

Bengaluru statement on

*Re-claiming and Re-imagining
Public Services in the Global South*

November 2013

Representatives from people's movements, trade unions, academia and civil society organisations met in the southern Indian city of Bengaluru from 24-25 October 2013 to discuss varied experiences of the assault on public services, especially health, water and energy, and to build solidarity around the growing movements to reclaim public services.

Public services have the characteristics of 'public goods' and in the cases of specific services such as water, have traditionally been part of the 'commons'. Access to public services should be equitable, universal and should be free from financial burdens. The struggle to defend, expand and reclaim public services intersects closely with popular struggles to defend and promote democracy, social justice, human dignity, equity, ecology, workers rights, and a better quality of life.

Across the world, public services are being used by global capitalism to expand existing markets and to create new ones. It is with this view that neoliberal governments across the globe are mounting a calculated and ideological attack on public services. These include privatisation, financialisation, corporatisation, commercialisation and outsourcing of essential services to various non-state actors. This has exacerbated the precarious situation of the poor in the global south who continue to grapple with a concurrency of interlinked crises; of food, health, education, water, energy, erosion of biodiversity, finance and decent jobs. The elite in different countries are insulated from the erosion of public services by their ability to purchase privatised services. Moreover, they thereby draw valuable resources away from public to private systems. Labour is particularly affected as millions of jobs are being lost in public services and are being replaced by contract workers working under extremely insecure and ill-paid conditions of employment.

Neo-liberalism is constantly engaged in finding different ways in which public services can be stripped of their solidarity and public good content, while at times retaining the formal nomenclature of public services. One of the strategies is to diminish the role of the state to a regulator of services while handing over the delivery of services, especially the financially viable ones, to the private provider. This has perpetuated the use of public funds for private profit. A relatively recent trend of concern is the outsourcing of public services to NGOs through public private partnerships, which is actually tantamount to their privatisation and the dereliction of the duty of governments in the provision of services. Involvement of NGOs and other non-state actors should be seen as part of the larger design to manage dissent and manufacture consent for the neo-liberal project. Further, major decisions about public goods are increasingly made through non transparent and unconstitutional national and international 'partnerships' and 'collaborations'. These machinations of the neoliberal state are entirely unacceptable and movements in different parts of the

world have rejected such models of public service reforms in different sectors.

The re-claiming and re-imagination of public services, and the defense of existing rights to public services won through numerous struggles, is part of an ongoing political struggle that goes hand in hand with the resistance to the neoliberal state in many parts of the world. This struggle crucially involves the participation of a range of progressive movements to reclaim and democratise the state from the clutches of capitalism. Thus the defense of public services is not a defense of existing governments and their role in providing public services, but is part of the struggle to transform the neo-liberal state.

While re-imagining public services there is a need to view the public – and not merely governments -- as owners of these services and integrally involved in ensuring accountability and popular participation in the shaping of public services. Popular participation anchored in constitutional principles ensures that expansion of public services is sensitive to people's needs and aspirations and do not become an instrument used by governments to undermine people's rights, as for example while acquiring land and displacing people for large government projects. Public scrutiny and participation is also crucial in ensuring that public services are designed to address real needs of the people and not merely to build infrastructure that can be utilised for private profit by the commercial sector.

The forging of unity of the working people of the South and their counterparts in the North, who also face the onslaught of neoliberal policies, is necessary to create a different vision of public services. The new vision must address the exclusion from public services of large groups of people based on class, caste, gender, ethnicity and religion. The recent innovations by relatively progressive governments in Latin America, driven by the participation of popular movements, offer live examples of how a different vision of public services is already being fashioned.

The reality in the global south is one of constant struggle and there are inspiring examples of successes. At the conference we deepened our understanding of vibrant people's movements in the state of Karnataka, across India and in Latin America, Africa and Asia that are not just resisting and reversing privatisation of public services, but also engaged in a process to deepen democracy by re-imagining the idea of public services.

The conference underlined the need for broadening of political alliances by building intra-sectoral and cross-sectoral solidarity. Key common principles that were identified collectively as non-negotiable include

- Public services should be viewed as public goods, and in the cases of specific services as commons
- Establishing the principle that public services need to be public funded and public provisioned
- The principle of equity, universal access, and freedom from financial burden for public services is enshrined as a constitutional right.
- The accountability of the state and its different arms that are involved in the financing, provision and regulation of public services has to be ensured
- Transparency as regards policies that shape public services

- Active participation of communities in building and ensuring better public services
- Ecological justice and sustainability
- Ensuring workers rights

Though each country has its unique experience, we see the Bengaluru conference as an important step in forging a new internationalism of the Global South based on the principle of solidarity – in which struggle and reconstruction go together in defending, deepening and enriching the idea of public services for all.

Participants at the Conference.

1. Abhay Shukla	Janaarogya Andolana, Maharashtra
2. Abhigeya Prasad	Common Mix
3. Afsar Jafri	Focus on the Global South
4. Akhila Vasani	Janaarogya Andolana, Karnataka (JAK)
5. Aloysius James	ActionAid International
6. Amit Sengupta	Jan Swasthya Abhiyan (JSA)
7. Amulya Nidhi	Swasthya Adhikar Manch, Madhya Pradesh
8. Anand Kumar	Bangalore University
9. Anasuya B	Swaraj Network, Bengaluru
10. Arati S Tiwari	Sapthashati Charitable Trust
11. Arpita Joshi	The Concerned for Working Children, Bengaluru
12. Asha	Janaarogya Andolana, Karnataka (JAK)
13. Ashim Roy	New Trade Union Initiative (NTUI), Gujarat
14. Ayesha Sulthana	Society of People for Action and Development
15. B.Ekbal	Jan Swasthya Abhiyan (JSA), Kerala
16. B. Hanumanthappa	Janaarogya Andolana, Karnataka (JAK)
17. B. Malleswari	Fellow, ActionAid, Bengaluru
18. B. M. Musthafa	Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP)
19. Bana Mallika	ActionAid, Guwahati
20. Benny Kuruvilla	South-South Knowledge Hub, ActionAid India
21. Bhavani	Society of People for Action and Development (SPAD)
22. Bhogaraj	Centre for Informal Development Studies Collective
23. CR Bijoy	Campaign for Survival and Dignity, Tamil Nadu
24. Claire Graham	Intern, ActionAid
25. Cynthia Stephen	Mahila Samakhya, Bengaluru
26. Daniel Chavez	Transnational Institute, Uruguay
27. David Sanders	University of the Western Cape, South Africa
28. Dhanalakshmi	Peoples' Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), Coimbatore
29. Donthi Narasimha Reddy	Chetana, Hyderabad
30. Eshwarappa Madivali	Peoples Campaign for Right to Water (PCRW), Karnataka
31. Esther Mariaselvam	ActionAid Chennai
32. Ganesh	Supporter from Karnataka
33. Gaurav Dwivedi	Manthan Adhyayan Kendra, Madhya Pradesh
34. Girish, BS	Shreedhar Bhat Laboratorities, Bengaluru
35. Greg Ruiters	Municipal Services Project, South Africa
36. Gunapal	Samagra Grameena Ashram, Udupi
37. Harish	Books for Change, ActionAid
38. Isaac Amrutharaj	Slum Janara Sanghatane, Bengaluru
39. Jammu Anand	Nagpur Municipal Corporation Employees Union
40. Jayant Verma	SAMVAD, Jabalpur
41. Joe Varghese	Jan Swasthya Abhiyan (JSA), New Delhi
42. K.Y. Babu	ActionAid Chennai
43. Karibasappa M	Nirman Samsthe, Jana Arogya Andolana
44. Keshab Chatradhar	Parivartan, Assam
45. Kevin Noronha	ActionAid, Bengaluru
46. Komala	Activist, Karnataka
47. L.A. Samy	Tamil Nadu Land Rights Federation
48. Leo Saldanha	Environment Support Group, Karnataka
49. MK Ramesh	National Law School University of India, Bengaluru
50. Madhuri Krishnaswamy	Jagrit Adivasi Dalit Sangathan, Madhya Pradesh

51. Malarvizhi M.	ActionAid, Bengaluru
52. Manjunatha L	Supporter from Karnataka
53. Mary	Society of People for Action and Development(SPAD)
54. Mary Ann Manahan	Focus on The Global South, Philippines
55. Meena Artwani	Peoples Campaign for Right to Water (PCRW), Karnataka
56. Mohan R.	Sinchana Prakashana
57. Mohan Rao	Centre For Social Medicine, Jawaharlal Nehru University
58. N. Sudha	Janaarogyga Andolana Bengaluru
59. Naushad Pasha	ActionAid
60. Neelaiah	Swaraj Network, Bengaluru
61. Neeraja B N	Bangalore University
62. Nuria Molina	ActionAid and EURODAD, Spain
63. Pon. Chandran	Peoples Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), Coimbatore
64. Prabir Purkayastha	Delhi Science Forum
65. Pragada Srinivasu	Association for Tribal Development, Visakhapatnam
66. Prathap	Action for Social Justice, Bengaluru
67. Praveentaj	Society of People for Action and Development(SPAD)
68. Raghavendra B	ActionAid, Bengaluru
69. Rajeev	Books for Change, ActionAid
70. Rajendra Prabhakar	PCRW, Karnataka
71. Rakesh Kumar	Fedina, Bengaluru
72. Raman	ActionAid
73. Ramdas Rao	Peoples Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL)
74. Ramkumar	Association for Promoting Social Action, Bengaluru
75. Ravi G	Fourth Wave Foundation, Bengaluru
76. Rekha G	Society of People for Action and Development(SPAD)
77. Reshma A	Bangalore University
78. Rick Rowden	ActionAid International, New Delhi
79. Rohini	Bridge Network, Bengaluru
80. S. Kannaiyan	South Indian Coordination Committee of Farmers Movements
81. S.J. Chander	Society Community Health Awareness Research & Action
82. Saibal Jana	Shaheed Hospital, Dalli-Rajhara, Chhattisgarh
83. Sankar Teddu	Fishermen's Youth Welfare Association, Visakhapatnam
84. Sharon Horder	ActionAid, United Kingdom
85. Shivaprasanna	Action for Social Justice, Bengaluru
86. Siddharth	Indian Institute of Management, Bengaluru
87. Sitara Das	The Concerned for Working Children, Bengaluru
88. Sitaram Shelar	Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action (YUVA), Mumbai
89. Sudhanva Deshpande	LeftWord Books, New Delhi
90. Sujatha Rao	Former Secretary, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, GOI
91. Sulakshana Nandi	Jan Swasthya Abhiyan (JSA), Chhattisgarh
92. Suresh JVV	Jan Swasthya Abhiyan (JSA), Andhra Pradesh
93. Suresh Kumar	Kerala State Electricity Board Officers' Association
94. Susana Barria	Peoples Health Movement & NTUI, New Delhi
95. Sylvia Karpagam	Jana Arogya Andolana Karnataka
96. Thimmaraju	Action for Social Justice, Bengaluru
97. Upendranadh Choragudi	ActionAid International, Bengaluru
98. Urvashi Sarkar	South-South Knowledge Hub, ActionAid India
99. Veena	Society of People for Action and Development(SPAD)
100. Veerabhadra	Society of People for Action and Development(SPAD)
101. Venkateshapa	Society of People for Action and Development(SPAD)
102. VijayaKumar	Janaarogyga Andolana, Karnataka
103. V.S. Sreedhar	National Law School University of India, Bengaluru
104. William	Fellow, ActionAid, Hyderabad