please talk to the head of the household?*

- **QUALIFYING QUESTIONS**
  These are used to determine the eligibility of the respondent to provide the desired information.
  Ex. *Could you please look at this card and tell me the income range of your household?* If, for example, the respondent answers that the monthly income is below Rs. 1,000, the interview is terminated because the Report Card Household studies are only interested in tracking sample populations at a certain income level.

- **WARM-UP QUESTIONS**
  These are used to focus thinking and memory.
  Ex. *The agencies listed on this card provide services to the public. Which agency's services have you used in the last 6 months?* In the Report Card survey, this type of question establishes the respondent's contact with a particular agency.

- **SPECIFICS**
  These questions extract the opinions and information sought by the study.
  Ex. *On an overall basis, how satisfied are you with this agency after your experience with it? How satisfied were you with the behaviour of the staff towards you? Did you have to pay anything extra to people in the agency to get your work done?* The Report Card survey uses these questions to focus on 1) overall satisfaction and dissatisfaction levels, and 2) service dimensions which contribute to those levels.

- **DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS**
  These describe the person and/or household who responded.
  Ex. *Could you please tell me your occupation? What is your educational background?* This information is especially important when looking at the socio-economic variables that might influence the quality of public services provided.

Each of the example questions listed above are closed questions. These offer the respondent a choice of answers. They may be simple yes/no questions or multiple choice. With the latter, be cautious about the choices you provide; piloting your questionnaire will hopefully reveal unexpected responses. Closed

PILOTING, CODING & ANALYSIS

Piloting

Pretesting the questionnaire in the form of a 'Pilot Survey' is a critical quality control strategy. Piloting facilitates the researcher to identify and correct problems with question wording, questionnaire structure, or administration. **Remember ! the time spent on planning and pretesting your questionnaire has a direct effect on the quality of the final results.**

What should you keep in mind when doing a pretest ? Three criteria are usually indicated :

- How easily the respondent can understand the questions as worded
- Whether the respondent can understand the question consistently
- Whether the respondent answer the question accurately with the response choices provided

Problems arise when interviewers do not read each question as worded, respondents regularly ask for clarification of questions' meanings or give inadequate or inappropriate answers. A simple "problem-no problem" rating can be used to evaluate questions. If problems occur for given questions in more than 15% of the pilot interviews, it can be safely assumed that the questions are highly likely to produce distorted data or distinctively susceptible to interviewer effects. Interviewer debriefings and the recorded or observed difficulties should indicate which questions need to be revised, relocated, or deleted.

Coding

The object of coding is to give each answer a number which can than be processed by computer. Many quantitative questions can be pre-coded and can be completed by the field worker at the time of the interview. Open-ended responses must be analyzed and each response given a number. It is also

recommend that one person completes the coding task to maintain consistency in response interpretation.

FIELD WORK

Regardless of how finely tuned your questionnaire becomes, it is the actual collection of the data that largely determines the validity of your study. Strict guidelines for data collection must be outlined and clearly articulated to each of your field staff. Group training and/or manuals are a good way to reinforce uniformity between field workers. One supervisor should oversee this stage of the Report Card study. This person should enforce rigid adherence to the data collection process through close supervision. He or she should also perform periodic quality checks to ensure the reliability of the data submitted by each of the field workers. This can be done by randomly selecting completed surveys and doing follow-up interviews with the respondents, either over the phone or in person, to confirm their original answers.

The importance of conducting a truly random sample cannot be understated. All of your work rests on the assumption that those interviewed are a random, and thus, representative sample of your city's entire population. To ensure randomness, your household selection process should be well thought out and grilled into the routines of each of the field workers. Once you have selected the localities you wish to survey, establish a starting point (e.g., the post office) and then follow a consistent pattern. For example, the interviewer will stop at every third house. If a complete questionnaire cannot be fully administered, he or she will continue to the very next house and resume the original pattern. Do not forget to include directional instructions (e.g., turn left at every second junction).

MAKING SENSE OF NUMBERS

In many ways, the analysis process is the easiest stage of your survey. Yet, even in its relative simplicity, thorough analysis requires a degree of expertise. It is best if the person assigned to this works independently to maintain continuity.

Data can be analyzed using several techniques. These include simple techniques of averages, data ranges, frequency and mid-point, as well as more technical analytical tools. Be certain to use only the techniques that match your objectives. Several computer programs which deal specifically with statistical analysis, such as *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)* and *Statistical Analysis System (SAS)* are widely available. Before you invest in one, determine the complexity of the results you expect, and then decide if the investment in a software package is necessary. With basic spreadsheet programs like *Microsoft Excel* and *Lotus 1-2-3*, you can easily generate basic linear regression models. The results from these simple tools of analysis often provide adequate statistical insight into your issue or problem.

Processed data will be presented as a series of tables. These will show the number of respondents who gave a particular answer to a particular question. Tables will be provided for the sample as a whole and for sub-samples (e.g., by age, occupation, or gender, etc.). It is important to generate usable data. It is easy to ask for too many tables, but the majority of tables are often left unused. In times of questioning or doubt, consider your original objectives.

The interpretation process, in contrast, can be undertaken by any number of people who possess a good understanding of the problem. In fact, the inclusion of multiple perspectives at this stage can greatly enrich the overall impact of your Report Card. There are some basic points you should keep in mind when interpreting your findings:

• Do not be a slave to techniques - select the appropriate technique for the task in hand • Be clear on your norms for interpretation - link them back to your original objectives • Keep your eyes open for: - typical patterns - unusual patterns - significant differences - significant relationships	• Use a mix of analytical tools • Remember that the results are only as good as the data from which they are obtained • Results must be understood by the public even if sophisticated research techniques have been used • Analysis provides the basis for interpretation, decisions and action - technical skills are not a substitute for experience and judgement

The interpretation stage is also significant because it is when the Report Card becomes tangible. At this point, a report or extensive summary of the findings should be written. Determine who you want your audience(s) to be beforehand and prepare a Report Card suitable to its comprehension level. In-depth statistical analysis of the findings may be better suited for academics or government agencies than for local citizen groups. Your report should be well organized, readable and supported by your data.

DISSEMINATION OF FINDINGS

The utilization of the research effort is of paramount importance since it helps us to understand the processes better and thereby enhance the quality of life. Utilization occurs when the research is of *high quality*, the findings lead to *practical interventions*, the findings *conforms with the users expectations* and whether and how much the findings *challenged current practices*. Some other factors which enhance the utilization are the client's information needs, decision characteristics, the political climate, and the availability of competing information.

The research findings could be categorised as follows :

- *Knowledge driven* or conducted to gain knowledge
- *Problem solving* or providing evidence to help solve policy problems
- *Interactive* or combining with experience to provide solutions to problems
- *Political* or supporting predetermined positions or advocating
- *Tactical* or supporting immediate needs
- Enlightenment or helping to make better sense of the environment

Communicating the Research Findings

A carefully planned and well-executed survey is a fruitless exercise unless the final report clearly communicates what was done, how it was done and what was found. The final package has to explain these factors so that the citizens can judge the accuracy of the research and the utility of the findings. A good and effective way to disseminate the findings are media releases. These releases help to minimise reportorial misinterpretations and helps in facilitating a broad public discourse about what citizens think and what administrators should do in response. Since the audience for the official report and press releases are different, the design and content of these vary.

NATIONAL WORKSHOP ON REPORT CARD APPROACH, BANGALORE, OCTOBER 25-27, 1999.

The Survey Report

An effective report is well organized, clearly written, and concise. It should include the following:

- The Executive Summary: The executive summary is the leadoff for the report. It highlights in one or two pages the contents of the report and presents a highly condensed version of the project's purpose, methodology, and major findings. It should also contain a list of recommended actions suggested by the findings.

- Survey Objectives: This section should relate the reasons for doing the survey, what information was needed and why, and how this information was expected to inform specific types of deliberations, decisions, or actions by various actors.

- Methodology: This section should explain how the information was gathered, when it was collected, the response rate, and what the confidence level and margin of error mean in the context of the response rate to the sample. The objective here is to present a thorough, accurate, and honest description of what he or she did and how. Remember! The quality of the research effort is distinguished by the methods employed.

- Major Findings: This section should summarize the results and review them in order of their importance or interest to the audience. Tables should be used to summarise the main findings, and the most interesting results should be highlighted with appropriate graphic illustrations.

- Implications of the Findings: This section should answer the "So what?" question and discuss the deductions that are possible from the findings that relate to the objectives of the survey. The findings should have implications concerning what is being done right, what is not, and how particular changes may improve, enhance, or otherwise affect the service or policy. Whatever is gleaned from the results, the inferences must be based on the evidence obtained, tempered by an understanding of the limits of survey research.

Media Releases

Media releases are effective conduits to disseminate accurate information about the survey and its findings. The executive summary of the final report should provide a good starting point to draft a release. To enable a non-technical audience to assess the accuracy of the findings, the release should stress the following points

- Who was surveyed, when they were contacted, the method of contact, and the size of the sample
- The response rate
- What were the major issues that were explored
- Analysis of the responses
- Identifying problem areas
- Suggest areas for improvements

FROM THEORY TO ACTION: SOME CASES

The Report Card methodology is more than just a quantitative snapshot of citizen satisfaction levels. With a vital plan of action, it can take on shape and substance.

At this point, it is helpful to revisit the questions you and your advisory group discussed from the Planning and Strategizing section. Were you able to obtain the information you expected, and did this information come from the people you expected it to come from? If so, what sort of operational changes did you anticipate making then? Is your group or organization prepared and willing to invest in new programs or to augment old ones in light of your new Report Card findings? These questions should again be cast out to a wide net of interested parties and advisors. This collaborative brainstorming can examine a wide range of possible impacts of the Report Card and, thus, help to stimulate innovative approaches to achieving them.

There are several valuable points to keep in mind when you are drawing up your Report Card plan of action:

• Know what you want to achieve • Be clear on your objectives and strategies; multiple options are available: - Disseminating information - Mobilizing the media - Education citizens about their civic rights and responsibilities - Catalyzing the government to respond - Developing pro-active programs and projects - Creating alliances among citizen groups, NGOs, the business community, willing government agencies • Be innovative and creative in your responses	• Do not assume instant impact; be ready for both positive and negative responses: - In Bangalore, the lowest rated BDA took over a year and a half to actively respond to the findings of the Report Card. Subsequently, they have requested consultation from PAC to curb corruption and increase public accountability. - In New York City, the Straphangers Campaign undertook bi-yearly Report Cards to measure subway reliability. Yet, even with the reoccurring assessment mechanism, they noted an overall decline in service delivery from one survey to the next. This suggested a disinterest in the quality of service by the Transit Authority. Subsequent action by the Authority, however, positively lead to an increase in the capital budget.

The introduction of the Report Card methodology itself is an innovative step in furthering the cause of improved local governance. Done properly, the Report Card can provide a systematic measure of citizen feedback with regards to their experiences and satisfaction levels of urban services. This quantitative tool can be a powerful new instrument of collective public voice at all levels of government and all stages of democracies.

Some examples of Report Card Studies initiated by PAC are illustrated below :

A Report Card on Hospital Services for the Poor in Bangalore

" It is 5.00 a.m. The emergency ward of the government hospital is deserted. The patient is brought in a critical condition. However, there is nobody in sight to provide any assistance. After much labour, a doctor is ushered in by a reluctant nurse and a ward assistant. There is no sense of urgency in the trainee doctors's movements. The patient's condition deteriorates. Medicines are prescribed, but the pharmacy is shut. The patient, a victim of apathy, finally succumbs to her illness".

This is not a chilling adaptation from a medical whodunit. This is a real life incident narrated by the victim's daughter who had to undergo the harrowing experience at a public hospital in Bangalore.

While medical services have undergone many technological advances, the deteriorating quality of health care provided by public hospitals poses alarming questions. The issue becomes more stark when it comes to the question of the service to the poor; lack of awareness, illiteracy and inability to pay open market rates for health services further compounds the problem.

How do citizens, especially the poor, experience these services ? What are their perceptions on the health care system ? Where are the improvements required ? To examine these issues, the Public Affairs Centre, MBA and the Citizens Action Group (CAG), an NGO based at Bangalore, designed and carried out a study to assess the nature and extent of problems encountered by the poor in their interactions with the health care system in Bangalore.

The Report Card on health care services was based on a sample survey of user perceptions and ratings from four categories of hospitals : large public hospitals, City Corporation run Maternity hospitals, Mission and Charity hospitals and Private hospitals. The study also involved a series of interviews with hospital administrators to identify systems and processes that explain some of the perceptions articulated by the respondents. As a run-up to the larger exercise, short case studies were generated, focussing on themes like *access, availability and quality of services, cost of services, reliability of services including diagnostic services, timely availability of drugs, patient information systems and extent of corruption.*

The field study was designed using inputs from these case studies. It covered a sample of 361 citizens drawn from 12, 896 economically weak households spread over sity-five locations. The in-patient sample covered 108 users of Government hospitals, 46 users of Corporation hospitals, 63 users of Mission and Charity hospitals and 63 users of Private hospitals. Eighty one out-patients were covered for the study; this includes 47 users of Government hospitals and 34 users of Mission and Charity hospitals. The survey explored areas such as :

- Usage profile of different types of health care services
- Quality of medical care and facilities
- Cost of services
- Behaviour of doctors and hospital staff
- Dynamics of `speed money'

- Overall satisfaction with the service

The study highlighted certain issues that call for immediate responses :

- The most significant issue seem to be the quality of medical care offered to the poor in the government hospitals. To start with, the waiting time prior to receiving medical attention and treatment seem to be quite high. Second, injections and medicines, presumably free or subsidised, are not available at government hospitals. However, the most critical problem seems to be the total absence of standards or the lack of awareness among the patients about what they can expect at hospitals. Viewed from these perspectives, Mission and Private hospitals seem to be serving the poor in a much better manner.

- The manner in which activities are managed in the Government hospitals calls for immediate attention. A good illustrative example would be the extent of cleanliness maintained. Although there was no major difference in the frequency with which cleaning was carried out across, different types of hospitals, the level of cleanliness at government hospitals was rated the worst in comparative terms. Similarly, the poor are made to run from pillar to post to find medicines (in many instances, even for obtaining life saving drugs!) when being treated in government hospitals.

- A compulsive strategy that the poor resort to in seeking better quality of services is to make speed money payments. This approach is applied for all levels of medical personnel (from doctors to sweepers), and for all types of services (from operations to entering wards without authorisation). Although there is a wide variation in the quantum of payments,the problem seems to be most acute in Corporation hospitals, which are used by the poor for maternity cases.

- Finally, it is observed that patients who have been in-patients at government hospitals are less likely to follow up their treatment with subsequent visits. While part of this tendency can be expalined in terms of the general attitude to avoid hospitals as far as possible, the poor quality of instructions that patients receive is also an important factor.

The study generated wide interest among the media; Times of India, Bangalore carried a series of reports and news-stories based on the findings.

Making Them Heard : A Report Card on Public Services in Ahmedabad by SEWA members.

SEWA or the Self Employed Womens Association is an NGO committed to improve the quality of life of women in both urban and rural areas. The SEWA

movement which began in Ahmedabad in the early 70's has today evolved into a national forum with a membership of over a million and has a strong presence in most urban centres.

Most of the SEWA members in Ahmedabad reside in low income settlements or slums. The availability and quality of public services in these areas leave much to be desired, leading to a high incidence of diseases. Repeated efforts by SEWA to bring the plight of the residents to the notice of the officials failed to produce the desired results. In this context, it was felt that the representation could be made stronger by conducting an objective study which could highlight the problems more starkly. It was here that the concept of Report Cards came in much handy. The mantle for conducting the exercise fell upon another NGO based in Ahmedabad - the Foundation for Public Interest (FPI). FPI got in touch with PAC to help implant the Report Card Methodology to obtain systematic and validated feedback on various dimensions of public service delivery in Ahmedabad. Members from FPI were provided training by PAC and MBA (who also supervised the conduct of the survey). Around 1200 SEWA members, spread over 12 slum areas, were selected for the survey. Salient highlights of the exercise are briefly stated below:

- Food and Civil Supplies (95%), Corporation Sewage (91%) and Water Supply (88%) were the most used agencies; Corporation and Collectorate (13%), Police (20%) and Health and Family Welfare (84%) were the least used.
- Post & Telegraph (86%), Electricity Board (84%) and Health and Family Welfare (84%) were rated as the most satisfactory services; the dubious distinction of being the least satisfactory service went to Toilets (25%), followed by Water Supply (33%) and Corporation Collectorate (36%).

- Only six percent of the respondents had contacted an agency. Fifty one percent expressed happiness with the behaviour of the staff, while 73 % expressed unhappiness with the time taken to solve their problems.

- One in three respondents who interacted with an agency had to pay speed money. In 72% of the cases, the money was asked for by the official. The average amount paid was Rs. 289.

But what gave the exercise more meaning was certain `spin-offs' that emerged as a result of the survey:

- A unique forum called "our city" table was set up at the SEWA office where the members can get all information required for interacting with any public service agency

- The findings of the study was conveyed to the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation; the Corporation has responded by starting a project called Parivartan to improve all the services provided by it in the areas covered by the study. The findings were also shared with the corporators of the study areas.
- Two training programmes, structured around the major findings from the study, were conducted for the leaders among the SEWA members in each of the 12 areas to help them monitor quality of services in their area. Further plans are underway to conduct `Report Card studies' on an annual basis to monitor progress.

ANNEXURE I

SOME IMPORTANT TERMS

- **Response:** This is a specific measurement value that a sampling unit supplies.
- **Statistic:** When we look across the responses that we get for our entire sample, we use a statistic, such as a mean, a median or a mode. A statistic represents a specific characteristic of the sample.
- **Parameter:** When we measure the entire population and calculate a value like a mean or average, we don't refer to this as a statistic; we call it a **parameter** of the population.
- **Random-Digit Dialing:** In those instances where a physical listing of the accessible population is not available, the frame is a procedure that produces a result equivalent to a physical listing. For example, take **Random-digit Dialing**, which is a variant of sample frame. Here the frame is not a set of people but a **way of selecting** it.
- **Sub-sample:** The group that actually completes your study as against the group you had initially identified as your sample.
- **Over-sampling:** If the sub-group is extremely small, one can use different sampling fractions (f) within the different strata to randomly **over-sample** the small group (although this will add one complication; one will have to weight the within-group estimates using the same sampling fraction whenever one wants overall population estimates).
- **Sampling Distribution:** The sample we take for study is just one of the infinite number of samples that we could have taken. The distribution of an infinite number of samples of the same size as the sample in our study is known as the sampling distribution.
- **Standard Deviation:** A standard deviation is the spread of the scores around the average in a single sample.

- **Sampling Error**: The greater your sample size, the closer your sample is to the actual population itself. Hence, the sampling error is smaller. A low sampling error means that we have relatively less variability or range in the sampling distribution.
- **Sub-categories of Purposive Sampling:**

1. **Modal Instance Sampling**: In statistics, the mode is the most frequently occurring value in a distribution The modal instance sampling involves sampling the most frequent or the typical case. In a lot of informal public opinion polls, for instance, a typical voter is interviewed.

But there are a number of **problems** with this sampling approach. **Firstly**, how do we know **what the 'typical' or 'modal' case is**? We could say that the modal voter is a person who is of average age, educational level, and income in the population. But it is not clear that using the averages of these is the fairest (considering the skewed distribution of income etc.). **Secondly**, how do you know that a particular variable or a set of variables (age, education, income etc.) is the **only or even the most relevant** of all for classifying the typical respondent? What if religion or ethnicity is an important discriminator? Clearly, modal instance sampling is only sensible for informal sampling contexts.

2. **Heterogeneity Sampling**: We sample for heterogeneity when we imagine that there is a universe of all possible ideas (held by a set of people) relevant to some topic, we want to sample this population (not of people but of ideas) and that we want to include all opinions or views, not necessarily proportionately. Another term for this is 'sampling for diversity'.

This happens particularly in brainstorming processes where our primary interest is in getting a broad spectrum of ideas, not in identifying the 'average' or 'modal instance' ones. In essence, what we would like to sample is not people, but ideas.

Clearly, in order to get all of the ideas, and especially the unusual ones, we have to include a broad and diverse range of participants. Heterogeneity sampling is, in this sense, **almost the opposite of modal instance sampling.**

3. Snowball/ Multiplicity Sampling: Here, begin by randomly identifying someone who meets the criteria for inclusion in the study. We then ask them to recommend others known to them who also meet the criteria (these are the **primary referrals**). Now referrals are obtained from these referrals, and so on, thus leading to the term '**snowballing**'.

Although this method would hardly lead to representative samples, there are times when it may be the best method available. This is **especially useful** when you are trying to estimate various characteristics that are rare in the total population / to reach populations that are inaccessible or hard to find (rare).

Even though some probability-based procedure may be used to select the initial group of respondents, the **overall sample is a non-probability sample.** For example, referrals will tend to exhibit demographic profiles that are more similar to those of the persons referring them than to what would be expected by chance.