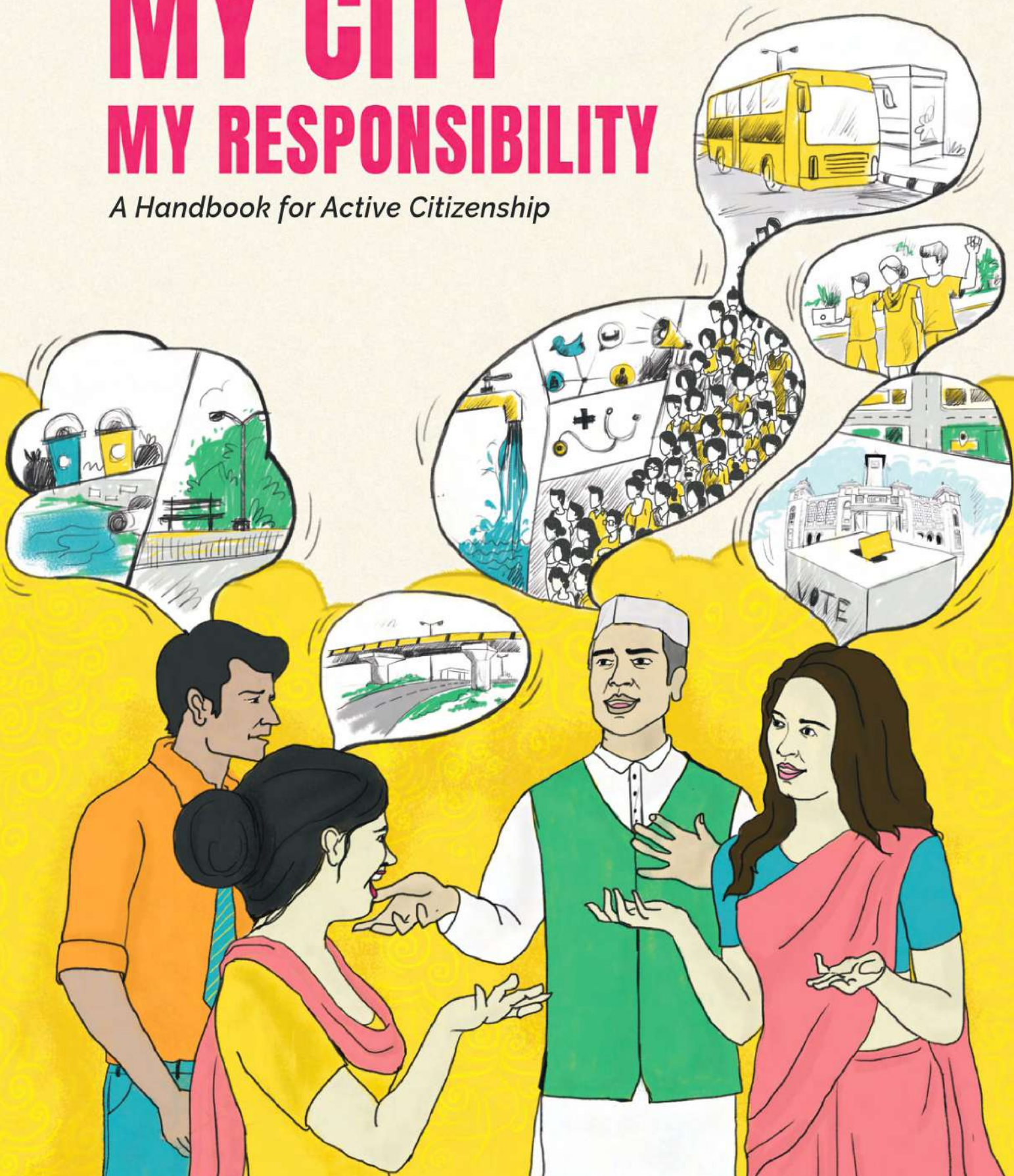


JANAAGRAHA

# MY CITY MY RESPONSIBILITY

*A Handbook for Active Citizenship*





# Foreword



**Shri Hardeep Singh Puri**

Hon'ble Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs,  
Government of India

'My City My Responsibility — A Handbook for Active Citizenship' is a timely resource for civil society, interested citizens, and public-spirited endeavours who wish to learn about and contribute more to the development of their cities.

India's urban areas are the key to its development in this period of 'Amrit Kaal'. Recognising the scale of the task ahead as well as the untapped potential of our cities, the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi unleashed the largest planned urbanisation programme undertaken anywhere in the world. A central tenet of this programme has been the emphasis on fostering active citizenship in order to strengthen the well-being of our cities and citizens, and truly make our cities productive and vibrant spaces for living and work.

The concept of *Jan Bhagidari*—alien to government functioning before 2014—is now an integral aspect of many national movements, including flagship government missions for urban areas such as the Swachh Bharat Mission, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, Smart Cities Mission and AMRUT, as well as global movements such as Lifestyle For Environment (LiFE).

This handbook draws guidance from the same well as it provides advice and insight to city dwellers and enables them to engage meaningfully with their local government. When citizens, officials and councillors in more than 90,000 wards in 4,800 towns and cities team up together for local action, then I am sure that even the mightiest of global challenges such as climate change, public health, gender equity, and services for the urban poor can be tackled.

I commend Janaagraha on releasing this handbook. It not only continues to demonstrate their commitment to the cause of decentralisation, but also showcases their impressive range of experience of working at the grassroots with councillors, civic officials, and neighbourhood communities while retaining a nuanced understanding of the constitutional and statutory mandates of cities.



I am certain that this handbook will equip civic leaders with the necessary theoretical information as well as the practical approaches to find solutions to everyday civic challenges through decentralised platforms such as Ward Committees and Area Sabhas. Ward Committees and Area Sabhas are the true embodiments of Swaraj. They are meant to represent the oft-overused, but rarely understood ideal of 'community' by exemplifying constructive team work between citizens, civic officials and elected representatives.

By situating these forums as the nodal points of citizen participation, this handbook aims to draw attention to the measures that need to be undertaken to strengthen them and make them the centres of planning and execution of development projects. It is incumbent upon all of us to shape these agencies as effective instruments of local governance.

I call upon citizens and civic groups such as resident welfare associations in all neighbourhoods and wards of our cities to make the best use of this guide, and contribute in making our cities thriving spaces.

New Delhi  
20 Nov. 2023

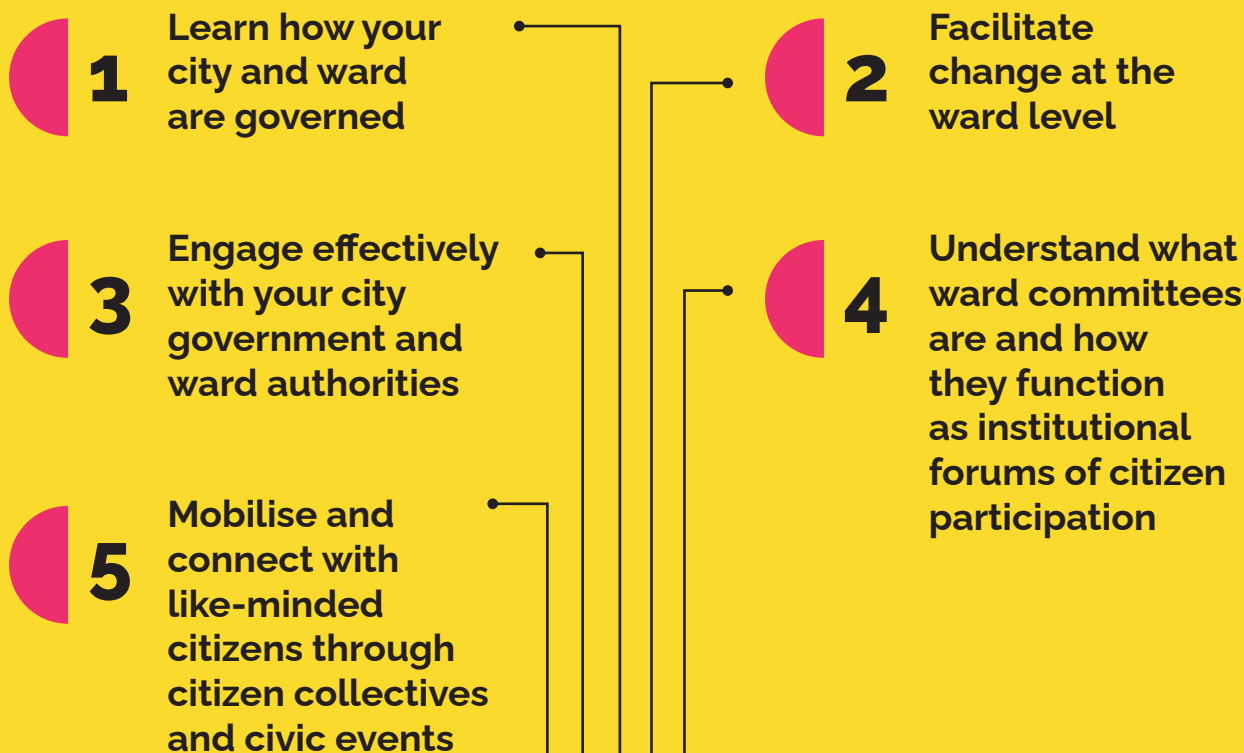


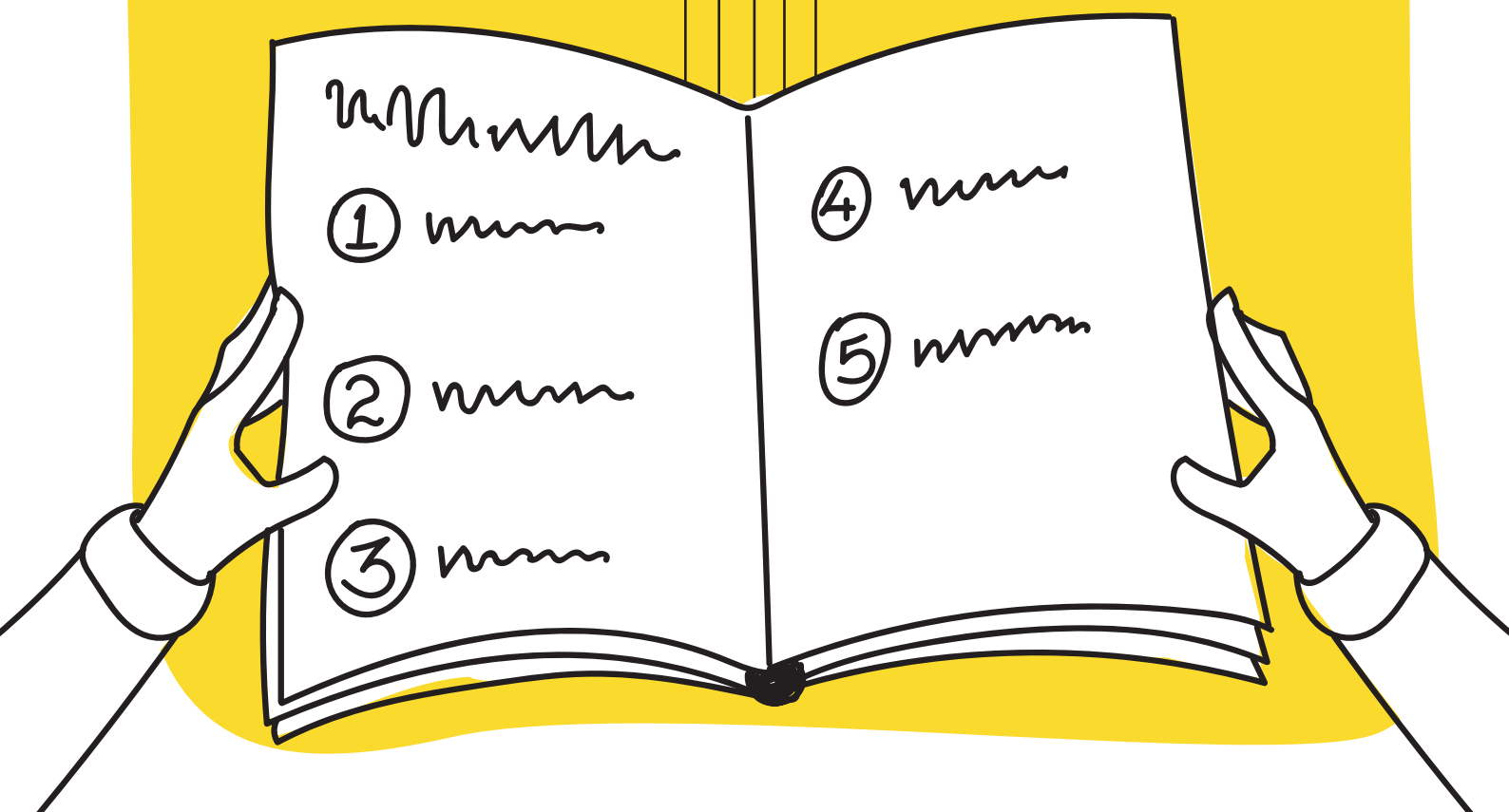
(Hardeep S Puri)

Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs,  
Government of India



# Use this handbook to

- 
- 1** Learn how your city and ward are governed
  - 2** Facilitate change at the ward level
  - 3** Engage effectively with your city government and ward authorities
  - 4** Understand what ward committees are and how they function as institutional forums of citizen participation
  - 5** Mobilise and connect with like-minded citizens through citizen collectives and civic events



## 01

# Getting Started

## 1.1 Is this handbook for me if:



- I am a seasoned member of my Resident Welfare Association and actively involved in local civic issues?



- A curious citizen exploring my options?



- I am looking to bring about change in my neighbourhood but have no knowledge or experience of how to do this?

# YES!

This handbook is designed to be of use to everyone – regardless of experience and expertise. If you're eager to make your neighbourhood – and your city – a better place, this handbook is for you.

1.2

## Why did we create this handbook



**Raise your hand if you have ever wanted to fix a civic issue around your locality but were stumped by the 'how-to' of it all.**

For most of us, our strong desire to do something fizzles in the face of the reality that we simply don't know where to start – or even how.

This handbook aims to change that.

It equips citizens with the practical know-how they need to bring about the change they seek in their localities. It also encourages an inclusive, bottom-up approach to city planning and development that promotes – and improves – participatory democracy at every level of governance.

This handbook is our attempt to provide individuals with an easy-to-follow roadmap to active citizenship. Because we believe that active citizens create vibrant democracies.

1.3

## Are there different types of citizen?

# YES!

Based on your level of civic engagement and your approach to civic rights and responsibilities, you are likely to belong to one of five categories: Passive Citizens, Interested Citizens, Engaged Citizens, Active Citizens, and Community Leaders.



**Passive  
Citizens**



**Interested  
Citizens**



**Engaged  
Citizens**



**Active  
Citizens**



**Community  
Leaders**



Think of the categories as rungs on a ladder. Passive Citizenship forms the first rung of the ladder while becoming a Community Leader is the goal at the very top.



05

## Community Leaders



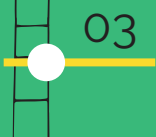
Mobilise citizens in the neighbourhood and set the agenda for collective action; engage with the ward councillor and civic agency officials as the leader of the neighbourhood community; enforce rules with government support and mobilise the community to follow rules.



04

## Active Citizens

Actively engage in civic issues on a regular basis; take initiative and work with others to get things done for the community; confront community members who break rules.

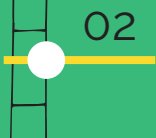


03

## Engaged Citizens



Modestly involved in neighbourhood's civic issues as a part of their RWA/AA; regularly attend community events. Have always wanted to do more but not sure how and may not have the time. Feel passionately about following the rules, not paying bribes.



02

## Interested Citizens

Quite irritated and worried about civic issues; want to do something to change the status quo but don't know how or where to start. They mostly follow the rules but may break them if they are onerous or if everyone else seems to be doing the same.



01



## Passive Citizens

Irritated by civic issues but believe not much can or will change. They also believe that individuals can't do much to change the system and it is up to the government to fix things. They therefore don't think twice while littering or jumping traffic signals.

Source: Janaagraha Citizenship Ladder

It is important to remember that, at some point in time, every Active Citizen was probably a Passive Citizen. Where you are today does not permanently define the kind of citizen you can be.

## THE MAKING OF A GOOD CITIZEN

Every act and action you take, big or small, can be an expression of your citizenship. It can be something as simple as following traffic rules and not paying bribes, or something as complex as coordinating a ward-level campaign for change. Intentions backed by efforts are what make good citizens.

## 1.4 The Action Zone



### TAKE THE CITIZENSHIP QUIZ!

Find out what kind of citizen you are and – more importantly – what kind of citizen you would like to be.

Choose what best describes you:



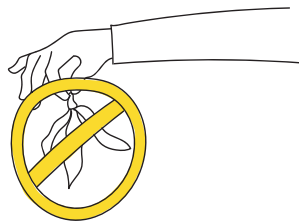
1 I segregate waste at home

- ☐ A Always
- ☐ B Sometimes
- ☐ C Often
- ☐ D Never



2 I abstain from littering

- ☐ A Always
- ☐ B Sometimes
- ☐ C Often
- ☐ D Never



3 I follow queues and abstain from breaking them

- ☐ A Always
- ☐ B Sometimes
- ☐ C Often
- ☐ D Never



4 I carry a cloth/jute/plastic bag from home when I go to buy groceries, fruits, or vegetables

- ☐ A Always
- ☐ B Sometimes
- ☐ C Often
- ☐ D Never



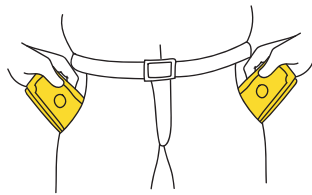
5 I follow traffic rules

- ☐ A Always
- ☐ B Sometimes
- ☐ C Often
- ☐ D Never



**6 I pay bribes**

- ☐ A Never
- ☐ B Occasionally
- ☐ C Often
- ☐ D Regularly



**7 I pay my taxes regularly and on time**

- ☐ A Always
- ☐ B Sometimes
- ☐ C Often
- ☐ D Never



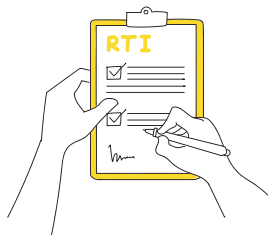
**8 I voted in the last elections**

- ☐ A Yes
- ☐ B No, but I have voted in previous elections
- ☐ C No, but I would like to vote in future elections
- ☐ D I never vote in elections



**9 I have filed an RTI application in the interest of public good**

- ☐ A Many times
- ☐ B Often
- ☐ C Occasionally
- ☐ D Never



**10 I have spoken to a public official to get a civic issue resolved**

- ☐ A Many times
- ☐ B Often
- ☐ C Occasionally
- ☐ D Never



**11 I know the name of my corporator, mayor and MLA**

- ☐ A Yes, I know all their names
- ☐ B I know my MLA's name but not my corporator's or mayor's names
- ☐ C I know my MLA's and mayor's names but not my corporator's
- ☐ D I don't know any of their names



**12 I know which government agency handles each service connected with my city's management**

- ☐ A Fully aware
- ☐ B Mostly aware
- ☐ C Somewhat aware
- ☐ D Not aware at all



**13 I understand the roles and responsibilities of mayors, councillors, MLAs, and bureaucrats**

- ☐ A Fully aware
- ☐ B Mostly aware
- ☐ C Somewhat aware
- ☐ D Not aware at all



**14 I believe that it is the responsibility of citizens to work together with the government to resolve civic issues**

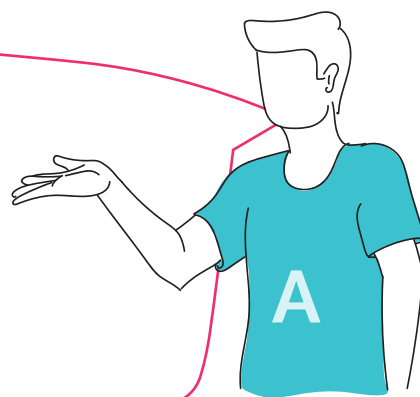
- ☐ A Strongly agree
- ☐ B Agree
- ☐ C Somewhat agree
- ☐ D Strongly disagree





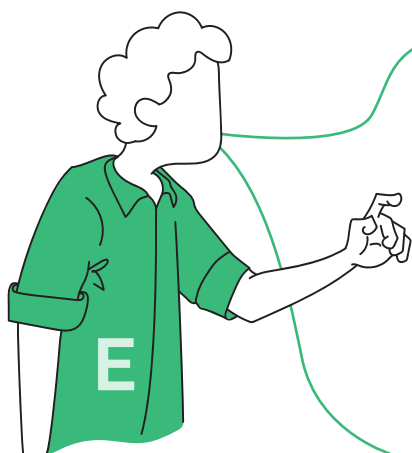
If your answer to most of the questions was (A), you may be an **Active Aamir**.

You strongly believe in the importance of citizen participation in a democracy – and your actions prove it. You feel passionately about following the rules and are not afraid to encourage others to do the same. You are actively involved in your neighbourhood and are quick to take the lead to resolve civic issues.



If your answer to most of the questions was (B), you may be an **Engaged Eshwar**.

You are conscientious about your duties and responsibilities as a citizen and may even be a part of Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) or similar collectives. Having previously addressed civic issues, you may be somewhat familiar with the local government machinery. Although you are doing your part as a responsible citizen, you wish to do more for your neighbourhood and city but don't quite know how to step up your engagement.



If your answer to most of the questions was (C), you may be an **Interested Isabella**.

You mostly follow the rules and are typically a law-abiding citizen, except perhaps for when the rules are too cumbersome or everyone seems to be breaking them. You're irritated by the civic issues facing your city but, rather than blaming the government, you are interested in playing an active role in resolving them. The only thing holding you back is a lack of knowledge.



If your answer to most of the questions was (D), you may be a **Passive Pavithra**.

Like most of us, you too are probably frustrated by civic issues, but you don't have much hope that things will change. Maybe you even believe that it is up to the government to fix things and that individual citizens can't do much to change the system. But reading this handbook could well be the first step in your journey to active citizenship! Kudos to you for getting started! We're here to tell you that there is a light at the end of the tunnel and this handbook will take you there.



1.5

## Why should I aspire to be an active citizen? And why are active citizens important in a democracy?

**A democracy needs active citizens to thrive.**

Active citizens understand that democracy is a two-way street. Even as they enjoy their rights and freedoms, they are aware of the many responsibilities that come with living in a democracy. They believe that their duty as citizens doesn't end at voting in elections. Instead, **they look at citizenship as an ongoing commitment that can be reaffirmed every day through actions and behaviours, big and small.**

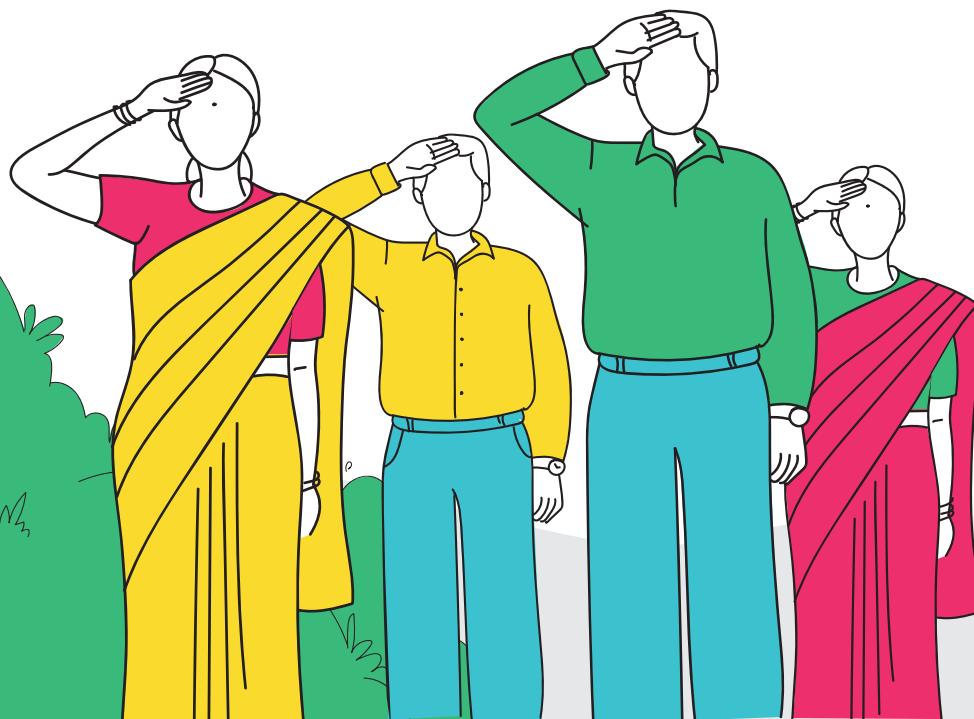
To them, active citizenship is patriotism in action. It is their way of expressing their love of their country through acts of service.

*As the quote by popular thinker and philosopher, Swami Vivekananda goes*



***The real work is in the practice***

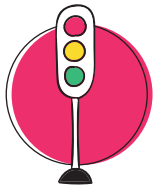
And active citizens believe in practicing democracy, every single day.



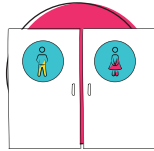
## 1.6

## How can me being an active citizen help the country?

Our everyday life is affected by various factors that seem out of our control. After all, how could we, as individual citizens, possibly



**improve traffic?**



**Or ensure cleaner public toilets?**



**Or prevent urban flooding?**



**Or ensure adequate water supply?**

**These issues fall under the purview of the government, right?**

**Yes, you are right – but only to an extent. Although the responsibility of the city government, there is a lot that citizens can – and must – do too.**

Our government and its agencies are structured for citizen participation. There are processes and mechanisms in place that help us, directly and indirectly, influence many aspects of urban quality of life (including good roads, streetlights, uninterrupted water supply, etc.) and the money required to provide them. Quality of life and allocation of funds in city budgets are interrelated and directly impact one another.

And this is where Active Citizens come in.

Active citizens **use their nuanced knowledge** of their localities to **highlight the neighbourhood-specific issues citizens face**. They channel their innate understanding of the community's needs to develop specific solutions. They **push for their city budgets** to reflect the concerns and aspirations of their locality more accurately. And they **leverage the power of platforms and opportunities** to ensure that the requirements of citizens and the policies and projects of the government are aligned.

Active citizens are also best placed – and more invested – in adopting a local approach to the global problem of climate change. After all, a greener, more environment-friendly neighbourhood translates into healthy citizens and healthy communities.

The efforts of active citizens, therefore, pave the way for improved quality of life in our neighbourhoods and cities. And the **more active citizens we have, the better our cities and country will be.**

**Because true democracy means true participation.**



## 1.7

## What can I expect to learn from this handbook?

This handbook is designed to give you all the information, advice, and expert tips you need to facilitate change at the neighbourhood level.

For the A to Z on city governments, turn to

### Section 2

For information on your ward, its governance, and its budget, head over to

### Section 3

Want to know the different ways in which you can engage with civic authorities and have your voice heard? Turn to

### Section 4

Looking to get more involved in your ward committee?

### Section 5

is essential reading for you.

Fired up to take your ward committee to the next level? Get started with

### Section 6

#### ALSO INCLUDED

1



How to conduct an event to mobilize citizens for a cause

2



How to engage with the media

3



How to draft a press release

4



How to report an issue to the civic authorities

5



How to draft a letter to the city and ward authorities

6



How to follow up with the city government

7



How to use social media



1.8

## What do I need to keep in mind while using this handbook?

Every city and ward is different, and often, their rules of governance can be too. This handbook reflects the typical conditions and processes in most Indian cities. It is not an exhaustive representation of the workings of all cities and wards.

The information, advice, and guidance presented in this handbook is to the best of our knowledge at Janaagraha. It will also be regularly updated to include changes in policies, rules, and regulations.

If you need any specific information, please reach out to us

[activecitizen@janaagraha.org](mailto:activecitizen@janaagraha.org)

1.9

## Say hello to JANAAGRAHA, the people behind this handbook.



Janaagraha has worked extensively towards nurturing active citizenship and participatory democracy for more than 20 years.

Our goal is to transform the quality of life in India's cities and towns. Towards this end, we are working to catalyse active citizenship and reform city governance through campaigns and programmes that bring citizens and city governments together to collaborate on civic matters at the neighbourhood level. **MyCityMyBudget is a participatory budgeting programme** that we run in **partnership with city governments, community groups, and civil society organisations** to accomplish this goal. We also work on strengthening ward committees as participatory platforms in various cities.

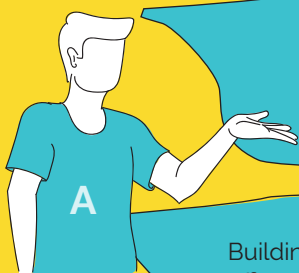
This handbook is a culmination of our vast and varied experiences on the ground. It is filled with **actionable information, best practices, and frameworks**, and has been carefully put together to be a reliable companion to those on the path to active citizenship.

02

# Decoding City Governments

Everything you need to know about how your city is managed

ACTIVE  
AAMIR



Do you agree that almost all global problems have a local impact and necessitate local action? Even the polar ice caps melting affects us in our cities. There is a lot we, as individuals, can do to mitigate climate-related issues such as heat waves, flooding, and air pollution.

Building climate resilience in our cities requires conscious effort at the household and community levels. Imagine joining hands with your city government to get your neighbourhood lake rejuvenated! If citizens participate in similar activities across the city, it will help keep the city's rising temperature under check, make more water available for drinking, increase the ground water table, improve the flora and fauna around us and eventually the biodiversity too! All this would also help reduce the risk of flooding in the city.

But how can we address the global challenge of climate change at the local level?

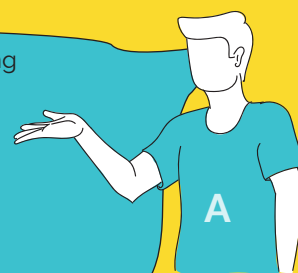


INTERESTED  
ISABELLA



Oh, that sounds amazing! What can I do to make this a reality?

The first step is understanding your city government. The path to becoming an active citizen, therefore, begins with learning the ABCs of your city government and understanding the different ways to engage with it.



Most of us are probably familiar with how our central and state governments function. The running of our cities, however, can often be a bit of a mystery.

But changing your city begins with understanding how it is governed. After all, city governments are responsible for providing the services and infrastructure that directly influence the quality of our everyday life.

## LET'S GET STARTED!





## 2.1 How is my city administration structured?

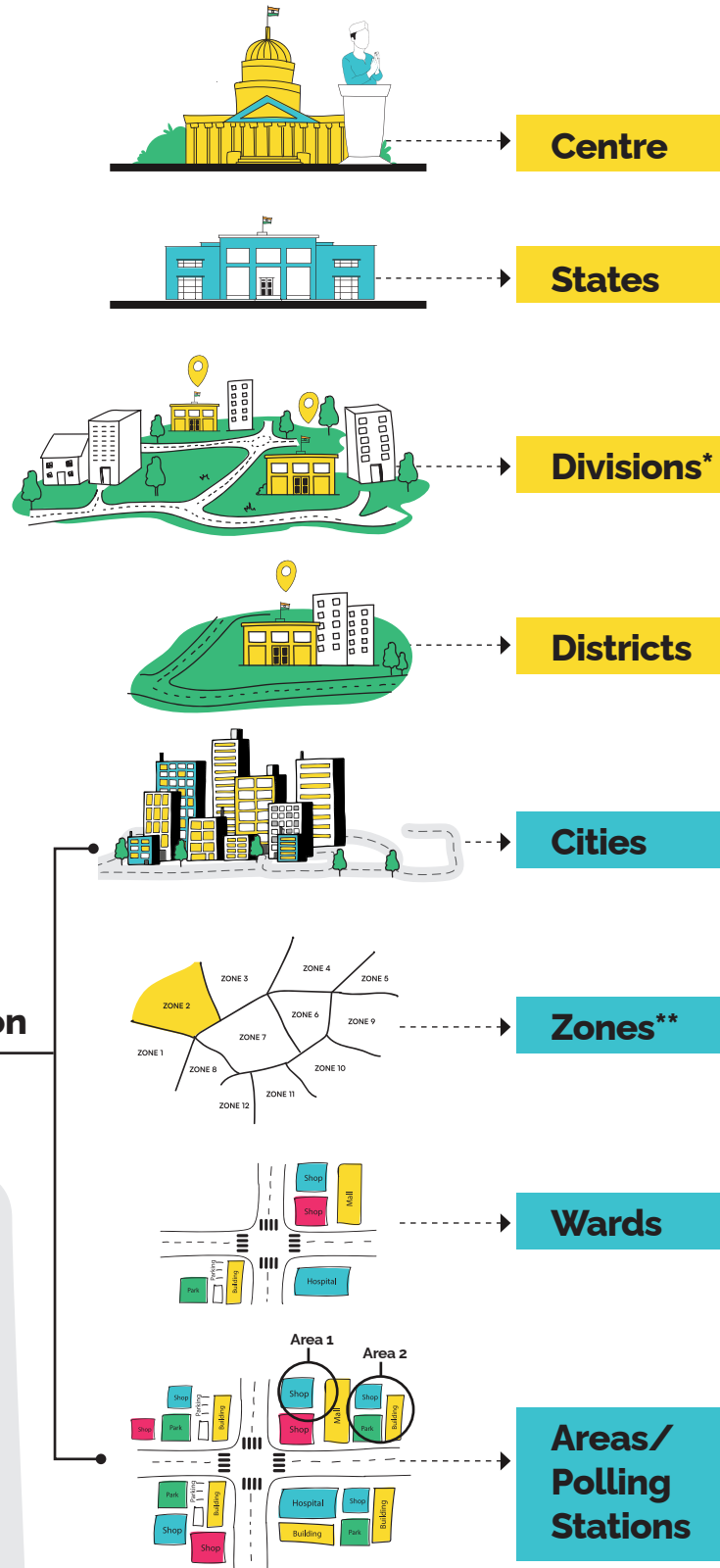
After the central and state governments, city governments form the third level of governance.

For ease of administration, large cities are typically divided into zones, which are further divided into wards. Often, smaller cities are directly divided into wards.

\*3-5 districts form a division; a division is headed by a senior IAS officer

### City Administration

While zones and wards form the basis of a city's administration, they are not the same as Assembly Constituencies. For the purpose of state and central elections, a city is divided into Assembly and Parliamentary Constituencies from which Members of Parliament (MPs) and Members of Legislative Assemblies (MLAs) are elected.



\*\* Typically, larger cities are divided into zones while smaller cities might or might not have zones.

# DID

## YOU KNOW?

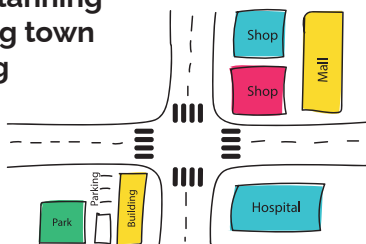
City governments get their power from the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act (74th CAA). The Act was introduced in 1993 to provide a decentralised structure for city governments to function as the third tier of governance next to central and state governments. However, the functions of individual city governments are determined by their respective states.

2.2

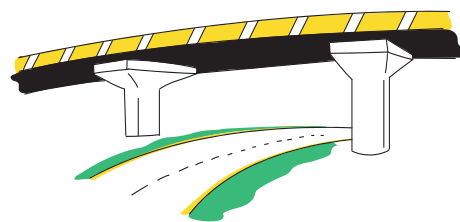
## What is my city government responsible for?

The 74th Constitutional Amendment Act under the 12th Schedule lists the following as functions of city governments

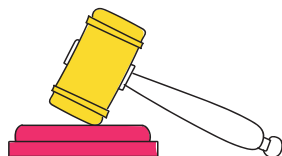
### 01 Urban planning including town planning



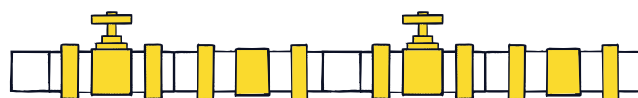
### 02 Roads and bridges



### 03 Regulation of land use and construction of buildings



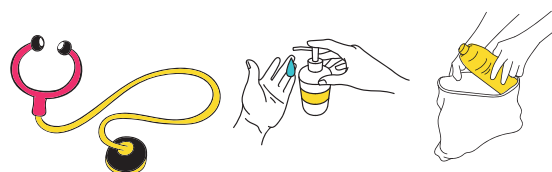
### 04 Water supply for domestic, industrial, and commercial purposes



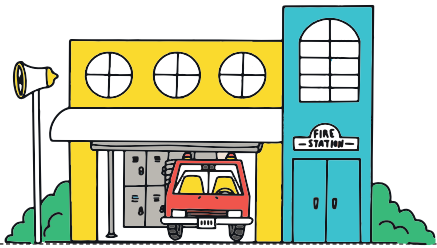
### 05 Planning for economic and social development



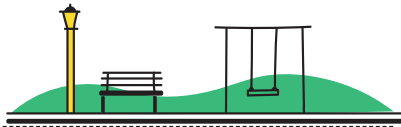
### 06 Public health, sanitation conservancy, and solid waste management



## 07 Fire services



## 08 Provision of urban amenities and facilities such as parks, gardens and playgrounds



## 09 Public amenities including street lighting, parking lots, bus stops, and public conveniences



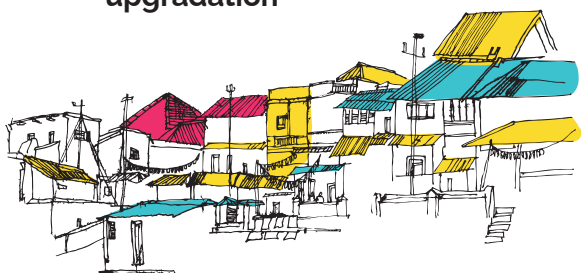
## 10 Urban forestry, protection of the environment, and promotion of ecological aspects



## 11 Safeguarding the interests of weaker sections of society, including the handicapped and mentally retarded



## 12 Slum improvement and upgradation



## 13 Urban poverty alleviation



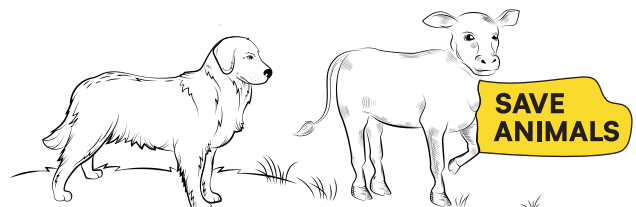
## 14 Promotion of cultural, educational, and aesthetic aspects



## 15 Burials and burial grounds, cremations, cremation grounds, and electric crematoriums



## 16 Cattle pounds, prevention of cruelty to animals



## 17 Vital statistics including registration of births and deaths



## 18 Regulation of slaughterhouses and tanneries



## A CITY GOVERNMENT BY ANY OTHER NAME...

Urban Local Body (ULB) and 'Local Government' are some of the other terms used to refer to city governments.

### 2.3 How is my city government structured?

Your city government will typically comprise an elected wing and an executive wing.

**The elected wing**, also known as the political wing, is a deliberative body headed by the mayor or president (in case of smaller ULBs). It consists of the city council, which is a collective of all elected representatives or councillors and the standing committees for accounts, taxation, finance and appeals, public health, town planning, etc.

**The executive wing** is headed by the commissioner (or a chief municipal officer or executive officer). It is an administrative body that focuses on implementation and consists of deputy commissioners, assistant commissioners, zonal commissioners, department heads, and municipal staff.

It is crucial that the elected wing and the executive wing work well together for the holistic development of a city.



# CITY



## EXECUTIVE WING



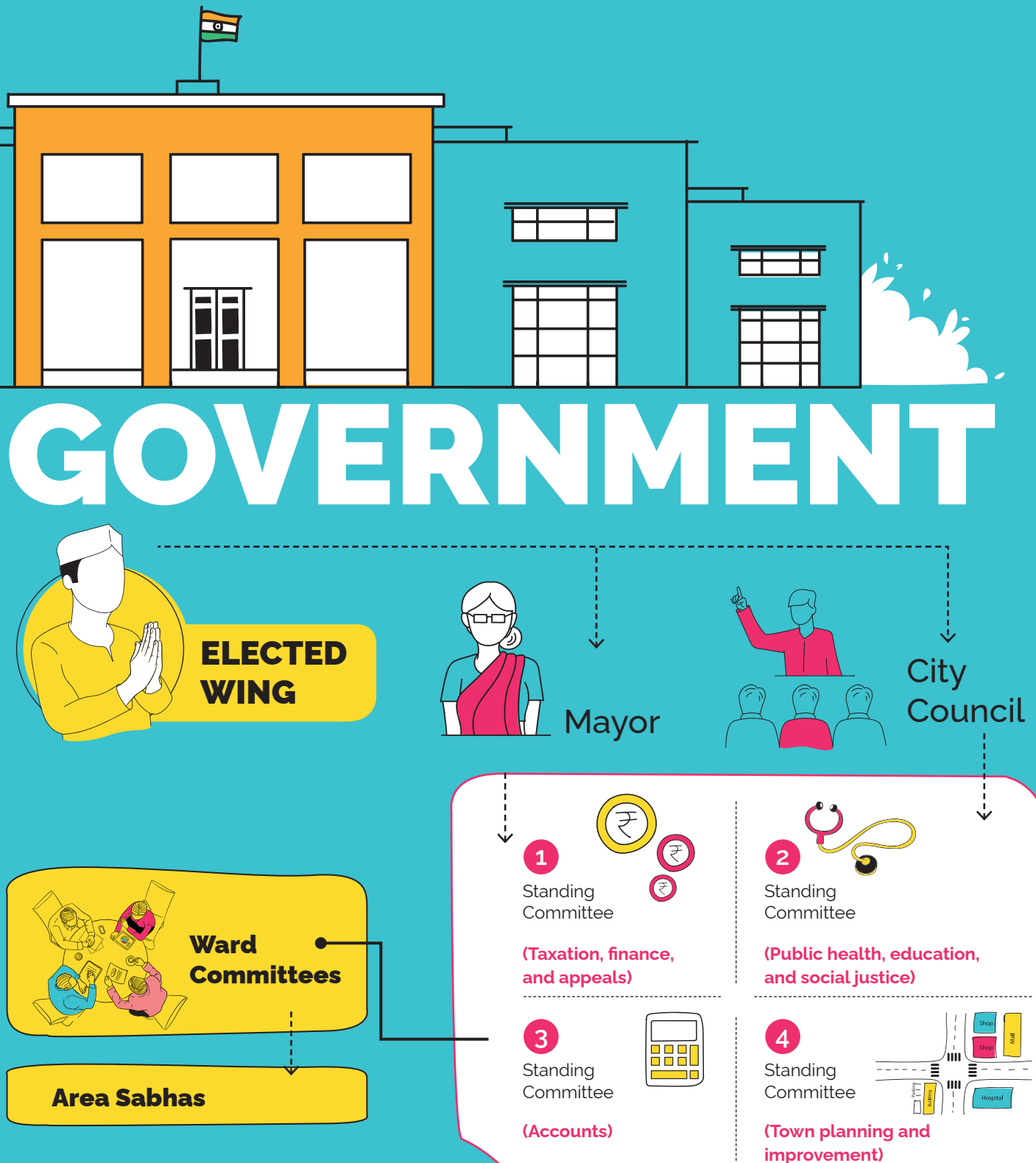
## Commissioner

Various departments like engineering, health, revenue, town planning, and finance with respective department heads and other staff.

# DID

YOU KNOW?

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) (also known as the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM)) gained recognition for the effective management of COVID in its 227 wards. The BMC's model is now widely referred to as the Mumbai Model of COVID Management.



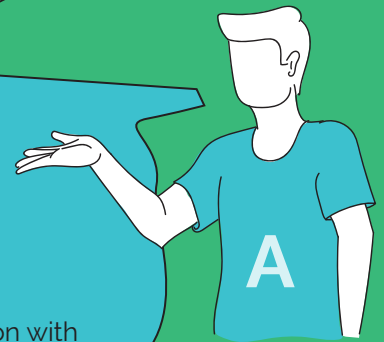


## INTERESTED ISABELLA



I have also heard of civic agencies? What exactly are these? Are they different from the city government?

## ACTIVE AAMIR

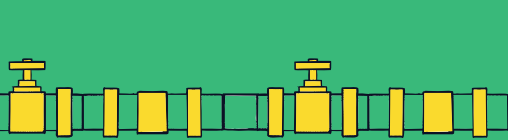


In some cities, specific functions of the city government are handled by organisations known as civic agencies or parastatal agencies. In many instances, these agencies pre-date the city government and, although they provide services to the city, they report to the state government.

Typically, parastatal agencies work in collaboration with the respective city governments over shared functions.

Some examples of civic agencies are:

### Civic Agencies



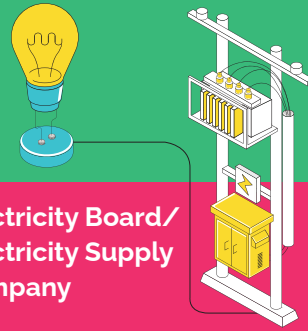
#### Water Supply and Sewerage Board

##### Functions

Responsible for delivering clean, hygienic, and safe water to the city and management/disposal of sewage.

##### Examples

Bengaluru Water Supply & Sewerage Board, Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply & Sewerage Board, etc.



#### Electricity Board/ Electricity Supply Company

##### Functions

Responsible for electricity supply and distribution to the city.

##### Examples

Uttar Pradesh Power Corporation Limited, Gujarat Electricity Board, etc.



#### Development Authority

##### Functions

Responsible for development of master plans, layouts, and plans for cities.

##### Examples

Jaipur Development Authority (JDA), Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority (CMDA), etc. In some of the Tier II and Tier III cities, Improvement Trusts take the place of Development Authorities.



Let's do a fun activity. Are you concerned about the condition of your neighbourhood? Do you see the interlinkages between the functions of your city government and the environment or global warming or climate change that we hear of so often these days?

Use this space to put down what you think are the direct and the indirect linkages:

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2.4

## Now, let's take a look at each piece of the city government puzzle.



### What is a city council?

The city council consists of elected councillors and is headed by the mayor. It convenes regularly (normally once a month) and plays a key role in determining the progress and development of the city.

### What role does the mayor play in the city government?

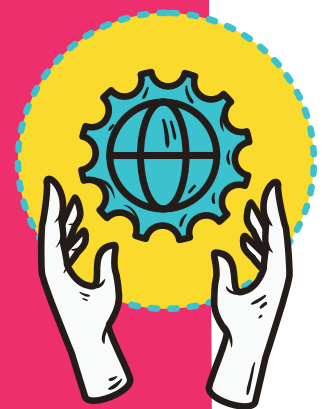
Just like the prime minister is the head of the central government and the chief minister is the head of the state government, the mayor is the head of your city government. Here are a few important aspects of a mayor's role:

**Election:** Although there are a few cities in which the mayor is directly elected by the public, in most cities, the councillors elect a mayor.

**Term:** The term of the mayor varies from 1 to 5 years depending on the governing act of the city.

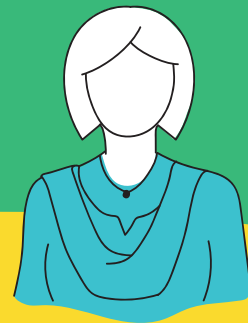
### ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- ❖ Heads the city council and represents the city at different forums
- ❖ Presides over the meetings of the city government
- ❖ Undertakes general inspections and issues directions for the implementation of resolutions passed by the council or standing committees
- ❖ Supervises and controls the actions of municipal officers in matters of executive administration
- ❖ Supervises the financial and executive administration of the council.



# DID

YOU KNOW?



**Ms Damayanti Majhi, a student from the tribal community pursuing her M.Com., was elected the deputy mayor of the Cuttack Municipal Corporation in April 2022.**

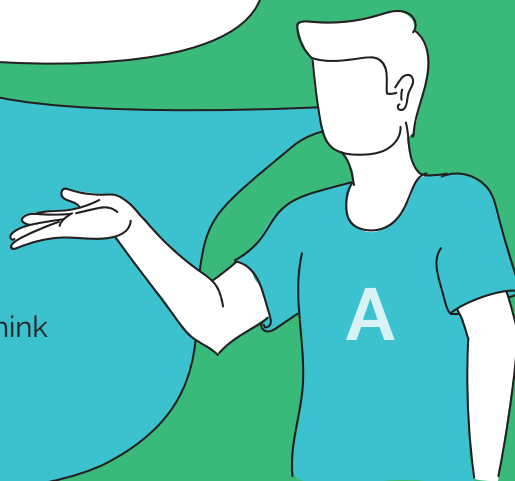


**ENGAGED  
ESHWAR**

What is the difference between an MLA and a councillor? Whom should I approach for help with neighbourhood issues?

**ACTIVE  
AAMIR**

Although MLAs and councillors are both elected representatives with 5-year terms, they play different roles in governance. Councillors are the voice of citizens at a city council. Think of them as the first point of contact to resolve neighbourhood issues.



## MLA (Member of Legislative Assembly)

- An MLA is elected through state elections
- Elected from an Assembly Constituency comprising of multiple wards
- Represents citizens at the state level and is responsible for making and amending laws and state government budgets
- Can hold the government accountable in the Legislative Assembly.

## Councillor/Corporator

- ▶ A councillor is elected through city elections
- ▶ Elected from a ward
- ▶ Represents citizens at the city council and is responsible for the welfare of people in their respective ward
- ▶ Can hold the city government accountable through city council.



## CITIZENS

Total of  
**1.2 billion**  
Citizens\*

## CITY

**87,215 Councillors\*\***

Each councillor represents  
approx. 4,323 citizens

## STATE

**4,121 MLAs**

Each MLA represents  
approx. 3 lakh citizens

## CENTRAL

**543 MPs**

Each MP represents  
approx 22 lakh citizens

Source: Analysis based on the data made available by websites of Lok Sabha, respective state assemblies, and local Government Directory.

\* Population as per Census 2011.

\*\* Councillors represent only urban population. In states like Gujarat and Maharashtra, there are around 2-4 councillors per ward.



## What are standing committees and how are they created?



Standing committees deliberate on specific domains (such as finance, public health, education, etc.) and their related issues in the city.

- ❖ Once the city elections are held and the city council is formed, various standing committees are created across different thematic areas. Councillors become members of these committees.
- ❖ Each standing committee has a chairperson who is elected from among its members and who acts as the head of the committee.
- ❖ The number of standing committees varies from city to city, but the most common ones are the committees for finance, town planning, health, and education.
- ❖ Standing committees are also vested with varying degrees of financial powers across states.
- ❖ The term of the standing committees varies from 1 to 5 years across different states.



## What is the role of a commissioner?

Commissioners are officers appointed by the state government who are typically part of the Indian or State Administrative Services commonly known as IAS, or KAS for the state of Karnataka, OAS for Odisha, and so on<sup>1</sup>. They are responsible for implementing the decisions taken by the city council and are assisted in their work by deputy commissioners, joint commissioners, engineers, etc.

Scan the QR code to learn more about the quality of your city's governance with the Annual Survey of India's City-Systems. Visit [\*Annual Survey of India's City-Systems \(ASICS\)\*](#)



## 2.5 Let's talk finances!

### Where does my city's money come from and why should I care?



No two cities are alike and therefore, no two city budgets are alike either.

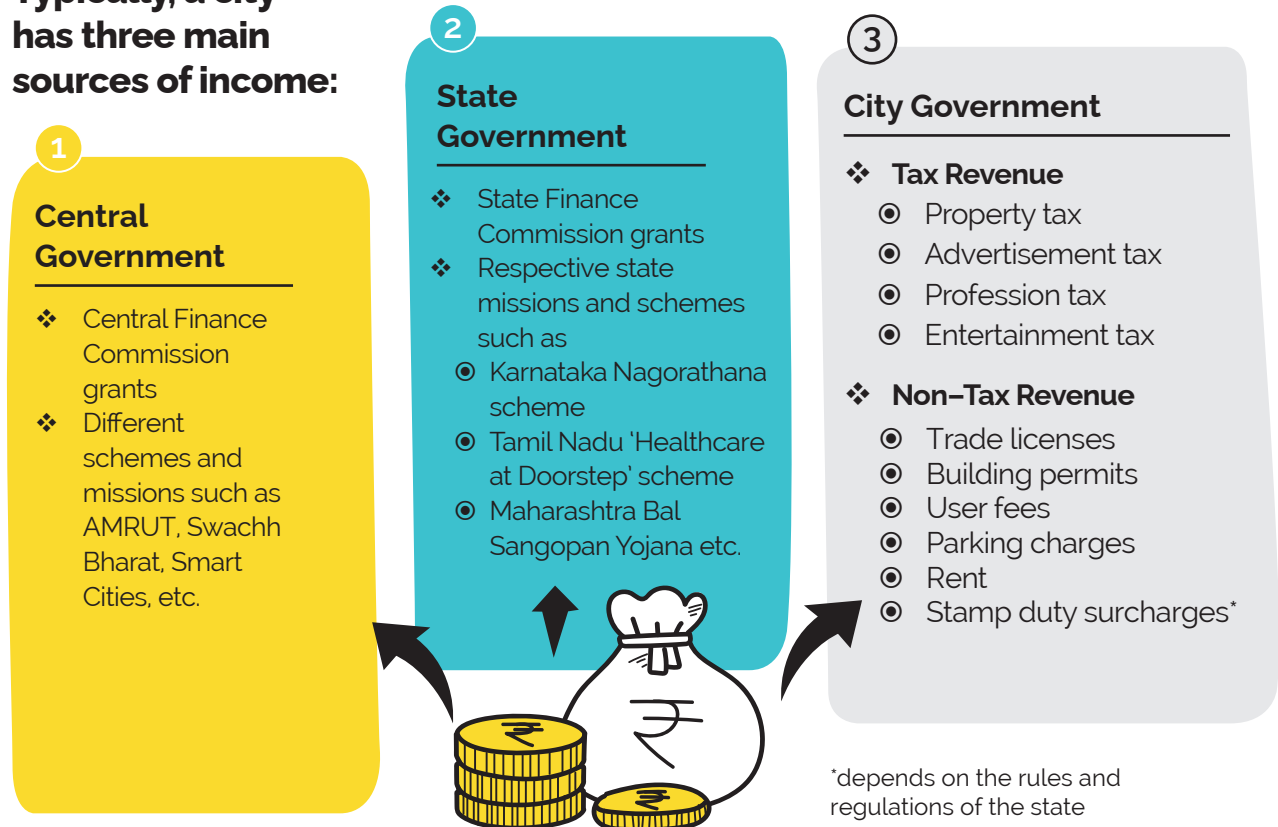
Learning how to read your city's budget and interpret its financial health will help you demand better accountability and transparency from your city government. This is a particularly useful skill when dealing with civic authorities across the board.

The first step to understanding your city's budget starts with understanding how your city generates income.

<sup>1</sup> In smaller cities, the local government is headed by officers appointed by the state government who may not be from the Central or State Administrative Services.



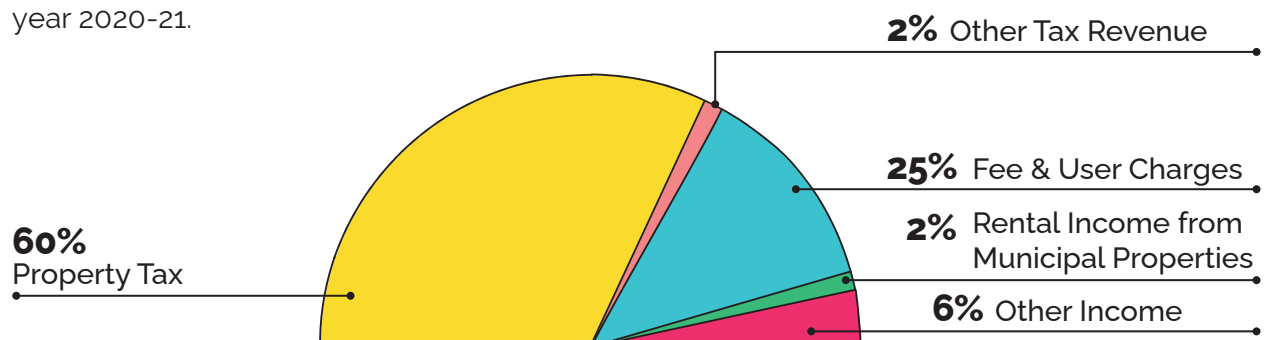
**Typically, a city has three main sources of income:**



*Here's an example of a city's revenue streams:*

### Own Revenue Split

The following pie-chart provides the split of contribution of own revenue streams to own revenue of Karnataka for the year 2020-21.



*The above pie chart is for representation purpose only and varies from city to city.*

Look up your city's finances at [www.cityfinance.in](http://www.cityfinance.in)

### Who is responsible for preparing my city's budget?

Depending on the city and state, a city's budget is typically prepared by the Standing Committee for Finance, in consultation with the commissioner and mayor.

## When is the budget prepared?

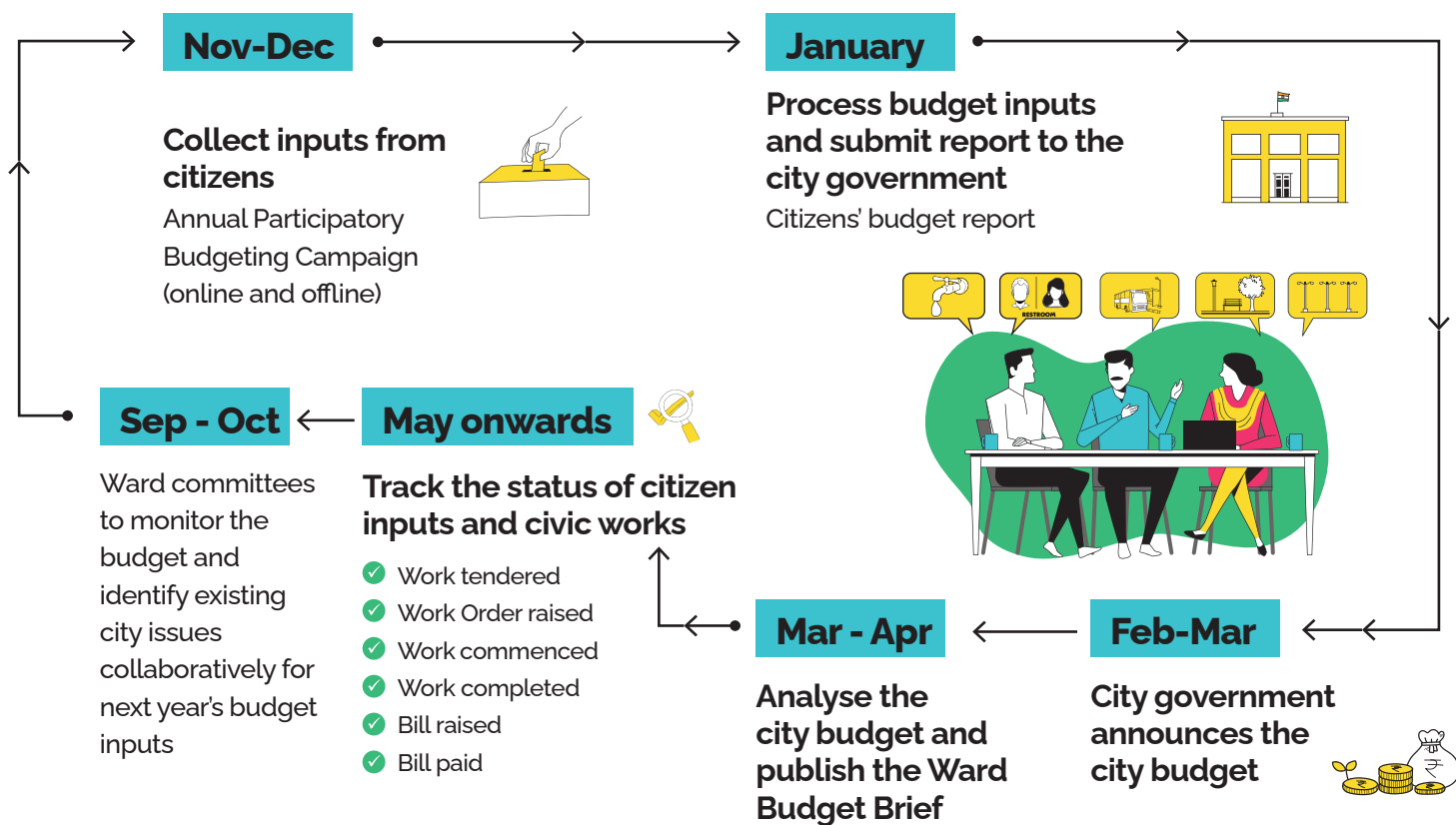
The budget is usually prepared between November and February of every financial year (April-March).

It is then approved by the city council between the months of February and March.

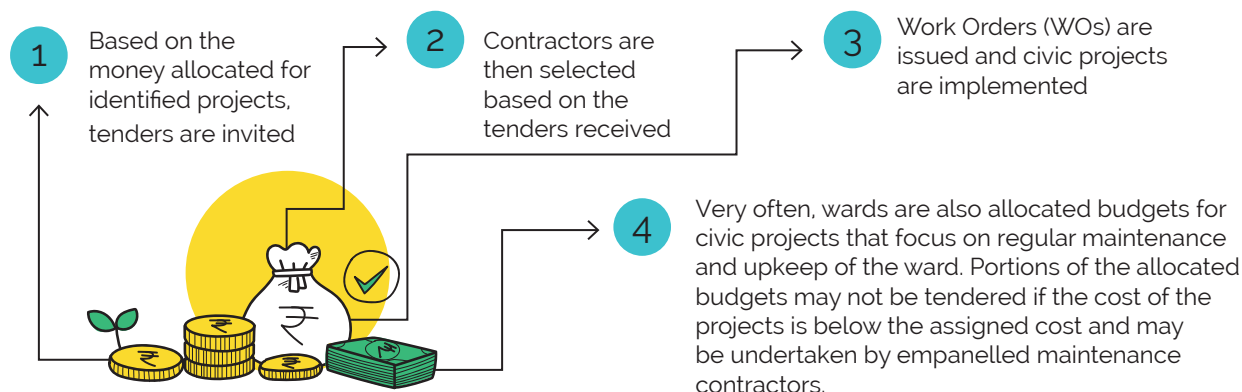
If your city's budget requires state government approval, the budget is announced, and in parallel sent to the state government for formal approval.

To facilitate citizen participation in budgeting process, Janaagraha started MyCityMyBudget (MCMB), a participatory budgeting campaign in 2015. The campaign, which started in Bengaluru, has now expanded to other cities of Karnataka such as Kalaburagi and Mangaluru. More about MCMB is covered in Section 4.

## The Lifecycle of MyCityMyBudget



## What happens once the budget is approved?



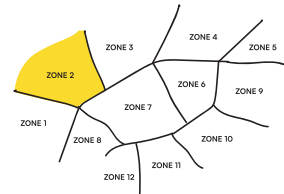
## 2.6 The Action Zone



- 01** Locate your city government's office.



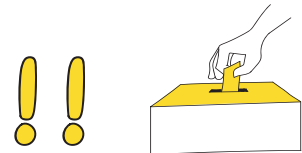
- 02** Find out how many zones your city is divided into and which zone your house comes under.



- 03** Check if your city has an active council. If not, find out the reason for the same.



- 04** Find out when the last city election was conducted.



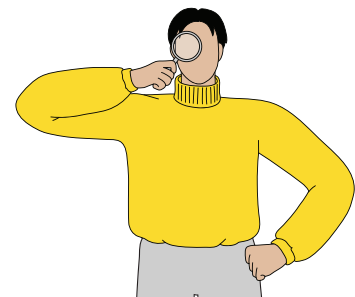
- 05** Learn the name of your mayor and their term in your city.



- 06** Obtain the contact details of the city commissioner and zonal commissioners.



- 07** Find out your city government's website and your city's grievance redressal system.



- 08** Look up your city's performance on the



Annual Survey of India's City-Systems (ASICS)

- 09** Deep dive into your city's finances at

[www.cityfinance.in](http://www.cityfinance.in) as well as on your city government's website.



03

# Know Your Ward

**A quick primer on wards and their functions**

**POP QUIZ TIME!**

How many wards does your city have?

What is the number and name of the ward you live in?

Does your city have an elected council in place?

What is the name of your councillor?

# LET'S QUICKLY RECAP

## 3.1 What is a ward?

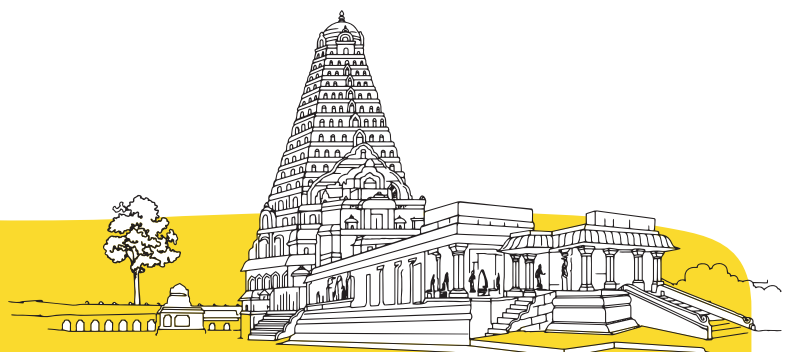
Every city is organised into a set of municipal wards for administrative convenience and better accountability. Think of these wards as a unit of governance for cities, similar to how cities and villages form a unit of governance for states. Each ward has an elected representative (a councillor or corporator) and staff (engineers, health inspectors, etc.).

Typically, in bigger cities, a ward is a small geographical area with an average population of

# 10,000 to 50,000 residents.



In smaller cities in India, the population of wards can also be less than 10,000 depending on the size and population of the city.



Wards – or similar units of local governance – existed even way back in the Chola empire. That is all the way back in 850-1200 CE! Temple inscriptions outline the process of democratic governance at the village level and include information on the formation of wards, the election process, the structure of administration, criteria for candidates, and even disqualification norms.

## 3.2

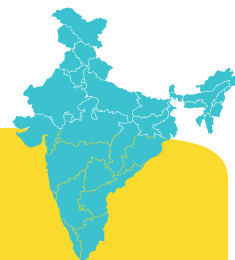
## Who is in charge of your ward?

Each ward is typically represented in the city council by a councillor who is elected by the people during the city elections. Unlike in gram panchayat elections where party symbols cannot be used, the local elections allow candidates to contest based on their party symbols.

The councillor (also known as the corporator) is the ward leader and is responsible for overseeing the development of the ward.

In most cities, the councillor is assisted in their work by the ward officer who is typically a municipal officer appointed by the city government.

**DID**  
YOU KNOW?



**Smt Draupadi Murmu, the Hon'ble President of India, started her journey in public service as a councillor!**

**Gujarat and Maharashtra are among the few states that have provisions for more than 1 councillor per ward.**

**INTERESTED  
ISABELLA**

Okay, but why do I need to know so much about my ward? How is it going to help me?

**ENGAGED  
ESHWAR**

Most of the factors that impact your everyday life fall under the purview of your ward councillor and the city government. Think roads, footpaths, streetlights... When you face an issue with any of these, you cannot reach out to your MLA or MP or chief minister. Your first point of contact will be your ward officials and councillor. That is why knowing everything about your ward is important – it is the first step to changing your neighbourhood.

I

E



## 3.3 Learn more about your ward

### Who are the individuals responsible for your ward?

Typically, the officials commonly responsible for your ward are:



**Councillor** (who is the head of the ward and represents you at the city council)



**Ward Engineer**



**Revenue Officer**



**Health Officer**

It is worth noting though that this list varies from city to city.

### How many wards does my city have?

Your municipality or municipal corporation should have all the information about wards in your city. You can visit their website to learn more.

Here are some examples:

#### • Bengaluru

[Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike](https://www.bengaluru.gov.in/)



#### • Chennai

[Greater Chennai Corporation](https://www.greaterchennai.gov.in/)



#### • Mumbai

[Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai \(MCGM\)](https://www.mcgm.gov.in/)



#### • Kolkata

[Kolkata Municipal Corporation](https://www.kolkata.gov.in/)

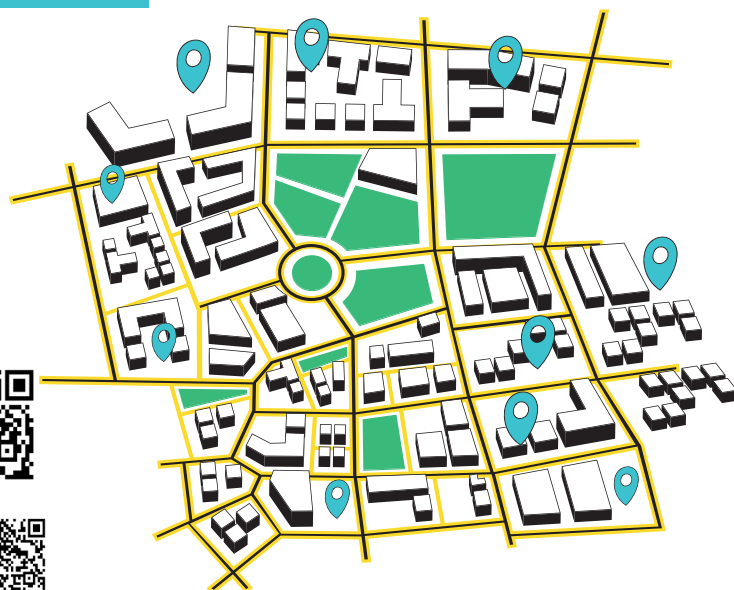


#### • If you are from Karnataka, you can also use

<http://mrc.gov.in/en>



which has the details of over 300+ ULBs in the state



Alternatively, you can visit the Local Government Directory

[lgdirectory.gov.in](http://lgdirectory.gov.in)

**The number of wards in a city, and the size and population of each, depend on the size of the city and is often up to the city government and respective state laws.**

### How can I find out my ward name and number?

There are a couple of ways you can learn details about your ward:

- 01** Visit your city government's (municipal corporation/municipality/nagar palika) website. Navigate to the 'Know Your Ward' section and allow the website access to your location to find out your ward number and related details.
- 02** Visit the Local Government Directory ([lgdirectory.gov.in](http://lgdirectory.gov.in))
- 03** Observe street signages in your neighbourhood.
- 04** Go through your property tax documents, ration card or related government documents. Many cities include ward information in these.
- 05** Enquire at any government office near your house (it could be your ward office, zonal office, the water supply and sewerage board, the electricity board or even the ration shop.)
- 06** Interact with Resident Welfare Associations, Apartment Associations, NGOs, or Civil Society Organisations in your neighbourhood.
- 07** You can locate RWAs, NGOs and CSOs in your area by running an internet search using the following keywords: **<RWA> + <Name of your area> + <Name of your city>**. You can also check with your neighbours and respective ward office to locate your nearest RWA.



## How can I find out the name of my councillor?

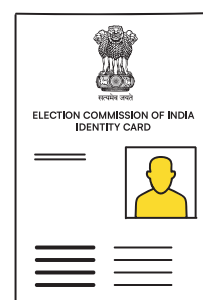
Once you know your ward name and number, you can use the above steps to also find the name of your councillor.

Additionally, you can also look for this information online by running a basic internet search with the following keywords: **<Name of your city> + Councillors / Councillors of Municipal Corporation / Municipal Council.**

## Can I vote in the city elections to choose my councillor?

# YES!

You need to have your name in the voter list of your ward/city to vote in the elections.



You can check if your name is on the voter list by using the Voter Helpline app on your phone or by visiting the website mentioned below. You can also apply for a voter id card on the same website

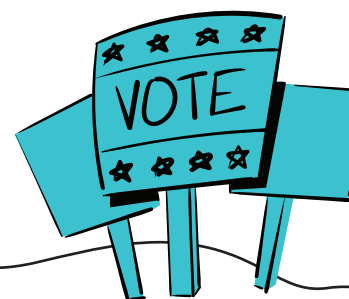
**ICT APPs - Election Commission of India ([eci.gov.in](https://eci.gov.in)).**

## When are the city elections conducted and how do I stay up to date with the election calendar?

Typically, city elections are conducted once in 5 years. The city government, along with the respective State Election Commission (SEC), is responsible for conducting elections in your city. Local dailies and newspapers will help you to stay updated about city elections.

## How do I find out where my polling booth is located?

- If you have a voter id card, check out the voter portal <https://voterportal.eci.gov.in/>
- Create your credentials and login with your user id and password
- Navigate to the 'Electoral Search' tab and enter your voter id details or EPIC number
- Your complete voter details, along with the polling station you need to vote at, will be displayed.
- In case you don't have login credentials, you can use [www.electoralsearch.eci.gov.in](https://www.electoralsearch.eci.gov.in) to find the details of your polling booth.



## 3.4 Ward budgets and allocations

### Where can I find my ward's budget?



Typically, the ward budget is a part of your city's budget book. In most cases, the city budget/city budget book should be available on your city government's website. You can also contact the city's chief accounts officer or file an RTI for the same.

While this might not hold true for many of the smaller cities of India, in most cases, you can find your ward's budget with the following steps:

- 01 Find the budget lines where your **ward name or number** is mentioned
- 02 Your ward may appear as a **single budget line or amongst the list of wards** for the proposed infrastructure projects
- 03 In case of multiple wards in a single budget line, there may be a **call out for the amount for each ward**
- 04 In some cases, instead of ward numbers and names, the **name of assembly constituencies might be mentioned**
- 05 In many cities, budgets are also **allocated by the type of work** to be done. For instance, cleaning of stormwater drains, solid waste management, roadworks, and so on.

Most budget books include the following common content: category, main heading, subheading, budget code, particulars, accounts for previous financial year, budget estimates for current financial year, revised budget estimates, pending amounts, ongoing works, new works, etc.

If you are from Bengaluru, you can download your ward's budget from: [IChangeMyCity.com](http://IChangeMyCity.com)

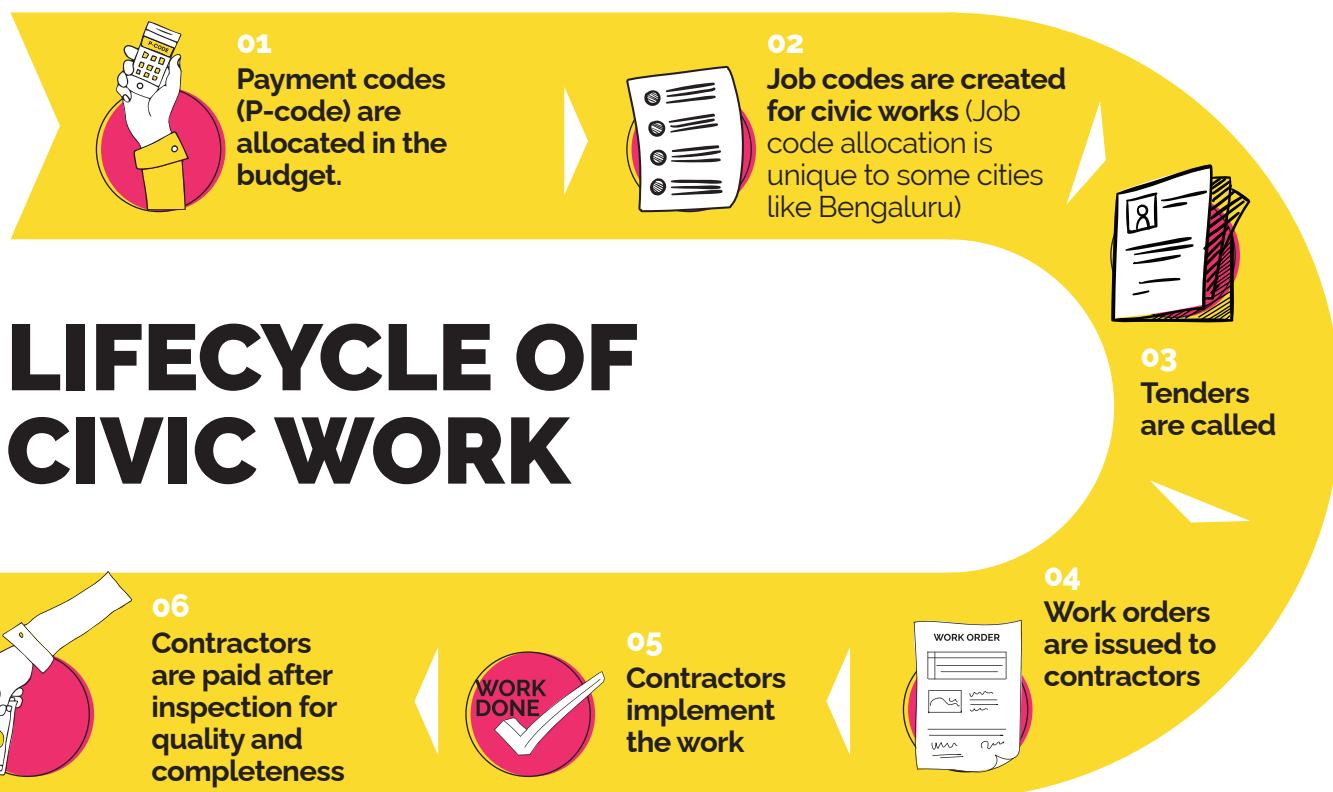


If you are not able to locate your ward's budget in the city's budget book, you can contact your ward councillor, nodal officer, or ward secretary.

You can also file an RTI (Right to Information) with the relevant officer in your city and request the details of your ward's budget. For example, if you are a resident of any city in Karnataka, you can file an RTI through [RTI Online.](#)

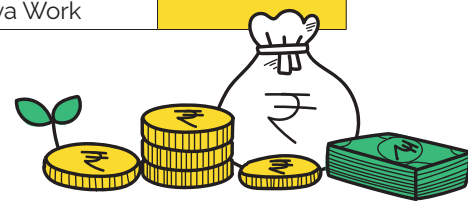
Once the city budget is passed by the council and approved by the state government, how does it impact civic works in my ward?

Resources are allocated and delineated for different projects in the budget.



You can have a look at the [sample ward budget allocation](#) and utilisation below. This will give you a glimpse of how budgets are typically utilised based on the budget allocated.

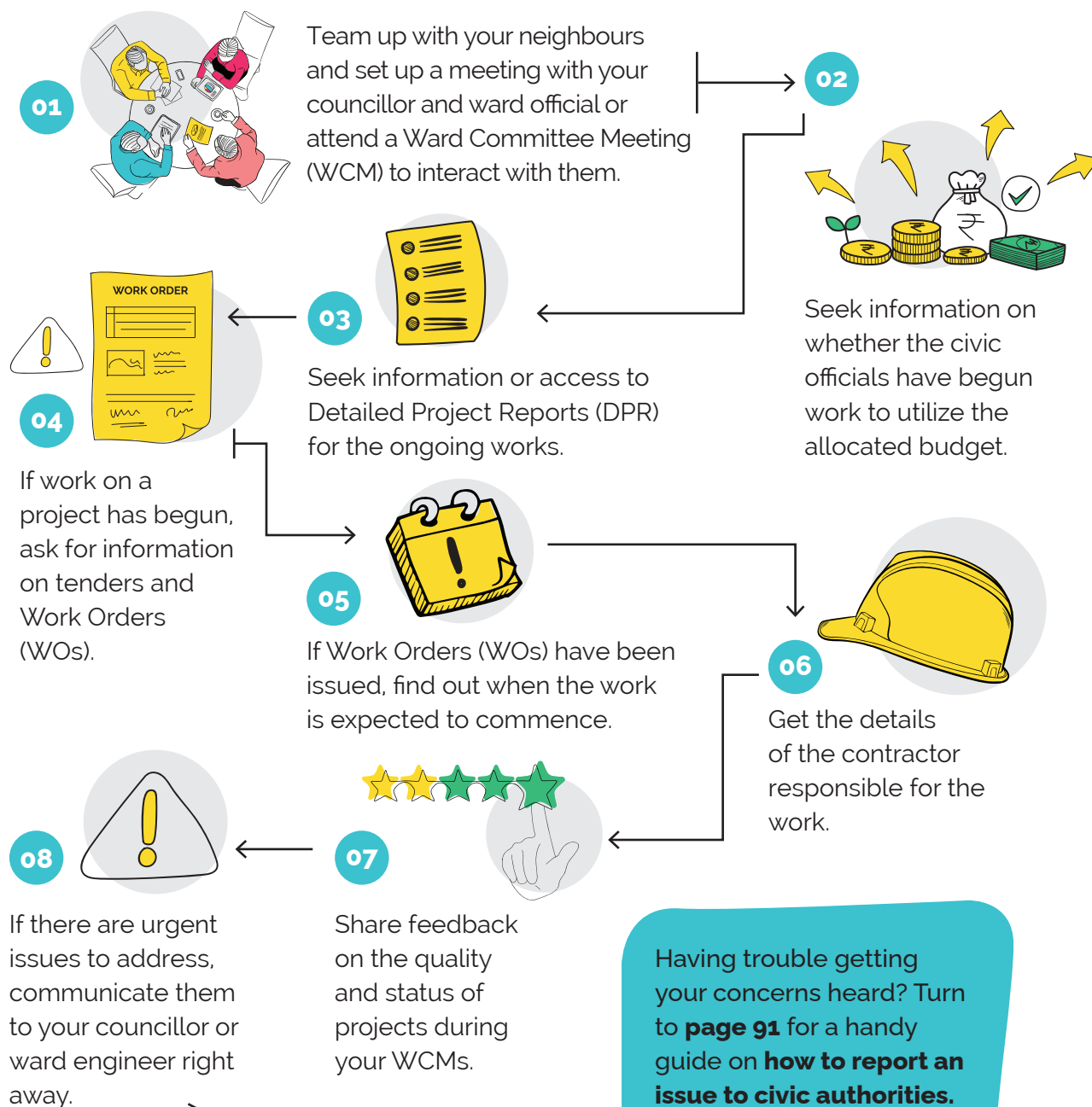
Ward No	Ward Name	Job Code *	Description	Budget Head	Amount (INR)
1	Kempegowda Ward	001-20-000034	Maintenance of pathway lights in Yelahanka Old Town lake, Ward No 1	P0287 M & R to Electrical Crematoria	7,00,000
1	Kempegowda Ward	001-20-000035	Painting of tubular poles in Kempegowda ward no 1	P0298 M & R to Electrical Installations in Parks and Gardens, Playgrounds, Burial Grounds	1,00,000
1	Kempegowda Ward	001-20-000013	Operation and maintenance of street lighting system in Ward No 1, package Y1 of Yelahanka zone	M and R to Street Lights Replacement of Burt Bulbs etc.	23,90,000
4	Kempegowda Ward	001-20-000056	Landscape development of park at Yelahanka Lake and surrounding area, North side of Yelahanka zone	Landscape Development of Park Medical/Medians/ Boulevants & Circles (Janoodya Work	20,00,000



## How can I use my knowledge of my ward's budget to become a more involved citizen?

A good understanding of your ward's budget as well as the lifecycle of civic works will equip you to demand greater accountability and transparency from local governance. This will also ensure that high quality works and services are delivered to citizens. It will help you actively and confidently participate in budgeting discussions with your councillor and ward officials.

### HERE'S A BLUEPRINT TO HELP YOU TO GET STARTED:





## 3.5 The Action Zone



### Create a civic directory for your ward

Put all that you have read in this section to use and set up a civic directory with all the necessary details of your ward.

Ward Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Ward Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Councillor: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact information: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Ward Engineer: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact information: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Executive Engineer: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact information: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Zonal Commissioner: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact information: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Health Officer: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact information: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Sanitation Officer: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact information: \_\_\_\_\_

Address of Ward Office: \_\_\_\_\_

Financial Year\*: \_\_\_\_\_

Budget allocated to the ward: \_\_\_\_\_

Identify ongoing or completed civic works and list them below. You can also take copies of this page in case you would like to enter more than three projects.



Civic Work Project 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Status: \_\_\_\_\_

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

Civic Work Project 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Status: \_\_\_\_\_

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

Civic Work Project 3: \_\_\_\_\_

Status: \_\_\_\_\_

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

3 issues that should be prioritized in your ward:

● \_\_\_\_\_ ● \_\_\_\_\_ ● \_\_\_\_\_



\* The financial year is from 1 April to 31 March. For example, 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.

## 04

# Active Citizenship and You

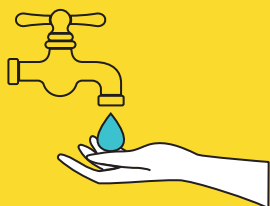


## Exploring the different pathways to becoming a better citizen



Here's a short exercise for you. In the last one year, which of the following issues have you faced:

### 01 Water issues



### 02 Improper waste management



### 03 Poor/non-existent street lighting



### 04 Broken and uneven footpaths



### 05 Substandard roads



### 06 Urban flooding



Chances are, you have probably had to reckon with at least two of the above issues, if not more.

As our cities grow, so do their problems. Even as our governments try to address these issues, citizen participation and engagement remains a missing piece of the puzzle. When citizens spotlight the challenges facing their neighbourhoods, it gives authorities a chance to address specific problems and adopt a bottom-up approach to city planning and development.

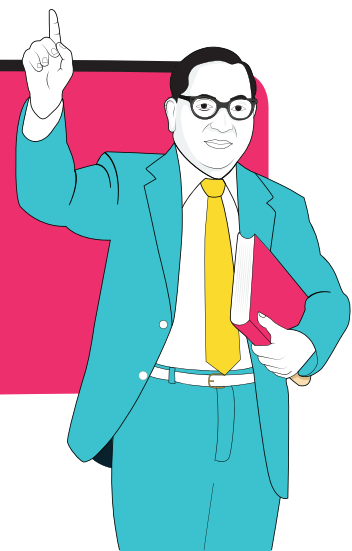
**So, the next time you are confronted with a civic issue in your neighbourhood, here are four ways you can get your voice heard:**



**(Looking for more information on ward committees? Section 5 and 6 have you covered!).**

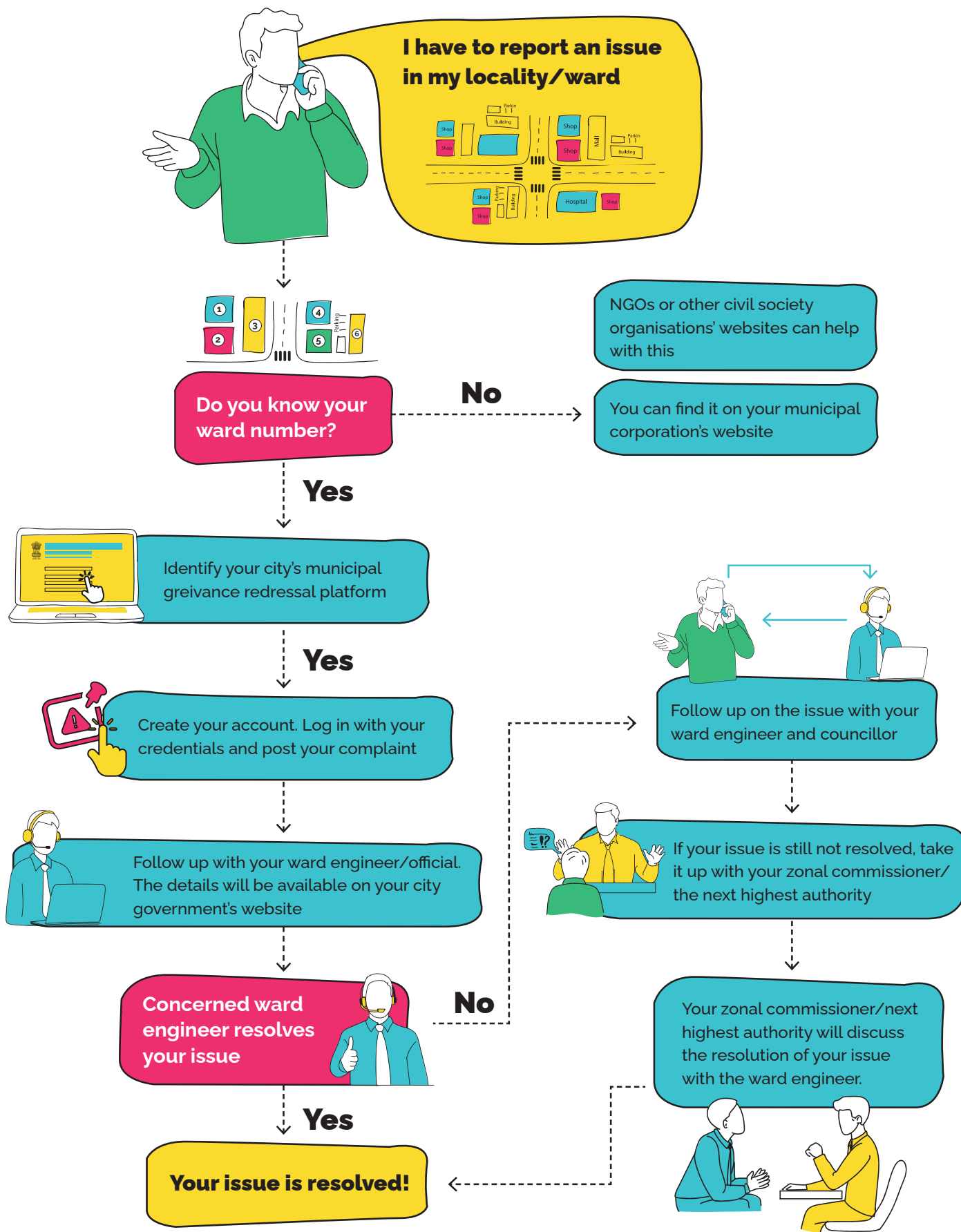
Democracy is not merely a form of government. It is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. It is essentially an attitude of respect and reverence towards our fellow men.

**DR B R AMBEDKAR**



## 4.1

# How do I use the municipal grievance redressal platform to resolve civic issues?

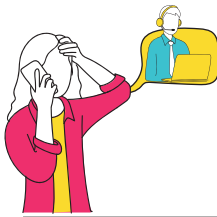




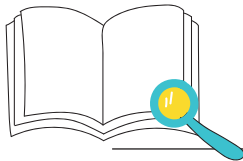
Your city government may typically have grievance redressal platforms in the form of toll-free numbers, websites, or even mobile apps.



You can also use the Swachhata app to report sanitation and waste management issues. The app detects your ward number and location automatically.



If the issue is still not resolved despite multiple complaints, you can escalate the matter to the next highest authority.



Check out page 93 for a quick how-to on following up with city government officials.

Here are some initiatives by different city governments to get you started:



**Bengaluru:** 'Sahaaya 2.0 (Namma Bengaluru)' app



**Bhubaneswar:** BHUBANESWAR ME citizen services



**Indore:** Indore 311 app



**Solapur:** Parivartan app

## Well-being Tip



If you find a garbage vulnerable point (GVP), an unauthorised garbage dump yard, burning of garbage, etc. in your neighbourhood, talk to your concerned ward engineer, councillor, or the agency responsible for solid waste management and maintain a cleaner neighbourhood. You can also register a complaint on the matter through the Swachhata App, which is available for download from the Play Store and the App Store.

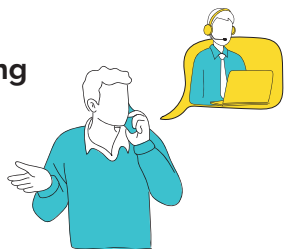
## 4.2

## How can I use RWAs, CSOs and SHGs to resolve civic issues?

- ❖ You can locate the Residential Welfare Associations (RWAs) and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in your area by:

01

**Contacting the ward office**



02

**Asking your neighbours and other residents of the locality**



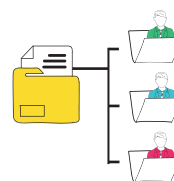
03

**Internet searches**



04

**City repositories of RWAs**

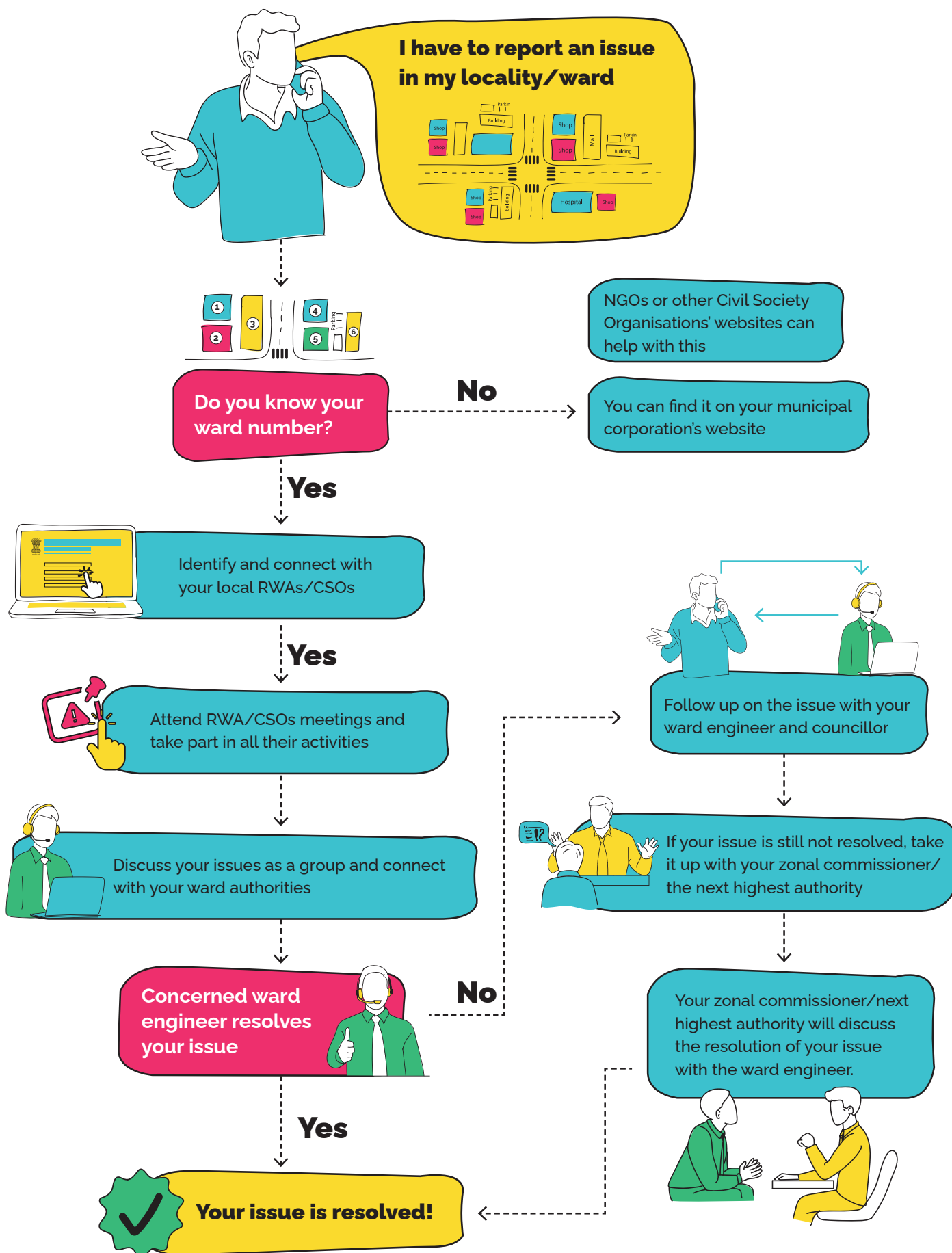


- ❖ Participate in RWA meetings and other activities.
- ❖ Use the RWA to bring the issues of your neighbourhood to the attention of your ward authorities.
- ❖ If your area doesn't have an RWA, you can form one by joining hands with your neighbours and other residents.
- ❖ If your issues are still not resolved, you can then escalate the complaint to higher authorities in the city government.

**Looking to mobilise like-minded people in your neighbourhood to address civic issues? We've got a handy guide for you. Head over to page 84.**

**Facing an issue in your neighbourhood? Draw inspiration from the active citizens across the country who are working to improve their localities. In Chennai, citizens along with civic activists have raised their voice against the Perungudi Dumping Ground due to concerns about improper waste disposal, groundwater contamination, and adverse health effects on nearby residents. Similarly, residents of Mavalli, a village on the outskirts of Bangalore, protested against the dumping of garbage from the city due to health concerns.**

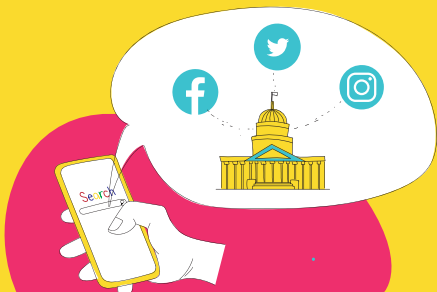




## 4.3

## How can I use social media to resolve civic issues?

01



- ❖ Use a quick internet search to find and connect with your city government on different social media platforms (such as Facebook, X, etc.)

02



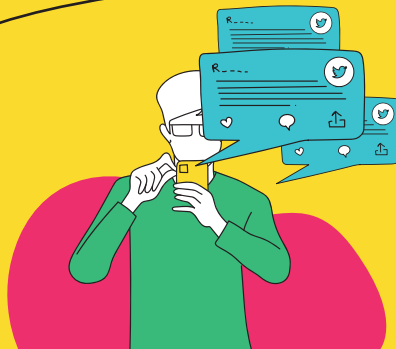
- ❖ Write about your issue and tag the relevant government authorities.

03



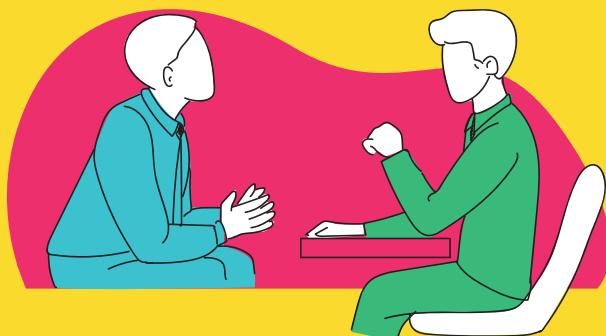
- ❖ For instance, residents of Bengaluru can reach out to:  
@BBMPAdmn,  
@BBMPSWMSplComm,  
@BBMPSplHealth.

04

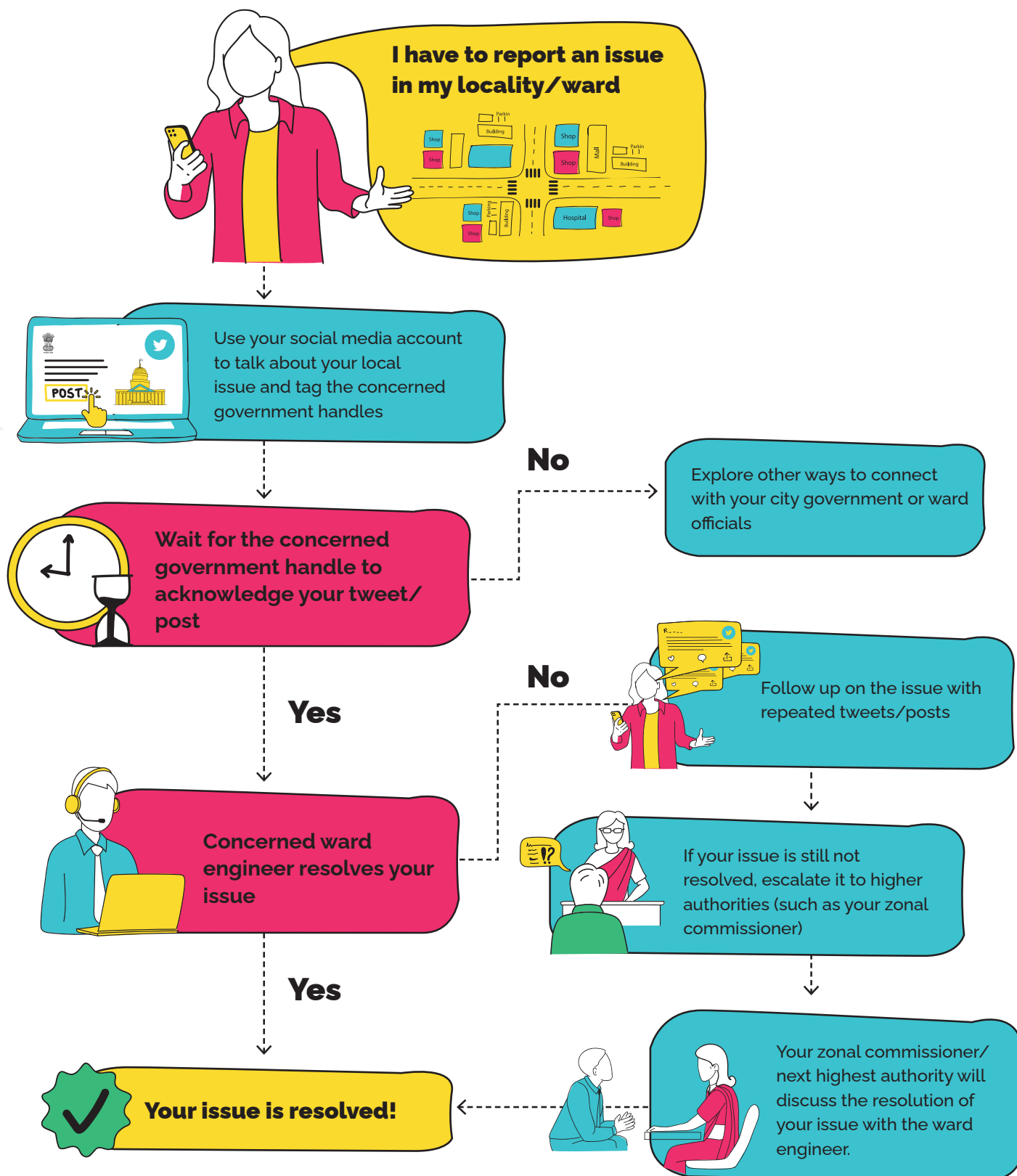


- ❖ Follow up on complaints through tweets and posts.

05



- ❖ If your issue is still not resolved, you can escalate it to the next highest-ranking officer or to elected members of the city government.



For a more detailed guide, turn to page 94.

## Well-being Tip



Put your social media know-how and event organising skills to good use and rally your neighbourhood around environmental causes! You can run campaigns that spark action on current issues or work with the local government to build more sustainable neighbourhoods. You could also raise your voice against projects that have a high environmental cost. The possibilities are endless!

## 4.4

## How can I use Ward Committee Meetings to resolve civic issues?

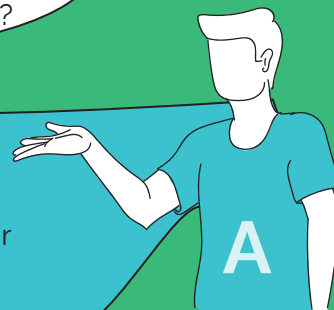
To learn more about ward committees, jump to the next section

**PASSIVE  
PAVITHRA**



All this sounds great in theory but have there actually been instances where this has worked? Where citizens have been able to affect measurable, real-world change?

**ACTIVE  
AAMIR**



Of course! It takes time and effort, but there are numerous stories of how citizens have successfully changed their neighbourhoods and cities! Here are two of my favourite!

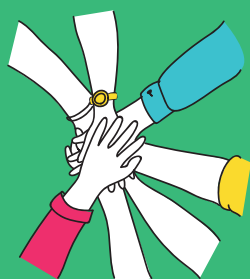
### That time when citizen action resulted in a first-of-its-kind allocation of ward funds in Bengaluru



**In 2015, Janaagraha launched MyCityMyBudget**

a participatory budgeting campaign that brought together citizens, community groups, Resident Welfare Associations, and NGOs from across the city. The initiative aimed to support the voice of citizens and amplify their opinions on the city budget.

**My City  
My Budget**  
JANAAGRAHA



**In 2021-2022, in a big win for participatory budgeting in India, Bengaluru's city government set aside Rs 120 crores for ward committees. That amounts to Rs 60 lakhs per ward!** The government also called for greater transparency and accountability through citizen participation in the city budget. This acknowledgement of the importance and power of citizen participation is a crucial first step. It sets the tone for city budgets across the country to reflect the needs and aspirations of their citizens. It is also a timely reminder that collective citizen action can move mountains.

# DID

## YOU KNOW?

The MyCityMyBudget 2023 campaign that was conducted across three cities of Karnataka – namely Bengaluru, Mangaluru, and Kalaburagi – was spearheaded by citizen groups themselves. Incidentally, in all these three cities, the citizen groups and civil society organisations preferred ward-level climate action such as recycling of waste, rainwater harvesting, maintenance of parks, desilting of stormwater drains, etc. as their focus area for the financial year's budget inputs to their city government!

## Meet the man who is helping Banaswadi Rise

ಬಾನೆಸ್ವಾಡಿ  
बानसवाडी  
BANASWADI



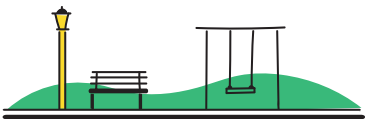
### Amith Nigli is a resident of Banaswadi Ward #27 in Bengaluru.

He began his journey of active citizenship ten years ago by learning about the different systems and processes in place. RWAs in his locality and others in the field proved to be particularly useful. "Gathering information was the first step. Understanding how to contact the right person for each problem and each task was the second," he says. "For example, in Bengaluru, if a streetlight needs maintenance, everyone's first instinct is to call BESCOM. But in reality, BESCOM is only in charge of delivering the electricity. The actual street light maintenance is the responsibility of the BBMP. This lack of micro understanding is the reason many issues never get fixed. By gaining this knowledge, citizens will be empowered."

Amith began attending his area's ward committee meetings and witnessed first-hand their immense potential: a park maintenance issue about clearing waste was resolved within two days!

Small wins like these encouraged him to start Banaswadi Rising. "When I started, I learnt that only homeowners could join RWAs, not tenants or apartment dwellers. Banaswadi Rising is an informal platform which welcomes participation from everyone in the ward. We started with a WhatsApp group and shared information with residents, which in turn began to empower them and made them want to do more. Banaswadi Rising became decentralized and became bigger and bigger. We now have 14 WhatsApp groups with 250 members each, one for each block. Empowerment has taken a domino effect."

**More power to the Amiths of our country!  
May their tribe grow!**



## 4.5 The Action Zone



### Take the Active Citizenship Pledge



If you're still reading this, you too probably believe in the transformative power of citizen action.

Reaffirm your belief and commit to becoming an active citizen with this pledge.

### ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP PLEDGE



I take the Active Citizenship Pledge.



I am a citizen of India and of the city I live in.



I believe in democracy and the rule of law.



I care deeply about my rights and duties, both to the government and to my fellow citizens.



I will attend ward committee meetings and collaborate with the government in making my neighbourhood and my city a better place to live.



**I PLEDGE**

To vote in all elections when I'm eligible.



To actively participate in civic matters in my neighbourhood.



To engage constructively with the government, and provide feedback on policies that require change.



To engage with my fellow citizens and respect their rights.

**TO CARE FOR AND RESPECT PUBLIC SPACES, AND IN DOING SO**

To not litter.



To dispose of garbage responsibly.



To follow traffic rules.



To care for the environment and reduce wastage.



To follow queues.



To never pay bribes and to pay any taxes that are due.



To know and follow all other civic duties and to obey the rule of law.



I pledge to be the change I want to see — in my neighbourhood, my city, and my country.

# I PLEDGE TO BE AN ACTIVE CITIZEN

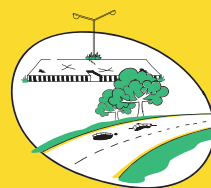


## 05

# The How and What of Ward Committees

**So, what exactly are ward committees and why should you care?**

Remember the time you nearly twisted your ankle walking on the broken footpath near the corner shop? Or when the pothole-riddled main road on your commute added to your Monday morning blues? Or every time you are forced to walk through the unlit lane to get to your neglected neighbourhood park?



Like most people, you probably felt frustration, a brief desire to do something, followed quickly, perhaps, by resignation. After all, how does one even go about fixing these things? Who do you complain to? What is the process? And how do you ensure follow-up?



Ward committees are considered the fourth tier of governance, ensuring 'last mile' democracy for citizens. As inclusive and collaborative platforms, ward committees have the potential to address the simple day-to-day matters related to civic amenities. They also provide a much-needed grassroots connect to the complex urban issues of the 21st century such as climate change, public health, women safety, and livable habitats for the future.

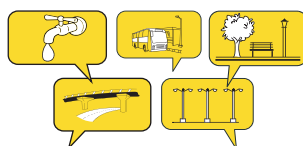
They are a place where citizens and officials come together; where individuals like you and me are given a say in the way our neighbourhoods are managed and developed. They help us address current challenges while encouraging us to actively participate in building a better future for our neighbourhoods and our cities.

**In this section, we take a look at:**

**01** How ward committees are structured



**02** Their roles and responsibilities

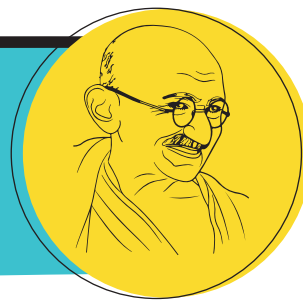


**03** How you can engage with them to drive change



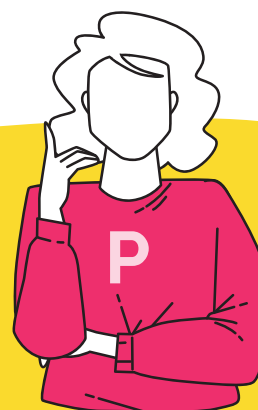
Be the change you want to see in the world.

**MAHATMA GANDHI**



## 5.1 Why are ward committees important?

We all know – or have been – a Passive Pavithra; the ones who are unhappy at the state of affairs but firmly believe that fixing it is the responsibility of the government and the government alone.



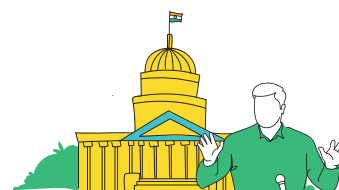
### But here's a question for you

Who is more likely to be motivated to improve things? You, who is directly affected by every change in the neighbourhood? Or a government official who is far removed from the happenings in your locality?

Ward Committees (WC) give citizens a chance to leverage their knowledge of their neighbourhoods into meaningful change. It offers an opportunity to work collaboratively with the city government to resolve challenges and plan the development of your area in a way that reflects the interests of its citizens. These committees are crucial to strengthening decentralised governance, especially as the growth of our cities outpaces our government's ability to manage them.



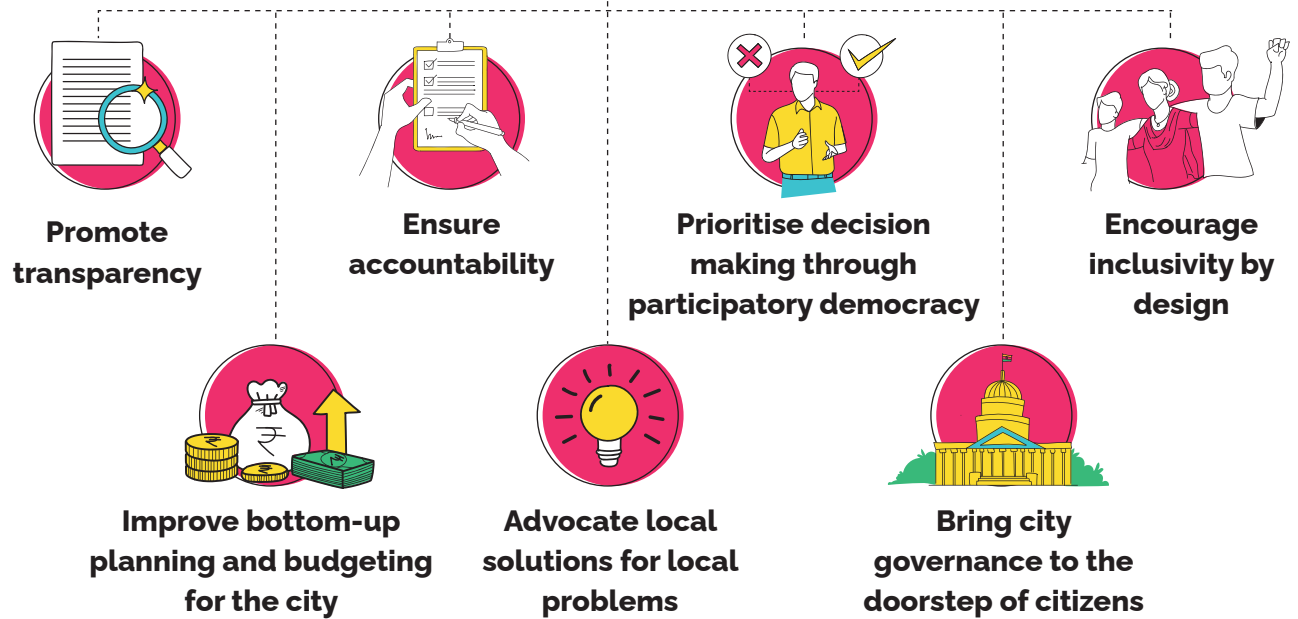
**No WC**



**WC**



## Ward Committees:



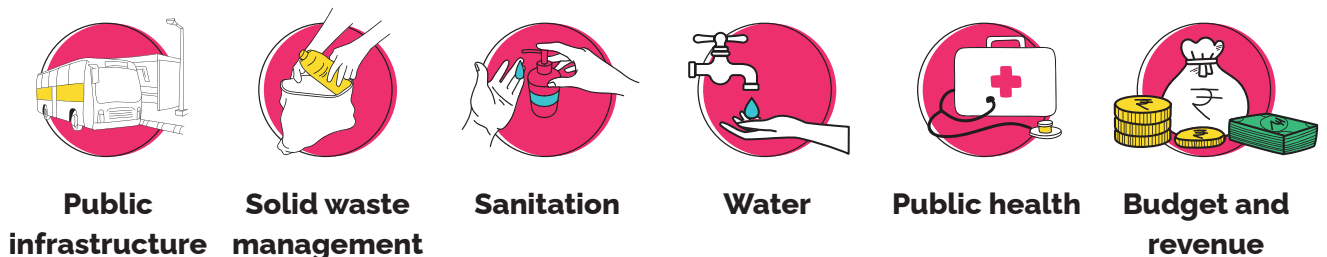
### No two wards are the same

Just like no two cities or states are the same. Size, location, and population are significant differentiators that create uncommon challenges for each ward. There is no one-size-fits-all approach and no fixed solution. In fact, the composition, functions, and responsibilities of ward committees vary from state to state depending on state laws.

5.2

### What areas does a ward committee oversee?

Ward committees serve as a space where citizens and local government can work together on issues of:



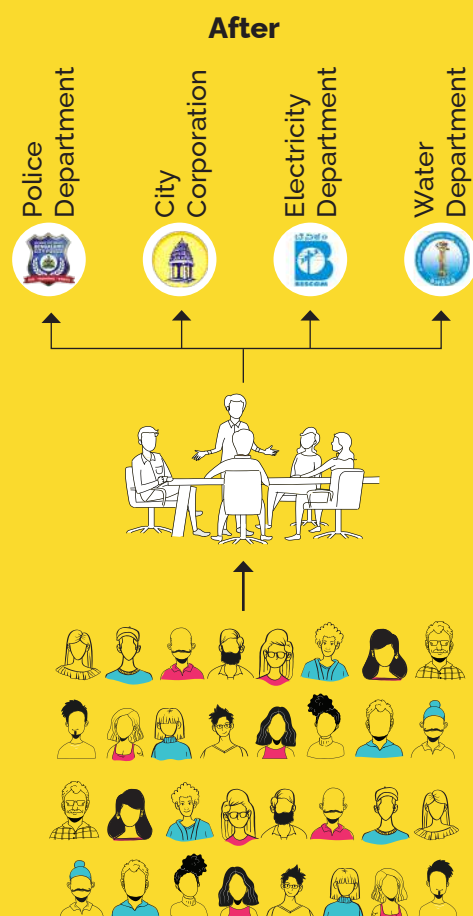
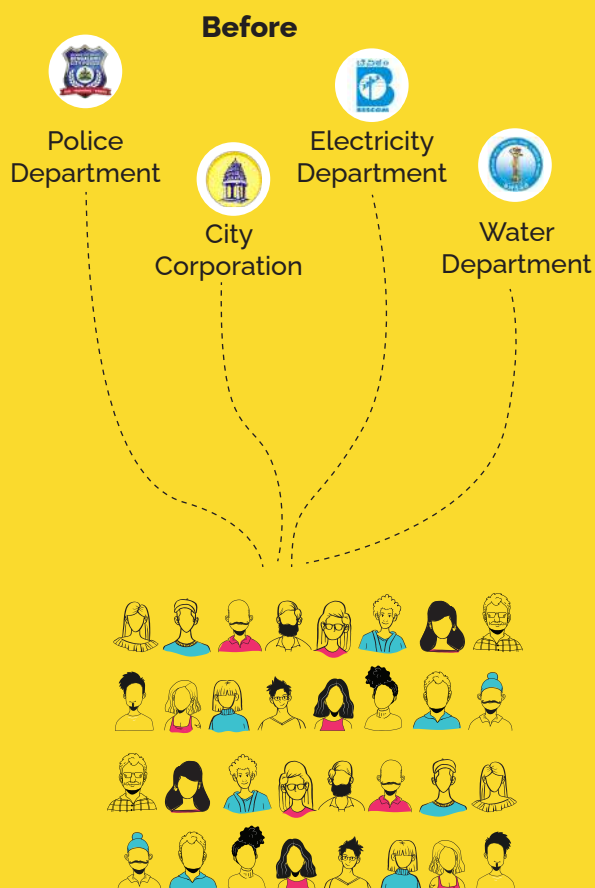
Please note that the above list may differ for ward committees, depending on state and city laws.

# DID

## YOU KNOW?

Officers from different government departments and various municipal corporation boards (including electricity, water supply, police, etc.) participate in the ward committee meetings in Bengaluru. This makes it easier for citizens to connect with multiple departments in one place and at the same time.

### Life in a Bengaluru Ward





## 5.3 Success Story

### Mrs Poongothai's Journey: From an interested bystander to an active citizen



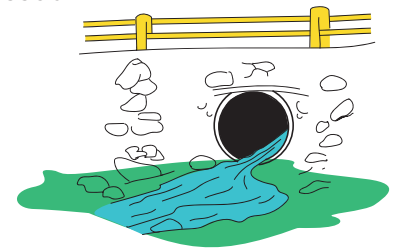
Like most of us, Mrs Poongothai too faced a familiar dilemma: the desire to do something to fix the issues she saw every day but the lack of know-how to do it.

**"I would see the issues in my vicinity such as poor road quality, drainage, and sanitation while walking or driving, but there was no time to address it in the moment. One challenge we all face is how to address these issues we complain about."**

**Mrs Poongothai reached out to her neighbours and was connected to the RWA. This was where she first learnt about ward committees – and there has been no looking back for this active citizen since!**

Through ward committee meetings, Mrs Poongothai and her neighbours have been successful in getting the concerns and needs of their ward addressed.

**Among their many achievements has been the construction of a culvert in the drain on NICE Road in Bengaluru. "We got the need for the culvert highlighted through the ward committee. Then the budget was allocated towards it, and it was built. We also managed to get a rainwater harvesting pit installed inside the drainage systems in the area."**



Mrs Poongothai is now a vocal proponent of ward committees. Before, she had used the BBMP grievance redressal platform, Sahaaya. "We even tried approaching MPs and MLAs, but Ward committees are more effective. You get a direct point of contact and each problem can be addressed to the official concerned with that area."

Her advice to those looking to get involved in civic issues? "First, connect with your neighbours and RWAs and start participating in RWA meetings. You can visit your ward office and talk to the ward authorities directly by introducing yourself. This is the only way you will be able to address your community's issues and get them solved."

### Well-being Tip



**Want your neighbourhood's infra projects to use eco-friendly materials only? Or feel that the waste segregation in your area leaves much to be desired? Talk to your ward committee! As an institutional platform, ward committees are a powerful tool to build greener neighbourhoods and cities.**

## 5.4

**What are the functions of a ward committee?**

Ward committees are often mistaken as grievance redressal mechanisms, but their function goes far beyond this. Although the tasks and responsibilities of ward committees may vary by state, their functions typically include:

- 01** Preparing annual ward plans and the ward budget
- 02** Prioritizing development work based on the needs of citizens
- 03** Supervising solid waste management and sanitation
- 04** Overseeing the maintenance of parks and streetlights
- 05** Assisting in the implementation of government schemes
- 06** Validating whether civic projects reflect the requirements of the ward
- 07** Providing feedback to the government on completed projects
- 08** Mobilizing citizens for social welfare programmes
- 09** Promoting harmony and unity among various groups of the ward.

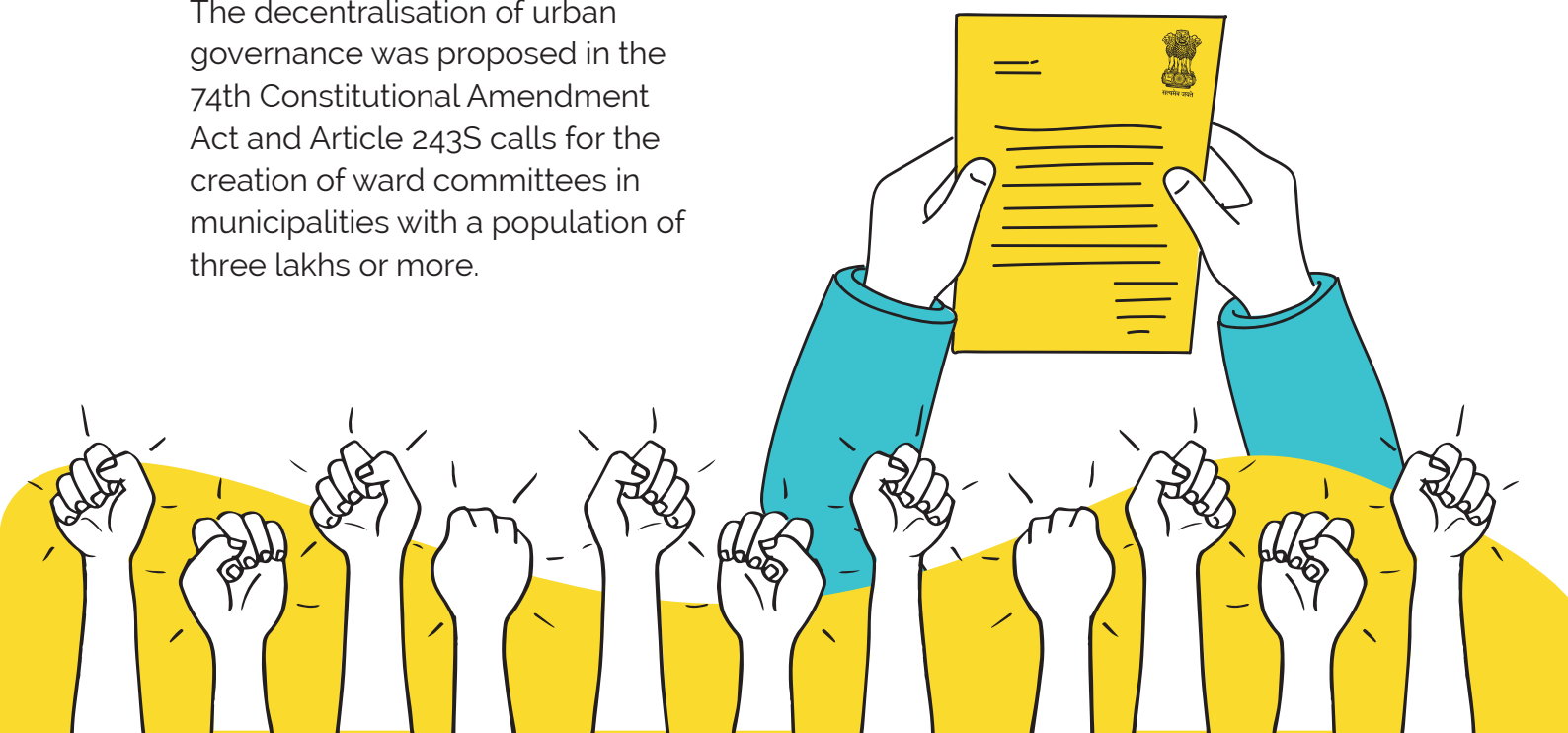
Source: Model Nagara Raj Bill, MoHUA

## 5.5

**What is the legal basis for ward committees?**

Ward committees are constitutionally mandated institutions.

The decentralisation of urban governance was proposed in the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act and Article 243S calls for the creation of ward committees in municipalities with a population of three lakhs or more.



## 5.6 How are ward committees formed\*?

- ❖ Election for councillors is held
- ❖ The city council is formed
- ❖ The commissioner of the municipal corporation conducts the first meeting of the council
- ❖ The process of formation of ward committees is initiated
- ❖ Ward committee members are nominated/elected, finalised, and announced
- ❖ The secretaries of the ward committees of all the wards are appointed by the commissioner
- ❖ Ward committees are formed in the city



State government  
passes law



Rules  
notified



City government  
calls for ward  
committee  
applications  
or nominates  
ward committee  
members or  
ward committee  
members are  
elected from  
area sabhas



Secretary of  
ward committee  
is appointed  
(Any officer  
from the city  
government)



Ward  
committees  
get notified  
by city  
government

Ward  
Committee  
Meetings  
begin  
(monthly or  
fortnightly)



\* This process is illustrative  
in nature and varies from  
state to state.

5.7

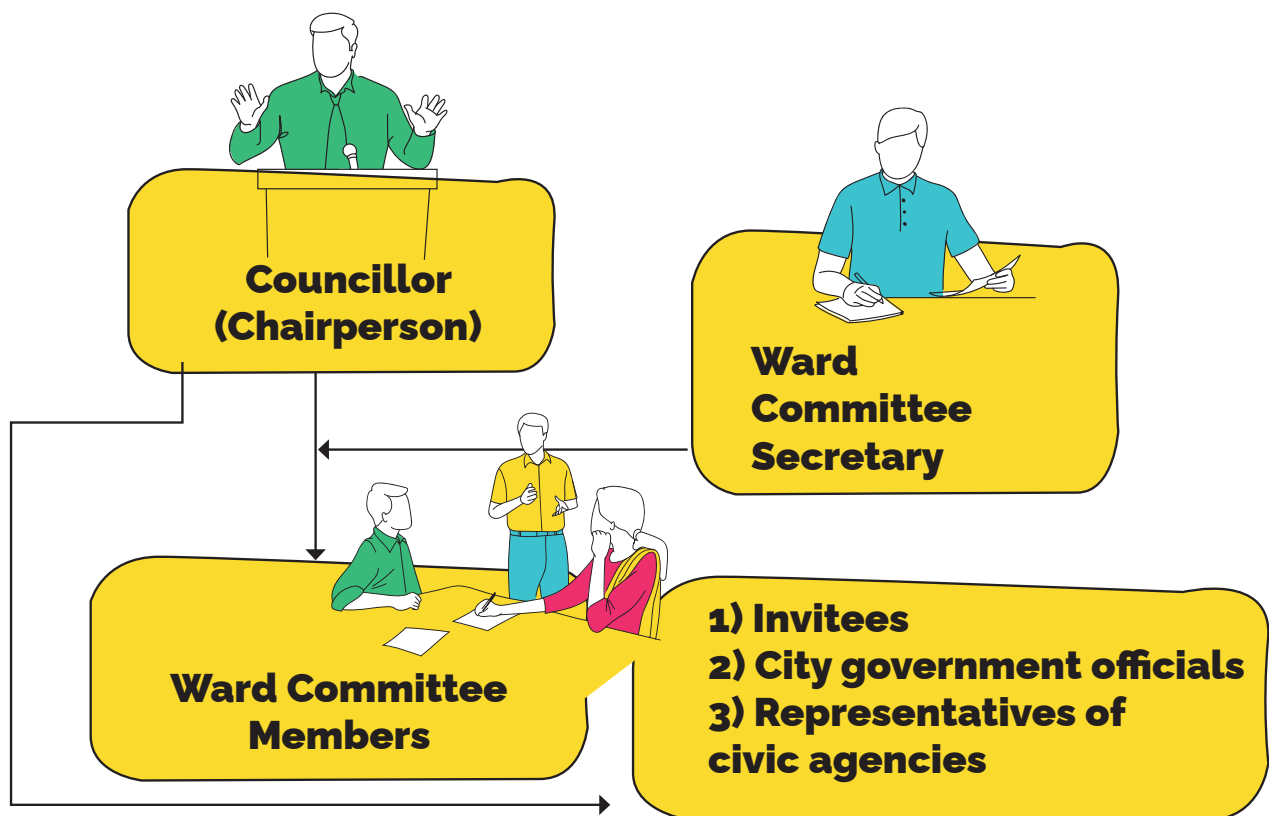
## Who is responsible for setting up ward committees?

Once the state government passes the municipal law, the establishment of ward committees is the responsibility of your city government.

5.8

## What is the organisational structure of a ward committee?

Typically, a ward committee includes:



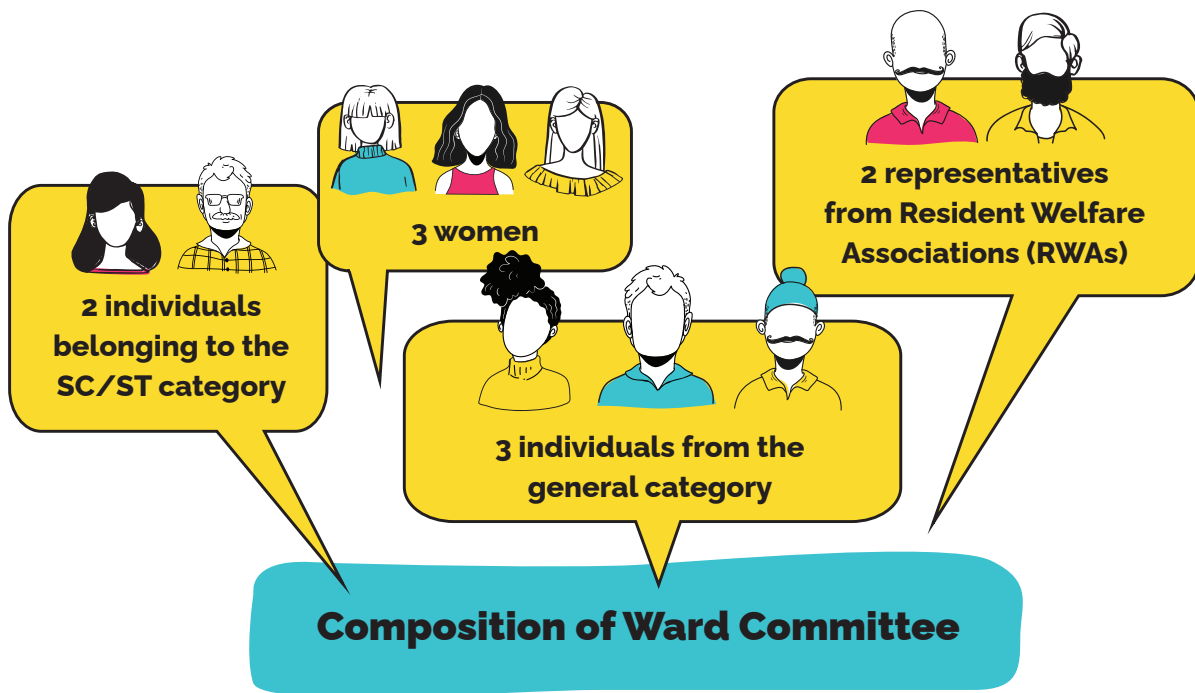
5.9

## What is the composition of a ward committee?

The state government has to pass the municipal law to form ward committees and notify the rules. This includes the framework for composition, representation, frequency of meetings, venue, etc, and vary from state to state.

Ward committees are typically structured to include representation from all sections of society, however their exact composition depends on the state laws. Also, the rules may vary for different types of ULBs (bigger and smaller cities).

For instance, in Karnataka, the rules for municipal corporations stipulate that ward committees should include:



## 5.10 Can I participate in ward committee meetings even if I am not a ward committee member?

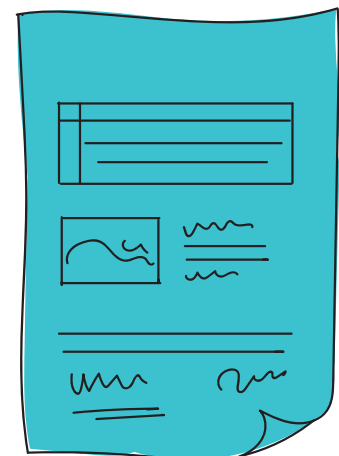
**YES!**

Ward committee meetings are generally open to all residents of the ward depending on laws of the state. Everyone can – and should – actively participate in the meetings. You can reach out to ward committee members about any issue you are facing and can even raise your concerns during meetings.

## 5.11 Okay, I'm sold! So, how can I become a ward committee member?

Once your city notifies ward committees, they call for ward committee membership applications or nomination forms. To become a ward committee member, you must nominate yourself based on the category you belong to and submit a nomination form to the municipal corporation commissioner.

You must be a registered voter of the ward whose ward committee membership you are seeking.

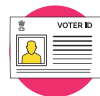


## ENGAGED ESHWAR

The list of must-have documents you need to submit with your application varies from state to state. For instance, some cities in Karnataka require the following:



**Passport-size photographs**



**Voter ID (EPIC Number)**



**Extract of the voter entry in the electoral roll**



**If claiming reservation, caste certificate issued by tahsildar to be enclosed**



**If claiming reservation under the RWA/NGO category, a recommendation letter from the president/secretary of the association (along with a copy of the NGO registration)**



**Supporting documents for claims of experience or awards.**





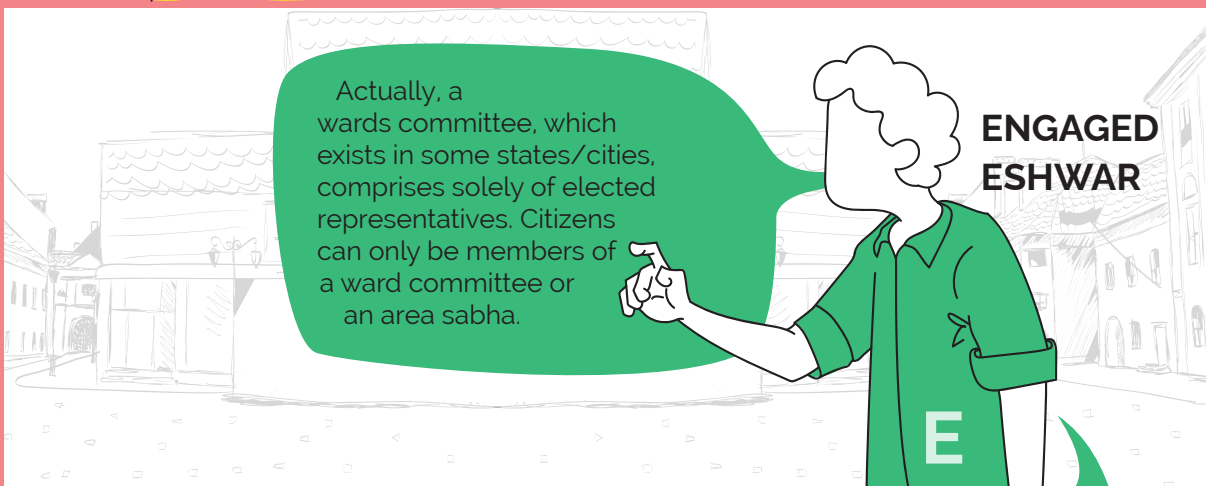
## 5.12 Ward Committees vs Wards Committees vs Area Sabhas

### INTERESTED ISABELLA



Actually, a wards committee, which exists in some states/cities, comprises solely of elected representatives. Citizens can only be members of a ward committee or an area sabha.

### ENGAGED ESHWAR

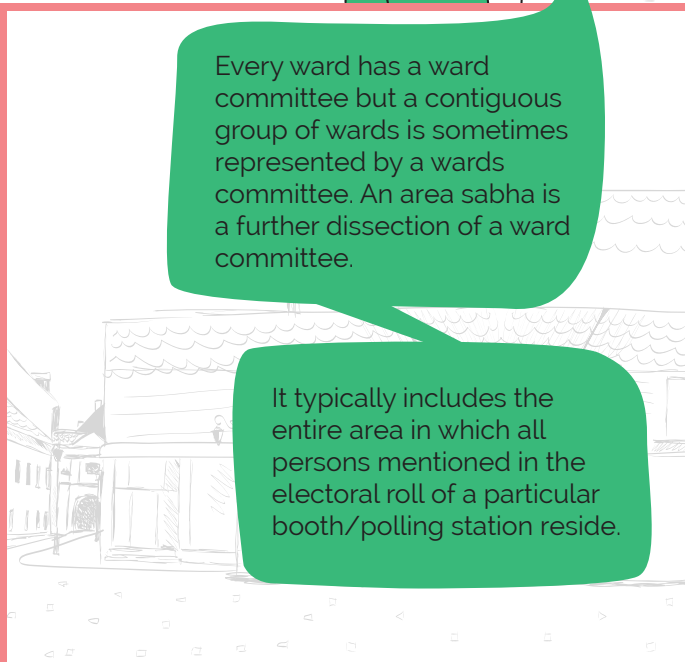


But what is the difference?



Every ward has a ward committee but a contiguous group of wards is sometimes represented by a wards committee. An area sabha is a further dissection of a ward committee.

It typically includes the entire area in which all persons mentioned in the electoral roll of a particular booth/polling station reside.





### WARDS COMMITTEE

- ❖ Contiguous group of two or three wards constitute a wards committee
- ❖ Consists of elected representatives and may have nominated NGO representatives
- ❖ Typical in a multi-councillor system (more than one councillor for a single ward)
- ❖ One of the councillors from any of the wards is elected as chairperson



### WARD COMMITTEE

- ❖ One ward committee for each ward
- ❖ Councillor is the chairperson assisted by ward committee members who are citizens of that ward.



### AREA SABHAS

- ❖ Residents under a polling booth are members of an area sabha\*
- ❖ 1 representative from each area is selected as an Area Sabha Representative (ASR)
- ❖ The ASR generally represented their area in the ward committees
- ❖ Typically, a ward committee is divided into many area sabhas (such as area sabha 1, 2, etc.) depending on the laws of the state.

\* A ward comprises of many polling booths

5.13

## What are my rights and duties as a ward committee member?

01



You have the right to seek information from relevant authorities regarding any matter relating to the ward (including complete information on budgets, allocations, and taxes).

02



You have the right to be consulted for land development and zoning regulations in your ward's jurisdiction.



Members also have the right to obtain financial and administrative support for their wards from the city government.

Ward committees can also retain a certain portion of ward revenue for local development. This is based on the respective state's laws

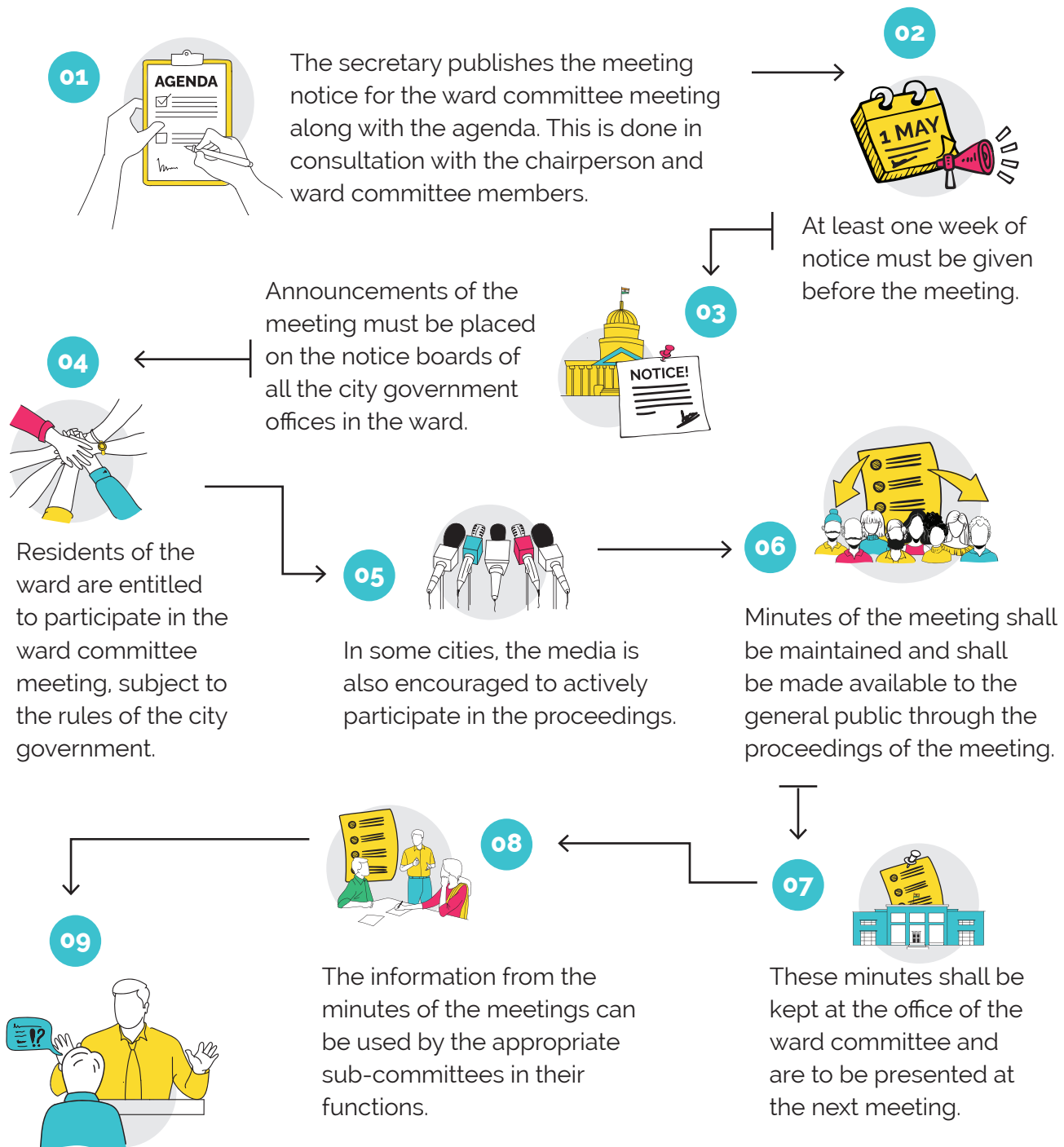
This is as recommended in the Model Nagara Raj Bill. But it is completely under the discretion of individual states and states may pass variations of it.



- ❖ **The term of ward committees is co-extensive with the term of the office of the elected council.**
- ❖ **The ward councillor represents the ward in the city council and is also the chairperson of the committee.**
- ❖ **An officer of the city government appointed by the commissioner serves as the secretary of the ward committee. But they do not have a say in the decision making of ward committees.**

## 5.14

## How are ward committee meetings conducted?



This is as recommended in the Model Nagara Raj Bill. But it is completely under the discretion of individual states and states may pass variations of it.

## Format of Meeting Notice

**City Corporation of** <insert city name>

Ref. No: .....

Date.: .....

### WARD COMMITTEE MEETING NOTICE

Sub: Invitation to attend the Ward Committee meeting of Ward No. ....

Reference: ..... City Corporation Order/Notification No..... dated.....

With reference to the above subject, whereas the ward committees have been formed for effective delivery of services to the citizens and provide a forum for residents to provide their inputs and suggestions in the governance of the city and implementation of development projects in the ward, and secretaries have been appointed to the ward committees for efficient functioning, the ward committee meeting has been convened as suggested by the chairperson and the members of the ward committee.

Therefore, the chairperson and members of the ward committee as well as the officials concerned are hereby requested to attend the meeting of Ward No. .... on <insert date> in <insert venue> at <insert time>, with the necessary information and documents and participate in the discussion on development projects and grievances of the people.

During this meeting, issues pertaining to current development works at the ward, identifying the beneficiaries for different schemes, any other issues etc. will be discussed. The meeting is open to all residents of the ward and we request all the residents to attend in large numbers for the development of the ward. It is thereby requested that the bureaucrats shall attend the meeting with necessary documents.

#### Meeting Agenda

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

**Ward Committee Secretary,**  
**Ward No. ....**

## Sample Agenda of Ward Committee Meeting

Date: 14-April-2023

WARD NO-33 | KADRI SOUTH

### SAMPLE AGENDA

**Objective:** To review on-going ward works related to desilting of stormwater drain

**Venue:** Govt School, Kadri

**Date and Time:** 20th April, 2023

Time	Agenda	Anchor
11:00 - 11:10	Introduction and setting the agenda	Chairperson
11:10 - 11:20	Review of Action Taken Report based on the last Minutes of Meeting (MoM)	Designated ward committee member
11:20 - 11:30	Discussion of agenda items	Chairperson / WC member
11:30 - 11:50	Open House	All, moderated by chairperson
11:50 - 12:00	Closing remarks, and actions summary with WC anchor listed out	Designated ward committee member

Ward Committee Secretary

## Model Civic Directory of Ward Committee Representatives

Agency	Department	Name	Designation	Phone
BBMP	BBMP Council	K Nagabhushan	Councillor	012345789
BBMP	Engineering	Suresh Devathraj	Assistant Engineer	012345789
BBMP	Engineering (Major Road)	Nagaraj	Assistant Engineer	012345789
BWSSB	BWSSB	Harikumar	Assistant Executive Engineer	012345789
BWSSB	BWSSB	Rajeshkar Meti	Assistant Engineer	012345789
BBMP	Health	Raghunath T	Health Inspector	012345789
BBMP	Horticulture	Chandra Shekar	Superintendent	012345789
BBMP	Electrical	Rajendra Nayak	Assistant Executive Engineer	012345789
BBMP	Electrical	Babu Reddy	Assistant Engineer	012345789
BBMP	Forest	Gopala	RFO	012345789
BESCOM	Electrical	Shivananda	Junior Engineer	012345789
BCP	Law & Order	Marysayla	Police Inspector	012345789

## Format of the Proceedings of the Meeting

**City Corporation of** <insert city name>

Ref. No: .....

Date: .....

### WARD COMMITTEE MEETING PROCEEDINGS

The details of the discussions held and decisions made thereto in the ward committee meeting of Ward No. .... on ..... <Insert Date> at ..... <insert time> am/pm in ..... <insert venue> in the presence of the ward councillor and chairperson, members, and officials is as follows

**Members/Officials/Special invitees present:**

SL. No.	Name	Designation
1		
2		
3		

**Action Taken Report presented in the meeting with respect to the decisions made in the previous ward committee meeting:**

SL. No.	Details of topic/ issues/ complaints	Name, designation and mobile number of the officer responsible for Action	Estimated date of completion	Present status of the issue/ complaint and details
1				
2				
3				

**Topics/issues discussed during the current ward committee meeting and decisions made thereto:**

SL. No.	Details of topic/ issues/ complaints	Decision Taken	Name, designation and mobile number of the officer responsible for Action	Estimated date of completion
1				
2				
3				

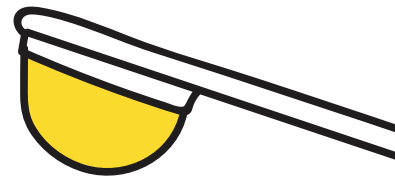
.....

Ward Committee Secretary

**Copy:**

1. City corporation commissioner through the nodal officer for ward committees
2. IT coordinator of the city corporation for publishing on the corporation website
3. Ward committee file of Ward No. ....





## 5.15 Debunking myths about ward committees

Ward committees are too often mired in myths and misconceptions. Let's debunk some common ones.

### MYTH



- ❖ Only ward committee members can attend ward committee meetings



- ❖ Information about councillors is not easily available.



- ❖ Former councillors control ward committees and do not let citizens participate.



- ❖ Ward committee meetings are only about grievance redressal.
- ❖ Ward committees curtail powers of the councillor and officials

### REALITY



- ❖ Any citizen of the ward can attend – and participate – in ward committee meetings subject to the rules of the state/city government.



- ❖ If your city has an elected council, all information about councillors will be available on the city government's website. The details may also be available at the council secretary's office of the city corporation



- ❖ The elected councillor is the chairperson of the ward committee and ward committee meetings are conducted only under their leadership



- ❖ Ward committees have a responsibility to monitor and evaluate civic works, plan projects for the ward, and seek budgets. In fact, in the year 2021, each ward committee in Bengaluru got a budget of Rs 60 lakhs to prioritise local needs on roads, footpaths and borewells
- ❖ Ward committees strengthen the system and encourage collaborative action between councillors, government officials, and citizens.

## 5.16 Success Story

### When these Mangaluru residents came together, their neighbourhood lit up!

The Santhosh Nagar Main Road in Mangaluru's Panchanadi Ward was a poorly lit road with barely any streetlights. Tired of having their neighbourhood left in the dark, the citizens of the ward came together to be the change they wanted to see.



**They reached out to the residents of the area and got 20 signatures on a letter requesting the installation of 5 LED streetlights. This letter was then submitted to their ward committee in April 2022. In response, the corporator of the area, Ms Sangeetha R Nayak, okayed the installation of the streetlights and approved a grant from the ward fund.**

The citizens followed up through continuous field visits with the corporator and other officials. Within 40 days, the streetlights were installed and the Santhosh Nagar Road was illuminated!

The citizens of Panchanadi Ward are a beacon of hope. They illustrate the power of collective action and all the wonderful things that can happen when active citizens, effective ward committees, and people-oriented corporators work together.



## Well-being Tip



Your streets might be in the dark but you certainly are not.

With this handbook, you're equipped with everything you need to fix that broken streetlight in your neighbourhood. To get started, look up the contact information of the concerned grievance redressal department in your city government and lodge a complaint. If the issue remains unresolved, raise it in your ward committee meetings. You can also approach your councillor, ward engineer or electrical engineer for resolution.

## Cleaner Lakes for Cooler Cities: The Story of Hubballi-Dharwad



The citizens of Hubballi-Dharwad got together to tackle the growing problem of pollution.

On 2 June 2022, led by the citizen collective of Hubballi-Dharwad Ward Samiti Balaga and in collaboration with the National Cadet Corps (NCC), volunteers collected close to 25 bags of garbage from the popular Sandhankere Lake Park of Dharwad.

In a similar initiative, 30 Ward Samiti Balaga members joined hands with their city government to conduct a cleanliness drive at a public garden in Hubballi. The zonal commissioner of Hubballi-Dharwad Municipal Corporation also participated in the drive, which collected 10 bags of garbage from the premises. The citizens also requested the zonal commissioner to install a compost unit in the locality; a request that was met favorably.

A true example of collaborative action for collective good!

## PASSIVE PAVITHRA



Oh wow! These stories are inspiring. Not only were the citizens able to affect change in their neighbourhoods but their efforts actually led to greener, healthier surroundings for all. How can I do my bit? Where do I start?

## ENGAGED ESHWAR



That's good to hear! Change begins at home and one way to get started is to be more mindful of your actions and behaviour in your everyday life. After all, every small step you take makes a big difference in building a sustainable neighbourhood.

### Let's find out how environment-friendly you are!

Do you walk, cycle or use public transport to get to office?

☐ Yes ☐ No



Do you choose stairs over elevators?

☐ Yes ☐ No



Do you run outdoors instead of on a treadmill?

☐ Yes ☐ No



Have you installed a solar heater on your terrace?

☐ Yes ☐ No



Do you turn your vehicle off at red lights?

☐ Yes ☐ No



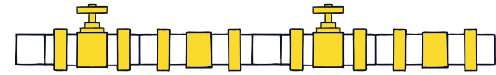
Do you turn off the water while brushing your teeth?

☐ Yes ☐ No



**Do you promptly fix any tap, flush or pipe leakages at home?**

☐ Yes ☐ No



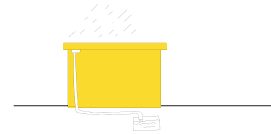
**Do you recycle the water from your AC/RO systems to wash vessels, water plants, etc.?**

☐ Yes ☐ No



**Do you have a rainwater harvesting set-up in your house or community?**

☐ Yes ☐ No



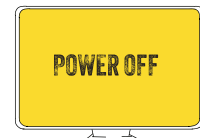
**Do you practice composting?**

☐ Yes ☐ No



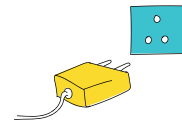
**Do you turn off the TV when you're not watching it?**

☐ Yes ☐ No



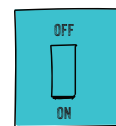
**Do you unplug appliances/chargers when not in use?**

☐ Yes ☐ No



**Do you turn off the lights when you leave a room?**

☐ Yes ☐ No



If your answer to most of these questions is 'Yes', give yourself a pat on the back! You are environmentally conscious and make a concerted effort to ensure that your decisions are better for the neighbourhood, the community, and the planet.

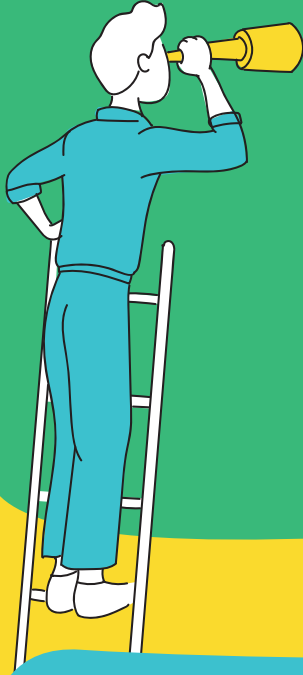
If your answer to most of these questions is 'No', there is still time! It is never too late to adopt a greener lifestyle and do your bit for the environment.

Scan the QR code to explore ways in which you can make a difference, starting right now!



You can always start with simple actions such as segregating your garbage or not dumping it in the sewer. This would help the local government mitigate the causes of landfills and floods. It is important for us to liaise with our local government in building healthy and sustainable neighborhoods. We can also leverage ward committees for the same.

## 5.17 The Action Zone



### To Explore:

*The status of ward committees in your city.*

Ward committees are yet to become the norm across the country.

If your city has ward committees, you can learn more about them through your city government. And if your city doesn't, then this is the perfect opportunity to lead the change!

### To Do:

Approach your city government and push for the creation of ward committees. After all, a city moves towards progress one street, one neighbourhood, and one ward at a time.



## 06

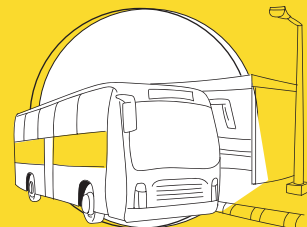
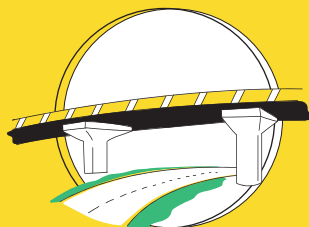
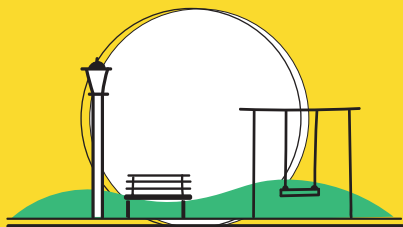
# A Guide to Transforming Your City through Your Ward

**Because cities change one ward at a time.**

Wards are the first, most basic units of transformation.

From footpaths and roads to streetlights and parks, from water to waste management – wards affect the everyday life of citizens. It is where policy becomes practice and where citizens experience the trials and tribulations of democracy, first-hand.

This section has a step-by-step guide to help you improve your ward, regardless of the state of ward committees in your area.





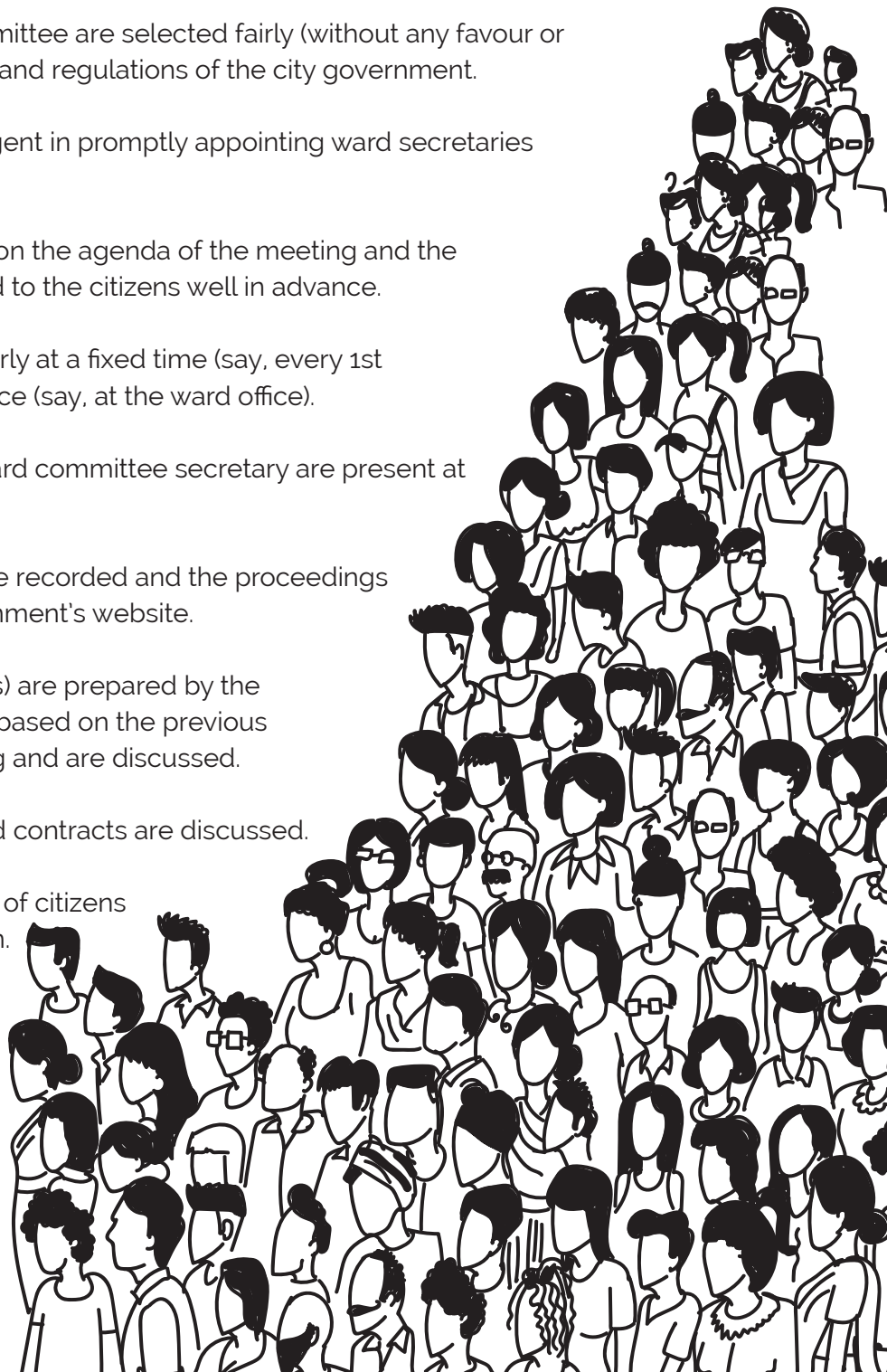
## 6.1

## What does an ideal, fully functional ward committee look like?

Active ward committees translate into increased citizen participation which in turn results in improved representation in and enhanced performance of local governance.

Here are the hallmarks of a model ward committee:

- ❖ Citizens from all sections of society (including women and the urban poor) are adequately represented and actively participate in the committee.
- ❖ Members of the ward committee are selected fairly (without any favour or biases), based on the rules and regulations of the city government.
- ❖ The city government is diligent in promptly appointing ward secretaries for all the wards.
- ❖ The citizens are consulted on the agenda of the meeting and the meeting notice is circulated to the citizens well in advance.
- ❖ Meetings take place regularly at a fixed time (say, every 1st Saturday) and at a fixed place (say, at the ward office).
- ❖ The ward councillor and ward committee secretary are present at all meetings.
- ❖ Minutes of the meetings are recorded and the proceedings uploaded to the city government's website.
- ❖ Action Taken Reports (ATRs) are prepared by the ward committee secretary based on the previous proceedings of the meeting and are discussed.
- ❖ Ward budgets, tenders, and contracts are discussed.
- ❖ The opinions and concerns of citizens are taken into consideration.
- ❖ Ward committees prepare annual development plans for the ward.

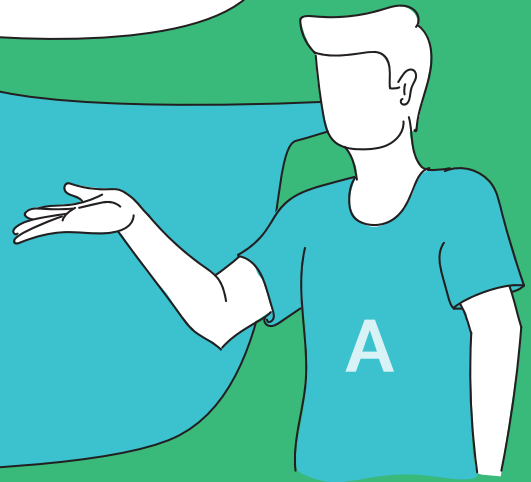


## INTERESTED ISABELLA



We have a ward committee in our area but it isn't as effective as it could be. How can I change this?

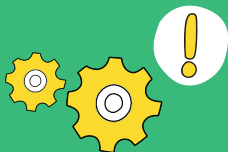
## ACTIVE AAMIR



Well, there are a few hurdles that keep ward committees from functioning at their best.

### For instance

# 01



Perhaps the members are not aware of their roles and responsibilities.

Or maybe citizens do not know how ward committees function and are therefore unable to realise its benefits.

# 02



# 03



In some cases, it could be that the meetings are not being conducted regularly. Or even that the members are not aware of meeting procedures.

There may even be a lack of follow-up with the concerned departments and officials resulting in poor grievance redressal and the sense that nothing is being done.

# 04



We recommend first diagnosing the issues with your ward committee and then taking the necessary steps to resolve them.

## 6.2

## What is the status of ward committees in Indian states?



This map represents the status of ward committees in your state. Please contact your city government for more information or to make ward committees fully functional in your city.

Now that you have an idea about ward committees in your state, find out the status of ward committees in your city and locate it on the map!

**Source:** Janaagraha's Annual Survey of India's City-Systems, 2023, in turn based on the assessment of 82 municipal legislations and allied Community Participation Law legislations across 35 states/UTs.

If you think of ward committees as teams, you will find that ward committees in your city are most likely to be in one of the following stages of team development:

### Stage 1: Forming

**WARD COMMITTEES ARE YET TO BE CONSTITUTED IN YOUR CITY.**

**If your city is in Stage 1 too, draw inspiration from the citizens of **Hubballi-Dharwad** in **Karnataka**.**

Realising the urgent need for ward committees, residents of Hubballi-Dharwad banded together with one clear goal: getting the government to constitute ward committees. Citizens mobilised on platforms like WhatsApp and Telegram. They are actively creating awareness on the importance of ward committees. They are also working with Janaagraha and regularly engaging with their city government on the issue. Their efforts have created a growing clamour for ward committees. The Hubballi-Dharwad Municipal Corporation (HDMC) has initiated the process of forming ward committees by inviting applications from interested citizens.



On the lookout for ways to mobilise citizens? Check out page 84 for some useful tips.

### Stage 2: Storming

**THE CITY GOVERNMENT HAS NOTIFIED WARD COMMITTEES BUT THEY ARE NOT FULLY FUNCTIONAL YET.**

**In Stage 2 and disheartened? Look to the citizens of **Chennai**, **Tamil Nadu****

Determined and relentless – that is how we would describe Chennai's active citizens! In the face of their tireless campaign, the city government passed a resolution stating the formation of area sabhas and ward committees in the city. Though area sabhas are functional in some parts of the city, ward committees are yet to be fully functional.

**Chennai**



### Stage 3: Norming

**WARD COMMITTEES EXIST IN YOUR CITY BUT ARE YET TO START ADDRESSING CITIZEN GRIEVANCES.**

**Bengaluru and Mangaluru show us the light at the end of the tunnel!**

Thanks to years of hard work by citizens and collectives, both cities have ward committees. Efforts are now underway to strengthen them to address citizen grievances.



Although Bengaluru does not have an active council, its ward committees are currently headed by nodal officers. On the other hand, Mangaluru has an active council and has established ward committees in all wards. Both cities have regularly mandated meetings on fixed days of the month.

In Bengaluru, a citizen coalition called 'Ward Samiti Balaga' is working towards strengthening ward committees across the city. Based on their recommendations, the city commissioner of Bengaluru appointed senior officers to monitor ward committee meetings.

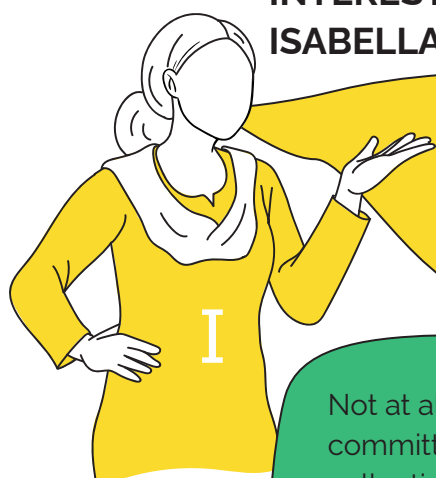


### Stage 4: Transforming

**WARD COMMITTEES HAVE BEEN FULLY FUNCTIONAL IN YOUR CITY  
AND CLOSELY MONITOR THE PROGRESS OF THEIR WARDS.**

Consistency, persistence, and collaboration are key to ensure successful governance. With knowledge about the city government and the way it functions, we sincerely believe that most ward committees will reach this stage. And doing so would surely be a testament to the efforts of citizens who tirelessly worked to make this a reality.

#### INTERESTED ISABELLA



Ward committees in my city are in the forming stage and are yet to be constituted on the ground. Does this mean we can't work towards civic change in our neighbourhood?

#### ENGAGED ESHWAR



Not at all! Even if your city doesn't have ward committees, you can still be a part of a citizen collective and work with government officials to develop your neighbourhood.

The advantage of having ward committees though is that they allow you to approach your city government in a formal manner and provide an institutional platform to work to transform your neighbourhood.

So, even while you continue to work with a citizen collective, I would recommend that you push for your government to establish ward committees in your city.

Refer to page 94 for more information.



6.3

## Okay, I have figured out which stage my ward committee is at. Now what?

Now, you follow the comprehensive chart below for a list of activities that you can do to improve your ward.

The chart will guide you through every stage of your ward committee's development – right from its formation to helping it achieve its full potential.

**We have been sure to add something for everyone, so let's get cracking!**

### Legends

**RWA** - Residents Welfare Association

**CSO** - Civil Society Organisation

**NGO** - Non Government Organisation



Arrows indicate that the specified action flows across different stages



Indicates the milestones achieved after following the mentioned steps



Indicates the direction to read in



### FORMING

B

#### GOVT ISSUES NOTIFICATION TO ESTABLISH WARD COMMITTEES

- ❖ Follow up with your city government regularly
- ❖ Submit a letter to your city commissioner requesting the formation of ward committees
- ❖ Leverage mainstream media/social media to gain momentum
- ❖ Discuss the need to evolve to ward committees
- ❖ Maintain momentum by conducting frequent events as a citizen collective
- ❖ Organise/conduct a volunteering activity and establish a social media group.
- ❖ Connect with RWAs/CSOs/NGOs in your locality

A

#### CREATE DEMAND FOR WARD COMMITTEES IN YOUR CITY



### STORMING

- ❖ Escalate persisting outstanding issues directly to your councillor and other higher authorities
- ❖ Ensure unresolved issues are brought up in subsequent meetings
- ❖ Discuss the Action Taken Report (ATR) of the previous MoM in the following meeting
- ❖ Ensure that your ward secretary uploads Minutes of Meeting (MoM) /proceedings to the city government's website
- ❖ Encourage all citizens to actively participate in ward committee meetings
- ❖ Work with your ward secretary to circulate details of ward committee meetings

C

#### WARD COMMITTEE MEETINGS ARE INITIATED

- ❖ Follow up with city government to ensure that ward committee members are appointed
- ❖ Encourage citizens to apply for the position of ward committee member
- ❖ Add the ward secretary to your ward's social media group
- ❖ Circulate the ward directory on social media and through pamphlets, etc.
- ❖ Educate citizens on how ward committees work through your social media group

**No WC? Start here!**







## NORMING



## TRANSFORMING

Woohoo! You have been successful in establishing an institutionalised platform for citizen participation in your city



- ❖ Monitor implementation and discuss progress during next ward committee meeting.
- ❖ Verify that the works planned correlate with issues faced in your ward
- ❖ Gather information on works planned and in progress (tenders and work orders)
- ❖ Initiate discussion on ward's budget allocation with the councillor and ward secretary

### D

#### CITIZEN GRIEVANCES ARE GETTING ADDRESSED THROUGH WARD COMMITTEES

- ❖ Create a ward committee coalition to promote collaboration across wards
- ❖ Share success stories of ward committee meetings through social media, electronic media, and print media

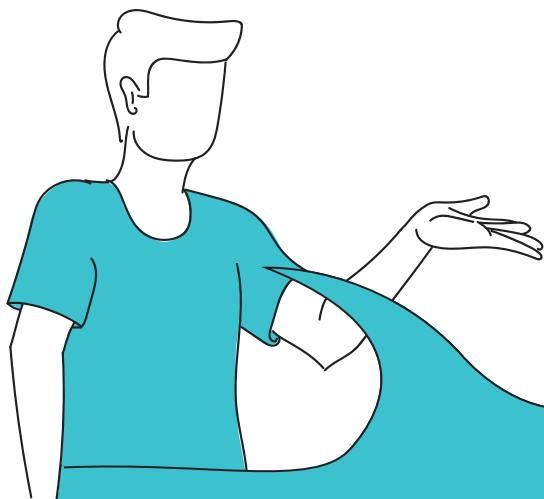
### E

#### WARD COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOCUS ON WARD PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

### F

#### CREATE WARD DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND WARD BUDGETS





### ACTIVE AAMIR SAYS

Before you become the active citizen your ward needs, be sure to have the following information handy:

- 1 **Ward name and number**
- 2 **Name and contact information of ward councillor**
- 3 **Name and contact information of ward committee secretary**
- 4 **Status of the ward committee in your area**

This is the identifying information you will be asked for at every interaction with a civic authority.

If you're not sure of any of these, take a small detour and go through Section 3.

## 6.4 The Action Zone



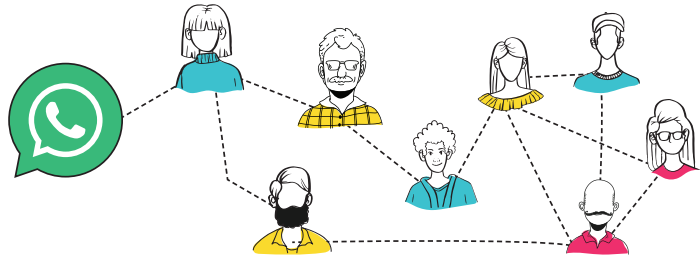
**In addition to the above chart, here are a couple of things that can help you get started:**

- 01 **Connect with nearby RWAs and organise an event for like-minded citizens (Page 84 has a handy guide on how to do this).**



02

Form a WhatsApp group with the interested citizens in your neighbourhood (Pointers available on page 95 ). In time, it may even evolve into an active citizen collective!



03

Reach out to the head of your city government to raise concerns about your ward committees (Tips on how to reach out to civic authorities and the city commissioner are available on page 91 and page 92)



04

Draft a press release about the civic issues in your neighbourhood and reach out to the local media (Head over to pages 87 and 88 for a quick how-to on engaging with the press and drafting press releases).



07

# The Way Forward



India's social and economic progress is closely linked to the quality of life in its cities. A quality of life that is as dependent on citizens as it is on governments.

Ward committees offer citizens the most effective platform to affect positive change. They are inclusive by design and have constitutional validity. Unfortunately, however, most of our cities and towns are yet to form ward committees.

### **But there is hope yet!**

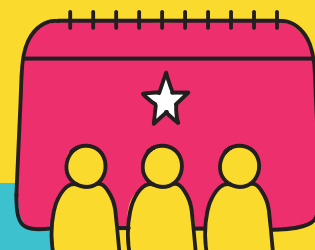
The movement to deepen citizen participation in democracy has never been stronger. We are witnessing an increasing awareness among citizens. Stories of change and triumph from different corners of the country are renewing confidence and opening up possibilities. Today, there is a greater willingness and eagerness among citizens to do their bit for their city.

Perhaps the day is not too far when every citizen has access to ward committees; when they use these committees to not only report issues but to build a better tomorrow.

**We hope this handbook acts as bridge to build a better tomorrow.**

# Annexures

## How to conduct an event to mobilize citizens for a cause



### Before the event

- ❖ Give your cause a catchy name to generate curiosity and attract more citizens.

Bengaluru, Mangaluru and Kalaburagi residents might be familiar with MyCityMyBudget (MCMB) that includes citizen inputs in the city budgets.



- ❖ Publicize the cause and event through social media.



- ❖ Use social media to form groups with like-minded citizens and create a citizen's directory (with their consent).

- ❖ Keep the group active and use it to publicize future events as well.

Once you have reached the maximum number of members in a group, you can create additional groups with the same name (For instance, MyCityMyBudget Group 1, MyCityMyBudget Group 2 and so on).



- ❖ Be sure to post regular updates about the event and to include the following information:

01

Date, venue,  
and time

02

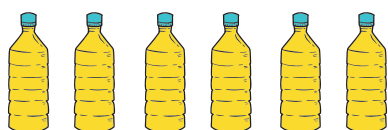
Agenda

03

What will be  
provided at the  
event

04

What citizens  
might have to  
bring



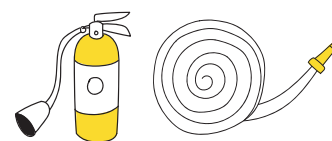
- ❖ Make arrangements for water and other essentials to be available during the event.

- ❖ Ensure that any required permissions from authorities such as police, traffic, and municipality are obtained.

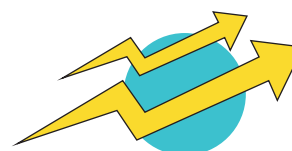


## During the event

- ❖ Ensure that any and all safety measures have been met.



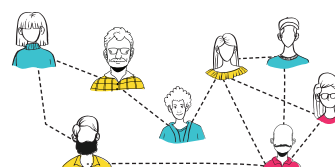
- ❖ Take attendance to track the growth and progress of the movement.



- ❖ Engage in conversation with attending citizens to understand their interests, what they hope to gain from the event and how they can contribute to the cause.



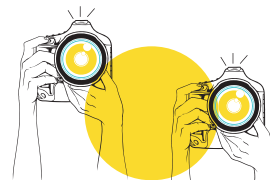
- ❖ Request consent to add attending citizens to existing social media groups.



- ❖ Collect and include the following information from consenting citizens for the citizen's directory:

01	02	03	04
Name	Phone number	Ward name and number	RWA details.

- ❖ Be sure to click photos of the event and document it.



- ❖ Record your insights.

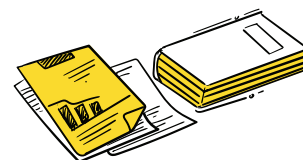


## After the event

- ❖ Post photos of your event on social media and other event broadcasting platforms.



- ❖ Collate and draft a report outlining success stories.



- ❖ Reach out to print and digital media houses to publicize your event and share success stories.



- ❖ Share event reports with different citizen groups throughout the community.



- ❖ Conduct and share similar events to grow the active citizen community.



- ❖ Create awareness about ward committees and their potential for change.





## How to engage with the media



### Traditional/Print Media

Print media is easily among the most powerful levers for changing society. You can also get the attention of conventional media houses through your work, posts, videos, and letters to the editor.

**Here are some things to keep in mind when engaging with print media:**

- ❖ Gather support for ward committees and present a united front as a citizen collective.<sup>3</sup>
- ❖ Identify a spokesperson from your collective and give them the responsibility to interact with the press and release press statements.
- ❖ Find the local press club and get in touch with them.
- ❖ Follow print media regularly to identify local reporters who write on civic issues in your city.
- ❖ Develop and maintain a relationship with such reporters.
- ❖ You can comment on the social media posts of the newspaper to attract the attention of the newspaper.
- ❖ You can also visit the newspaper office, introduce yourself and talk about your cause.
- ❖ As a citizen collective, issue a press release clearly stating your objectives and concerns (Refer to the next section for pointers on how to write a press release).
- ❖ Conduct a press meet to inform the media about important aspects of the campaign. You can also write letters to the editors of any newspaper to create awareness about your cause.
- ❖ Be sure to repost and share your press releases and editorials on social media and to tag your citizen collective as well as the relevant city authorities.

<sup>3</sup> To know more about citizen collectives, refer to the Stages of Transformation in Section 6



## Digital/Electronic Media (TV, web, FM radio, news apps, vlogs, blogs, etc)

The key to digital media is people participation, the relevance of an issue in the current context, and the creativity or uniqueness with which it is addressed (think freeze mobs, human chains, etc).

**Here are some tips to leverage digital media as an active citizen:**

- ❖ Connect with social media channels that focus on civic issues and that conduct debates or discussions on these issues in your city.
- ❖ Explain the importance and impact of the cause you are working for and the citizen collective you are a part of.
- ❖ Exchange contact information with them and stay in touch.
- ❖ Reach out to them during events and campaigns, and ask for their help in spreading the word.

## How to draft a press release



Press releases are an important way to engage with the media and capture their attention.

**Here are some pointers to help get you started:**

- ❖ Add a logo of your citizen collective on top. If you do not have a logo, add the name of your collective along with its contact information. You can also use your letterhead for the press release.
- ❖ Include the topic of the press release in the subject. For instance, if you are inviting the press to an event, you can use something like "Invitation to <name of event/campaign> on <date>". If your press release is about a campaign, you can add eye-catching information about it in the subject.
- ❖ Be sure to add the name of the cause or movement as well as any social media handles and hashtags you are using for it.
- ❖ Set the context of the press release in the first paragraph.

- ❖ Include 2 or 3 paragraphs on the importance of the event/cause and why it is media worthy. You can use this opportunity to include facts and figures, quotes, as well as references.
- ❖ Ensure that the press release has information that is up-to-date and accurate. Focus on the action that the citizen collective is taking.
- ❖ Complete it with the authorised signature and contact information (name, mobile number, email id, etc).

**Here's an example for your reference:**

<Insert Your Citizen Collective Logo>

**Media Release**

**25/Jul/2023**

## **Mayor assures prompt action to put ward committees back on track**

Wards are the basic units of governance in a city. Focussed and planned development of wards has an aggregated effect on the overall growth of the city. Article 243S of the Constitution of India provides for ward committees to be constituted at ward level, to act as institutional platforms for the elected representatives (ward councillors) and the administration of the city government (officials) to engage with citizens on the governance and development aspects of the city and the neighbourhoods on a continuous basis.

The ward committees not only enable the ward councillors, the officials and the citizens to come together to plan and work for the betterment of the city dwellers in a collaborative manner, but also facilitate the much needed coordination between various civic agencies at the local level such as the city corporation departments (SWM, horticulture, public health, town planning, etc.), water supply and sewerage management agencies, public transportation agencies (city bus, BRTS, sub-urban railway), traffic management, civil defence and police, forest department, fire services, pollution control board, etc. in an effective manner.

Citizens United, a coalition of civil society organisations, Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) and citizens, conducted a survey on the status of ward committee meetings in the city in the year 2022. Ward committee meetings in Harinagar Municipal Corporation are mandated to be conducted regularly on every first Saturday of the month. Among other things, the study found that more than 50% of the wards in the city did not conduct even one meeting last year. The study also found that all the proceedings of meetings conducted were not found on the website of the city corporation.

The coalition met the city commissioner and the Hon. Mayor today and submitted a letter detailing the findings of the study and remedial measures to be taken by the city corporation to ensure regular meetings of the ward committees in every ward of the city. Responding to the delegation the Mayor Smt. Kamala Prasad has assured that she will seek all the details from the commissioner and take appropriate measures. She has also assured to convey the importance of people's participation in the development and welfare measures of the government to the councillors in the meeting of the General Body of the city council scheduled later this week, and encourage them to conduct the ward committee meetings regularly and effectively. The Commissioner, Mr. Gurdeep S., has also assured of prompt action to update the website with the notices and meeting proceedings of ward committees on a regular basis. He has also assured to appoint a new nodal officer for ward committees at the city level as the position was currently vacant due to the previous officer in charge being transferred 3 months back. Citizens United has communicated to the Hon. Mayor and the commissioner that the coalition will continue to monitor the progress of ward committees and follow-up continuously with the authorities.

The study report, the letters submitted to the Hon. Mayor and the Commissioner as well as the pictures of the delegation of Citizens United meeting the Mayor and Commissioner are attached herewith for wide publication through your esteemed media houses.

For further details, please contact:

Vimala D'souza, Coordinator (Communications)

Ph No: 1010101010

Email id: [contact@citizensunited.in](mailto:contact@citizensunited.in)

Sd/-

(P. B. Azad)

Convenor,

Citizens United

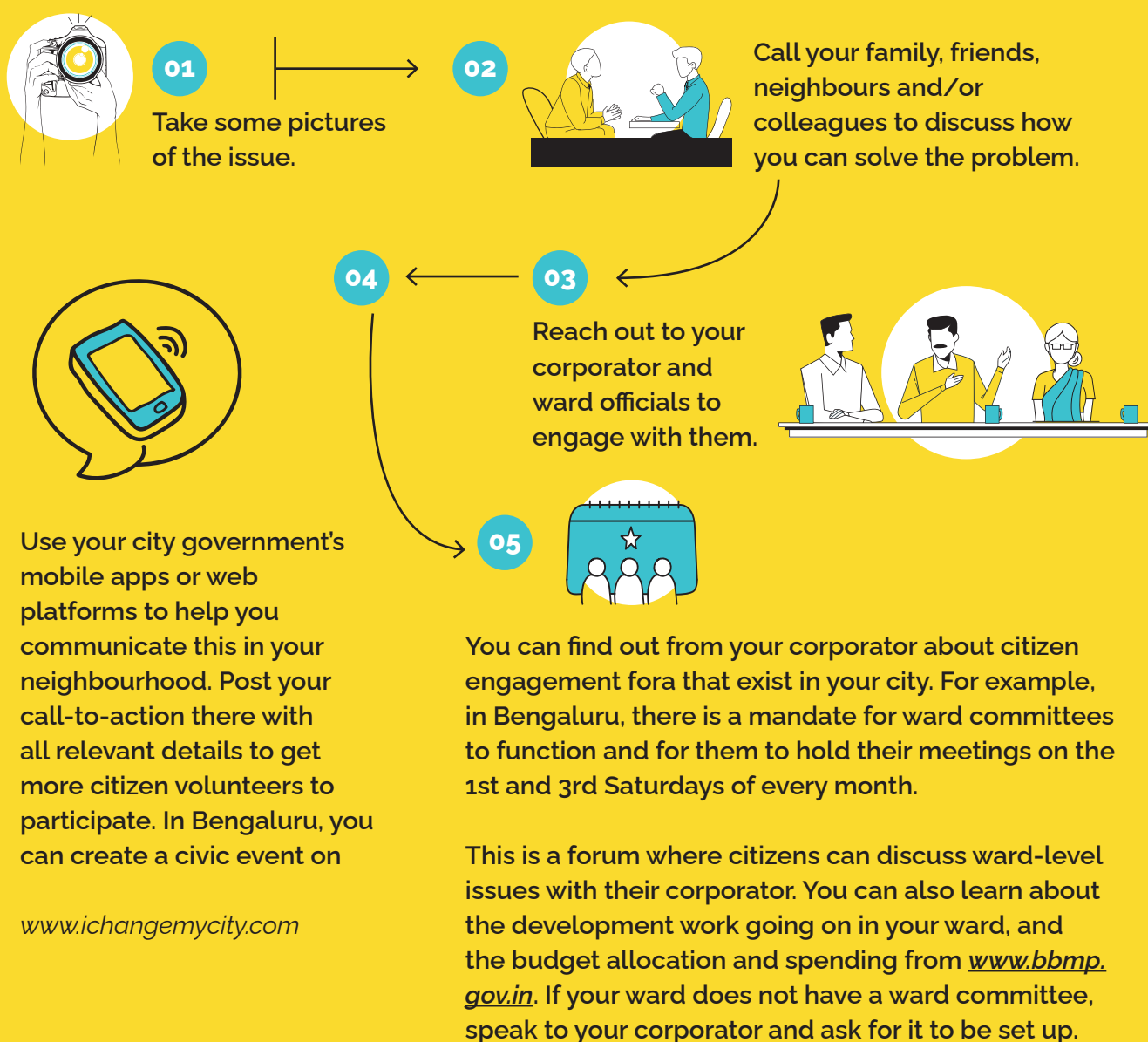
Disclaimer: The above media release and all its contents and names are fictitious to provide the readers with a representative content for reference. Any similarities in names or places are purely coincidental.

# How to report an issue to the civic authorities

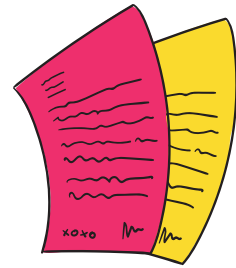


Please refer to Section 4 of this handbook for a step-by-step guide on raising complaints through different channels.

## RESOLVING ISSUES AS A COMMUNITY



## How to draft a letter to the city commissioner/mayor



Drafting a letter to your city commissioner/mayor is important because it sets a formal tone to put forward your cause and set up a meeting with them. If you have a letterhead, you can use the same.

**The template for the letter is as given below:**

Logo of your Citizen Collective (if available)

Address of your citizen collective  
(along with phone number and website, if available)

To

<Name of the commissioner>/<Name of mayor>/<Name of any other authority>,  
<Enter designation>  
<Name of the department>  
<Name of the city>

<Enter date>

Subject: Request for setting up a meeting to update on next steps for ward committee

Dear Sir/Madam,

We are writing to you to update you about the latest happenings in our city with respect to the functioning of ward committees. We have been continuously working towards the formation of ward committees in the city and we have our citizen groups actively functioning in different parts of the city with respect to the same.

Since we have an active council in place in the city, according to the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act (74th CAA), this is the right time to make ward committees functional. We would like to hold a discussion with you regarding the ways that we can assist in taking this process forward. As a first step, we request you to call for applications for ward committee membership from different parts of the city.

We look forward to an in-person discussion with you and your esteemed team about the activation of ward committees in our city for the benefit of our citizens.

Thanks and Regards,

<Name of the authorized person>  
<Designation>  
<Phone number>  
<E-mail id>

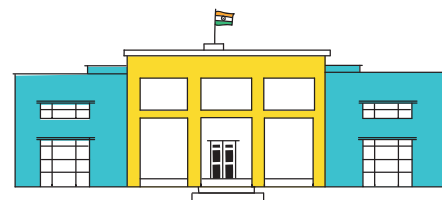
(along with signature and seal, if available)

Enclosed Annexures:

Annexure 1: Efforts to make ward committees active in our city by our citizen collective

Annexure 2: Brief about our citizen collective

# How to follow up with the city government



## When your city has ward committees

- ❖ Raise your issue during ward committee meetings.
- ❖ If your issue is not resolved or if it remains pending for an extended period of time, talk to your ward committee members.
- ❖ You can also simultaneously contact your ward committee secretary,<sup>4</sup> ward engineer or any other appointed government officer.
- ❖ If your issue still remains unresolved, you can contact your ward councillor and press for resolution.
- ❖ The next point of escalation is your zonal commissioner<sup>5</sup>. Take an appointment to meet your zonal commissioner as a part of a citizen collective/group of citizens and highlight your issue.
- ❖ Your zonal commissioner will talk to your respective ward councillor.
- ❖ The final point of escalation is your chief commissioner/commissioner/chairperson/mayor.
- ❖ To gain their attention or to book an appointment with them, approach them as a part of a citizen collective.
- ❖ Explain the issue to your commissioner.
- ❖ If it is still not resolved, create awareness about your issue. Use traditional media and social media to gain your city government's attention and get your issue resolved.

<sup>4</sup> You should maintain a civic directory containing the names of your ward engineer, ward committee members, councillor, assistant executive engineer, executive engineer, zonal commissioner, and chief commissioner/commissioner/chairperson.

<sup>5</sup> If your city doesn't have a zonal commissioner, you can approach your commissioner/chief commissioner/chairperson.



## When your city doesn't have ward committees

- ❖ Discuss your issue with your ward engineer as a part of a citizen collective. You can contact your ward engineer at the ward office.
- ❖ Depending on your issue, your ward engineer might take the responsibility or else will direct you to the relevant officer.
- ❖ If your issue is not resolved, typically the next point of contact is your Assistant Executive Engineer (AEE) and Executive Engineer (EE). You can meet your AEE and EE at the divisional office.
- ❖ The next point of escalation is your Chief Engineer (CE) or Zonal Commissioner (ZC). Your CE/ZC will direct your ward engineer or the relevant authority to resolve the issue.
- ❖ If your issue is still not resolved, seek the help of traditional and social media to gain your city government's attention. You can also approach the commissioner/mayor directly.

## How to use social media



Social media offers a powerful tool to hold your government accountable.

**Here are some ways you can use social media effectively:**

### X.com (Formerly Twitter)



- ❖ Create an account (either for yourself or the citizen collective you are a part of).
- ❖ If it is a personal account, use a formal photograph of yourself as the profile picture.
- ❖ If you represent your citizen collective, use the logo of the collective as the profile picture.
- ❖ Fill in your bio.  
Think of your bio as a tagline – it should be short, simple, and catchy. Make sure it includes the civic issues you want to address, any campaign tags and hashtags, as well as your intention behind creating the account.
- ❖ Avoid frequently changing your bio. It should be consistent.
- ❖ Maintain a repository of the city officials' X handles. You can do a simple Google search using the following keywords: <your city> + <municipal commissioner/relevant officials based on your issue> + <X handle>. There might be more than one official X handle for a single issue.

- ❖ Post about your issues. Use the tag feature to tag relevant officials. For example, for solid waste management issues in Bengaluru, the account to be tagged is @BBMP\_SWM Special Commissioner.
- ❖ Support your post with relevant photos and videos.
- ❖ Use hashtags related to your issues. Hashtags are created with the symbol #. For example, #garbage #solidwaste #waterlogging. You can create as many hashtags as you want.
- ❖ Share your post with your friends and family. Request them to reshare to gain momentum for your issue.
- ❖ If you are a part of a citizen collective, set up a volunteer team to manage social media.

## WhatsApp



Create a group for your ward using the 'Create Group' feature. Add citizens of your ward as well as your ward engineer to the group.

- ❖ Include any necessary information in the 'Add description' section. Be sure to be clear and easily understandable.
- ❖ Discuss neighbourhood issues and important updates on the group.
- ❖ Ensure that only relevant individuals are made group admins, as admins can add and remove members from the group.
- ❖ Group admins must also act as moderators and guide discussions as well as advise members.
- ❖ Be sure to keep politics, routine forwards, and advertisements out of the group.
- ❖ You can use the group link feature to share the link with interested citizens who want to join your group.
- ❖ You can also use the 'Broadcast list' feature to share your thoughts and draw attention to your issue. Broadcast list enables you to connect with people without forming a separate group.

## Facebook and Instagram



- ❖ Facebook users can create pages/accounts on Facebook and use the Facebook live feature to share their thoughts.
- ❖ Additionally, you can also use Instagram reels, stories, and posts to create awareness about your issues.
- ❖ Facebook and Instagram also have tagging features that are similar to X.
- ❖ When using social media for civic awareness, be mindful of ensuring professionalism and civility in your interactions as well as your profile picture, group name, group description, etc.



# Acknowledgements

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### **Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy**

3rd Floor, Sair Bagh, 19/4, Cunningham Road, Bangalore, Karnataka,  
India – 560052

Phone: 080 41200844, 41500844

For further enquires on this handbook,  
email: [activecitizen@janaagraha.org](mailto:activecitizen@janaagraha.org)

**[www.janaagraha.org](http://www.janaagraha.org)**



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