

Green Drinks in Association with the US Consulate, Mumbai – 12th July 2016
Discussion on “Civic Engagement – In Solid Waste Management

Let us ask ourselves some searching questions and be honest about the state of affairs of the City as they now exist.

We show apathy towards the system of administration, criticise actions and inactions on the part of the administration and throw up our hands. We choose to be totally unaware of our surroundings, thereby not understanding the problems that plague our localities. We break all safety rules- be they civic, building regulations or traffic, without any hesitation. This then begs the question, how are we going to make a difference and also how will we ensure the administration discharges its job of doing the right thing by civil society.

This evening, I would like to interact with you, as our Prime Minister Modi had somewhat said “on small matters which affect our daily lives”.

Today the most popular word is “SMART” Citizens and City!

If we are to become Smart Citizens, we need to convert Mumbai into a Smart City. This is not very far-fetched.

Engaging in Citizen Participation is a most powerful tool, provided citizens do so and strengthen the system by positive participation.

Finding Solutions to problems, lurking in all spheres of everyday life, may well be the answer to make ourselves “SMART”.

Now - How to go about it?

Identify the problem issues, Work with all stake holders, Find A solution which is both Implementable and Sustainable.

However, there is general unawareness about the multiple Services that are availed of in daily life e.g. Municipal Services and any such allied Service.

The ALM scheme of MCGM is one very positive way to move in this direction... explain the ALM scheme in short and introduce ALM of Little Gibbs Roads 1, 2 & 3. Talk about segregation, hawkers and the toilet especially constructed for the use and need of women and about washing their clothes. Also share about the Siri Road Issue.

Introduce Swachha Mumbai Abhiyan and Litterbins by VCAN and now that design is used for the City.

A Citizens Engagement Digital Forum titled “www.togethervcan.in

<http://togethervcan.in/?tag=alms> Articles

<http://togethervcan.in/?article=what-is-an-alm> The ALM manual is along in this article

<http://togethervcan.in/?article=how-to-start-an-alm> How to start an ALM

Why the WEB PORTAL and What It Can Do?

The Web Portal as a tool for Public Engagement - The purpose of this Web Portal is to engage with people to equip themselves to deal with challenges, which exist within the various administrative systems and which affect our daily lives.

The common thread - the Web Portal addresses is the requirement of a Systems Change, as well as the issues of Safety and Security; of self, home & family, neighbourhood and society in general.

Particular emphasis is on addressing a “how to do” situation.

The most important theme, has been to acknowledge the dignity of work, safety and security of life of self and others, getting people to recognize their capabilities and using these capabilities to deal with the problems that they may face.

- In civil society, especially in urban areas, we find it extremely difficult to;
- Cope with situations that arise around us
- How can we best overcome the difficulties
- To overcome the trust deficit between service providers (Government and Private) and the Citizens
- The constant increase in the cost of living plays heavily on the Citizens
- Consumerism is increasing and proportionately, understanding the various means of conserving natural resources is lacking
- Lack of understanding as to how the legalities affect various aspect of living e.g. the matter of conveyance of property, probate of wills, distribution of assets and settlements of insurance claims etc.

Whilst the creation of Web Portals are not new, an interactive Web Portal addressing multiple issues and engaging the Government Bodies, is not common. Usually efforts are made to engage on a single issue, but this Web Portal brings many if not all such issues that touch a person's daily life on a single platform.

It is in the Spirit of Partnership, that the information will be given for the use of Citizens. _

Our motto is clear – **“We will not do it for you, you must do it for yourself”**.

The Focus is on Four Sections, and the Issues related to these Sections are:

Be Secure

This section deals with issues related to the safety and security of you and your family, as well as that of your home. Topics ranging from Fire Safety, Securing your Home, Safety of your Children, and Disaster Management are all found here.

Be a Smart Citizen

This section covers the basic knowledge about your rights and responsibilities as a citizen. In particular, it focuses on knowledge related to your rights as a consumer, your rights as a voter, and general legal awareness that we may require in our day to day lives.

Homes and Neighbourhoods

This section contains information on different topics that you have to deal with in your home or your neighbourhood every day. Issues like waste management, segregation, mosquitoes, water matters, greening your locality, and the various civic services of the Municipal Corporation (MCGM) are included here, as well as information about the Advance Locality Management (ALMs) concept i.e. neighbourhood welfare groups supported by the MCGM.

Healthy Living

This section contains useful information about how to live a healthier life by focusing on eating healthy food, drinking healthy water, maintaining a healthy body, and keeping a healthy mind.

In the section where information is given on how to be **Legally Aware**, we have dealt with some frequently asked questions and Citizens should know the answers to such questions.

The “How To Deal With” section in the portal, as the name suggests, guides citizens with knowledge as regards four Organisations; MCGM, Police, Election Commission and State Government - mainly the offices of the Collectors.

Our philosophy behind this portal is to provide a platform to all to empower them requisite knowledge so that they can help themselves. VCAN believes that to build better lives “I Can, You Can and Together VCAN”.

I certainly believe you can....

My motto has always been to work in partnership with the Statutory Authorities and engage all the stakeholders of any project I take up.

Consultation and Not Confrontation is the Way to Go.

Indrani Malkani
12th July 2016