



CIVIL SOCIETY PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

... promoting democratic values & articulating voice of the voiceless!

S U P P O R T E D B Y



The Asia Foundation



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Project No.: 30418
Task No.: 130
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Close Out Report
October 2005



Sankat Mochan Foundation

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14th October 2005

Sushri Dinesha deSilva Wikramanayake
The Asia Foundation
3/1 Rajakeeya Mawatha
(Racecourse Avenue)
Colombo 7, Sri Lanka

Dear Sushri Dinesha ji,

Enclosed is the close out report for the third The Asia Foundation grant period 2004 – 2005 for the Civil Society Partnership Program at the Sankat Mochan Foundation, Varanasi.

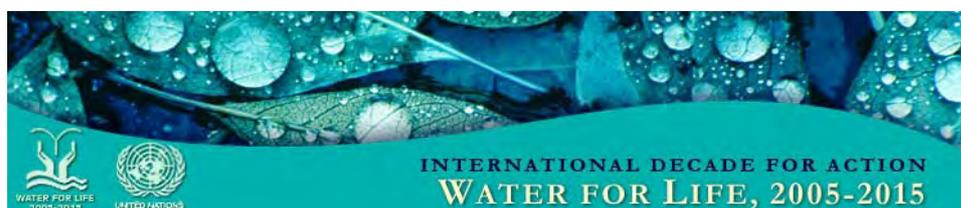
With The Asia Foundation involvement in the program drawing to a close, may I take this opportunity to thank each and every one of your colleagues for their kindness and guidance these past three years. Together, we have seen the germination of more knowledgeable civil society governance in the holy city that is charged with the enormous undertaking of dealing with the fate of the declining River Ganga. The Campaign for a Clean Ganga itself has spread beyond our city to the national stage – thanks in part to TAF support.

I hope you will have the occasion to visit us again, here at Tulsi Ghat.

Again, my heartfelt thanks.

Sincerely,

Dr Veer Bhadra Mishra
President
Sankat Mochan Foundation





14th October 2005

Ms Dinesha deSilva Wikramanayake
The Asia Foundation
3/1 Rajakeeya Mawatha
(Racecourse Avenue)
Colombo 7, Sri Lanka

Dear Dinesha,

Mahantji has put it so well. There is little more to say, except to also express my thanks for your dedication and support for this project these past three years.

The Asia Foundation support came at a crucial period, and in my opinion has paid off in terms of slowly improving municipal governance conditions in Varanasi – starting at an extremely low level – and the national takeoff of the *Swatcha Ganga Abhiyaan* (Campaign for a Clean Ganga).

Our work is by no means over. But perhaps we have reached the end of the beginning?

Thanks once again!

Sincerely,

Amitayush Vyas
Civil Society Partnership Program
Sankat Mochan Foundation

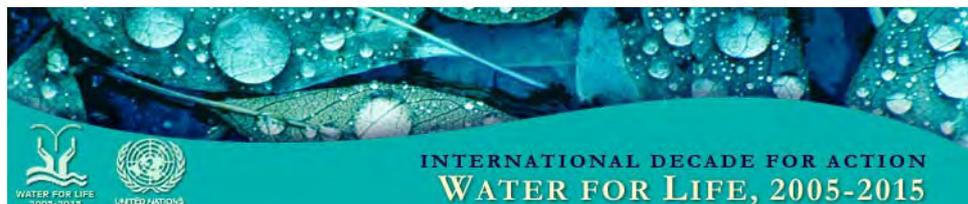


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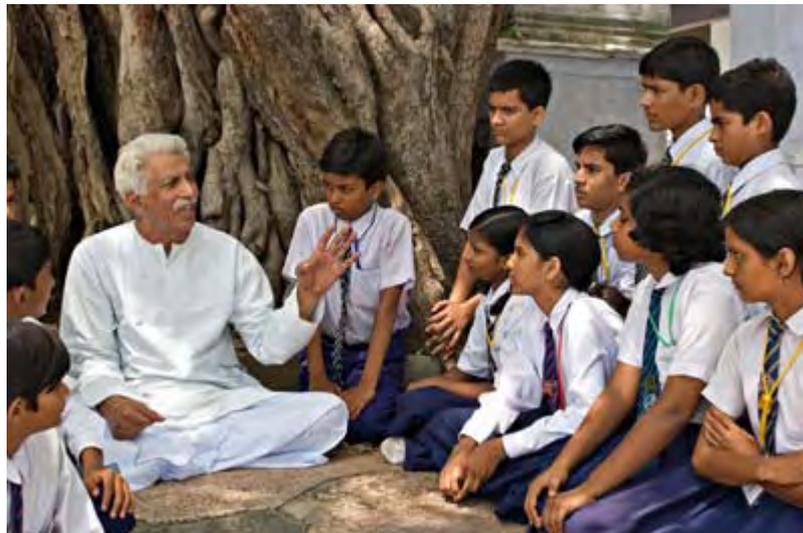
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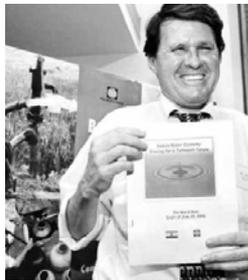
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Close Out Report: October 2005
Civil Society Partnership Program (CSPP)
Sankat Mochan Foundation (SMF), Varanasi, India
Log No.: FOC\05\12
Project No.: 30418
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"India faces a turbulent water future. Unless water management practices are changed — and changed soon — India will face a severe water crisis within the next two decades and will have neither the cash to build new infrastructure nor the water needed by its growing economy and rising population."

Sewage and wastewater from rapidly growing cities and effluents from industries have turned many rivers, including major ones, into fetid sewers. Massive investments are needed in sewers and wastewater treatment plants to protect people's health and improve the environment."

India's Water Economy: Bracing for a Turbulent Future
A Draft World Bank Report
By John Briscoe, The World Bank Country Director for Brazil &
Senior Water Adviser for South Asia
Released in New Delhi on 5th October 2005



<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/SOUTHASIAEXT/INDIAEXTN/0,,menuPK:295589~pagePK:141159~piPK:141110~theSitePK:295584,00.html>



1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



A remarkable agreement was signed in June 2002 between The Asia Foundation (TAF), Regional Office, Colombo, Sri Lanka, and Sankat Mochan Foundation (SMF) in Varanasi, India.

In this agreement, an initial 12-month grant of USD 25,000 was awarded to SMF to promote heightened community awareness, participation and action to deal with the severely polluted River Ganga. An additional grant of USD 11,000 extended the program for a further 12 months, to 30th September 2004. Further, the program was extended till 30th September 2005 with a final grant of USD 11,000.

TAF grants were all made with concurrence from the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) United States-Asia Environmental Partnership (US-AEP) program at the American Embassy in New Delhi.



In addition, the British High Commission in New Delhi granted the sum of GBP 3,000 (about USD 5,000) in the fourth quarter of 2005, and the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Department of State, American Embassy, New Delhi, granted USD 5,804.60 in the same quarter towards Clean Ganga Day 2005 New Delhi.



**Public Affairs Section of the
U.S. Department of State,
American Embassy, New Delhi**

This close out report of the 2004 - 2005 grant period summarizes the status of the project, called Civil Society Partnership Program (CSPP), for the months of August and September along with a three-year program overview.

During the grant period, the project consisted of continued municipal governance capacity building for municipal corporators and others in Varanasi; Clean Ganga Day 2005 on 15th September in New Delhi, an all-day public event that included a top-level river

seminar, student manifestations; two Ganga-themed cultural evenings on 14th and 15th September; a "Distressed River Ganga" photographic exhibition at the India Habitat Centre from 13th to 15th September, and a "Healing the distressed Ganga" corporate luncheon and business leaders' consultations on 16th September at the British High Commission in New Delhi with support from US-AEP Bangkok and US Commercial Service, New Delhi. The website "www.cleangangaday.in" was set up in August to increase public interest and also to act as repository for considerable documentation about Ganga.

The various Clean Ganga Day events amounted to a breakthrough of sorts for the Campaign. Media coverage was brisk and communications specialists have noted that the Clean Ganga Day is now the only firmly established "brand" for the cause of Ganga. Meantime, The Office of the Prime Minister of India, with an understood go-ahead from Shrimati Sonia Gandhi, Chairperson of United Progressive Alliance — the ruling coalition in India; and National Advisory Council — the "super cabinet", requested summaries about the Ganga seminar on September 15 and the corporate workshop the following day. Arun Bhatnagar, Secretary, National Advisory Council, is forming a committee to review the proposals put by Sankat Mochan Foundation regarding Ganga cleanup in Varanasi. Further, Arun Bhatnagar informed the CSPP team that the National Advisory Council on 19th April 2005 has put forward recommendations to the Union Cabinet after bearing in mind the views expressed at Clean Ganga Day 2004 New Delhi regarding empowerment of urban local self-government institutions (LSGIs). The recommendations include:

1. Urban local self-governments should own, manage, monitor and control all new programs and missions
2. The bilateral and multilateral funding agencies may be advised that their support for projects related to the functional domain of local governments as envisaged in Schedule XII of the Indian Constitution has to be contingent upon implementation through elected local governments
3. All state legislations regarding 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments, which do not conform to the Indian Constitution, should be repealed. Citizens must be advised to invoke Writ jurisdiction in the higher judiciary

4. The district tier of the local self-governments should represent the interests of both rural and urban populations of the district
5. The Union and state governments should put in place and implement a comprehensive training and capacity building program for elected representatives of the urban local self-government institutions. External expertise should be sought liberally for carrying out these programmes

In addition there was another welcome development. The Government of India was very well represented at this Clean Ganga Day; the seminar was attended by S K Panigrahi, Director, Environment, of the Planning Commission; and senior bureaucrats from National River Conservation Directorate (NRCD) of the Ministry of Environment and Forests - Lalit Bokolia and Dr K C Rathore; and Manjit Singh and Dr Lalim from Yamuna Action Plan (YAP).



Further, a local Delhi NGO — YouthReach, in association with Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi, wants to emulate the Clean Ganga Day model for its Clean Yamuna Day, starting this year onwards. SMF will guide YouthReach to hold Clean Yamuna Day.

Political interest was evidently triggered by public statements issued by the American Ambassador and also the British High Commissioner who both praised the work of the Campaign in our quest for sustainable solutions for the Ganga.

British High Commissioner Sir Michael Arthur KCMG, who spoke at both the seminar and the workshop, said Britain "was proud to join our partners in USAID, US-AEP and The Asia Foundation in that support." He publicly stated his country would continue to morally and materially support the Campaign.

At the heart of the Campaign is the fact that the Indian state water apparatus is lackadaisical, ineffective and indifferent, and lacks a driving interest in environmental quality.



The World Bank is now driving this message home. In a draft report issued on 5th October, the Bank said that India faces a turbulent water future unless dramatic changes are made, and made soon, in the way in which the government manages water.

The Bank is set to increase its loans to India for water-related sectors and plans to bring knowledge about international good practice to bear. As things stand, "the Indian state water apparatus still shows little interest in the key issues of the management stage: participation, incentives, water entitlements, transparency, entry of the private sector, competition, accountability, financing and environmental quality."

2.0 THREE-YEAR PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Sankat Mochan Foundation (SMF) in Varanasi "has brought the plight of the despoiled Ganga to the attention of the world," as *Time* magazine once put it. The first year of the grant, in 2002-2003, augmented the capabilities of SMF in order to expand its Campaign for a Clean Ganga nationwide, including the nation's first-ever Clean Ganga Day, held in Kolkata (Calcutta). Numerous workshops and lectures across the Ganga Basin were conducted during this period.

At the outset, networking was vital in order to enhance SMF's capabilities. Networking directed its energies toward identifying and cooperating with likeminded organizations and individuals who share our concern about the fate of the Ganga and other Indian rivers.



During the first grant period CSPP established relationships with some 50 parties that include other NGOs, businesses, educational institutions and private individuals, both at home and abroad.



By the end of the first period, relationships ranged from the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) to the Trustees of Pomona College in the US, and included closer interaction with our long-established Friends of the Ganges chapter in San Francisco, as well as the nascent chapter in London. New partners were gradually added during the three-year grant period. They now include The Times Foundation, K.K. Jojodia Foundation, Art of Living Foundation, International Goodwill Society of India, Development Alternatives, Swechha Foundation —





We for Change & We for Yamuna, Delhi Public School Society, India Habitat Centre, YouthReach and the Photography Arts Association of India (PAAI).

At the political level, we commenced interaction with municipal corporations in Ganga Basin cities such as Kanpur and Allahabad, in addition to enhanced interaction with the Municipal Corporation at our home base in Varanasi. In a sense, Varanasi is the model for municipal corporations elsewhere in the Basin: It is the only municipal corporation that is asserting its mandated environmental rights.

The first grant period was therefore crucial in laying the groundwork for the remaining two years of TAF support. It saw many tertiary activities, including translation into Hindi of Ganga-related articles extracted from our former website "www.cleanganga.com" — and their subsequent publication — and production of Hindi language newsletters showcasing the activities of the Campaign. Other promotional materials included Clean Ganga posters targeted in particular to municipal corporators, including those who are illiterate.

During the second year of grant activity, 2003-2004, SMF focused attention on activities within Varanasi municipality and in New Delhi, where the second annual Clean Ganga Day was staged.

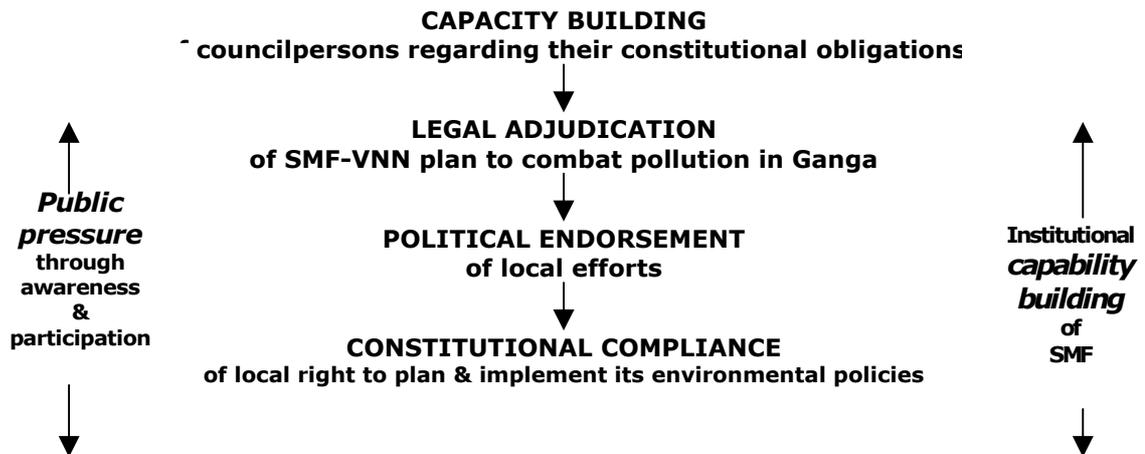
Throughout the entire three years of the program, capacity building of municipal corporators in Varanasi was pushed forward unabated. It is important that municipal corporators fully understand their legal rights in the Indian Constitution. It gives municipalities the mandate to determine environmental policy, among other things. SMF over the years has been working for *constitutional compliance* so that the municipal corporation can fulfill its constitutional obligation towards the citizens of Varanasi and River Ganga.

Since the Uttar Pradesh Government has usurped these rights, a court case supported by SMF is underway to obtain *legal adjudication* to implement the SMF-backed non-electrical sewage treatment solution with gravity interception and diversion to clean the 7 km river stretch in the holy city.

Public pressure, civic capacity building, legal adjudication and political endorsement will pave the way for constitutional compliance of local

civil society rights in Varanasi. This scenario can lead to Union Government's prioritization of a Ganga cleanup nationwide in tandem with local needs, aspirations and conditions. Simultaneously, it calls for the *institutional capability building* of SMF to undertake and achieve these crucial goals, which are in fact cornerstones of 'effectiveness of civil society discourse' for our nation in the context of *constitutional compliance* of democratic decentralization for efficient environmental management.

ROAD MAP FOR A CLEAN GANGA IN VARANASI IN TANDEM WITH MDG 7 - TARGETS 9 & 10



2.1 Objectives in 2004-2005

SMF objectives remained straightforward, and are also in accordance with Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Johannesburg Summit Goals:

1. *To bring various civil society actors together to create public pressure to secure a clean Ganga for future generations*
2. *To build capacities of various civil society actors for successful articulation and adoption of sustainable development goals at local and national levels, promotion of grassroots democracy, enabling of good governance and protection of human rights*
3. *To mobilize civil society support to encourage the Government of India to prioritize the issue of Ganga pollution, and advocate enhanced financial and technical resources to achieve this; and sustain the Campaign for a Clean Ganga program*
4. *To continue the on-going dialogue and colloquy with Varanasi municipal corporators and support their efforts at gaining a better understanding of their rights and responsibilities under the 74th Amendment to the Indian Constitution, granting environmental authority to the municipalities*

5. *To help articulate the citizens' and urban LSGIs concerns and aspirations in order to create public pressure on state and its instrumentalities to adopt appropriate and sustainable technology for pollution abatement*

2.2 Engagements in 2004-2005

Specific engagements were:

1. Ongoing onsite capacity building; and a three-day corporators' conclave (*Sabhasad Sangam*) for members of Varanasi Municipal Corporation which included the following:
 - I. Symposium: People's Participation in Urban Development and Planning in the context of 74th Amendment to the Indian Constitution — 30th September
 - II. Symposium: Fraudulence in Constituency Delimitation and Reservation in the context Urban Local Self-Government Elections — 1st October
 - III. Symposium: Relevance of Gandhian Philosophy in Contemporary Society — 2nd October (Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi)
2. Clean Ganga Day 2005 New Delhi: 15th September
 - I. Website: www.cleangangaday.in
 - II. Photographic Exhibition: The Distressed River Ganga at the Palm Court Gallery, India Habitat Centre, 13th to 15th September
 - III. Cultural Evening: Ganga Rhythms at the Amphitheatre, India Habitat Centre, 14th September
 - IV. Seminar: Healing a Distressed River at the India International Centre, 15th September
 - V. Seminar Volume: Healing a Distressed River, expected in January 2006
 - VI. Student Manifestations: Clean Ganga Now! at the India International Centre, 15th September

VII. Cultural Evening: Ganga Rhythms at Triveni Kala Sangam, 15th September

3. A Civil Society Engagement Workshop in New Delhi with business corporates to include pollution in Ganga in their Corporate Social Responsibility Agenda (CSR): Corporate Luncheon and Business Leaders' Consultation at the British High Commission, New Delhi on 16th September
4. Lecture tours in Britain and Sweden and international publicity

These engagements concretized the priorities as stated by The Asia Foundation: to once again encourage the Government of India to prioritize the issue of Ganga pollution



through events like Clean Ganga Day 2005 New Delhi; and find ways to sustain the Campaign for a Clean Ganga through various civil society engagement workshops and symposia; as well as further increase the capabilities of the local municipal corporators so that they can implement reasonably sound choices to contain Ganga pollution in Varanasi. These events reinforced SMF's space in the politico-environmental discourse of the nation while solidifying SMF's premier position as the sole Ganga River organization that offers technically and financially sound alternatives for pollution abatement—instead of just talk.

The *raison d'être* for these events is to inculcate a sense of social responsibility among various civil society actors, a responsible media and an accountable political class in order to marshal urgent affirmative action to clean Ganga in Varanasi. Sub-themes include Ganga as an environmental concern, scarcity of clean water, health impact of water pollution, protection of democratic polity.

And, as well, constitutional rights and obligations at the grassroots level, conserving our cultural heritage, safeguarding human rights by articulating the desire for a clean Ganga by the citizens of the holy city, securing a role for the voluntary sector in nation building through public-private partnership, and pressing adoption of sustainable and appropriate technology to ameliorate the Ganga from its present decline.

3.0 ACTIVITIES

The overriding objective in 2004-2005 was to again encourage the Government of India to prioritize Ganga pollution. This must be supplemented "by broad support from people living in the Ganga



Basin," as Robert O Blake, Jr, the Deputy Chief of Mission at the American Embassy in New Delhi, stated last year at Clean Ganga Day.

This objective found expression in four main projects:

1. Ongoing onsite capacity building; and a three-day corporators' conclave (*Sabhasad Sangam*) for members of Varanasi Municipal Corporation
2. Clean Ganga Day 2005 New Delhi: 15th September
3. A Civil Society Engagement Workshop in New Delhi with business corporates to include pollution in Ganga in their Corporate Social Responsibility Agenda (CSR): Corporate Luncheon and Business Leaders' Consultation at the British High Commission, New Delhi on 16th September
4. Lecture tours in Britain and Sweden and international publicity

3.1 Ongoing onsite capacity building; and a three-day corporators' conclave (*Sabhasad Sangam*) for members of Varanasi Municipal Corporation

Municipal capacity building efforts continued for the 100 members of the Varanasi Municipal Corporation and other stakeholders. This core program spanning three years aimed at improving their understanding about their own roles and responsibilities in accordance with the 74th Amendment to the Indian Constitution — that gives broad powers to municipalities. Dr Veer Bhadra Mishra, president of SMF, and field coordinator Shri Rana Mani Tiwari on the SMF staff, spearhead the program.

3.1.1 Ongoing onsite capacity building program for municipal corporators of Varanasi

Our capacity building exercises with some 100 members of the Varanasi Municipal Corporation (*Varanasi Nagar Nigam*) is a core program that evolved over the years through process learning. It has received significant impetus through CSPP. The capacity building exercises extend into the village *panchayats* adjoining Varanasi and Sarnath.

These exercises assume a unique dimension because SMF is engaged in a public-private partnership with the Corporation. Value-added knowledge, information dissemination, appreciation of mutual problems and continuous support to realize the rights granted under the Constitution make our capacity building exercises more of counseling sessions in professional and personal empowerment of municipal corporators.

A typical field session consists of six to ten participants of which at least half are councilpersons, and the rest are other members of civil society such as members of clubs, associations, trade unions, educational institutions, individual citizens etc. who have a direct stake in a clean Ganga in Varanasi. Shri Rana Mani Tiwari, our Field Coordinator, assumes the role of the 'Master Trainer'. Dr V B Mishra's inputs are available to Shri Tiwari at all times. Interestingly, these sessions are held at any conceivable place: the canteen at the Corporation office or the only park across from the Corporation office, at a tea stall, at ward offices and sometimes in our offices.

Although bottom-up approach of urban governance was institutionalized with the 74th Constitutional Amendment in 1994, it is not yet realized because of two reasons: one, information asymmetry, that is, elected municipal corporators are still ignorant of their rights and duties; and two, absence of any 'disempowerment' mechanism for the high-end and medium-end ruling political class and permanent executives so that they voluntarily devolve power to the low-end political class, that is, the municipal corporators. Evolving a proper 'disempowerment' mechanism is a tough road. Better to focus on enabling the municipal corporators with information about their rights and duties, thus filling the potholes of ignorance. Arming the municipal corporators with proper and adequate information not only adds to their capacities but is also the formula for 'disempowering' the ruling political class.

'Master Trainer' Shri Rana Mani Tiwari follows this line of argument in his presentations, which are complemented by group discussions and role-plays.

The standard presentation focuses on:

1. The level and extent of pollution in River Ganga
2. The ill effects of river pollution
3. Reasons for river pollution
4. Role of councilpersons in conserving and managing local urban environment
5. Control of environmental defaulters
6. Role and contribution of civil society in the above

The capacity building sessions specifically discuss relevant statutes viz.

1. Uttar Pradesh Municipal Act 1994
2. Water (Pollution Abatement and Control) Act 1974
3. Water (Pollution Abatement and Control) Act 1975
4. Water (Pollution Abatement and Control) Act 1977
5. Water (Pollution Abatement and Control) Cess Act 1978
6. Factory's Act 1948

All the sessions, with their inbuilt components of awareness generation and presentations of empirical evidences, are repeated at regular intervals — sometimes daily when the Corporation is in session, or in testing times like the present when Varanasi Municipal Corporation is all set to seek a fresh mandate.

The capacity building program is based on empirical realities and also readings from the following publications:

1. Neera Chandhok: *State and Civil Society – Explorations in Political Theory*. Sage Publications, London, 1999.
2. Rajesh Tandon: *Voluntary Efforts, Civil Society and State*. PRIA, New Delhi, 2001.
3. Sahbhagi Shikshan Kendra: *Ghazipur Municipality – A Study*. Sahbhagi Shikshan Kendra, Lucknow, 2002.
4. Sahbhagi Shikshan Kendra: *Our Institutions of Urban Local Governance*. Sahbhagi Shikshan Kendra, Lucknow, 2002.
5. Sankat Mochan Foundation: *Civil Society Partnership*. Sankat Mochan Foundation, Varanasi, 2002.

3.1.2 Three-day corporators' conclave (Sabhasad Sangam) for members of Varanasi Municipal Corporation

The capacity building program was capped on 30th September to 2nd October with a formal conclave of corporators and other citizens at Tulsi Ghat. It included the following:

- I. Symposium: People's Participation in Urban Development and Planning in the context of 74th Amendment to the Indian Constitution — 30th September
- II. Symposium: Fraudulence in Constituency Delimitation and Seat Reservation in the context Urban Local Self-Government Elections — 1st October
- III. Symposium: Relevance of Gandhian Philosophy in Contemporary Society — 2nd October (Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi)

More than 250 persons heard Dr V B Mishra call for "real empowerment" of local democratic institutions and proper "devolution" of power as mandated in the Indian Constitution. He further said that the democratic decentralization is the need of the hour if all-round sustainable development is to be achieved. He said devolving real power and authority to local democratic institutions will ensure accountability and enhanced public good.

Mani Shankar Pandey, a former member of the state legislative council, facilitated the symposia. Other resource persons included Sagar Singh, a renowned lawyer; Dharmshel Chaturvedi; Professor Nirmal; Professor B N Pandey; Professor Abdul Kalam; and Indradev Mishra. The symposia were chaired by Professor R K Mishra, former Vice-Chancellor of Gorakhpur University.

3.2 Clean Ganga Day 2005 New Delhi: 15th September

The third annual Clean Ganga Day could easily have been described as "Clean Ganga Days" since the various events occurred between 13th and 16th September along with a website "www.cleangangaday.in". "Clean Ganga Days" included a "The Distressed River Ganga" photographic exhibition at the India Habitat Centre; two Ganga-themed cultural evenings; student manifestations "Clean Ganga Now!"; "Healing a Distressed River" seminar of experts on 15th September; and a workshop for corporate leaders the following day, held at the British High Commission.

3.2.1 Website: www.cleangangaday.in

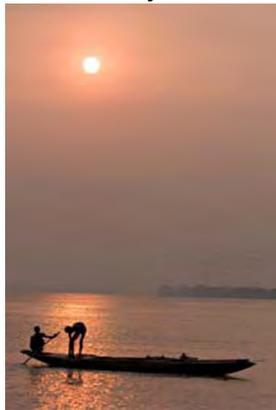
Originally meant as a micro-site for Clean Ganga Day informational purposes only, the site quickly expanded into something far more ambitious—thanks to volunteers.

At this point in time, the site probably contains more useful information about Ganga than any other site on the net. Special features included a petition to the President of India asking him to provide a vision for Ganga. Anybody can send this petition to him by simply pushing a button or two. The site also offers questionnaires and a bulletin board that did not attract much attention, probably because the site was never publicized. Bearing that in mind, a similar site can be smartly utilized for next year's Clean Ganga Day.

The website "www.cleangangaday.in" is hosted on Windows platform with 20 MB space, control panel, POP3 accounts, unlimited autoresponders, unlimited FTP access, detailed web statistics and webmail support. The website has more than 100 web pages now including search engine optimization and meta-tagging.

3.2.2 The Photographic Exhibition: "The Distressed Ganga"

The misery of the River Ganga—and also her stunning beauty—found expression in an exhibition by the Photography Arts Association of India supported by the Visual Arts Gallery at India Habitat Centre.



Running from 13th to 15th September at the India Habitat Centre, the recently snapped pictures were done *pro bono* for the Campaign. The locale at the India Habitat Centre was provided at concessional charge.

Believers worship the River Ganga as a divine goddess who is, by definition, pure. But the photographs told another story. Juxtaposing the river's innate beauty with garbage heaps, open sewage drains and suffering children, the exhibition made a deep impression.



Comments from the guest book:

This is a very interesting exhibition, and certainly the first time I have seen anything dealing with this issue

Vijay S Jodha

It is indeed a delightful exhibition. I particularly liked the picture of night scene in Varanasi. The pictures toward the end were quite sad and well...still beautiful. It is very inspiring

Mayank Singh

Not an easy subject to shoot, nevertheless creativity and hard work have been transformed into wonderful pictures

S Pratap

Excellent eye-opener to what is happening in our nation. Keep it up!

Reni Rajan

This is really an excellent exhibition beyond my expectations. Some of the pictures can win international awards, I am sure. God bless these young people who are really so devoted

S. Paul (internationally renowned photographer)

Five Delhi-based photographers (Dinesh Aggarwal, Dipesh Mehrotra, Rajnish Gehlawat, Rathika Ramasamy and Vikas Malhotra from Photography Arts Association of India — PAAI) between 1st and 5th September snapped the photographs in Varanasi.



The two guest photographers from US who also donated their photographs for the cause are Austin Hills (San Francisco) and Tyler Hicks (New York). The exhibition has been handed over to The American Center in New Delhi for further display, before going on parade abroad.

3.2.3 Seminar: "Healing a distressed River"



India International
Centre

Media attention focused on the Ganga River seminar of experts on 15th September at the India International Centre. Nearly 100 people were crammed into a conference room, where politicians, environmentalists, diplomats, physicians, lawyers and spiritual leaders dealt with this agenda:

- Is the ravaged Ganga ultimately a moral issue?

- Placing Ganga pollution onto the national political agenda, in accordance with the 74th Amendment to the Indian Constitution giving municipalities the final say.
- How can the great river be cleaned? At what cost? Which technologies are appropriate under Indian conditions?
- River pollution and public health: Does pollution in Ganga kill?
- Ganga renewed! What are the environmental and economic benefits of a clean river?

Background papers on these topics were prepared in advance, so that speakers were forewarned and forearmed. They were requested at a later stage to make their addresses available in written form to be published in a book sometime early next year, kindly funded by the British High Commission. Rough transcripts have already been made available.

The ultimate aim of the seminar was to explore the full extent of Ganga distress and suggest solutions. The speakers included: Sir Michael Arthur KCMG, the British High Commissioner; Dr V B Mishra, Founder President of Sankat Mochan Foundation and Campaign for a Clean Ganga; Dr D K Sundd, Executive Director of Sankat Mochan Foundation; Justice Rangnath Mishra, Former Chairperson of National Human Rights Commission of India; Shri Yogendra Narain, Secretary General of Rajya Sabha — Upper House of Indian Parliament; Dr K K Jajodia, Chairman of Duncan Macneil Group of UK; Swami Agnivesh; Shri Rajesh Kumar Mishra, Member of Parliament from Varanasi; Dr V K Ramteke, Medical Superintendent of Loknayak Hospital; Dr M C Chaturvedi, water resource management expert; Shri Ajay Vij, Coordinator of Art of Living Foundation; Dr Shantum Seth, Zen Master and Director at United Nations' Development Program; Shri J S Sinha, Advocate at the Supreme Court of India; Dr Jyoti Parikh, environmental economist; Shri Vimlendu Jha, Coordinator of We for Yamuna; Dr Alka Pande, Art Consultant at the India Habitat Centre; Dr K Anand, Centre for Community Medicine at All India Institute of Medical Science; and Dr H S Shukla, Senior Oncologist from Institute of Medical Science at Benaras Hindu University.

The media was struck by the fact that both the American and British governments, through their top envoys, had endorsed the Campaign for a Clean Ganga in public statements that coincided with Clean Ganga Day events. British High Commissioner Sir



Michael Arthur KCMG was the inaugural speaker at the seminar and pledged continued material support; while American Ambassador David Campbell Mulford had been scheduled to speak the following day at the corporate workshop. He had to decline at the last minute, but his powerful statement remained unchanged.

Sir Michael Arthur told the seminar "Ganga is vital to the world and not just India alone, in view of its contribution to the world economy." The river interacts with some 550 million people in the Ganga Basin. Sir Michael Arthur went on to say: "We know that the solution to the plight of the Ganga lies in the coordinated and consistent support of all sectors of business, government and civil society."



His call for a public-private partnership was seconded in the public statement from the US Government. In the statement, Ambassador David Campbell Mulford said: "I commend the work of civil society groups that are reaching out to businesses and the community at large to improve the condition of the Ganga River...we are confident that public-private partnerships in which communities and businesses work together are essential for success...."

The American Ambassador added that corporate leaders "will have to play an increasingly important role...to successfully meet the challenges of an improved infrastructure and a better quality of life for the citizens of India."

The British envoy said the High Commission has given support to the Sankat Mochan Foundation in recent years, both in the form of financial support for a ghats' cleanup and beautification project, and through participation in previous Clean Ganga Day events.

Sir Michael Arthur and Lady Arthur were delighted to visit the Foundation and the *Swatcha Ganga* team last year in Varanasi, he said. "That visit gave me a first-hand view of the challenges posed

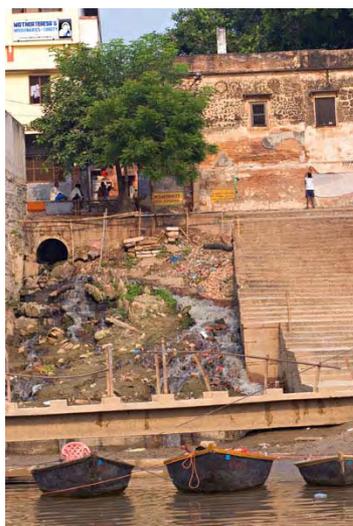
by the pollution of the holy river, and also of the enthusiasm and energy which exists within the community of Varanasi to find a sustainable solution."

The British Government will continue to take a keen interest in the fate of the Ganga – and support, both morally and materially, the ongoing Campaign for a sustainable solution, said Sir Michael Arthur. "The United Kingdom has a community of over 1.5 million people of Indian origin, and our own River Soar in Leicester has been consecrated with water from the Ganga to enable the scattering of ashes. This illustrates the worldwide importance of the Ganga."

He felt that the waterway could be restored in much the same way as the River Thames in England. The High Commissioner emphasized that public pressure is a key to river cleanups. "No great waterway in the world has ever been successfully cleaned without public pressure being brought to bear."

Another speaker — Dr K K Jajodia of the Jajodia Foundation — recalled the Ganga vision of the late Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi. When launching the Ganga Action Plan (GAP) in Varanasi in 1986, Shri Rajiv Gandhi stated: "in years to come, not only the Ganga but all our rivers will be clear and pure." Public participation, he believed, would be vital for its success.

But Shri Rajiv Gandhi's vision has still not been realized, noted Dr Jajodia. "Citizens must now step forward to make it finally happen, in partnership with government and business."



Citizen involvement is not always easy, stated Dr Shantum Seth of UNDP. In discussing the need to nurture the volunteering spirit in India, he felt that "many Indians do not connect to the environment at the more personal level, and hence there's a gap between needs and wants."

The failure of the Ganga Action Plan leaves the world's most important river more polluted than ever, said Dr V B Mishra (*Mahantji*), leader of *Swatcha Ganga* and President of the Sankat Mochan Foundation. He stated that hundreds of millions of liters of raw sewage and effluents are dumped into the river every day by

103 cities. "With an estimated 550 million souls depending on Ganga, the level of human suffering is immense at times. As well, marine and wildlife are at risk, in some cases irretrievably."

Excerpts from Dr V B Mishra's keynote address at the seminar:

"... as young professors and engineers, we never suspected that the battle for the Ganga would be protracted and even bitter. At first, we sensed a kind of victory when in 1986 the late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi came to Varanasi and announced the Ganga Action Plan. This involved setting up treatment plants in 29 cities. That sounded like a good start, even though a total of 103 cities, in fact, dump toxics and raw sewage into India's lifeline; supporting an estimated 550 million of our citizens.

By the early 90s it became clear that the Action Plan was failing. The problems were manifold.

Wrong technologies were chosen: Somebody had forgotten about fecal-coliform altogether. And with frequent power breaks in northern India, the plants would shut down altogether, and it takes a big effort to get them running again. Maintenance problems are rife, municipalities can't always pay the power bills, and in any event the pumps get flooded during the monsoon season. The plants cease to work altogether then, for up to 3 months.

We were thus obliged to launch the second battle of the Ganga. For starters, we staged an international Ganga seminar in 1992 to assess what was happening. And what could be done. The mood was grim. Despite the Ganga Action Plan, the river was more polluted than ever. Since the government refuses to publish all its official statistics about river pollution, some Swedish environmentalists helped us establish our own private laboratory at Tulsi Ghat where we daily take samples ourselves. We now know, for instance, that the fecal-coliform count can rise as high as 67,000 times the accepted Indian standard for human bathing.

The Foundation then launched a search on the request of Varanasi Nagar Nigam for a better technology for our city. Together with the University of California we devised a detailed plan for cleaning the crucial seven-kilometer stretch in Varanasi that would utilize a system relying on biological treatment and sunlight to cope with wastewater.

Mainly non-electrical, the system is relatively inexpensive and easy to maintain. Wastewater from open drains is diverted through a pipeline into biological treatment ponds, where it is treated by a combination of bacteria and algae. Electrical power doesn't even enter into the picture. This system, technically called AIWPS, is an adaptation of a tried-and-true pond system found in some American communities.

The Municipal Corporation of Varanasi unanimously approved this system for the holy city. The Corporation has that inalienable right under the Indian Constitution. But the state government of Uttar Pradesh then intervened, and tried to impose a new version of the old Ganga Action Plan, which wasn't going to work anyway.

This has become a court case pending before Allahabad High Court with huge implications for municipalities across India. The 74th Amendment unambiguously casts obligations upon the municipalities to determine and implement policies and technologies for wastewater treatment and other environmental measures within their jurisdiction.

While awaiting the legal decision, the Campaign is doing everything in our power to alleviate the situation in Varanasi. Squads of Ganga cleaners every day remove litter from the waterfront, along with animal and human corpses floating in the river. We run an adopt-a-ghat program where citizens undertake to keep a ghat clean and tidy. We conduct innumerable awareness workshops across the Basin, go into the schools, and of course, stage events like Clean Ganga Day 2005."



Speakers Dr V K Ramteke of Loknayak Hospital in New Delhi and Dr K Anand of Centre for Community Medicine, All India Institute of Medical Science, reviewed health hazards posed by river pollution. There is the ever-present risk of waterborne

diseases that can lead to pandemics. Cholera, yellow fever, diarrhea, amoebic dysentery and jaundice are among the more common diseases caused by water contamination. Skin diseases may be affecting millions: data is not always as accurate and forthcoming as it should be.

More than one speaker underlined the need for appropriate wastewater technologies. In Varanasi, a mainly non-electrical wastewater system that utilizes interaction between bacteria and algae has been approved by the Varanasi



Municipal Corporation. It is being thwarted by the Uttar Pradesh Government, which seeks to impose a variation of Ganga Action Plan (GAP) on the city — a system that fails to address diversion of

sewage from open drains, as well as shocking fecal-coliform levels. Fecal-coliform is found in animal and human excrement in water.



Seminarians were informed that court cases are proceeding against the Uttar Pradesh Jal Nigam and the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), both charged with bypassing a city's right to environmental management

within its jurisdiction, as stated in the 74th Amendment to the Indian Constitution. Supreme Court Advocate J S Sinha told the seminar he thought it very important "to clean the Ganga according to the schedule and provisions as per the amendment."

Dr Rajesh Kumar Mishra, Member of Parliament from Varanasi, discussed the issue he raised in Parliament concerning the cleaning of Ganga, and read out the written reply from the Environment and Forests Ministry, which pointed to measures being taken under "phase two" of Ganga Action Plan (GAP). Dr Mishra found the reply inadequate. He said the public has the right to comprehensive and transparent information about the extent of Ganga damage.



Dr V B Mishra (*Mahantji*) closed the proceedings with a call for zero tolerance to wastes in rivers. "It should be noted that member states of the United Nations have demarcated 2005-2015 as the International Decade for Action: Water for Life. They want the sources of river pollution eradicated by 2015. And that far more human beings should have access to clean water by then."

Getting serious about Ganga pollution, he said, will send a positive shock wave across the developing world, where virtually all rivers are polluted. "And also open up for India new social and economic opportunities that accrue from important environmental investments."

He endorsed the call by the American and British envoys to seek public-private partnerships for cleaning the river. "Any plan to clean the Ganga should be needs-based and community based, and

not imposed from the outside in violation of the 74th Amendment to the Indian Constitution." This would be in the best spirit of the late Shri Rajiv Gandhi and his vision of active civil society participation in river issues.

3.2.4 Student manifestations: "Clean Ganga Now!"

Cultural manifestations, poetry, pledges and serious presentations were the highlights of the student program held on 15th September at India International Centre, right after the morning seminar.



About 150 students from the Delhi Public School system participated in the manifestations that concluded with presentation of certificates of participation and mementoes, given to each of the students by Ms Marie Anne Everitt of the American Embassy.

Originally scheduled to take place on the spacious lawns of the India International Centre, a sudden downpour moved all the events indoors. This did not deter student enthusiasm.

A K Mangotra, Joint Secretary to the President of India, attended the student manifestations, on president's behalf.

Extracts from student presentations:

Today, Ganga is filthy. It is pumped with raw sewage, industrial waste, human and animal carcasses every day of its existence – despite that, we have the audacity to call it pure? I've never seen anything more hypocritical than that – we bathe in it, we drink it, we sell it, we workshop it but...we pollute it.

Amit Sharma

The pollution of the river is the direct outcome of long-term public indifference, diffidence and apathy. There is a lack of public awareness, and poverty fuels the problem...there is a need for nationwide awareness programmes. And a definite plan, which takes concrete action and doesn't fizzle out.

Ridhi

Its man's duty to preserve what God bestows, what comes down from God, Man should never defile.

Nitika Lal

*Today I'm in pathetic shape
I lie before you with my soul raped*

*Oh sons of India it's your duty
To protect your mother's soul and beauty*

*Save me, my children, before I perish
Keep me pollution free, love me and cherish*

Nikita Chawla



has been closely working with Sankat Mochan Foundation, providing them with student volunteers.

The Council for Environment and Culture of Delhi Public School Society and its Director Ms Suleena Sapra helped us to choreograph the student manifestations. Delhi Public School(s) are the first, which have concertedly worked on sensitizing their students about river pollution. The Delhi Public School in Varanasi

During the student manifestations we circulated a questionnaire to participating students, to which 95 responded. Results show that they regard pollution as Delhi's most pressing problem; they think the Ganga Campaign is excellent; they regard the level of Ganga pollution as high; they see municipal sewage as the worst culprit; they believe that local people contribute to Ganga pollution with solid wastes; they believe that poverty is the most pressing national problem; they support NGOs working on environmental issues, and they aren't aware of the concept "civil society". They said they really benefited from the Clean Ganga Day event, and perhaps would come to Varanasi to check out river pollution for themselves. We have been told by Delhi Public School that they are bringing these children for a hands-on experience in Varanasi in mid-November. A basic conclusion is that students should acquire a better understanding of civil society in order to become responsible citizens.

3.2.5 Cultural evenings: "Ganga Rhythms"

Two cultural evenings were scheduled on 14th and 15th September. The former was cancelled at the last minute due to heavy rainfall: it was to be staged in an open-air amphitheatre at the India Habitat Centre. Lady Arthur, spouse of the British High Commissioner, was to be the guest of honour.



The second cultural evening at the (fully-enclosed) Triveni Kala Sangam Auditorium in New Delhi featured the Odissi Dance Troupe led by Guru Pravash Kumar Mohanty—their second annual appearance at Clean Ganga Day events. The performers were all students of Patitapawan Kala Niketan from New Delhi. Ms Anne Marie Everitt from the American Embassy was the guest of honour.

Ganga is not only a story about pollution. It is also a river that India celebrates.

The impressive cultural evening at Triveni Kala Sangam drew a large crowd who witnessed the Odissi dance recital presented by the disciples of Guru Pravash Kumar Mohanty.



About 25 disciples of Guru Shri Pravash Kumar Mohanty trained at Patitapawan Kala Niketan presented various soul-warming performances in Odissi style. The "Ganga Rhythms" concert was classic in its execution. One dancer, for instance, salutes

Mother Earth followed by obeisance to Lord Shiva and Mother Ganga.

Swatcha Ganga! Clean Ganga! The message echoed all around.

3.3 Corporate luncheon and business leaders' consultation

The first-ever corporate workshop about Ganga pollution was conducted on 16th September in New Delhi at the British High Commission.

Purpose of the 3-hour session was to brief businesspeople about the status of the Ganga, and also to determine an action program where the business community can get on the bandwagon.



64 participants, including citizens from professions other than business, attended the workshop, hosted by the British High Commissioner.

Facilitator was Mona Chhabra Anand of Development Alternatives, who led participants in these discussions:

- How does Indian business "lose" from worsening pollution of the Ganga?
- How might Indian business gain — individually and collectively — from actively pushing for a cleanup?
- How can the business community cooperate with environmental groups like the Sankat Mochan Foundation to create public pressure to clean the Ganga?
- Next steps: action-planning exercises



General consensus was that Indian business as a whole would gain significantly by being identified with Ganga cleanup. Due to a lack of time, the action-planning steps were not fully explored. Follow-up with participants is indicated.

Keynote speaker was Dr Veer Bhadra Mishra. He said that businesses linked with Ganga campaign could experience short-term gains, such as good PR, and also long-term benefits, such as winning contracts or new business opportunities as a result of a Ganga cleanup. "Cleanup of Ganga and other rivers would be a big step in correcting a vague international image of India as a dirty and unhygienic place in which to do business."

Excerpts from Dr V B Mishra's keynote address:

".... this workshop presents an historic opportunity for the Indian and international business communities. The question before us is urgent: to heal the distressed River Ganga by prioritizing her in CSR agendas. The failure of the Ganga Action Plan tells us that the business community must actively partner with citizens and government to get the job done."

Let me summarize the challenge. A total of 103 cities dump toxics and raw sewage into the waterway every day. Millions suffer because of pollution in the Ganga, which is literally the most important river in the world. It supports about 550 million citizens or 1 out every 12 human beings on the planet. Without Ganga, their existence is impossible. Bathing in it. Drinking it. Washing clothes in it, irrigating their fields, dying by it, and then having their ashes borne away by it.

We do not have very much time to clean this river. Apart from the ever-present risk of epidemics, it also happens that United Nation member states have urged that unsustainable exploitation of rivers like Ganga be halted by 2015 as a Millennium Development Goal. India has never been good at meeting environmental goals. Let's try to improve our batting record this time around!

I think this corporate workshop will want to ask some frank questions. The most important is whether or not the business community should play a role in producing a concrete plan to clean the waterway.

We'll also want to ask whether businesspeople in cooperation with environmentalists can help create public pressure to clean the Ganga. The fact is, that no great river in the world has ever been cleaned without public pressure being brought to bear.

Businesspeople have companies to run and profits to be earned. I hope this workshop will discuss the specific gains for businesses that choose to be linked to a cleanup. Some gains are short-term, such as good PR. Others are long-term, such as winning contracts or new business opportunities as a result of a Ganga cleanup. I should add that, in my opinion, cleanup of Ganga and other rivers would be a big step in correcting a vague international image of India as a dirty and unhygienic place in which to do business."

Participants were provided with considerable documentation in order to facilitate their discussions. They agreed that advantages accruing to businesses as a result of a cleanup included:

1. Cleanup of river in stages → creates new contracts and jobs → creates new business opportunities → creates economic boost for communities along the river
2. Clean surface water suitable for irrigation → more irrigation water for more fields → "cleaner" crops → bigger harvests → new export markets
3. Clean surface water restores marine life → boost for fishing industry → decrease in fish contamination → bigger fish yields

4. Clean surface water benefits public health → reduction of waterborne diseases → reduced public health costs → healthier labor force
5. Clean surface water easier and cheaper to treat for human consumption → increase in available safe water for population → reduced reliance on groundwater and deep water wells → correction in current downward slide of water tables
6. Clean surface water suitable for human bathing → more bathers and beaches → bonus for international tourists → new tourist facilities → new vistas for boating and water sports
7. **Cleanup of Ganga and other rivers helps to correct a vague international business image of India as a dirty and unhygienic workplace**

Participants were told that the Indian business community has been handed an historic opportunity because of an international pledge made by the Union Government.

It has promised the world that unsustainable exploitation of rivers like Ganga will be halted by 2015. And that safe water will be available for most of our citizens by then. The pledge was made in accordance with the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDG7 - targets 9 and 10) and International Decade for Action: Water for Life 2005-2015.

The year 2015 may sound far away. But huge infrastructural projects normally take huge amounts of time before they bear fruit. They cannot be achieved without active participation by business.



Participants realized that when it comes to Ganga, the challenge is daunting, to say the least. A total of 103 cities dump toxics and raw sewage into the waterway every day. The risks for human beings are obvious. Millions suffer.

The workshop concluded with the thought that Ganga presents an historic opportunity for the business community. There are commercial and PR opportunities to be won the day India clean her rivers, not least the Ganga. Even the start of a true cleanup will send a positive signal across India and the developing world where virtually all rivers are polluted.

Topics to be discussed at a later date:

1. What can a major stakeholder like the business community actually do to hasten the day — to really get the Union Government on the bandwagon?
2. Can business leaders include the plight of suffering millions in their corporate social responsibility schemes?

US Commercial Service, New Delhi, supported the workshop. Mr Andrew Partridge of the British High Commission presented the vote of thanks.



3.4 Lecture tours in Britain and Sweden

The program coordinator made three trips to London in 2004-2005, where he delivered 14 talks in public schools about the state of the river. These schools are situated in a predominantly Asian district in West London.

He also delivered a one-hour lecture on 16th January 2005 in the British capital, at the South Place Ethical Society. About 60 people attended, including journalists and reps from Indian High Commission. The Society is a prominent intellectual forum founded by political philosopher Jeremy Bentham in 1793. The lecture was followed up by his article "The Ganga is Polluted: So What?" in the *Ethical Record*, published by the Society. An abridged version was then written for the British environmental website "www.peopleandplanet.net".



The London tours were financed privately. In addition, modest non-financial assistance was received from Groundwork West London — a UK Government financed foundation — along with the Temple Trust and our longtime MoU partner Thames21. Thames 21 fields up to 5,000 volunteers to keep the Thames riverfront tidy.

Assistance from these organizations specifically included advance planning and scheduling; introductions; publicity; production of modest flyers, and a PowerPoint presentation. Former Mayor of the London Borough of Ealing, Umesh Chander JP, offered important moral support, and promised future introductions to the broader Indian community in Britain and "India friendly" MPs in the House of Commons.

The program coordinator gave 9 talks in 2004-2005, at various forums in Sweden, including two talks at the main Hindu temple in Helenelund, north of Stockholm. Forums addressed by him included groups such as the United Nations chapter in Sollentuna north of Stockholm and the Social Democratic Party association in the same town.

The coordinator's program in Sweden was capped by a talk to an estimated 300 members of the Indian community at their annual Diwali celebration in the Swedish capital. Modest expenses during the Swedish phase were financed privately. As in the UK, the aim was to set the stage for possible fundraising in Scandinavia. Partners would probably include the temple; Indo-Swedish associations comprised of Indian immigrants, and the Indian Embassy. The latter played an invaluable role in securing introductions.

4.0 PROMOTIONS & PUBLICITY

Mainline Hindi and English language media in India covered clean Ganga Day events extensively, viz., *Rashtriya Sahara*, *Dainik Jagran*, *Asian Age* and *Indian Express*. *The Delhi City* and *Delhi Diary* included the events in their listings. International impact is not known. At the same time, *Mahantji* was nominated by readers of the Indian weekly *Outlook* (September 26th issue) as one of India's outstanding citizens.

On the main day of the events, we placed small advertisements in two mainline English language newspapers – *Times of India* and *Hindustan Times*. Online promotions appeared on "www.rediff.com" and "www.google.com". Take-away cartons of Nexus Foods – a leading Indian fastfood chain, which also supplies delicacies in its take-away cartons to Austrian, Continental Airlines, Air Canada, British Airways, Lufthansa, Virgin Atlantic, Air France, South African Airways, Qantas, Cathay Pacific, Qatar Airways, Kuwait Airways, Emirates and Etihad – carry a plea to support "Campaign for a Clean Ganga" with "www.cleangangaday.in" in its byline.

Sankat Mochan Foundation released 5 press releases while the British High Commission did 2 and Indo-Asian New Service did 1 press release.

Media tended to focus on statements made by Sir Michael Arthur KCMG, British High Commissioner to India. The Press Trust of India said "Britain offered to assist India in the ambitious 'Clean Ganga' project as it has 'considerable experience' in cleaning pollution in such water bodies."

New Kerala Newslines, Chennai Online News and MSN News reported that "without criticizing the Ganga Action plan...Arthur said there was urgent need to use 'appropriate' technology' for the cleaning of the Ganga.

"Organizers here said: 'Though Sir Michael Arthur would not comment on any specific project, his support itself says he favours the use of the traditional and inexpensive system of de-polluting through sedimentation ponds, as against setting up sewage treatment plants.'"

Coverage was not always accurate. *WebIndia* incorrectly stated "even former US president Bill Clinton has sent a congratulatory message to the Sankat Mochan Foundation of Varanasi, which has spearheaded the campaign to rid the river contaminated by raw sewage and chemicals for over a century."

(In fact, Clinton's statement was made in 2000 after meeting *Mahantji* during the president's state visit to India.)

Asian Age noted that "the British High Commissioner said his country had been funding a project to clean the Ganga through an NGO, Sankat Mochan Foundation, and was willing to help in the future also."

(In fact, the Sankat Mochan Foundation, through its Ganga campaign, is a public pressure group rather than an organization that would itself clean the river.)

Some media used SMF press releases almost verbatim.

The television channels, which covered the events, are Eenadu Television and Channel 7 JTV.

Asad Mirza of Press and Communications Department of the British High Commission, New Delhi, coordinated the media

management. Mediatrack, New Delhi; and Noida Ad Agency, NOIDA did news monitoring.

5.0 SOME CONCLUSIONS

The three-year Civil Society Partnership Program came at a critical juncture; and Varanasi has now gotten a boost. But the near collapse of effective governance elsewhere in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar is also reflected nationally, to some extent. Water management — or the lack of it — is an excellent example of state apathy. This has duly been noted by the World Bank. The country's development of water infrastructure is not accompanied by an improvement in governance of water resources and water services, says a newly-released World Bank report, prepared by John Briscoe, country director for Brazil and senior water advisor for South Asia.

Although the Bank is prepared to increase loans to India for the water-related sector, it notes that "the Indian state water apparatus still shows little interest in the key issues of the management stage: participation, incentives, water entitlements, transparency, entry of the private sector, competition, accountability, financing and environmental quality."

Ineffective and secretive water management, accountable to no one, is one of the main reasons for the collapse of the Ganga Action Plan (GAP) and rising pollution levels in Ganga, which at times is nothing more than a sewer. In cities like Varanasi, meantime, councilors still struggle to obtain the right of environmental management granted to them by the 74th Amendment of the Indian Constitution.

Entrenched interests such as the bloated GAP bureaucracy, meantime, stand in the way of effective environmental management of the Ganga and, by implication, other rivers in India — a country that derives some 85% of surface water from rivers.

The Campaign for a Clean Ganga must step up its pace. We all know that great rivers are never cleaned before public pressure has its day. Our ability to influence and perhaps mobilize public opinion could well be a determining factor of whether the Ganga is effectively cleaned anytime in the next few years.

Another factor is to bring together the main players in India — civil society, business, government and media — to agree on river strategy: in all likelihood, a public-private partnership to clean

Ganga and other waterways. This course of action is being suggested to India by the American and British governments.

In 1986 the late Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi came to Varanasi and announced the Ganga Action Plan. His vision is yet to be realized, neither in the holy city nor any of the other 102 cities and towns that dump billions of litres of raw sewage into Ganga, day in, day out.

There is no good reason why a revered river like Ganga is polluted in the first place. India does have capital access, manpower and technologies to clean the entire Ganga—all 2,525 kilometres of it.

If the nation wants to, that is.

National events such as Clean Ganga Day are definitely having their effect, which is why we plan to stage it, yet again, in 2006 in New Delhi. Grassroots activities in Varanasi are at least as important — suggesting that capacity-building training at the Varanasi Municipal Corporation must continue.

Other programs such as riverfront cleaning funded by Oxfam India; village water initiatives, environmental education for students and riverside stakeholders' capacity building funded by OzGreen, Australia and community supported "adopt-a-ghat" program all proceed apace, while "sensitization workshops" about river pollution help to ensure public participation in both the analysis of the problem and possible solutions.

Also crucial is ongoing litigation asserting the right of Indian communities to determine own environmental management. No Indian authority or institution can bypass the final verdicts of courts of law.

5.1 The last word

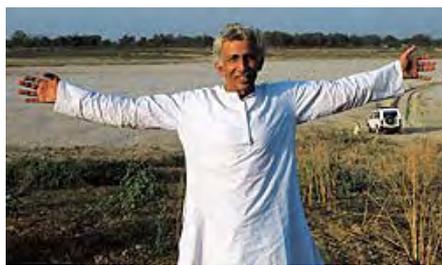
And finally: will the great river ever be cleaned?

We believe a degree of success is within reach. The Union Government can no longer ignore the Campaign, along with the publicly stated views of the World Bank, the United States, and Great Britain. The heart of the Indian problem is a policy dysfunction at the highest level. There is every good reason to believe that this state of affairs can be changed for the better.

6.0 COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND SANKAT MOCHAN FOUNDATION: SUMMARY

United States is a key international participant assisting *Swatcha Ganga Abhiyaan* {Campaign for a Clean Ganga (Ganges)} that is managed by the Sankat Mochan Foundation (SMF) in Varanasi. Cooperation started in 1991 with an international conference about Ganga....

- United States Agency for International Development (USAID) provides much-needed funding in 1991 for an international conference in Varanasi on "Pollution Control in River Cities of India: A Case Study of Ganga in Varanasi." Participating are experts from the United States, France, Sweden and India
- Over the next few years, USAID provides various river experts and financial assistance that lead to an appropriate technology solution for the river in Varanasi. Devised jointly by SMF and the University of California (Berkeley), the mainly non-electrical system called AIWPS consists of a series of ponds that treat wastewater biologically. The US-Indian engineers had determined that a mainly non-electrical pond system, including interception and diversion of wastewater utilizing gravity, was more appropriate for Varanasi because of frequent power breaks in the city. The groundwork by engineers is vividly described in *The New Yorker* article "Next Life for the River Ganges" by Alexander Stille



The long-running Campaign for a Clean Ganga is led by Prof Veer Bhadra Mishra, who is also a Hindu high priest (*Mahantji*)
Photo © TIME

- Former President Bill Clinton, in a keynote address in Agra in 2000, publicly praises The Campaign for a Clean Ganga. *Time* magazine nominates Campaign leader Dr Veer Bhadra Mishra as "hero for the planet" for bringing the plight of Ganga to the attention of the world

- From 2002 onwards the Civil Society Partnership Program at SMF, funded by The Asia Foundation, San Francisco in cooperation with United States-Asia Environmental Partnership (US-AEP) Program at USAID, raises public

awareness about Ganga pollution throughout the Ganga Basin. Numerous workshops and seminars are conducted for local elected officials, citizens and other NGOs

- In 2003 the nation's first Clean Ganga Day is held in Kolkata (Calcutta) by the Civil Society Partnership Program
- Success of the event led us straight to the nation's capital. Clean Ganga Day 2004 in New Delhi on August 27 consisted of a morning symposium of river experts, parliamentarians and notables; afternoon manifestations by school students, and an evening concert. It was inaugurated by Robert O Blake, Jr, US Deputy Ambassador to India
- US Deputy Ambassador Robert O Blake invites *Mahantji* for a working lunch on a visit to Varanasi in July 2004 to explore areas of cooperation between SMF & American Embassy
- Clean Ganga Day 2005 was held in New Delhi on September 15 followed by a presentation for corporate people on September 16

Of course, this is a list of specific cooperation areas between SMF and US, rather than a complete list of SMF programs during the 14-year period. SMF also played host to two US ambassadors to India, one congressperson and a couple of senators during the period. We are so very grateful for the longstanding commitment by American Embassy and USAID spanning three presidential administrations!

7.0 COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND SANKAT MOCHAN FOUNDATION: SUMMARY

India and the United Kingdom are linked immeasurably and not least, by a profound respect and concern for the River Ganga.

She is not only the supreme holy river for believers, but also the world's most important waterway, supporting nearly 550 million lives in the Ganga Basin: "Bathing in it. Drinking it. Washing clothes in it, irrigating their fields, dying by it and then having their ashes borne away by it," as British author Eric Newby put it.

But toxics contaminate the great waterway, putting millions at risk. So say nothing of disease-causing faecal coliform — animal and human wastes in water.

The Sankat Mochan Foundation (SMF) in Varanasi — dedicated to a Ganga cleanup — turned to Britain as early as 1991, for both moral and material support. Because the battle of the Ganga is not easy, to put it mildly. The SMF mission is to alter mindsets in India about the importance of a cleanup of her literal lifeline. Indian environmentalists want the nation to fulfill its Millennium Development Goals pledge to the United Nations to not only provide safe water for more citizens but also to *eradicate* the causes of river pollution.

Similarly, British environmentalists and concerned citizens are anxious to support — in one way or other — all worthy clean water movements and organizations the world over. Our own organization occasionally receives unsolicited donations from UK subjects who have heard or read about us.

Fourteen years of cooperation

This checklist presents examples of cooperation between SMF and the UK. It is not a listing of all SMF activities, which range from Ganga workshops to daily cleanup of the entire waterfront in the holy city of Varanasi.

- UK experts attend the SMF international Ganga conference in 1991
- Leading Indian businessperson in London provides financial encouragement throughout the decade
- Daniel Whistler's film *Battle for the Ganges* centring around SMF campaign activities in the holy city is released worldwide in 1999
- A Memo of Understanding (MoU) is signed in 2002 between SMF and Thames21, the leading riverfront cleanup organization in London. The same year, Thames Chief Executive Mark Lloyd meets in Varanasi with Dr Veer Bhadra Mishra (*Mahantji*), leader of the Campaign for a Clean Ganga (*Swatcha Ganga Abhiyaan*) managed by SMF. The visit is reciprocated by Dr Mishra in 2002, and includes a lecture and temple tour in London, discussions with Indian leaders in Southall in West London, and considerable media exposure
- Over the next two years the riverfront cleanup program along Ganga in Varanasi is closely studied by Thames21,

with aspects adapted for British conditions. At the same time, SMF receives welcome counsel from the British organization in view of its impressive history of mobilizing volunteer workers to regularly clean the Thames waterfront — up to 5,000 citizens in Wellingtons!

- In 2003 the British High Commission in New Delhi signs an agreement with SMF in which a stretch of ghats along Ganga in Varanasi is singled out, not only for cleanup but also beautification: a demonstration project to show Varanasi citizens and the world what can actually be done with the world heritage stone works. They form a physical and spiritual unity with the river. The project managed by SMF is capped by a public diplomacy visit to Varanasi in April 2004 by Sir Michael Arthur KCMG and Lady Arthur to inspect the results. Media coverage is noteworthy
- Success of the ghats project opens new doors. Acting High Commissioner Mark Runacres delivers a lecture at the Clean Ganga Day 2004 symposium in New Delhi
- Former Ealing Borough Mayor Umesh Chander JP visits Varanasi in February 2005 in his present capacity as Chairman of the Temple Trust of Great Britain. He offers to assist in the formation of a "Friends of the Ganges" chapter in Britain to complement similar SMF chapters in Australia, the United States and Sweden

Meantime, an SMF activist based in Varanasi delivers lectures in West London schools in cooperation with Groundwork West London. This government-supported charity has actively encouraged teenagers to study clean water issues, and particularly in the developing world. In February the schools produce a special issue of *Global Water Times* highlighting Ganga. The tour by the activist is capped by a lecture at the South Place Ethical Society in central London. The lecture is published in abridged form in their journal in July 2005

- The BBC dispatches a film team to Varanasi in June 2005 to document the Campaign for a Clean Ganga
- The British High Commission offers SMF a grant and other forms of cooperation for Clean Ganga Day 2005 in New

Delhi, to top up an existing core grant from The Asia Foundation, San Francisco

The tryst

British concern about Ganga is longstanding. Because Britain, to paraphrase Jawaharlal Nehru, has a unique tryst with Ganga: an affair of the heart. When early British travelers first gazed upon the mighty river, they were not slow in grasping the obvious: Ganga is India.

8.0 PERSONNEL

Staffing remained unchanged.

- Roger Choate *Program Coordinator*
- Rana Mani Tiwari *Field Coordinator (salary from SMF)*
- Ashok Kumar Pandey *Assistant Coordinator (Accounts)*

9.0 FINANCIALS

(FILED IN FORM TAF 209)

Counterpart contributions

SMF continued counterpart contributions to the project, which included use of office space, seminar rooms, staff accommodation, library, computer facilities including printers and scanner, photocopier, electricity, water, emergency power generation unit, salary of field coordinator and well-qualified volunteers as resource persons.



"The UPA government is making special effort to create greater space for civil society – for committed individuals, like...Dr V B Mishra...."

Sonia Gandhi

Chairperson, United Progressive Alliance (UPA) &
National Advisory Council

At the Outlook **Speak Out** Awards function, 8th October 2005, New Delhi

10.0 TOMBSTONE OF GRATITUDE

Without you, we could not have done it!

American Embassy, New Delhi	Sankat Mochan Foundation, Varanasi	J S Sinha
Anne Marie Everitt	V B Mishra (<i>Mahantji</i>)	Jalaj
Anuradha Suda	D K Sundd	James
Ayesha Seth	S K Mishra	James Stein
David Campbell Mulford	S N Upadhyay	Jaselin
Laura D Taylor-Kale	V N Mishra	Jatin Sachdeva
Preetha Nair	Vijay Nath Mishra	Jayalakshmi Pattanaik
Ramesh Jain	Frances Peavey	Joginder
Ritika Sawhney	Catherine Porter	K K Jajodia
Robert O Blake, Jr	Colin Lennox	Kamla Chowdhry
Robin D Diallo	Sue Lennox	Kishan
Sameer Verma	Gopal Pandey, Sr	Krishna Kapoor
Shweta Midha	Anoop Kumar Mishra	Kumar Pankaj
	Ashok Kumar Pandey	Lalit
USAID, New Delhi	R K Mishra	Lalita Arora
George Deikun	Rohit Joshi	Lalita Sachdeva
Rebecca Black	Dukhi Mani Tiwari	Livin
	Rana Mani Tiwari	Maneka Gandhi
US-AEP, New Delhi	Vashisht Tiwari	Manish Nanaware
K Balakrishnan	N Ravindran	Manoj
Kristen Easter	Vinay Pandey	Mona Chhabra Anand
	Ajay Pandey	Narendra Kumar
US-AEP, Kolkata	Anupam Dubey	Naresh
Arup Mitra	Gopal Pandey	Nitin
Gaurav Mazumdar	Sunandan Bhattacharya	Padmini Shekhar
	Shiv Nath	Pankaj Tiwari
US-AEP, Bangkok	Raj Kapoor	Pooja Punshi
Elaine Blatt	Ramchander	Pravash Kumar Mohanty
Pierre Beaulne	Shankar	Premola Ghosh
Stanford Smith	Kiran	Prosun Sen
Tony Kolb		Rachna Mehra
	ELSEWHERE	Raghu
The Asia Foundation, San Francisco	Ajoy Bagchi	Rahul Barua
Christopher S Plante	Alka Gupta	Rajnish Gehlawat
Leela Young	Alka Pande	Rakesh Jaiswal
	Amar Bahadur	Rakhi Chib
The Asia Foundation, Colombo	Anupreksha	Rathika Ramasamy
Dinesha Wikramanayake	Arun Bhatnagar	Sanjiv Kumar Srivastava
Hyacinth Razack	Arun Kumar	Santosh
Nilan Fernando	Arun Kumar Rawal	Sapna Sinha
	Aruna Roy	Savita Gokhale
British High Commission, New Delhi	Ashish	Seema Pattanaik
Amutha Bharath	Ashok Khosla	Shadaab
Andrew Partridge	Austin Hills	Shalini
Archana Mirajkar	Balbir Singh	Shalini Gujral
Asad Mirza	Bhim Singh	Shantha Sinha
Chitra Iyer	Bonani Kakkar	Shivani Rawat
Daniel Shepard	Buzee	Shyamlal Yadav
David McMahan	Captain August Millard	Sidharth Patnaik
Kitty Tawakley	Chandan Kumar Tripathi	Sudip Mazumdar
Lady Arthur	Chotu	Suleena Sapra
Mark Runacres	Daman Singh	Sumeet Chugh
Nicola Murray	Debopriya Banerjee	Sumeet Katoch
Peter Holland	Dinesh Agarwal	Sunita Dubey
Preeti Malhotra	Dipesh Mehrotra	Suresh Anand
Ravi Dutta	G M Kapur	Suruchi Jain
Sir Michael Arthur KCMG	Geetpriya	Tapsya
Suparna Sharma	George Vaurghese	Tyler Hicks
	Gunjan Goswami	Vikas Malhotra
	Hareesh Chandra Pattanaik	Vimlendu Jha
	Ira George	

Thank you!



CIVIL SOCIETY PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM



|| SWATCHA GANGA ABHIYAAN ||
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