The Public Newsense

Private Circulation Only

JULY - SEPTEMBER 2015

Dear Friends,

I am pleased to present the newsletter for third quarter of this year. We celebrate 30 years of CAG in October-2015! We are also launching our new website and releasing the 30th anniversary souvenir. At this important milestone there is considerable excitement in the team both regarding our past achievements and the upcoming events and projects!

The last quarter was particularly successful for us. A train-the-trainer workshop for EIA (Environment Impact Assessment) process was held in Bangalore in July (the first workshop outside Tamil Nadu). Also in July, the team worked closely with the Corporation of Chennai (CoC) to hold two camps to issue government id cards for informal sector waste pickers, the first such recognition for these workers in the city. The Right to City movement saw a revival with the first public meeting in August. The team's support to prepare for the Global Investors Meet (GIM) was much appreciated by the Industries Department of the Government of Tamil Nadu. We initiated a campaign in Tamil Nadu on promoting organic food. Finally, we are kick-starting our work on road safety with an awareness campaign on ambulance etiquette for drivers.

We at CAG look ahead with great optimism. We have interesting projects in the pipeline and step-by-step are securing the funding to execute them. In September we finalised the audited financial statements for FY2014-15 and the budgeted expenditure has nearly doubled over the previous year. We plan to achieve the same rate of growth this year!

Sincerely,
Om Prakash

TELCOS TO COMPENSATE FOR CALL DROPS!

Frustrated by frequent call drops in the middle of conversations? You may soon be compensated for the inconvenience.

Call drops are a constant niggle, especially in choked metro networks. Indian mobile phone users have emerged as the world's second-biggest market, behind only China. While low call rates and fast growth of mobile internet services have marked the journey of the Indian mobile phone industry, quality of service has been deteriorating over the years.

Call drops not only annoy consumers but they also result in the consumer paying more. Apart from the fact that for a person who is on a per-minute-pulse, who will have to pay for the minute even if his call drops after one second, there is every possibility that the consumer will re-attempt the disrupted call. The second conversation might go something like this - he will be apologizing, berating about the interrupted call, starting the conversation from the beginning, repeating information before continuing. The result is a longer call duration and greater monetary loss.

With many complaints on these lines pouring in, the Government has finally decided to act upon the issue and is looking to order operators to either return the money charged for the dropped calls or provide extra airtime to compensate for deficient services. TRAI has floated a consultation paper on the subject and has

sought comments from all stakeholders. Apart from discussing the various issues related to call drops, the paper suggests diverse ways that could potentially be employed to deter telecom service providers from ignoring the issue.

It suggests that calling consumers should not be charged for a call that got dropped within five seconds and if the call got dropped any time after five seconds, the last pulse of the call (minute/second), which got dropped, should not be charged.

It further proposes credit of talk time in minutes / seconds or credit of talk time in monetary terms as compensation for call drops.

CAG has given its comments to this consultation paper, where we have gone one step further and have suggested that if a consumer is frequently affected by call drops during a particular month (say 20 and above), then there should be provision for additional compensation, monetary or otherwise, that will act as a detriment and will help improve the system.

FORMAL WASTE MANAGEMENT AND ITS INFORMAL WORKERS

These have been exciting times for our work on SWM! In July the Corporation of Chennai (CoC) acted on the strategy paper on issuing ID cards to the waste pickers of the city. The paper had been presented to the Commissioner in a meeting by the Initiative on Waste, Informal Workers, and Chennai's Future in November last year. These ID cards are a first step towards recognizing the occupation of waste pickers and also their contribution towards the city's waste recycling. Accordingly, ID card camps were held at Perungudi and Kodungaiyur dump yards where waste pickers are highly concentrated in the city. The camp at Perungudi was conducted for 3 days from 15th to 17th of July 2015 followed by the camp at

The hidden face of the clean Chennai we all desire...

Kodungaiyur for 3 more days from 20th to 22nd of July 2015. Approximately 980 waste pickers from across the city participated and were registered. Alongside the ID card camps, the Corporation had also organized a medical camp at each of the sites which benefited all the waste pickers who came for the ID card registration.

As a first in the city, these camps saw the use of technology for data collection with minimum use of paper and other resources, instead using ODK (Open Date Kit) forms developed by the CAG team. CAG also trained the CoC surveyors prior to the camp in using the tablets and ODK forms. This digital registration process using tablets helped us save time on data entry and analysis, reduced errors in data entry and also helped in verifyingthe data on a here and now basis. Our CBO partners helped us in mobilizing the waste pickers from various parts of the city including areas in and around the dump yards. They also came forward to give reference to the waste pickers who

had no valid ID proofs to prove their identity or place of residence. As part of this exercise a general survey was also administered to at least 35 percent of waste pickers who participated in the camps. The information thus collected will be analysed to help us make suggestions to the government on bringing out better policies for improving the socio-economic status of waste pickers.

The combined effort of CAG along with its partners and CoC made the two ID card camps a great success. CAG, as part of the Initiative on Waste, Informal Workers and Chennai's Future will continue working with CoC and ensure that the ID cards are issued to the waste pickers within the agreed timeframe. We look forward to organizing more such camps in other zones of the city, targeting other waste pickers who missed out on our recent camps.

We want to give a formal shout out to the community based organizations - **Pennurimai Iyyakkam, Thozhamai, Arunodhaya, Real Charitable Trust and Chennai Metro Workers Union** who have been working with us as part of the Initiative on Waste, Informal Workers, and Chennai's Future.

They have been our partners in advocating for ID cards, in the outreach work amongst waste pickers such as organising awareness programmes and in helping us mobilize waste pickers.   The CBO partners also conducted another socio-economic survey with 500 waste pickers from various parts of the city and also helped us in our effort to register waste pickers with the Tamil Nadu Manual Workers Welfare Board. CAG is very

The first day of the camp saw 224 waste pickers register their details.

thankful for their support, involvement and efforts and we are excited to continue our partnership.

The team currently is working on following up with the Corporation in designing and printing the waste pickers ID cards and thereafter to distribute them to the waste pickers. The team also participated in meetings and workshops related to waste management and informal workers at Delhi, Hyderabad, Chennai, and Singapore and put forward CAG's stand on these issues.

MAPPING PARATRANSIT IN CHENNAI

According to a study conducted by Yokohama University, paratransit serve up to 70% of the travel demand in many developing countries[1]. Paratransit vehicles are informal public transportation that ply on the same routes as mass transit modes like buses, relieving the congestion or filling the gap in mass transport. They are popular because of their flexibility and because they provide transport services in areas not serviced by formal public transportation. They are inexpensive in comparison to taxis, do not necessarily follow fixed routes or time schedules, and passengers can board and debark at any point on the route.

Share autos are one such example of para transit which were introduced in Chennai following a 1998 Government Order to introduce one hundred of them on an experimental basis. Since then share autos have made a significant contribution to passenger mobility in the city, having now grown to 4800 vehicles. Around 2000 of these share autos are enrolled with Centre for Indian Trade Unions (CITU) and an estimated 800 of them ply in the suburbs but are not affiliated with any trade union or association. The remaining 2000 are split between other unions, such as All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) and Labour Progressive Federation (LPF).

Since most drivers were associated with trade unions, we decided to meet with union representatives to understand how the system worked. Mr. Anbalagan, the General Secretary of CITU in Chennai, explained that most share auto drivers had been auto drivers and hence knew the areas which saw a large number of passengers and started operating on those routes. Without any support from unions and through public demand, as described by Mr. Chandru, the General Secretary of the CITU affiliated auto union in Tamil Nadu, new routes started to crop up through the centre as well as the periphery of the city. The unions did not maintain a map of the routes but instead kept registers where some of this information was available. The only way to navigate through these routes would be to know them or ask fellow commuters.

Despite their significance in the city's transit options, there is no formal governance mechanism nor any publicly available data on numbers, routes and fares. We decided to create a map of share auto routes which would eventually be linked with other modes of transport and enable commuters to make transit choices that were seamless, comfortable and convenient. We started with exploring methodologies to collect data about share autos in the city and reviewed similar efforts from across the world. These included volunteers riding a transit service and collecting geocodes for stops and routes using a GPS device, using a data collecting app to crowdsource the information, and conducting mapping sessions with the transport service provider. We chose to work with the drivers to create information. As a first step, we decided to take up Mr. Chandru's offer of mapping routes operated by CITU drivers.

Due to the lack of internet connectivity in the CITU office we used paper maps and printed an A0 size city map with road networks and major transport landmarks. Each route was marked with a route number and further identified with a colour and line legend. It took two paper-mapping sessions with CITU share auto union heads to enumerate 70 routes operating in the city, covering most parts of Chennai except the Tondiarpet, Thiruvottiyur and Ennore area. Mr. Anbalagan explained that share auto drivers in North Chennai do not belong to any union and operate individually. The only way to collect information about these routes would be to ride them in a share auto and GPS track the course,

CAG team mapping share auto routes with Mr E. Shivashankaran, Secretary CITU share auto union in Chennai

hence making it the next step in the project.

We intend to meet with other unions to collect information on the routes that they operate to getter a more complete picture of the transit service. Making this information available to the general public will help the public make better informed decisions on modes of transportation available to commute across the city. Mapping the share auto routes will also help

[1] http://library.jsce.or.jp/jsce/open/00039/200811_no38/pdf/p18.pdf

gain knowledge of the areas not covered by MTC buses or trains and also not currently covered by share autos. They can also act as potential feeder services to formal mass transits like bus or train stations

providing first or last mile connectivity, creating a more accessible public transport system. Hence legalisation of this paratransit service would enable robust network of transit services in the city.

A RELUCTANT REFUND - CAG'S INTERVENTION

Will manufacturers / service providers ever come forward to address at least issues that are straight forward?

'**NO**'is the obvious answer, especially when you read the following complaint which is simple enough and could have been promptly resolved.

Bala had a d2h connection at his home and had no problems until recently. One month ago, he recharged for Rs.590/- and the amount was debited to his bank account in favour of d2h service provider. Within 4 days, he received a message stating that his recharge was overdue and that he had to recharge immediately to avoid disconnection. Surprised, Bala contacted the company and was told that the payment made earlier was not received and

therefore he should recharge at once. Fearing disconnection, Bala recharged once again with Rs. 590/-. Later, he wrote to the d2h provider, explaining about the double payment made and requested to refund the excess amount paid. The service provider immediately wrote back to him stating that they had received only one payment and that Bala should verify with his bank.

Bala immediately approached his bank and upon going through his account statement, found that there were two debits to the d2h service provider within a span of 4 days. He forwarded the bank statement to the company and asked them to refund the excess amount paid, as additional payment received by the service provider was obvious from the bank statement. However, the service provider chose to remain silent and did not resolve Bala's issue which was quite straight forward. An irate Bala approached CAG for assistance. Upon CAG's intervention, the d2h service provider refunded the amount due to Bala.

AMBULANCE ETIQUETTE

In a crowded country like India, where our senses are constantly assaulted by noises, colours and sights, its streets filled with jostling crowds and impatient vehicles competing for space and struggling to get past, it is no surprise that we have learnt to ignore anything extraneous to our own thoughts, needs and plans for the day.

In a pragmatic society like ours, we accept with little argument that death is inevitable. We all have to die and die of something. We see death and decay all too frequently, maybe chronically numbing our senses, destroying our empathy. Where does that leave a wailing ambulance then? Just white noise to filter out? An object of curiosity? A missive on our own mortality? Not to the patient or her family though. Every second on that journey to the hospital, could to her be the difference between life and death. Or maybe life as she knew it and life suspended in a coma.

So what is the right thing to do when we see an ambulance?
1)**Remember**, there is a real person in there. It might not be you or someone you love, but one day, it might be.

2)**Be alert**. Look for the ambulance. Listen out for it.

3)**Locate** the vehicle and try and identify it's possible route. It will help you decide which way to move. Look in the mirror to see which way the other vehicles are pulling over.

4) Now **pull over**. Sometimes just slowing down will do.

5) **Indicate**. When pulling over, use your indicator to communicate which way you plan to move. It will make the ambulance driver's job much easier.

6) Keep safe. You are responsible for your own safety and that of other road users. Don't, for example, speed, to get out of the ambulance's way.

And what should you not do?
1) Don't question the authenticity of the ambulance service or the emergency. You might have concerns. but now is not the time to act on it.

2) Don't ignore it; don't copy others who might ignore it. Sometimes, you might be the only agent of change on that road.

3) Don't annoy other road users by trying to follow

the ambulance out through the traffic. It makes them reluctant to let one pass another time.

4) Don't misuse the lull in the traffic to dart out in front of the ambulance.

5) Don't inch forward at traffic lights, taking up every bit of space behind the stop line (sometimes even in front of it!). It creates a web of wheels with no room to manoeuvre and allow an ambulance to pass.

Remember, what you do behind the wheel today might save somebody's life. I would save yours. Will you save mine?

THE RIGHT TO CITY MOVEMENT

On August 08th 2015, Transparent Cities Network at CAG organised a public meeting to reinvigorate the people's movement on the Right to City: Chennai For All (RTC). The RTC movement, started in 2012, offers a common platform for activists, organisations and communities to claim back living spaces for the urban poor.

The eviction mapping exercise and the Konnur High Road fact finding have clearly indicated that government's intentions for slums is relocation with no thought to whether they are declared or unobjectionable. In fact, in the Cooum Restoration Project, the government was offered three options of dealing with settlements along the Cooum. Two of these involved in situ development and/or reconstruction but the government has chosen to go with the option of large-scale displacement of more than 14000 families across 58 slums. It has been convenient for government agencies to keep residents in the dark about impending evictions thereby preventing any chance of protest and challenge, and in complete violation of their human rights. Demolition squads typically arrive on the day of eviction and people are coerced into leaving. It is unclear whether vacated lands are put to the purpose for which they are cleared for, but limited enquiries seem to suggest that they are not.

The meeting on 8th August marked a new beginning for the RTC movement. The data gathered from our eviction mapping exercise evidenced the government's one-track policy of eviction and ghettoisation and underlined the need for united and concerted efforts against the policy. The meeting was well attended by our community partners including the Unorganised Worker's Foundation, Pennurimai

Iyakkam, Arunodhaya, Penn Thozhilalar Sangam, Thozhamai, MIDS, Actionaid, Real Charitable Trust, Commonweal and several others. Discussions at the event were fervent as participants discussed the worrying rates of slum clearances and the mass movement of residents to colonies several miles away, disrupting livelihoods and education, thereby affecting lives even into the next generation, the poor provision of services and infrastructure and resettlement colonies, and the disproportionate negative impact resettlement has on the lives of the poor. Considering the seriousness of the issue, the group planned to meet fortnightly to assess actions taken and plan further.

Three such follow up meetings of the Right to City Movement have been held since the initial meeting in August. What has emerged from these meetings is a consensus that collective action to protect the rights of the urban poor on the city's spaces is necessary to prevent the government from acting with impunity

Maduravoyal: An outlet of industrial waste with foaming effluents joining the Cooum.

against the city's residents. With the Chennai Rivers Restoration Trust (CRRT) taking action towards the implementation of the 'Integrated Cooum Eco-Restoration Project', the banks of the river are poised to see intense eviction and demolition activity in the coming months. This has become the focal point for the RTC movement's actions. One reason for this is a case before the National Green Tribunal (NGT), a public

interest litigation filed by a concerned resident. On the 9th of September, members of the Transparent Cities Network, CAG attended a hearing at the NGT. Counsels of TNPCB, CRRT, the petitioner, and the industries that were charged with polluting the Cooum appeared before the tribunal. As a telling example of the dysfunction of the system, there was no representative for the slum dwellers (despite the CRRT claiming that it was the residents who were the primary polluters of the river). It claims to have identified 15 sewage outlets and three industries along the banks, of which all three have now been assessed and declared as non-polluting.

A myth that the government is using to its advantage, particularly in hearings before the NGT, is that the resident population along the banks of the Cooum is the primary polluter of the river. Propagating this myth has been convenient for the involved agencies as it turns public opinion against the slum residents, making it easier to evict those now perceived as filthy and unsanitary, reducing the likelihood of anybody coming to their rescue.

The RTC movement is working towards dispelling misinformation through a photo exhibition titled "Who Pollutes the Cooum?" that the team at Transparent Cities Network, CAG has been working to create. We are also preparing material for disseminating information to residents of settlements,

on the project and what they can expect at relocation sites. Members of the RTC have filed RTIs demanding more information on the Cooum project such as the Social Impact Assessment and on the functioning of the Sewage Treatment Plants. Answers to difficult questions such as the amount of sewage generated in the city compared to the processing capacity of the sewage treatment plants, the amount of

Commercial buildings and malls encroaching the banks of the Cooum

treated and untreated sewage that is released into the river daily will allow us to counter the allegations of the CRRT.

The Right to City movement will also work on several other fronts such as trying to influence political agendas to serve the cause of the poor, educating the public through articles in the popular press and educating slum residents on their rights. It is hoped that when the combined weight of civil society is brought to bear on the government through the Right to City movement, it will be forced to pay heed and change its policies to be more inclusive of the urban poor.

COMPETENT TO CONSERVE - UNDERSTANDING THE EIA

The Citizen consumer and civic Action Group, Chennai, National Law School of India University, Bengaluru and Karnataka Electricity Governance Network [a unit of CREAT], Bengaluru, had organised a one day workshop on 'Environment Impact Assessment Process' on 11th July 2015 in Bengaluru. The object of the workshop was to sensitize and equip representatives of civil society organisations with information and advocacy skills to effectively use provisions of the environment impact assessment process at the local level.

The long term objective was to facilitate formation of a group of citizen activists who could strengthen the EIA process and ensure peoples participation on environmental issues that affect them. The participants in the workshop included environmental groups, consumer organisations, government officials, and media persons. Dr.O.V.Nandimath,

Registrar, NLSIU, who delivered the keynote address, traced its evolution in the Indian context. The EIA was not mandatory until 1994. Later in 2006, the EIA notification was issued by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India. At this time, an EIA was purely an economic consideration and environmental aspects were secondary. The EIA process is now mandatory under the Environment Protection Act. The EIA now also involves a tripartite decision making process in which the State, Industry and Civil Society are involved.

We also heard some success stories. Mr. Somashekar, environmental activist from Mysuru, explained how he and his group successfully fought the setting up of the Rose Valley Resort, at Sandur. The illegal development was removed and the owners were to the Government. asked to pay a penalty of Rs.10 crores. Mr.Addoor Krishna Rao, consumer activist from Mengaluru

explained his fight against power plants like the Cogentrix and MRP. Concerns were raised about plans for thefuture including the upcoming solar power plant in Pavagada in Tumkur District, where thousands of acres of land have been acquired for the project and its effect on the livelihoods of the farmers/local population inadequately studied.

Recommendations of the workshop

1) A comprehensive manual/toolkit about EIA should be prepared keeping the view of civil society requirements in view, to also be made available in Kannada.

2) A separate workshop on the methods of using Right to Information Act to seek information on environmental issues should be organised.

3)District level workshops on EIA are to be organised. It was decided that two district level workshop in Tumkur and

Workshop in progress

Gulbarga is to be organised. Participants from Mysuru came forward to organise a workshop at Mysuru as well.

4) Civil society should try to take a balanced view of the projects and should not oppose all projects.

5) A study about the functioning of the state institutions related to environment should be studies vis-à-vis their efficacy.

INFORMATION TO MAKE CITY AGENCIES MORE EFFECTIVE

A wide host of new technologies and analytical tools combined with new administrative dispensations is transforming the way government officials are addressing previously intractable local governance problems. Most recently, CAG's Chennai Data Portal team had the chance to work with the Global Investors Meet (GIM) 2015 team and the Tamil Nadu Industries Department to make improvements in public infrastructure and services a reality. Combining old-fashioned teamwork with data collection using tablets enabled us to provide high quality data to city agencies that they could use to make targeted improvements. This was not only precise, regular and inexpensive; it reduced the burden on city agencies to collect and analyse data that would otherwise have been time-consuming. The aim was to present a city that could be attractive as an investment destination.

The survey was undertaken with a view to establishing evidence from which to ascertain the need for and to prioritise infrastructure improvements. The focus area included 65 roads connecting hotels, industries and airports that would be the primary routes used by delegates and potential investors. In order to embed the practice of using informtion for decision making in the city agencies, our project was operational from April through August 2015 and saw us interacting with the Corporation of Chennai, Highways Department and the Chennai Traffic Police.

We identified six categories of infrastructure and services that we would monitor: roads, footpaths, bridges, bus shelters, centre medians and traffic islands on these roads. The survey team documented the current state of these infrastructures, including photographs and tagging the locations of the problems observed. We then analysed it to draw insights into which departments and jurisdictions faced problems and whether or not it was rectified. This provided information on not only where the renovation was needed but was also used to provide a record of the integrity of works undertaken.

To create an appropriate mobile-based data collection tool we first conducted several reconnaissance exercises. The tool, in turn, went through several iterations to ensure that it captured all details that would be required by the agencies. Yet, it had to be simple enough for surveyors to use with minimal training, since the goal was to work towards creating a tool that could eventually be used by citizens.

The 65 roads were divided into segments and each segment assigned a unique reference point. We chose the following parameters: infrastructure categories (e.g. road/ bus stop/ toilet), observations of defects (e.g. hoarding/ patchwork/ abandoned vehicle) and criteria (complete/ incomplete). The aim was to record comprehensive but manageable information on the current state of the road most relevant to its users. We used the Open Data Kit (ODK) application to create

survey forms. This greatly simplified the exercise since the data could be uploaded directly to the server, downloaded and visualised quickly.

A team of surveyors were hired and trained thoroughly on identifying defects and using tablets. They conducted trial surveys and we incorporated their feedback into improving the form. The trial survey was also useful to establish if the roads under survey were safe to be could be covered on foot. Everyday each surveyor was assigned a set of segmented roads, with distinguishing landmarks and route maps. The surveyor walked the route, identifying sites needing improvements. The survey team observed the problems with infrastructure, documented it as a photograph, its condition and location using the ODK based form. This information was uploaded at the end of each day to reduce the risk of loss of data. Surveying all 65 roads constituted one cycle, and it took us 7-8 days to complete a cycle. In total, we undertook eight cycles over the course of the survey.

At the end of each cycle we analysed the data gathered and prepared reports that we shared with each of the three departments. The departments acted on the information with different speeds and effectiveness, which we captured in the subsequent cycle of the survey. We also represented the information spatially to give the user a bird's eye view of the project. Clicking on a location on the map opened an information window with all current data pertinent to that geographical spot. The evolving data was captured as an animated map which indicated changes and improvements, if any, over the eight survey cycles.

Issues needing engineering and aesthetic improvements were numerous. These included roads that were not properly laid or maintained, poorly maintained drains, damaged street lights, abandoned vehicles, walls defaced with posters and banners, poorly marked bus shelters with no information board and no seats, footpath surfaces broken, hoardings and shops occupying footpath space, public toilets with damaged doors, damaged grills and walls of centre medians, water stagnant on roads and several more.

A screenshot of the map with locations needing improvements
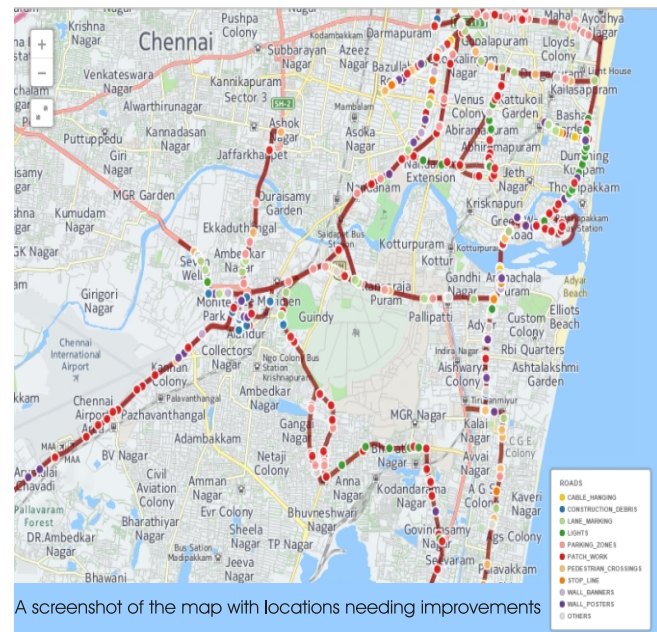
Even newly laid roads were found to have considerable shortcomings.

Governments can function reasonably well without technology. But they need data, analysis, and actions based on the data and analysis in order to be effective. In our previous interactions with public officials, we learnt that despite the rich latent knowledge that they hold, they work informally and driven by intuition. Some engineers had confessed that they found it difficult to regularly collect data and systematically act upon them. They were also unable to prioritise their actions. As a result, few processes are institutionalised and regular processes of the government are conducted in an ad hoc manner.

When we provided the data and analysis to the Corporation of Chennai, Highways Department and the Traffic Police, they were able to take targeted action. Of the 65 roads, 25 were re-laid in the July and August. Footpath surfaces were repaired, potholes on roads filled, bus shelters were renovated, street lights repaired, and lane markings, stop line and traffic signs were newly painted. While the benefits were substantial, periodic maintenance is necessary to preserve the changes. Importantly though, in keeping with the scope of the project, road conditions nearly reached expected levels - in time for the GIM event. Can they be maintained as such is what remains to be seen!