

Press release from the office of Arvind Kejriwal (July 26, 2010)

MOHALLA SABHAS

A new experiment has started in some municipal wards of Delhi. People are collectively making decisions regarding the government funds and functionaries of their areas. Local politicians and officers obey these decisions.

Each ward where this experiment has started has been divided into 10 *Mohallas*. All residents of a *Mohalla* are members of *Mohalla Sabha*. Each *Mohalla Sabha* meets once in two months. The councilor and all local municipal officials are present at *Mohalla Sabha* meetings.

People collectively take the following decisions:

- o What works should be done with municipal budget (including Councilor's funds) of all departments in that *Mohalla*
- o Payments are not made to any contractor for any work done in that *Mohalla* till *Mohalla Sabha* expresses satisfaction on the same
- o List of beneficiaries for all government schemes for poor people are decided by *Mohalla Sabha*
- o Any grievance any resident has with any department is also solved on the spot.

Hon'ble LG of Delhi has issued orders to ensure the presence of SHO in *Mohalla Sabha*.

Some Interesting Experiences till now-

- The *jhuggi* of Sundernagri, a resettlement colony in East Delhi had a public toilet 20 years back. The same had been closed down then due to some local feud. For the past 20 years, *jhuggi* residents have been living in great difficulty, having been forced to defecate in open. Many mishaps have happened with women in this area. The *jhuggi* residents wanted the toilet to be rebuilt. However, a nearby economically better off locality was not letting this happen as they wanted a parking lot in place of the toilet. In the *Mohalla Sabha* of this area, people from both sides came, many viewpoints were discussed, the people even fought, but ultimately it was

realized that the need of *jhuggi* residents was greater. The toilet was thus sanctioned in the *Sabha* by the Councilor and was constructed within 3 months.

- In a *Mohalla Sabha* in F 1 Block of Sundernagri, people demanded 5 lanes to be constructed. The councilor and officers, citing paucity of funds expressed their inability to do so. However, when the officers were openly questioned by the people of the area, they agreed to get funds sanctioned for the lanes. Within 6 months of this *Mohalla sabha*, all 6 lanes were constructed.
- In a *Mohalla Sabha* in a middle class area in RK Puram, some people raised the issue of “nuisance” created by hawkers. They requested the officers to disallow hawkers from entering the area. However, the resolution was not passed by the *Mohalla* as many people expressed support to the hawkers. It was felt that not only did hawkers provide services to their area, but also, it would be unjust to take away their means of livelihood. The *Mohalla Sabha* finally decided to call all the hawkers of their area to the next meeting and discuss these issues with them, to find a viable solution.
- In one *Sabha* in a *jhuggi* in Trilokpuri, people asked for construction of *pucca* lanes. The same were sanctioned. After a few months, when the *sabha* again happened in their *mohalla*, the people complained that the roads were not constructed properly and threatened to stop the payment of the contractor. The officers then took a round of the area and ensured that the roads were constructed properly.
- In Khanpur, the Councilor was surprised to see over two hundred residents attend the first *Mohalla Sabha*. It was observed that even those people who never go to the Councilor or any government office to register their complaints, openly voice their grievances in these meetings. Since the first *Sabha*, the Councilor has been working seriously on all the issues raised and has managed to get most works done. The police also got into action in this area after the meeting. In the meeting people had expressed immense frustration over *satta* being played in parks and alcohol being consumed in the open. The SHO had personally attended the meet. Police jeeps patrolled the area for many days and these activities have completely stopped now. People having expressed immense dissatisfaction in the meeting over sanitation in the area, are amazed to discover that drains and parks of their area are being cleaned every day. *Safai karamcharis* have started reporting on time every day. This is happening because people in the *Sabha* summoned their attendance register in the next meet.
- Hon’ble LG has ordered police to attend *Mohalla Sabhas*. In one meeting in a *jhuggi* in Sundernagri, the SHO of the area was present. He was informed by a woman that illegal activities including *satta* take place in the parks in their area. The SHO assured that he will take action. One man then dared to tell him, “How will you take action? You get a fixed income or *hafta* from the wrongdoers!” The SHO assured everyone that he will remove all *satta* in the area

within 3 days. He did so (as he again had to face the public in a week's time). He also gave his mobile number to the residents in the *Sabha*. Crime in this area has reduced considerably now.

- The people of O, M, N Block of Sundernagri have been suffering from a severe water problem for the last 2-3 years. The sewage line leaks, as a result they get water mixed with sewer in their area. The residents in the *Sabha* expressed deep anguish and frustration over the same. DJB officials were present in the meet. Within the next 3 days, they ensured that the problem was solved.
- In L Block, Sundernagri, the sewer line overflows since the last 1 year, as a result, during mornings and evenings, muck from the open drains comes into the lanes. It is a pitiable sight. Within 1 day of the *Mohalla Sabha* in this area, this problem was resolved by the officials.
- The SDM of Sundernagri attended one *Mohalla Sabha* and interacted with the people. In between the meet, he confessed that he had no idea that people in jhuggis live on rent! *Mohalla Sabhas*, thereby are providing a platform to the officers to understand the needs of the common people.