

PRESS RELEASE

1 Oct 2020

GRASPING AN OPPORTUNITY: INCREASING COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND INDIA'S CIVIL SOCIETY

The Future of Governance virtual conference will spark dialogue on collaboration among the Government, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Corporates, and Citizen Networks i.e. the Civil Society, as India reels under the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

New Delhi, 1 Oct 2020: It has been more than seven months since the first country-wide lockdown was imposed in March as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has increased the vulnerability of people, whether it be the disruption of children's school education or loss of rural livelihoods. It has also required massive mobilisation of government resources. With over 3.3 million NGOs in the country, there is an increasing recognition, including by the Government, that the Civil Society can play an active role in supporting the government in its efforts.

Yet, a [pan-India survey](#) of over 160 NGOs on their interventions and challenges has revealed that the biggest obstacle they face (93%) is coordinating with the Government. The inability to access relevant knowledge of government schemes, processes and protocols, was highlighted as a dampener.

The [Accountability Initiative](#) (AI) at the Centre for Policy in collaboration with [Arthan](#) are hosting a dialogue forum called The [Future of Governance](#) from 7-8 October 2020, to explore routes to strengthen Civil Society-Government engagement. The Forum will see the participation of major political, social and policy leaders. They will deliberate on various aspects that lead to impactful collaboration, such as:

- How can relevant and applicable information on government functioning be made available and used by the Civil Society?
- What are the knowledge, skills and attitudes for effective government engagement?
- Grantmaking as an enabler of Civil Society participation in governance.
- Enhancing the powerhouse of NGO programmes- grassroots field workers - and how they can successfully engage with local government administrations.
- Government perception of citizen participation.

A diverse mix of esteemed speakers will bring to life each of these aspects through their wide-ranging experiences in public service. The speakers include:

- Anurag Behar, CEO of the Azim Premji Foundation and Vice Chancellor of Azim Premji University
- Atishi Marlena, Member of the Legislative Assembly
- Avani Kapur, Director of the Accountability Initiative and Fellow at the Centre for Policy Research
- Bharath Visweswariah, Director of Investments at the Omidyar Network India
- Gaurav Gogoi, Member of Parliament
- Luis Miranda, Governing Council Member at the Indian School of Public Policy and Chairman of the Centre for Civil Society
- Nikhil Dey, Indian Social Activist at Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan
- Rukmini Banerjee, CEO of the Pratham Education Foundation
- Sandhya Venkateswaran, Deputy Director at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
- Srikanth Viswanathan, CEO of the Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy
- Yamini Aiyar, President & CEO of the Centre for Policy Research and Founder, Accountability Initiative
- For the full list of speakers, refer [here](#).

There will be 5 panel deliberation sessions and 2 Masterclasses (schedule available below), planned in this way to offer attendees a comprehensive understanding of Civil Society-Government collaboration, along with keynote sessions. We will also launch our online course on understanding government functioning called Understanding State Capabilities.

Combined with the efforts of NGOs, citizen networks and corporates, India can look forward to unleashing a tremendous opportunity.

“With INR 20 lakh crore announced by the Union government alone, as part of COVID-19 relief measures, this pandemic has not only increased, but also laid bare the number of citizens dependent on government relief measures. Meanwhile, as we await the short-term and long-term effects of the pandemic, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) are already playing a critical role in ensuring vulnerable communities are identified and reached.

Access to the right tools, skills and information is going to be important for effective engagement across citizens, government, grant-makers, and the corporate sector. The Future of Governance conference curated by us seeks to facilitate this dialogue in the hope of stronger relationships and increased impact,” says Avani Kapur, Director of Accountability Initiative at the Centre for Policy Research.

“Citizen participation in the form of the Civil Society and Government collaboration is critical in the pandemic era because of the extent of people’s needs, and the number of tasks to be done to secure these needs. The sessions planned will provide invaluable insights from government, non-profit and policy leaders, and also discuss constructive solutions to challenges,” says Satyam Vyas, Founder & CEO, Arthan.

For queries or to arrange interviews, please contact Avantika Shrivastava (Senior Communications Officer, Accountability Initiative) at ashrivastava@accountabilityindia.org.

Additional Notes

About ‘The Future of Governance’ Forum

The Future of Governance forum is a virtual conference being hosted by the Accountability Initiative at the Centre for Policy Research in collaboration with Arthan from 7-8 October 2020. A wide variety of sessions have been curated. Full agenda and Speakers list is [available here](#).

About Accountability Initiative

Accountability Initiative is a research group which has worked since 2008 on strengthening transparency and accountability in governance. We have done this through evidence-based research on state capabilities and factors affecting efficient public services delivery in India. We are operational in 5 states - Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan. Our research studies have been multi-sectoral and include studies on budgets, governance processes, and public administration across social sectors like education, health and nutrition, and sanitation.

Our vision is to enable Responsive Governance. We believe this can be achieved if government institutions are designed in a transparent and accountable manner and are responsive to citizen demands, and an informed and mobilised citizenry which can draw upon these platforms. Our mission is to increase both through research and dialogue.

We are a part of the Centre for Policy Research, one of India’s leading public policy think tanks.

Learning and Development has been an essential element of Accountability Initiative’s DNA. As is evident, the provision of quality public services in India remains an aspiration rather than the reality. Our [Learning and Development work](#) offers structured, customisable learning opportunities for decision makers, service providers and citizens to participate in governance and monitor social sector programmes.

Our courses are based on our research findings and 10+ years of rich hands-on experience in dealing with government systems.

The Understanding State Capabilities programme, being launched at this Forum caters to English-speaking audiences for them to learn more about the nuts and bolts of government functioning. Participants of the course will be able to undertake critical analysis of state capability in India as it exists today. By learning about the root causes of administrative and fiscal dysfunctionality on the ground, and the most effective means of bridging state capacity, the participants will be equipped to apply a systems approach to on-ground interventions that seek to strengthen administrative and organisational systems.

Another flagship course is 'Hum Aur Humaari Sarkaar', aimed at empowering grassroots leaders to undertake critical analysis of how the government functions and delivers key public services.

About Arthan

The Future of Governance forum is a part of Arthan's initiative 'Building Civil Society Organisations of the Future' that has covered 10 forums in the past 3 months, with over 200 speakers, over 3,000 participants and 500,000+ views.

Sessions

ACCOUNTABILITY INITIATIVE | CR CENTER FOR POLICY RESEARCH | ARTHAN

Wednesday, October 7, 2020	Thursday, October 8, 2020
<p>Introduction by Arthan and Accountability Initiative, CPR 9:30 am - 10 am</p>	<p>Keynote Address 10 am - 10:30 am</p>
<p>Fireside Chat - 10 am - 10:45 am</p>	<p>Grantmaking as an enabler of citizen-state engagement 10:30 am - 11:30 am</p>
<p>Announcement: Launch of Understanding State Capabilities - course on understanding the nuts and bolts of government functioning 10:45 am - 11:15 am</p>	<p>Masterclass: The truth lies where the money hides- Identifying fiscal roadblocks in India's welfare programmes 11:30 am - 12:30 pm</p>
<p>The importance of understanding the nuts and bolts of government functioning - 11:15 am - 12:30 pm</p>	<p>A Delicate Thread: Government perception of citizen participation 12:30 pm - 1:30 pm</p>
<p>Building knowledge, skills and attitudes for effective government engagement - 12:30 pm - 1:30 pm</p>	<p>PULSE Launch 2:00 pm - 2:15 pm</p>
<p>Deep Dive: How can grassroots field workers engage with local administration effectively? - 2 pm - 3 pm</p>	<p>Stand-up Act: Everything you wanted to know about the bureaucracy but were afraid to ask 2:15 pm - 3 pm</p>
<p>Masterclass: Union, State, District, Block and Villages- Disentangling decentralized governance in India - 3 pm - 4 pm</p>	
<p>Masterclass by Socrates: Only Wicked Minds Solve Wicked Problems: Systems Thinking for the 21st Century - 4 pm - 5 pm</p>	

