

Good governance is critical, and Agni is lighting the way ahead

By Invitation

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The Action for Good Governance and Networking in India (Agni) was launched in 1999 as a citizens' movement. It was a response to the growing frustration felt by Mumbai's citizens over the plight of their city

Mumbai was once a world-class metropolis. It fails its people today with its bad quality of life and slack economic growth.

Nearly all of Mumbai's troubles can be traced to bad administration or government policy. Governance must change. AGNI believes that the best way for this to happen is for citizens to bring about that change.

Our approach

Agni brings together citizen groups so as to assemble the numbers that no politics can ignore. Mumbai has many NGOs, housing societies, community organisations, etc. Agni provides them a forum to exchange information and focus on the goal of cleaner, more effective governance.

Past successes

Elections are decisive in a democracy. Therefore they are a high Agni priority. Agni launched the city's first 'Election Watch' in 1999; It has re-run this programme in civic, assembly and Lok Sabha elections over the years.

At election time, Agni drafts a citizens' manifestos

based on expert studies of Mumbai's problems. It sets out specific demands to meet local and citywide needs, and a code of conduct for elected representatives.

Agni has also initiated dialogue with political parties for candidates of higher calibre with a cleaner record / personal life. It educates voters on what makes for a good candidate

Agni was the first NGO to initiate and hold 'Meet Your Candidates' events in various parts of the city during elections.

On voting days, Agni volunteers take extra efforts to bring out the citizens to the voting booths. This has ensured higher voter turnout than in previous elections.

Agni's 'Meet Your Elected Representatives' events follow up on election promises and set a trend of dialogue between citizens and representatives.

The way forward

While the activities mentioned above – and several others as well – have continued, there have been setbacks, most prominently during Covid-19, when interaction with various authorities like BMC, police, etc came to a virtual halt. Even post-Covid, citizens groups took time to gather momentum in their activities.

Agni is now trying to revitalise the organization by taking up new initiatives and continuing with activities like election watch in a very focused manner.

These include public meetings with senior police officials, awareness Programmes on Right to Information Act, awareness on municipal budget, and awareness on cyber security

—The writers is convenor, Agni

