JANAAGRAHA CENTRE FOR CITIZENSHIP & DEMOCRACY

Voter List Management

Patna

Summary Report

A study on the quality of voter lists: findings from the Quality of Voter Lists (QoL) study and Booth Level Officer (BLO) Interviews in Patna

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Research Team:
Katie Pyle – Research Manager, Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy
Vivek Anandan Nair – Senior Research Associate, Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy
Fieldwork undertaken by Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy
Contact: research@janaagraha.org

Introduction

Jana Group was Co-Founded by Ramesh Ramanathan and Swati Ramanathan. It comprises four institutions, all of which are urban-focussed

Janalakshmi, an urban micro finance company serving 2.5 million households across India

Janaadhar, an urban affordable housing company

Jana Urban Space Foundation, a non-profit focussed on spatial planning and design, both policy and practice

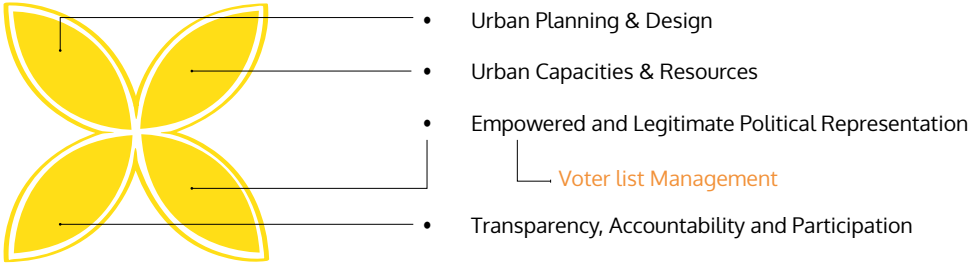
Janaagraha, a non-profit having the objective of transforming quality of life in India's cities and towns

About Janaagraha

Janaagraha was founded in December 2001 as a platform for citizen participation in cities. Today, it works with citizens on catalysing active citizenship in neighbourhoods and with governments to institute reforms to city-systems, generally referred to as urban governance.

With an objective of improving quality of life in India's urban centres, Janaagraha believes in addressing the root-cause of existing issues instead of the symptoms through its city-systems framework. This framework consist of four inter-related dimensions critical to the running of world-class cities.

CITY SYSTEMS FRAMEWORK



Janaagraha's work on Voter List Management

'Empowered and Legitimate Political Representation' is one of the four components of Janaagraha's city-systems framework. We believe quality of voter lists can potentially influence quality of political leadership in cities in India. The Voter List Management process in cities however has been a much ignored electoral reform agenda. Voter lists form the basis of democracy by codifying a citizen's right to exercise franchise. But errors in these lists, omissions that lead to disenfranchisement and potential deletions which expose the electoral process to phantom voting, are a reality. This applies particularly to urban areas which witness large scale migrations, from villages to cities, between cities and even within cities. For quality political representation and leadership, the voter list should be free of errors. Poor quality voter lists impact electoral participation and outcomes, and thereby the quality of political leadership.

JCCD has been working on the issue of urban voter lists since 2005, highlights of which include the Jaago Re! campaign, India's largest voter registration drive in cities and a 3-year Memorandum of Understanding with the Election Commission of India for a pilot project on voter list management in Shanthinagar Assemby Constituency in Bangalore. The groundwork in Shanthinagar resulted in the Proper Urban Electoral (PURE) List manual, a new and improved process for voter list management in cities.

2005

Citizen's Initiative on Voters' ID List (CIVIL) – a grassroots program focused on determining accuracy of voter lists in select wards in Bangalore

State Enhanced Electoral Roll System (STEERS) – a program focused on creating an electoral list maintenance process document; done in partnership with Microsoft and the Election Commission of India

2008

Jaago Re! – Urban India's largest voter registration campaign that saw over 6 lakh citizens applying; was executed with more than ten partners with the biggest being Tata Tea

2010-14

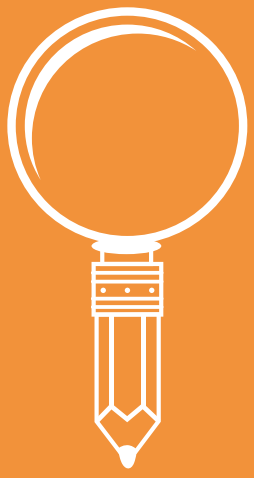
Jaagte Raho! and PURE – grassroots program on improving electoral rolls in Shanthinagar assembly constituency through an MoU with the Chief Electoral Officer, Karnataka. Also led to the development of the Proper URban Electoral (PURE) list manual - a comprehensive approach and process mapping for accurate voter lists

2010 onwards

Quality of Voter Lists Studies – a comprehensive research based program aiming to measure quality of voter lists in urban India and ascertain the reasons behind them.

Through research studies such as this, we aim to develop a body of irrefutable data and information that can catalyse reforms to voter list management in cities. We believe that such studies, based on both primary surveys and desktop research, are critical to electoral reforms in India.

Contents



Executive Summary

Executive Summary

A. Introduction

The Quality of Voter List Surveys (QoL) are a part of the efforts led by Janaagraha to improve the accuracy of voter lists. Having taken its current shape in 2014, QoL studies have been conducted and evolving for over the last three years. This study aims to quantify the errors that plague urban India's voter lists and help drive discussions around issues in urban voter list management. This is done by using a two-pronged design; one of matching voter lists to citizens and the other to match eligible citizens to voter lists. The former helps determine Deletions i.e. entries or citizen names on the list which should not be there and the latter, Omissions i.e. the number of citizens who are not on the list but should be on it.

In June 2015, the QoL surveys were extended to the city of Patna with particular focus on coverage of areas classified as 'high migration'. Janaagraha, during an earlier study in Patna, was left with a large percentage (70%) of sampled citizen addresses on the voter list as 'not found'; to mitigate this, the QoL methodology had devised a stage of research which assessed 'address quality' i.e. assessing whether addresses given on the voter list contained information considered adequate in finding an address on ground. Preparatory field investigations to develop assessment parameters in Patna led to a change in approach. Address infrastructure in the city and on its voter list were found wanting and instead of launching the full-fledged QoL study, Janaagraha rolled out a Pilot in July 2015 to estimate the proportion of addresses that would be deemed 'not found'. Conducted in four out of the eight ACs administered by the Patna Municipal Corporation (PMC), with a sample size of 600, the results of the pilot led to the ceasing of all further QoL stages as nearly half of addresses sampled from the voter list could not be located on the field. To understand better, the reasons behind the poor state of address information (and overall information in general) on voter rolls, this Pilot was followed up with interviews with Booth Level Officers (BLOs) in Patna in September and October 2015. A total of 14 telephonic interviews, in the ACs where the Pilot was conducted, were held.

B. Findings

Key findings from the Patna Pilot and BLO interviews are:

- **Address information on the city's voter lists, clubbed with a lack of uniformity in how addresses are structured on ground, is inadequate in helping locate a citizen on ground.** Patna city is quite complex in terms of the address infrastructure it has and also in the way its citizenry has adopted it. This complexity is highlighted by the fact that no single method could be developed to assess the 'findability' of an address i.e. whether a listed address has all information necessary to locate it on ground and local knowledge/intelligence emerged as the single largest factor in helping locate addresses.

- **The pilot study returned a 45% 'address not found' figure despite leveraging on local knowledge heavily.**

- **Procedures followed by BLOs, with respect to voter list updation, both across and within ACs are not uniform.** Findings suggest that general work procedures followed differ both across and within ACs, These differences were observed in a host of functions such as facilitating voter list updation, making the Nazariya Naksha and maintaining BLO registers.

- **The prescribed method for making the 'Nazariya Naksha' and allotting house numbers, an aspect key to finding addresses, is not being followed.** The 'Nazariya Naksha', a hand drawn map of a polling part, has to be created and updated by the BLO in the manner clearly laid out in the ECI's training manuals. However, the way this is being done is not consistent with laid down procedures and also differs both across and within ACs. Some BLOs stated that these numbers had already been allotted and they had not altered it and the ones who claimed to have updated their PPs mentioned differing ways to do so. This issue is compounded by the fact that, as several BLOs stated, PPs have no house or lane numbers, revealing just as the Patna Pilot did, that on ground address infrastructure in the city is weak.

- **While receiving forms from citizens, BLOs know which documents to accept as proof but do not seem to give due attention to completion of forms or the quality of data within.** The general lack of uniformity seen in work procedures followed does not seem to extend to their knowledge on documentation requirements. However, when asked about the checks they conduct to ensure completeness of forms, not much was said with indications that what information citizens gave is considered more or less complete and accurate. BLOs also stated that the quality of information on forms that they received from the citizen concerned or their family member is more or less the same. However, since not much was spoken about the specific checks they make, how BLOs assess this 'quality' remains uncertain.

It should be noted that the study found that BLOs usually engaged in voter list updation only when instructed from higher authorities. There are ways in which citizens can get enrolled or request for changes in their status on the voter list without having to go through the BLO during continuous revision. However, the BLO's role in 'continuous' updation or in facilitating it remains unclear. Another aspect that remains unclear is whether the current system of actively engaging BLOs at some times in the year, something we found varied both within and across ACs, can be called 'continuous', especially since BLO's did not see their work as so.

While the study was not able to shed light on the errors that plague Patna's voter lists, it has been able to explore two aspects key to measurement of voter list quality; one on methodology and the other on the interpretation of 'addresses not found' (ANFs). Making the survey methodology more rigorous, like increasing the total time to look for an individual or involving the Booth Level Officer could help but the main reasons behind such high ANFs have to do more with external factors that restrict the methodology's effectiveness and feasibility. The biggest reason was the inadequacy in voter list addresses made worse by general address infrastructure and the adoption of addresses by citizens. An overall divergence in how households are numbered, added to how people usually did not seem to associate with the addresses they have been formally allotted leads to the second big question, of the interpretation of 'address not found' cases. Cities faring better in overall address quality may offer an easier way of interpretation. In cases where an address is deemed to be 'unfindable' and can also not be located on ground, it would be fair to assume that inadequate address information is the issue. If deemed 'findable' but not found on ground, the chances of an address being fit for deletion becomes higher. However, importantly, in the case of Patna, where formal and structured addresses have little to do with findability itself, concluding that addresses deemed 'findable' but not found on ground are probable cases of deletion has little ground. This statement is enforced by procedural differences in allotting addresses and making the 'Nazariya Naksha' observed during the BLO interviews.

Apart from the procedural issues in how BLOs work, interviews with BLOs also provided insights into possible flaws in other layers of the voter list management machinery. Continuous updation, which as stated earlier may not be taking place in true spirit, was also affected by the unavailability of forms. Almost all BLOs indicated their concern on back end data entry and printing systems; some by directly saying that data entry operators caused most errors despite citizens providing correct details and some by speaking of it as something to be improved while providing suggestions. There were some other broad suggestions as well, mostly involving incorporating BLOs into data entry and record printing systems to ensure faster error free overall voter lists.

C. Discussion

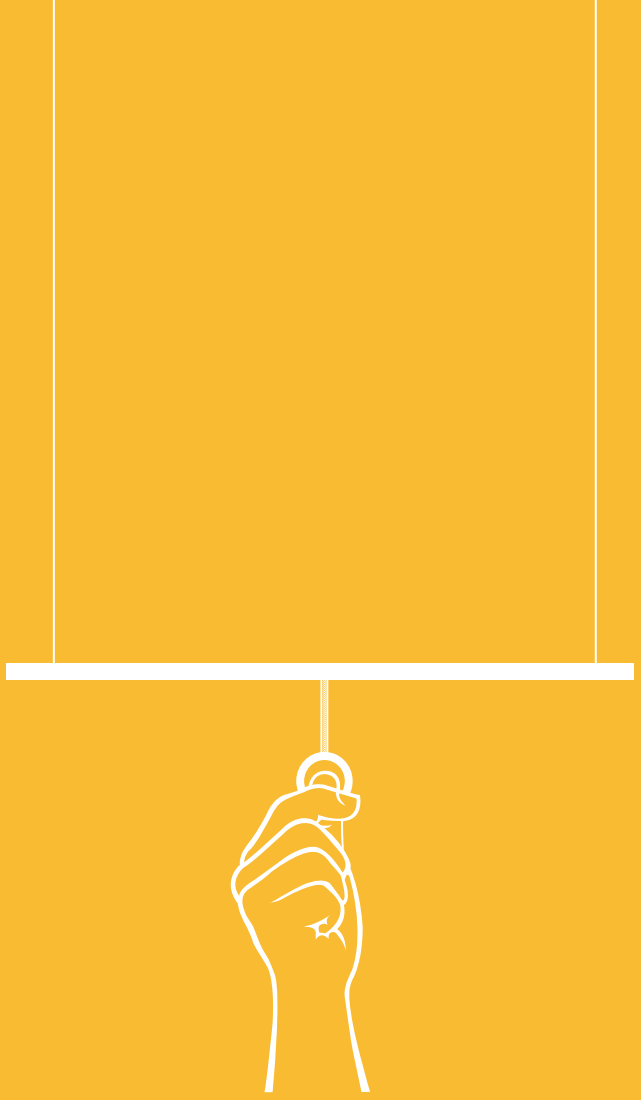
With the Pilot study returning a 45% 'address not found' figure revealing the state of address infrastructure in Patna and on its voter lists, addressing the basic issue of not being able to locate respondents to verify voter list accuracy remains a big challenge. This is also twofold; one for methodology and compounding the challenge, one for the interpretation of results that arise. Findings from BLO interviews help explore solutions to these challenges better. Being frontline workers of the ECI, they are a very good source to insights behind issues that lead to these challenges.

Methodology, which has more to do with the efficacy and scalability of the efforts to measure voter list hygiene, faces a major roadblock in terms of 'addresses not found' (ANFs). Having a large number of ANFs takes away from the larger aim of measuring voter list hygiene because of the second big challenge i.e. of interpretation of what 'ANFs' mean. Are these to be called 'errors' or are they not? Under what circumstances can an 'ANF' case be called an error and if called so, what is its impact? In an effort to answer such questions, the one thing that has emerged is that interpretation of 'ANFs' is quite tricky and the parameters to interpret it may differ greatly from city to city. Additionally, the issue of ANF may be rooted outside the purview of Voter List Management itself i.e. of issues in how authorized entities allot addresses. This was corroborated by the BLO interviews as well. In essence 'ANFs' may be more of a reflection on the quality of information available on voter lists and not the accuracy of the voter list in terms of deletions.

Given this, it would be worthwhile to devise ways of measuring voter list hygiene by reducing or eliminating dependence on addresses given on voter lists. This may be done in several ways ranging from involving BLOs in field-work procedures to increasing the time-frame for searching for an address. Each such method would have its own implication on time and costs but warrant further exploration. In any case, advocacy efforts aimed at improving voter list management should also focus on incorporation of robust audit mechanisms, not just for back end procedures and Electoral Roll Management System (ERMS) software, but also for on-ground voter list accuracy such as periodic survey based measurement and review.

Evidence from BLO interviews indicate a need for enhanced and more frequent training. BLOs interviewed did not think that there are a lot of issues with what they are doing. Even when asked for suggestions to improve the whole process, they spoke of improvements required in data entry and printing systems, rather than with processes they, as BLOs, are currently following. But there are clear divergences in the way they work and the way they are supposed to. Currently, there are a lot of demands put on BLOs in terms of the processes they have to follow. These, such as voter list health analysis, creation of the 'Nazariya Naksha' etc. can easily be handled by higher layers (such as AEROs, EROs etc) through technology. GIS tagging of PP houses and boundaries, using hand-held devices for real time servicing of citizen requests, tagging new housing structures that come in etc. also need to be explored as they can strengthen data collection and help drive targeted and efficient BLO intervention. With rapid urbanization and resultant citizen movement on the rise, demands on BLOs will only go up. Therefore, these enhancements need to focus on reducing BLO workload to ultimately lead to better adherence to prescribed processes (since these may be lower in number and perhaps less strenuous). Simultaneously, processes outside the BLO's purview also need to focus on the same.

Overall in Patna therefore, voter lists struggle with the address infrastructure in the city. This can be attributed to the poor address infrastructure in existence in the city and may be further compounded by inconsistent and unclear practices displayed by BLOs in maintenance of the lists. It is imperative for BLOs to be trained consistently across the city and to investigate and improve list maintenance practices in other layers of the voter list management machinery using improved technology aids. This, with the aim of ensuring that accurate and verifiable addresses are present on the list, leading to improved mechanisms for identifying potential deletions and omissions to the voter list and in turn, ensuring clean voter lists allowing all eligible citizens to cast their votes.



Introduction to Quality of Voter List (QoL) Studies

1. Introduction to Quality of Voter List (QoL) Studies

As a part of the effort to rid urban voter lists of errors, Janaagraha has been objectively measuring the hygiene of voter lists in Assembly Constituencies (ACs) in Bangalore as well as at city-level across India over the last two years and currently, is involved in conducting studies across major urban pockets to capture the diverse and complex nature of issues that voter list hygiene faces. Called Quality of Voter Lists (QoL) Surveys, these studies are an effort to quantify errors that exist in urban voter lists and put forth credible and irrefutable data which can subsequently guide corrective action and further discussion.

The QoL study was most recently expanded to the city of Patna to ascertain the hygiene of voter lists with particular focus on the differences that may arise between areas of high-migration and others. The methodology for QoL surveys evolves with each study and is tweaked to take into consideration specificities that each urban centre possesses. A similar study conducted in Patna in 2013 had faced a major hurdle. Investigators were not able to locate the addresses of around 70% of citizens sampled for the voter list-centric survey. These had been declared 'not found'. Following this, the research team decided to explore the issue in detail. Therefore, to check whether these entries were in fact liable for deletion or that they appeared to be incorrect as the information within them was inadequate to lead investigators to such addresses, another layer of research was added to all subsequent QoL studies. This involved assessing addresses on voter lists for 'findability' i.e. whether these addresses had a minimum amount of information required for them to be found on ground. This process was followed in the Delhi study conducted in early 2015 and was also applied to this study i.e. the QoL Patna study.

In the case of Patna, given the past experience, it was essential to develop a robust address scoring mechanism. Extensive field investigations to do so revealed that address infrastructure in the city, in terms of how these were structured and also how the citizenry had adopted it, was not uniform. It was also weak in terms of the number of parameters present on ground, such as an absence of road and lane names/numbers in several cases. These findings posed questions on both methodology and interpretation of 'addresses not found'. The possibility of a large number of sampled addresses not being found would take away from the primary aim of these surveys i.e. to assess the hygiene of Patna's voter lists. Overall, complexities that the city offered in terms of addresses commanded a change in broad methodology and Janaagraha decided to conduct a Pilot study to assess the feasibility of a full scale roll out. Forty five percent of addresses sampled for the Pilot, which was designed to closely resemble that of the larger QoL survey, could not be located on ground. This led to the ceasing of all further stages of the study.

In order to understand better, reasons behind the state of address quality on voter lists and to also try and answer the questions that findings from the Pilot survey raised on methodology and interpretation, Janaagraha engaged in another study. For this, interviews were conducted with Booth Level Officers (BLOs), the frontline workers of the ECI/CEO machinery in a manner that aimed to speak with a range of BLOs working within the ACs in Patna where the Pilot was conducted. This report summarizes the findings from both studies i.e. the QoL Pilot and BLO interviews, documents the broad methodology used and provides commentary on the way ahead.

Introduction to the Design and Methodology

2. Introduction to the Design and Methodology

The QoL Pilot was conducted in four Assembly Constituencies (ACs) within the Patna Municipal Corporation administered area and used a ground survey approach to try and find citizen addresses on ground. The BLO study, which involved conducting telephonic interviews, was also conducted in the same four ACs.

2.1 The Patna Pilot

Quality of Voter List (QoL) surveys broadly aim to quantify two error types on voter lists:

- **Errors of Deletion** – citizen names/entries on the voter list that should not be there
- **Errors of Omission** – citizen names/entries which should be on the voter list but are not

To capture these effectively, QoL surveys rely on two separate instruments:

- **Voter list centric surveys** – which are used to measure errors of deletion. The sampling basis for this is a citizen name and associated details listed on voter lists. In this method, a citizen in pre-selected from the voter list and surveyors try and locate them on ground. In general terms, either a person is found at their listed address or not. The latter being an error of deletion.
- **Citizen centric surveys** – which are used to measure errors of omission. The sampling basis for this survey type is a household and a random adult over 18 within this household. Essentially in this method a citizen is located by household selection and consequently checked against the voter list. In general terms, a citizen is either on the list or not. The latter being an error of inclusion.

In reality there are some subtle complexities and grey areas in not only the methodologies but also the categorisations of these errors which are fully outlined in the larger QoL pilot report[1].

In Patna, initial field investigations, conducted as a preparatory exercise prior to the execution of the QoL surveys led to a pilot study with the aim to assess feasibility of finding addresses. The methodology adopted involved finding pre-selected citizens from the voter list and locating their addresses on ground. This was the same as was to be used for the Voter list centric survey except that the ground exercise ended as soon as the pre-selected citizen's residence was successfully located.

2.2 The Booth Level Officer (BLO) Interviews

These were qualitative interviews, conducted over the telephone, with Booth Level Officers from selected PPs to try and understand better, reasons behind the current quality of information, particularly address information, on voter lists. Since Booth Level Officers (BLOs) are the frontline workers of the ECI's voter list machinery, Janaagraha conducted a series of interviews to explore the aforementioned issue in detail. Fifteen BLOs spread across four ACs within Patna were interviewed to try and understand why the state of information on voter lists was so. The objective of the interviews was to find out the following:

- Familiarity of BLOs with their assigned polling parts (PPs) and the general work procedures that they follow
- Specifics on documentation and information, particularly address information, in the forms they receive and
- Suggestions on improving the state of information on voter lists

[1] *The larger QoL Pilot report can be found on Janaagraha's website: www.janaagraha.org/sss/xx ; to be published in March 2016*

2.3 Sampling for the Pilot and BLO Interviews

Patna City, the area administered by the Patna Nagar Nigam (Municipal Corporation) or the PMC, is home to about 1.7 million people (2011 census). On applying the 18+ population percentage to this, which is 63%[2], we get a target population of 10,54,980 or just over a million citizens of voting age. To ensure sample representation with a 95% confidence level and a confidence interval of +/- 1.8% at the city level, an achieved sample size of 2956 citizens was required. For the List Centric survey, citizens were over-sampled to account for a probable 10% refusal/non-participation rate i.e. a total of 3284 citizens had to be sampled. For the Citizen Centric survey, since substitution with an alternate household is possible, exactly 2956 citizens needed to be surveyed. Citizens were be sampled from Polling Parts (PPs) within Assembly Constituencies (ACs).

Out of the 13 ACs that fall under the district of Patna, the PMC administers 8 ACs either partly or wholly. The QoL study was to be conducted in all 8 ACs but only in the areas administered by the PMC. However, the pilot was conducted in 4 out these 8 ACs with a sample size of 600, pre-selected from the voter list (therefore following the voter list centric methodology). These four ACs were chosen in a manner that ensured two were wholly within the PMC and two, partly. Sampling within the ACs also took into consideration adequate coverage of areas classified as 'high migration' and those as not. A total of 50 PPs were chosen for the Pilot and these were spread across the four chosen ACs in proportion to the size of the ACs. Within each PP, 12 citizens were chosen randomly.

For the BLO interviews, a sample of 15 was drawn in a manner consistent with the design stated above. Four sets of 15 BLOs were chosen to help interviewers substitute easily in case an interview was unsuccessful because of refusal/no contact or other such reasons.

[2] *The 2011 census states the population in Urban Patna to be 25,14,590 and of this figure, 15,71,935 have disclosed their age as 18 or over. This equates to 63% of Urban Patna citizens being 18 or over. Since the study will cover areas administered by the Patna Municipal Corp., which administers Urban Patna, census figures have been taken for Urban Patna instead of Patna as a whole.*

2.4 Execution

2.4.1 Execution of the Pilot Study

The pilot involved conducting on ground searches to locate a citizen's address. To maximize the chances of locating the address of a pre-selected citizen, the following process was adopted:

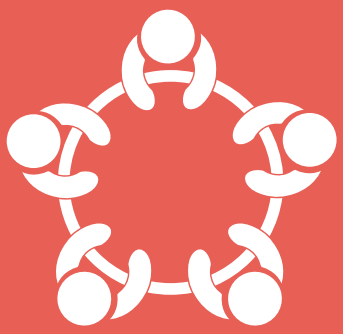
1. **The field team supervisor was required to make a list of at least 8 people in a particular locality who were most likely to know where an address lied, called the address resource list. These included people such as:**
   - **a.** The Booth Level Officer (BLO)
   - **b.** Post man/post office
   - **c.** Local grocer
   - **d.** Courier agency/delivery agent
   - **e.** Milk man
   - **f.** Garbage collector/collection agency
   - **g.** Local electrician
   - **h.** Local carpenter
   - **i.** Local plumber
   - **j.** LPG/Gas agency

2. **While looking for an address, the interviewer was then required to:**
   - **a.** Speak with at least 3 of the identified people mentioned in the above list.
   - **b.** Look for the address for at least 30 minutes.

In addition to this, all addresses deemed 'Not Found' by interviewers on ground were checked by the supervisor who was required to speak with the three people that the interviewer had spoken with and in addition, another two from the resource list that the interviewer had not spoken to.

2.4.2 Execution of the BLO Interviews

- BLOs from the set of sampled PPs were contacted using a telephone
- Calls were made at varying times of the day ranging from 11:00 AM to 8:00 PM IST to maximize chances of getting a complete interview. In case a call did not get answered, the number was tried at least five more times during different day-parts and different days before accepting it as a failed contact
- Once answered by the BLO of interest, Janaagraha either conducted the interview there and then using a semi structured interview schedule or sought an appointment on a different time and day to conduct the interview
- All interviews were recorded on a mobile device. Once completed, these were transcribed. Transcription was done in English, translating the words that BLOs spoke from Hindi to English in real-time



Summary and Discussion of Findings from the Patna Pilot

3. Summary and Discussion of Findings from the Patna Pilot

The Patna QoL study was undertaken to enhance JCCD's understanding of the errors that plague urban India's voter lists. Part of a series of studies, this step was taken to explore potential differences in voter list hygiene between areas that display high migration and others that do not. Like the earlier studies, the Patna QoL intended to fulfil its aim using a two-pronged approach i.e. using a voter list centric phase (matching the voter list to citizens) and a citizen centric phase (matching citizens to the voter list). However, findings from pre-launch field visits and the desk research phase commanded a change in approach leading to a pilot study being undertaken to better understand the occurrences of addresses on the voter list not being found on the field. Conducted in the months of July and August 2015, key findings are as below:

- Patna city is quite complex in terms of the address infrastructure it has and also in the way its citizenry has adopted it. A lack of uniformity in how addresses were structured along with differences in the way people used them rendered it difficult for the team to develop a single methodology for ascertaining address quality. Instead it led to the development of three methods reflecting varying degrees of confidence in the quality of an address in helping locate an enrolled citizen. Additionally, local knowledge emerged as the single most important factor in locating addresses.

- Despite leveraging on local knowledge, the pilot returned a 45% 'address not found' figure. The Assembly Constituencies (ACs) Bankipur and Kumhrar, lying completely within Patna Municipal Corporation (PMC) administered area saw 'Addresses Not Founds' (ANFs) at 53% and 52% respectively. Danapur and Phulwari, which lie partially within PMC saw better ANF percentages at 30% and 31% respectively. It appeared that locating addresses towards the outskirts of the city and in areas having a lower density of houses was easier as in such cases, local knowledge proved to be much more effective.

- Since the percentage of ANFs was much higher when compared to the acceptable figure of 25% (established as a cut off before the pilot commenced), all further stages of the study were ceased.

While the study was not able to shed light on the errors that plague Patna's voter lists, it has been able to raise some important questions on two aspects; one on methodology and the other on the interpretation of ANFs that arise out of such studies. A city like Delhi was easier to handle on both aforementioned aspects but it seems likely that urban pockets similar to Patna will face challenges while trying to solve those issues. Making the methodology more rigorous, like increasing the total time to look for an individual or involving the Booth Level Officer could help with the first question on methodology but the main reasons behind such high ANFs have to do more with external factors that restrict the methodology's effectiveness and feasibility. The biggest reason was the inadequacy in voter list addresses made worse by general address infrastructure and the adoption of addresses by people. An overall divergence in how households are numbered, added to how people usually did not seem to associate with the addresses they have been formally allotted leads to the second big question, of the interpretation of 'address not found' cases.

Cities faring better in overall address quality, such as Delhi, may offer an easier way of interpretation. In cases where an address was deemed to be 'unfindable' and could not be located on ground, it would be a fit case of inadequate information. If deemed 'findable' but not found on ground, the chances of such an address being fit for deletion would also be quite high. But in the case of Patna, where formal and structured addresses have little to do with findability itself, concluding that addresses deemed 'findable' but not found on ground are probable cases of deletion has little ground.

This endeavour has thrown significant light into how address information is recorded on voter lists and the issues with the process. These findings beg further investigation into how the ECI's machinery records such information and on the issue of coordination between the ECI and authorities empowered to allot addresses. Without answering these questions, addressing the two main challenges, on methodology and interpretation may be difficult. As a result of these issues being raised, following on from this study, a qualitative study with Booth Level Officers (BLOs) in Patna was commissioned. The aim was to better understand the poor state of address information on voter lists with an eye towards the larger aim of understanding Voter List Management (VLM) processes.

Summary and Discussion of Findings from the BLO Interviews

4. Summary and Discussion of Findings from the BLO Interviews

Patna offers a lot of complexities in terms of the address infrastructure present in the city. This is not just in terms of the physical infrastructure present, but also in terms of how the citizenry has adopted and uses it. This had made it very difficult for Janaagraha's Quality of Voter List (QoL) surveys, conducted in July and August 2015, to locate citizen addresses on ground. Further investigations into the issue of 'address not found' resulted in a Pilot study in which 45% of sampled addresses could not be located on field and a large number of sampled addresses were found to be wanting in terms of the completeness of address information in them. This raised further questions on both methodology and the interpretation of such a figure i.e. the 45% 'address not founds'. Interviews with Booth Level Officers (BLOs) from Patna were commissioned to understand better, reasons behind the state of address quality on Patna's voter lists and to also try and answer the questions that findings from the Pilot survey raised on methodology and interpretation.

These interviews have helped to shed light on some reasons behind the current state of affairs, particularly with respect to the address information on Patna's voter lists. However, it would be worth keeping in mind that these observations are only from a section of the entire voter list management machinery and should be read as so. Key findings from this study are as follows:

- **Procedures followed by BLOs with respect to voter list updation, both across and within ACs, are not uniform.**
  BLOs generally appeared to be well aware of the number of people in their PPs which may not be surprising given a large number of them had been taking on this responsibility for three years or more. However, findings suggest that general work procedures followed differ both across and within ACs, perhaps indicating a need to increase the scope and strength of training procedures. These differences were observed in a host of functions such as facilitating voter list updation, making the Nazariya Naksha and maintaining BLO registers.

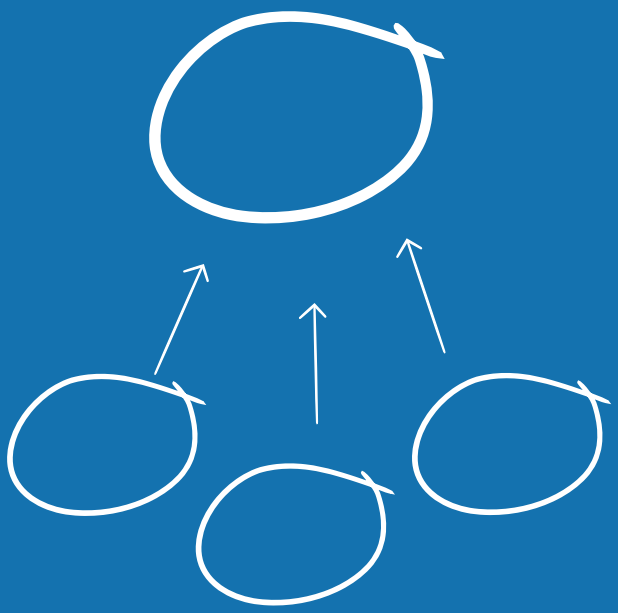
- **The prescribed method for making the 'Nazariya Naksha' and allotting house numbers, an aspect key to finding addresses, is not being followed.**
  The 'Nazariya Naksha', a hand drawn map of a polling part, has to be created and updated by the BLO in the manner clearly laid out in the ECIs training manuals. However, the way this is being done is not consistent with laid down procedures and also differs both across and within ACs. Inquiries into the state of address information revealed that the address parameter 'house number', an aspect linked to the Nazariya Naksha, also had several complexities around it. Some BLOs stated that these numbers had already been allotted and they had not altered it and the ones who claimed to have updated their PPs mentioned differing ways to do so. The recommended method is not generally being followed. As per the ECI this should involve using the number allotted by competent authorities and if not present, using an alternate numbering method clearly listed out by the ECI. This issue is compounded by the fact that, as several BLOs stated, PPs have no house or lane numbers, revealing just as the Patna Pilot did, that on ground address infrastructure in the city is weak.

- **While receiving forms from citizens, BLOs know which documents to accept as proof but do not seem to give due attention to completion of forms or the quality of data within.**
  The general lack of uniformity seen in work procedures followed does not seem to extend to BLO's knowledge on documentation requirements. However, when asked about the checks they conduct to ensure completeness of forms, not much was said with indications that what information citizens give is considered more or less complete and accurate. BLOs also stated that the quality of information on forms that they receive from the citizen concerned or their family member is more or less the same. However, since not much was spoken about the specific checks they make, how BLOs assess this 'quality' remains uncertain.

Another finding was that BLOs usually engaged in voter list updation only when instructed from higher authorities. There are ways in which citizens can get enrolled or request for changes in their status on the voter list without having to go through the BLO during continuous revision. However, the BLO's role in continuous updation or in facilitating it remains unclear. Another aspect that remains unclear is whether the current system of actively engaging BLOs at some times in the year, something we found varied both within and across ACs, can be called 'continuous', especially since BLO's did not see their work as so. This could have a bearing on whether BLOs help citizens enroll, create awareness and perform other requisite duties 'continuously' i.e. as and when approached by citizens or only when instructed by higher authorities.

Apart from the procedural issues mentioned above, BLOs also gave insights into possible flaws in other layers of the voter list management machinery. Continuous updation, around which questions remain, was also affected by the unavailability of forms. Almost all BLOs indicated their concern on back end data entry and printing systems; some by directly saying that data entry operators cause most errors despite citizens providing correct details and some by speaking of it as something to be improved while providing suggestions. There were some other broad suggestions as well, mostly involving incorporating BLOs into data entry and record printing systems to ensure faster error free overall voter lists.

The objective of this study was to understand, from BLOs, how voter lists are maintained and updated, addresses are recorded and the 'Nazariya Naksha'/PP maps are updated. This was to aide Janaagraha's understanding on why addresses may not be findable on ground and general voter list management practices. The study's findings, summarized above, reveal inconsistencies among BLOs as well as divergences from ECI stated procedures in the way they work, particularly in areas that relate directly to voter list address quality. When seen together with bad on-ground address infrastructure, many addresses listed on voter lists will continue to be difficult to locate on-ground without the help of BLOs. Going forward, field work for the QoL surveys needs to consider if it would be feasible, given resource limitations, for more contact to be made with BLOs in Patna. Additionally, whether these findings apply to other urban centers or not also needs to be examined as it impacts on the scalability of the current QoL methodology.



Conclusion

5. Conclusion

Overall in Patna therefore, voter lists struggle with the address infrastructure in the city. This can be attributed to the poor address infrastructure in existence in the city and may be further compounded by inconsistent and unclear practices displayed by BLOs in maintenance of the lists. It is imperative for BLOs to be trained consistently across the city and to investigate and improve list maintenance practices in other layers of the voter list management machinery using improved technology aids. This, with the aim of ensuring that accurate and verifiable addresses are present on the list, leading to improved mechanisms for identifying potential deletions and omissions to the voter list and in turn, ensuring clean voter lists allowing all eligible citizens to cast their votes.

JANAAGRAHA

JANAAGRAHA CENTRE FOR CITIZENSHIP & DEMOCRACY

4th Floor, UNI Building, Thimmaiah Road, Vasanthnagar, Bangalore - 560052
Tel: +91-80-4079-0400 Fax: +91-80-4127-7104
www.janaagraha.org | www.ichangemycity.com | www.ipaidabribe.com