

Access and Delivery in Local Governance: A Case Study of Vadgam

Project Course Proposal

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Area: Public Systems Group
Term IV

Credits: 1 per student

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Introduction¹:

The Members of Legislative Assembly Local Area Development Scheme (MLALADS) enables each MLA to undertake developmental actions in his/her constituency through centrally allocated funds amounting to around 2 crore per year, the exact expense is capped varying by the state. It is modeled after MPLADS which started in 1994.

The works undertaken in this scheme are towards “creating durable community assets satisfying locally felt needs.”¹ The projects undertaken could belong to any broad category from construction of institutions like schools, subways, community halls etc. to provision of services like street lighting, computers in schools, toilets etc.

Though a lot of constituencies are in need of civic amenities and reforms, only 50% of the allocated funds are generally spent.¹ Some of the pre-identified problems include “storming” i.e., the MLAs spend the most in the last two years and least in first year after elections and calling off projects midway the tender process, which delays the implementation phase. The challenge lies in ensuring that the projects undertaken and the funds spent truly represent constituency’s needs.²

Objective:

We intend to create a model of effective governance at the local level by analysing Vadgam constituency. It would be interesting to understand the thought process that goes into allocation of such funds and Vadgam was chosen as the basis of study, due to the presence of an independent candidate who is currently the MLA of the constituency. We believe that his lack of political affiliations would help in increasing objectivity of the study and ease the process of gathering accurate data.

We divide the process into two distinct parts.

First, we analyse the constituency’s access to structural and institutional mechanisms of delivery that fulfil citizen’s expectations. Using four areas: primary healthcare, education, early childhood development, and public distribution system, we identify the need-gaps and barriers to access. We will also explore systemic reasons for marginalization of certain sections of society.

Second, we analyse the government mechanisms of delivery and power-structures that an MLA must navigate to deliver his constituency’s needs and representative’s promises. We will focus on how an MLA can gauge constituency expectations, track his progress, and be held accountable.

Finally, based on our understanding of the situation in hand, we will formulate a formal strategic plan taking into account the expectation of outcomes and vehicles used to achieve it, among the leadership and electorate.

Methodology:

Understanding Expectations of Electorate: Meet specific stakeholders especially people who directly get influenced by the policies introduced: Anganwadi workers, Mid-day meal schemes, farmers, representatives from different population segments.

Understanding Leader’s Vision: Visit the constituency. Understand the representative’s vision for the constituency through interviews. Shadowing his meetings with the electorate and other stakeholders. Understanding values and implementation plans of the party.

¹ Loosely adopted from *Guidelines on Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme*

Understanding drivers of the Core Team: Interview representative's core team members and *karyakartas* and probe deeply into what they feel would arise out of the representative's leadership. Analyse their view of implementation plan, their vision of democratic process and execution.

Understanding the Policy Formulation Framework: Understanding the policy formulation process and instruments of impact. Understanding what avenues does the electorate have in voicing their issues and the power-position of stakeholders.

Deliverables:

- I. After understanding the capabilities and expectations of the leadership team and the electorate, create a comprehensive case study that addresses
 1. Engagement of the electorate: Mechanism for engaging the electorate to elicit expectations as well as removing barriers to access.
 2. Measuring and Delivering on the Expectation: Mechanism for transparent and accountable governance.
- II. A strategic plan for Vadgam constituency for the next three years, with recommendations to achieve the aforementioned objectives.
- III. Creating an assessment toolkit, that could help local governments to assess the progress of policy delivery.

Evaluation:

- I. Case Study – **50%**
- II. Strategic Plan – **30%**
- III. Assessment Toolkit – **20%**

References

1. *Guidelines on Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme*, Government of India Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, June 2016.
2. MLA Local Area Development Scheme, Delhi Citizen Handbook 2003, Accessed: <http://www.mpwz.co.in/ShowProperty/UCMRepository/Contribution%20Folders/Common/PDF/govtInitiative/mla.pdf>, as accessed on March 9th, 2018.
3. *Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India on Social, General, and Economic Sectors*, Government of NCT of Delhi, 2014.