

Annual Report 2024-25



Centre for Budget
and Policy Studies

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Photo: Vidhi B Shah

Director's Message

I was walking on a busy street in Bombay when I chanced upon a graffiti. Scrawled in thick bold font across a grey electrical box, it said: Create things you wish existed. I stood in front of that graffiti for a few minutes to take in the possibilities of this very simple message. I have kept it as a talisman ever since.



Niveditha Menon

Director, Centre for Budget
and Policy Studies

In the year that has gone by, we have asked ourselves a few pertinent questions: What is the purpose of research? What is the relevance of research in a world beset with exigent social problems? What is our identity as a public policy research organisation? What is the purpose we serve? Who are we accountable to?

In answering these questions, we ensure that our work is responsive, inclusive, and relevant. Even when it is often hard, we constantly ask ourselves: so what? Answering this essential question grounds us to our purpose, it helps us refocus on what is important, and it helps us create things we wish existed.

An emblematic example of this is the Neeti Habba – our first policy festival conducted over two days in November. The lessons we learned as an organisation started to take shape within this festival. We realised that complexity – of emotions, intentions, actions, ideas, values, identities – can be embraced, not flattened into nothingness. Diversity and inclusion are not just pretty words; they are essential concepts in articulating what ‘public’ means. Building spaces in which we can engage with our shared humanity is critical, especially if we have to foster a critical, yet empathetic imagination of the future.

But the act of creation is not only in the realm of the imagination or ideas; it is in action, labour, and effort. The festival also showed us that to truly embrace the values of inclusivity, diversity, and equality, we have to invest in everyday practice. This means having the willingness to embrace the contradictions within, to work against easy explanations, to welcome questions and acknowledge failures – all of which are essential ingredients to reimagine, reinterpret, and recast. To do this, it is not enough to engage in dialogue or debate alone; it is just as important to engage in quiet spaces of reflection. For us, spaces for contemplation, deep thought, and introspection are just as fundamental as spaces for dialogue.

Of course, creating these spaces is never a solitary exercise. In fact, this work is only possible because of the particular idiosyncrasies of our wonderful team – individuals who have boundless zeal and endless enthusiasm, individuals who calmly, patiently, almost serenely tackle the unknown and the unexpected without losing focus, individuals who have voracious appetites for learning and the clear-headedness to ask incisive questions, and individuals who can bring both levity and gravitas to daily conversations. Without their convictions, grit, and let’s not forget – their inimitable humour, the things that we have accomplished and created would not have been possible.

At the end of the day, what is clear is that it is people who power the talisman I carry with me. It is people: the ones who have supported us, the ones who inspire us, the ones who have criticised us, and the ones with whom we journey, who give me hope that we can remake the world anew. They are the ones who make me believe that together, we create things we wish existed.

About CBPS

In 1998, in the heart of Bengaluru, the Centre for Budget and Policy Studies (CBPS) was founded by academics, activists and former civil servants with a collective vision – to enable rigorous research that contributes meaningfully to public discourse, and to shape responsive and empowering policies.



As an independent not-for-profit organisation, CBPS has held a distinctive space in the research ecosystem since its inception, focusing on two critical areas: budgetary analysis and local governance. The purpose of establishing a grounding within these areas was not merely to understand budgetary processes or fiscal evaluations, but also to understand social priorities and examine policies aimed at vulnerable groups such as marginalised communities, informal workers, children, and women. This examination laid the foundation for a comprehensive understanding of government functioning and its impact on the ground.

Over time the organisation has expanded its horizon, emphasising on an interdisciplinary approach to research the impact and influence of public policy in health, gender, livelihoods, education, governance and accountability as well as public finance. This has been possible due to the strength of a diverse and skilled team, who bring intellectual depth and field-based insights into every project. While research remains at the core, CBPS has also grown into a space for action-research, capacity building, and participatory workshops.

Our Vision

To create and share knowledge for an empowered, equitable, just and democratic society.

In the last two decades, the organisation has completed more than 135 research projects across 20 states in India, produced more than 250 publications, and has successfully collaborated with UN agencies, Central and State Governments, Civil Society Organisations, and other research centres.

CBPS continues to uphold the ethos of interdisciplinarity, methodological pluralism and the centrality of social justice, and remains committed to nurturing knowledge that is not only academically robust but also relevant and inclusive.



Our Mission

To conduct rigorous interdisciplinary research across critical social issues that leads towards

- © *Effective and inclusive public policies*
- © *In-depth knowledge production for advocacy and informed society*
- © *Collaboration with governments and communities*

Governing Board & Society

Governing Board

Dr. Vinod Vyasulu	President
Mr. MS Ramaprasad	Secretary
Dr. A Indira	Treasurer
Mr. LV Nagarajan	Member
Mr. JVR Prasad Rao	Member
Dr. Shreelata Rao Seshadri	Member
Dr. Srikanth Sastry	Member
Dr. Niveditha Menon	Director, CBPS

Society Members

Dr. Shreelata Rao Seshadri	Professor and Director, Ramalingaswami Centre for Equity and Social Determinants of Health, PHFI, Bengaluru
Mrs. Sarojini Ganju Thakur, IAS (Retd.)	Chairperson, Himachal Pradesh Private Educational Institutions Regulatory Commission
Prof. Srikanth Sastry	Professor, JNCASR Fellow, Indian Academy of Science, Bengaluru
Dr. Gita Sen	Distinguished Professor and Senior Advisor, Ramalingaswami Centre for Equity and Social Determinants of Health, Bengaluru Retd. Adjunct Professor of Department of Global Health and Population, Harvard University
Dr. S Rajagopalan	Professor, International Institute of Information Technology, Bengaluru (IIITB)
Dr. Veerashekarappa	Former Professor, Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC), Bengaluru
Dr. A Indira	PhD (Economics), Independent Researcher
Mr. S Sadananda	Advisor and Former Director, IDPMS, Bengaluru Independent Consultant
Mr. MS Ramaprasad	Expert, Renewable Energy
Dr. MS Sriram	Professor, IIM Bengaluru Distinguished Fellow, Institute for Development of Research in Banking Technology
Mr. JVR Prasad Rao, IAS (Retd.)	Former UN Secretary General's Special Envoy on AIDS in Asia Pacific Former Health Secretary, Government of India
Dr. Vinod Vyasulu	Ex-Director and Founder, CBPS Consulting Economist
Ms. BP Vani	Associate Professor, Centre for Economic Studies and Policy (CESP), Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC), Bengaluru
Dr. Arnab Mukherji	Professor and Chairperson, Post-Graduate Programme in Public Policy and Management, IIM Bengaluru
Dr. Saraswathy Ganapathy	Director of Projects, The Belaku Trust
Mr. LV Nagarajan	Former Additional Chief Secretary, Government of Karnataka
Mr. Pronab Dasgupta, IAS (Retd.)	Distinguished Fellow & Senior Director, Southern Regional Centre, The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)
Dr. Shobhita Rajagopal	Professor, Institute of Development Studies, Jaipur
Ms. Anita Ratnam	Founder and Executive Director, Samvada, Bengaluru
Dr. Jyotsna Jha	Former Director, CBPS
Dr. Niveditha Menon	Director, CBPS

Funders and Partners

Research Partners

Current Partners

- Bhoomika Women's Collective (BWC), Telangana
- Doosra Dashak – Foundation for Education and Development (FED), Rajasthan
- Fiscal Policy Institute (FPI), Bengaluru [MoU for mutual assistance in the area of training and research]
- Society for Women's Action and Training Initiatives (SWATI), Gujarat

Past Partners

- ActionAid, Myanmar
- Administrative Training Institute (ATI), Mysuru, Karnataka
- Akshara Foundation, Bengaluru
- Azim Premji University (APU), Bengaluru [MoU for teaching and research]
- Central University of Rajasthan, Ajmer [MoU for teaching and research]
- CIVIC, Bengaluru
- Department for International Development (DFID), Government of United Kingdom
- ERU Consultancy Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi
- Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), New Delhi
- Indo Dutch Project Management Society (IDPMS), Bengaluru
- Institute of Development Studies (IDS), Jaipur, Rajasthan
- Institute of Financial Management and Research (IFMR), Chennai
- Karuna Trust, Bengaluru
- Mahila Samakhya, Bihar
- Mahila Samakhya, Karnataka
- OP Jindal Global University, Sonapat, Haryana [MoU for teaching and research]
- RV University, Bengaluru [MoU for assistance in research, training and academic activities]
- State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD), ATI, Mysuru, Karnataka
- University of Cambridge, United Kingdom

Funding Partners

Current Partners

- Commonwealth of Learning, Canada
- EdelGive Foundation
- Ford Foundation
- Gates Foundation
- Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies (RNP)
- The World Bank
- UNICEF, New Delhi

Past Partners

- American Jewish World Service (AJWS)
- Arghyam, Bengaluru
- Azim Premji Foundation (APF), Bengaluru
- Bengaluru Rural Zilla Panchayat, Govt. of Karnataka
- British Academy (BA)
- Brookings Institution
- Child Rights and You (CRY), New Delhi
- Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI), London
- Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere – CARE India, New Delhi
- Dallyan Foundation, Switzerland
- Decentralisation Analysis Cell (DAC), RDPR, Govt. of Karnataka
- Department of Agriculture (KSDA), Govt. of Karnataka
- Directorate of Economics and Statistics (DES), Govt. of Karnataka
- Expenditure Reforms Commission (ERC), Govt. of Karnataka
- Finance Department, Govt. of Karnataka
- Global Development Network (GDN), New Delhi
- Google Foundation, California, US
- Institute of Social Studies Trust (ISST), New Delhi
- International Budget Partnership (IBP), Washington DC, US
- International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada
- International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie), Washington DC, US
- IPE Global, Bengaluru
- Jharkhand Education Project Council (JEPC), Ranchi
- Kalyana Karnataka Region Development Board (KKRDB), Kalaburgi
- Karnataka Monitoring and Evaluation Authority (KMEA); Planning, Programme Monitoring and Statistics Department, Govt. of Karnataka
- Karnataka State Health System Resource Centre (KSHSRC), Bengaluru
- MacArthur Foundation, Chicago, US
- Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR), Govt. of India
- National Foundation of India (NFI), New Delhi
- National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA), New Delhi
- Nirantar Trust, New Delhi
- Prajayatna, Bengaluru
- Purva Bharati Educational Trust (PBET), Jorhat, Assam
- Room to Read, New Delhi
- Rural Development and Panchayat Raj (RDPR) Department, Govt. of Karnataka
- Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, Govt. of Karnataka
- Save the Children India
- State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD), ATI, Mysuru, Karnataka
- Tata Education and Development Trust (TEDT), Mumbai
- Tata Steel Foundation, Jamshedpur, Jharkhand
- The Asia Foundation, Colombo, Sri Lanka
- The Thakur Family Foundation, St. Petersburg, Florida, US
- The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), France
- UNICEF, Chhattisgarh
- UNICEF, Hyderabad
- UNICEF, Mumbai
- UNICEF, Odisha
- United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER), Finland
- United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

Team



Niveditha Menon
Director



Jyotsna Jha
Former Director



Vinod Vyasulu
Former Director



Madhusudhan BV Rao
Senior Research Advisor
Lead - Public Finance and
Decentralisation



Archana Purohit
Senior Research Advisor
Lead - Inequalities;
Quantitative Methods



Sridhar R Prasad
Research Advisor
Lead - Governance



Neha Ghatak
Research Advisor
Lead - Education;
Mixed Methods



Gayathri Raghuraman
Research Advisor
Lead - Health



Urvija Priyadarshini
Research Advisor
Lead - Gender



Sowmya J
Senior Research
Associate



Yukti Jain
Senior Research
Associate



Amukta Sistla
Research Associate



Raghavi Purimetla
Research Associate



Susmita Chatterjee
Research Associate



Abida UC
Research Associate



Tina Maria D'Souza
Research Assistant



Vidhi B Shah
Research Assistant



Syed Mohiuddin Khadri
Research Assistant



Yasmin R Daniel
Research Assistant



Joann Miriam Mathew
Research Assistant



Kumar Chandan Samal
Research Assistant



Thyagarajan R
*Administrative and
Liaison Officer*



Usha P Variath
*Finance and
Accounts Officer*



Mrinalika R Pandit
*HR, Information,
Operations Manager*



Anita Ramesh
Communications Manager

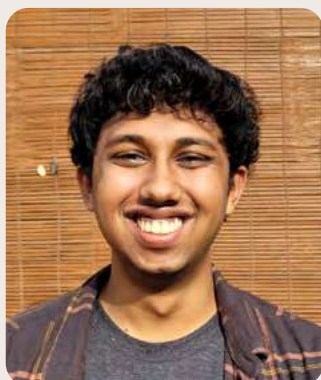


Vanaja S
*Administrative and
Accounts Assistant*



Ramesh K
Office Assistant

Research Fellows [Cohort 2024-25]



Arvind Thadi

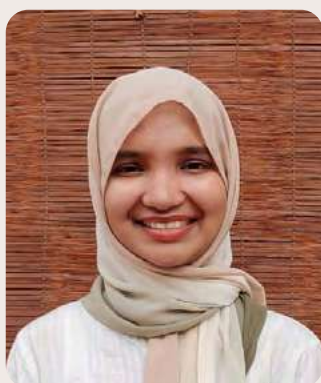


Akshitha Unnithan



Ariyan Abhijit Pal

Interns



Nashwa PA



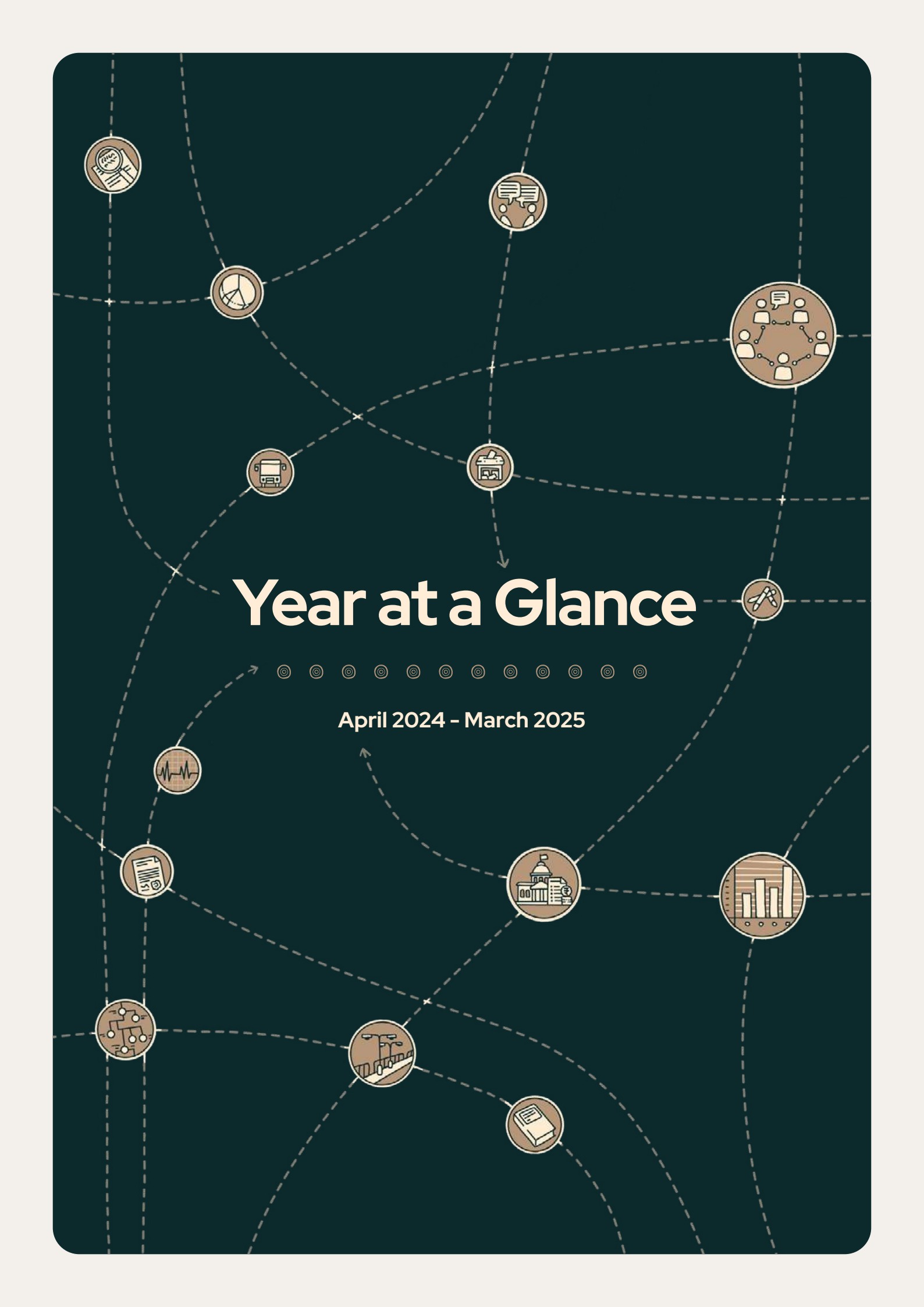
Sona Serene



Mohammed Abdurazak



Pranitha Ballarapu



Year at a Glance

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April 2024 - March 2025

3 April

Conversation with Authors: CBPS hosted Dr. Sreeparna Chattopadhyay, a social scientist and professor, for a discussion on her book *The Gravity of Hope*. Conversation with Authors – central to CBPS' capacity building efforts, invites authors and artists to share their experience on research or writing processes.

5 April

In an internal workshop, the team working on **Gender Street Games (GSG)** project, reviewed the toolkit design, analysed the frameworks, and engaged in discussions on employing the frameworks. The workshop was facilitated by Bharath M Palavalli and Sruthi Krishnan.

19 April



A one-day internal workshop was held for the organisation's shared understanding on gender responsive budgeting, international practices of gender budgeting, gender budgeting process in India (Union and selected states), schemes and policies related to various themes, and evaluation of the current articulation of the needs of women in policies and schemes.

25 April

To further engage in conversations about its **GSG** project, CBPS held a workshop to discuss solidarity towards four groups of informal workers. The team formulated parameters that conveyed their ideal imagination of solidarity, while also considering the realities evident in contextual data and literature.

28 May



CBPS organised its annual public lecture on the topic *What would a National Employment Policy look like?* delivered by Dr. Amit Basole, Professor of Economics, Azim Premji University. The lecture explored the prospect of a national policy to address the nuanced issues of unemployment. Drawing on this present landscape of labour force participation and employment, Dr. Basole emphasised on the importance of explicit recognition of the precarious nature of employment, and regional, and identity-based disparities.

The public lecture is organised every year in memory of one of CBPS' founding members - Dr. Poornima Vyasulu.

11 June

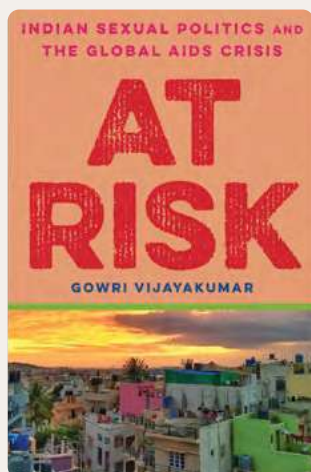


CBPS held a training on *Women's Empowerment and Gender Based Violence* at ANSSIRD, Mysuru. Led by Niveditha Menon and joined by Tina Maria D'Souza, Syed Mohiuddin Khadri, and Urvija Priyadarshini, the workshop aimed at engaging the first cohort of fellows selected for Rajiv Gandhi Panchayat Raj Fellowship 2024 with the concepts of women, gender, empowerment, freedom, and violence.

27 June

As part of CBPS' Lunchtime Series, an internal event aimed at learning about the diverse interests of CBPS employees, Surya George, Research Fellow of CBPS, talked about Hayao Miyazaki's renowned Studio Ghibli anime and why it is considered a comforting safe space during difficult times by people across the globe.

3 July



As part of our Conversation with Authors series, CBPS hosted Dr. Gowri Vijayakumar to discuss her book *At Risk: Indian Sexual Politics and the Global AIDS Crisis* (Stanford University Press, 2021). Based on extensive fieldwork and interviews with sex workers, activists, LGBTQ communities, donors, state agencies and biomedical experts, she examined India's response to the AIDS crisis, its implications for debates on sexual identity, and reflected on her methodological and writing process.

9 July

CBPS' research report *Public Health Education in India: A Study of Master of Public Health Programmes in the Country* was cited in an article titled Need for a Right Blend of Students in Public Health Institutions authored by Mayur Trivedi of Azim Premji University. The article was published in The Nagaland Post.

10-12 July



CBPS conducted a multilingual workshop in Hyderabad to present the preliminary Process Indicators framework with three partner organisations – Bhumika Women's Collective (Telangana), Doosra Darshak (Rajasthan) and SWATI (Gujarat). Field functionaries engaged with the framework through deliberations and debate, highlighting that process-level data is essential not only for evaluating impact but also for learning, course correction and addressing the root causes of social change.

26 July

As part of the Lunchtime Series, the CBPS team working on the **Gender Violence in Public Spaces** project presented a session on process indicators and their application in understanding processes of social change.

26 July

Niveditha Menon, Director of CBPS, participated as a panelist in *The Budget Dialogue: A Webinar on Union Budget 2024-25*, the flagship programme on the Union Budget organised by the Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (CBGA).

29 July



Jyotsna Jha, Skills Director at the Commonwealth of Learning (CoL) and former Director of CBPS, visited the team working on the CoL-funded project **Improving Lives and Livelihoods by Building Women's Capacities in Craft**. The team presented the inception report and discussed scope, expectations and next steps, with an emphasis on developing a curricular framework incorporating livelihood security, digital literacy, human rights and financial literacy.

30 July



CBPS held its 100th board meeting since inception. The meeting was attended by: Prof. Vinod Vyasulu, President – Chair; Mr. MS Ramaprasad, Secretary; Members Dr. A. Indira, Dr. Sreelata Rao Seshadri, and Mr. LV Nagarajan. Dr. Jyotsna Jha was also present as a special invitee along with Niveditha Menon and Neha Ghatak.

12 August

CBPS team Neha Ghatak, Thyagarajan R, Tina Maria D'Souza, and intern Mohammad Abdurazak attended the Karnataka Librarians Day event held at Palace Grounds, Bengaluru. The programme hosted government officials and state librarians to recognise the efforts of librarians in *Arivu Kendras* across the state, and to provide a platform to articulate their demands and priorities. The CBPS members also interacted with Ms. Uma Mahadevan, IAS, Additional Chief Secretary and Development Commissioner, and Dr. Arundhati Chandrashekar, IAS, Commissioner of Karnataka Panchayat Raj Commissionerate.

21 August

As part of Conversation with Authors, Dr. Mary E John, Professor at the Centre for Women's Development Studies, visited CBPS to talk about her latest book *Child Marriage in an International Frame* which explores the complex history of child marriage as a social and feminist issue. The book critically reviews a wide range of historical, demographic, and legal scholarship on the subject. In her talk, Dr. John traced how the discourse on child marriage in India has undergone several shifts as cultural, social and economic changes occurred.

27 August

Niveditha Menon participated as an expert speaker at the *Humanistic Leadership for India in an AI Driven World: A Unique Programme for Leaders and Decision-makers* programme organised by the National Institute of Advanced Studies in Bengaluru. The NIAS Humanistic Leadership programme was designed to assist leaders in navigating the complexities of managing the workforce and systems in an AI-driven world, promoting a leadership approach that is more humanistic, participative, motivational, and inclusive.

13 September



CBPS published its Annual Report for 2023-2024 in English and Kannada, offering a glimpse into the organisation's activities and capturing a snapshot of the projects undertaken during this period. The report also featured an interview with Jyotsna Jha, former Director of CBPS, as she reflected on her journey with the organisation and provided keen observations.

15 September

Gender-Responsive Budgeting: Still a Long Way to Go For India



Abida U.C. and Archana Purohit
15/Sep/2024 • 5 min read



Can an increase in allocations for spending on women can truly qualify a budget as 'gender-responsive'?



Women farmers in Palakkodu, Tamil Nadu in May 2021. Photo: Deepak Kumar/Unplash.

The Wire published an article authored by Abida UC and Archana Purohit titled *Gender-Responsive Budget in India – Still a Long Way to Go*. The article analysed the gender responsiveness of India's Union Budget 2024-25, highlighting concerns regarding women's exclusion from formal recognition as farmers, inadequate employment initiatives, and tax reforms that primarily benefit men.

19-20 September



Niveditha Menon participated in the Shram aur Hum 2024 conference at the India Habitat Centre, New Delhi, organised by the Institute of Social Studies Trust (ISST). The conference explored issues around women's paid and unpaid work, care responsibilities, care infrastructure and models, unpacking gender-based violence across spaces of paid and unpaid work, and systemic and structural violence. Niveditha Menon was invited to present a book review of *Making Women's Work Visible - A 40-year Legacy* which illustrates and celebrates 40 years of ISST's journey.

27 September

Niveditha Menon participated in a roundtable on *Gender, Budget, and Labour*, organised Breakthrough Trust, Delhi. The purpose of the roundtable was to enhance the internal capacity of Breakthrough staff on issues related to gender, budgeting, and work in India. Niveditha Menon spoke extensively about the purpose of the gender budgeting process, and the different ways in which it can be used to create pathways of accountability and planning. Other panelists included Dr. Protiva Kundu and Dr. Kalpana Karunakaran.

26-27 September

Neha Ghatak was invited to conduct a session titled *Latest Trends and Challenges in Technology-driven Research* at a collaborative research and innovation workshop organised by Uttar Pradesh's State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) and India Partnership for Early Learning (IPEL) in Lucknow. The workshop was supported by USAID. Neha's session focused on the utilisation of technological solutions when analysing large data sets in education research, where she also pointed out the challenges and opportunities in using it. The second half of her session also focused on the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education research.

13 November

Niveditha Menon served as a panelist at the Mentoring Summit, organised by Mentor Together, in the session *Elevating Youth Mentorship as a Policy Priority in India: Current Opportunities and the Future Scope*. The discussion explored the government's role in integrating mentorship into education policy, enabling youth access, and in scaling high-quality and impactful mentoring programmes nationwide.

22-23 November



CBPS organised a one-of-a-kind public policy festival called Neeti Habba at the Infosys Science Foundation. The central theme of Neeti Habba was “What is ‘Public’ in Public Policy?” The event was free and open to all. Over two days, the festival featured workshops, games, screenings, discussions, performances that were attended by students, non-profit organisations, government officials, academic staff, and researchers. (Full report on page 53)

19 December

Niveditha Menon was one of the speakers for the NIAS-DST Training Programme on *Policy for Science and Science for Policies* seminar held for Directors, Divisional Heads, Chief Scientists, and Senior Scientists. In her lecture *Gender and Public Policy*, Niveditha Menon spoke about the different ways in which gendered issues are featured within public policy, and proposed ways in which even organisational policies can bring about gender equitable outcomes.

19-21 December



CBPS **Crafts and Skills** researchers Akshitha Unnithan, Thyagarajan R, and Syed Mohiuddin Khadri conducted field-work in Bagalkot with powerloom and handloom artisans. Through interviews and observation, they studied Ilkal sari production stages and women's roles in dyeing, spinning, and thread joining. Engaging with producer company members and independent artisans, the team documented key challenges – limited social security, weak market linkages, and low remuneration – while identifying knowledge gaps for future research.



9-10 January



Urvija Priyadarshini, Research Advisor – Gender, participated in the Beijing+30 India CSO South Regional Consultation in Whitefield, Bengaluru, organised by Point of View and Gender at Work, to review progress on the 1995 Beijing Declaration. Discussions revolved around gender-based violence, disability rights, digitalisation, labour rights, and climate change, culminating in a renewed commitment to collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and centering marginalised voices, particularly Dalit, Bahujan, Adivasi, and gender-diverse communities.

22 January

CBPS held an internal capacity-building workshop on *data processes*, organised by Tarkham Initiative and led by Bharath M Palavalli. The session explored creating an open-access data library to enable cross-utilisation, reduce duplication, and enhance collaborative research.

29 January

CBPS' GVPS team conducted a full-day workshop on *Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS) and Process Indicators (PI)* for representatives from 26 organisations and Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies, organised by Edelgive. Using activities developed for Neeti Habba, the session introduced process-based evaluation frameworks and advocated for those frameworks to be adopted as a way of assessing programmes.

28-29 January



CBPS researchers Urvija Priyadarshini, Susmita Chatterjee, and Syed Mohiuddin Khadri, along with an external consultant Usha BN, visited Channapatna, for the **Crafts and Skills project**. Engaging with artisans, producer companies, NGOs, and craft enterprises, the team documented insights on craft practices and market conditions. Field observations from this visit helped guide the next phase of research.

5 February



Niveditha Menon spoke at the RV University panel on the Union Budget 2025 alongside academics and industry experts. She analysed social sector allocations for housing, livelihoods, education, and health highlighting stagnation and insufficient expenditure, particularly for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and women, stressing the need for stronger investment in social protection and equity.

5-6 February

Urvija Priyadarshini represented CBPS at the India Fundraising Conference in Delhi, organised by The Resource Alliance. Sessions led by speakers from organisations including Mariwala Health Initiative and the MacArthur Foundation offered insights on donor expectations, trust-building, and strategies to strengthen fundraising.

6 March

Syed Mohiuddin Khadri presented a paper titled *Companionship of the Bus: Studying the Lives of Bus Conductors in the City* at an international conference on *Imagining Urban Futures in India and Beyond* conducted by Manipal Centre for Humanities in collaboration with Centre for Inclusive Cities, MAHE.

14 March

Child Vulnerabilities project researchers Sridhar R Prasad, Syed Mohiuddin Khadri, and Abida UC visited Mysuru at the invitation of the Additional Commissioner Smt. Kusuma Kumari S, KAS. They discussed the project's objectives and the role of Urban Local Bodies in implementing Mission Vatsala guidelines, presenting child-focused activities for potential inclusion in the Mysuru City Corporation budget.

18 March



Karnataka Libraries project team visited the Arivu Kendra in Yelahanka to assess its facilities and functions. Engaging with the librarian and schoolchildren, they observed the centre's dual role as a library and a safe space for children, with frequent use of digital resources. This visit marked the first step in fieldwork across Arivu Kendras in Karnataka.

21 March

CBPS staff participated in a day-long workshop on the Indian Constitution, led by Vinay Sreenivasa from Alternative Law Forum (ALF). Sessions explored the Preamble's core principles – liberty, equality, fraternity, secularism, and dignity, alongside Fundamental Rights, Duties, and Directive Principles of State Policy. Through group activities, case examples, and discussions, participants reflected on these principles and their relevance to building a just society.

25 March



Rationale for revenue deficit

The idea of a state spending higher than its receipts has increasingly evoked discomfort in recent years.

 **Abida U C**

Last Updated : 25 March 2025, 03:04 IST

An op-ed piece written by CBPS researcher Abida UC was published by Deccan Herald. The article titled *Rationale of Revenue Deficit* was a reflective piece on the budget speech presented by Karnataka's CM Siddaramaiah.

25-27 March



Niveditha Menon, Vidhi B Shah, and Raghavi Purimetla conducted a workshop in Jaipur on *Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS) and Process Indicators (PI)* for 26 participants from 16 organisations implementing youth leadership programmes, as part of a collaborative effort to explore different forms of participatory evaluation, with a Bengaluru-based organisation, Maraa. The session, modelled on CBPS' January Edelgive workshop, followed an informal orientation for Maraa staff held on 4 March.

26-28 March

Sridhar R Prasad, Gayathri Raghuraman, Abida UC, and Ariyan Pal visited Mysuru to continue interviews with government officials on the **Child Vulnerabilities** project. Speaking with eight personnel from the Directorate of Child Protection, including outreach workers, data analysts, and officers, the team gathered insights on vulnerabilities, roles in child protection, and ways Urban Local Bodies can strengthen child-focused interventions.

Gender



▲
Photo: Tanushka Sharma

Reframing Gender

CBPS' work uses gender as a critical lens for advancing inclusive and responsive public policy across public finance, governance, education, health, livelihoods, and climate change.

Overview

The critical lens of gender serves to center not only marginalised populations in the analysis framework, but also the systemic ways in which gendered norms, attitudes and behaviour influence economic and social policy decisions. The focal point of analysis in almost all of CBPS' work, including gender responsive budgeting, participatory local governance, allocation of public resources, gender violence in public spaces, and the connections between heat and mental health, is about how power relationships are produced, experienced, and negotiated by diverse actors in the ecosystem. Understanding these relationships are critical to enhance participatory, inclusive, and responsive policymaking and implementation.

CBPS' Approach

At CBPS, projects engaging with gender have historically involved systematic and in-depth inquiries of gender-responsive policies, gendered needs, and structural barriers faced by marginalised populations, including women and children. Any form of gendered experience, including paid work, care work, or violence are navigated differently by diverse actors, based on their individual and structural constraints. Understanding these often complex, unpredictable, and non-linear patterns is critical to understanding the larger landscape of gender justice.

Through multiple modes of engagement with key stakeholders including policymakers, civil societies, and communities, CBPS' projects have revealed that policies, especially those related to carework, financial literacy and access to education, healthcare, or social protection have to incorporate gender-equitable and gender-just principles in order to be efficacious. In order to take into account the specific needs of different communities, whose access to institutions and policies are mediated by their identities, it is critical to build participatory processes and methods for conducting inclusive and responsive research to ensure inclusive policymaking.

Researcher's Viewpoint

"Our approach to gender is influenced by different frameworks – a critical and in-depth understanding of gender justice in local and global contexts, the value of excavating and centering gendered knowledge production through new and innovative methods, and the importance of involving diverse stakeholders with particular attention to 'invisible' actors. These frameworks are crucial to seed systemic and systematic change, and to build alternate and holistic visions of citizenship and gender justice."



Niveditha Menon
Director

Governance and Accountability



▲
Photo: Amukta Sistla

Pathways to Decentralised Governance

CBPS examines governance through policy, budget and institutional processes with a specific focus on decentralisation, public service delivery, and citizen participation.

Overview

Since its inception, CBPS has been deeply invested in understanding and strengthening local governance in India. CBPS has strived to study the operationalisation of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments that introduced local self-governments in rural and urban areas and devolved 29 functions to Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) and 18 to Urban Local Bodies (ULBs). Because essential social sector services like education, health, rural development including building roads and water supply are under the jurisdiction of local governments, CBPS studies these areas to strengthen participatory governance through research on policies, budgets, and institutional frameworks. CBPS also works towards improving service delivery mechanisms and building capacities.

CBPS' Approach

Research into, about and around governance has been a fundamental aspect of the organisation's identity. CBPS' work has extended from analyses of constitutional underpinnings of local governance to in-depth empirical studies of lived realities. To connect the dots between the 3 Fs of decentralisation - functions, funds and functionaries, an interdisciplinary approach has been in place. Using budgets as a tool, CBPS deep dives into critical aspects of governance such as the administrative structure, institutional processes and capacities, decision-making autonomy, negotiations between elected representatives and state appointed officials, data utilisation and management, resource generation and service delivery mechanisms. The legal and regulatory framework within which local governments function along with their statutory roles and responsibilities are also examined.

Over the years, CBPS has undertaken several studies on enhancing capacity and accountability in urban governance. This includes the documentation of governance processes in cities, studies on how 'Child Friendly' Gram Panchayats further children's interests, examination of urban governance through the lens of sanitation and solid waste management, insights to improve public service delivery, support of capacity-building for stakeholders, and the promotion of participation of marginalised communities. Key projects include impact evaluation of schemes like *Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana*, *Bhagyalakshmi*, and *Mathrupoorna*, mapping of service delivery systems like ICDS, and developing governance structure frameworks.

Researcher's Viewpoint

"It is important to examine the foundations of both the supply and demand of local governance. Looking at challenges using this framework strengthens our understanding and enables solution-oriented pathways. The supply side looks into the functional aspects of local bodies such as planning and delivery of basic services including political will and decision-making processes, while the demand side looks at the needs and expectations of citizens with a focus on awareness, active participation and equity. At CBPS, we aim to elevate both sides to help proliferate healthy practices of government and governance, and to encourage an empowered and effective populace."



Sridhar R Prasad
Research Advisor,
Lead - Governance

Education



▲
Photo: Siddharth Lunia

Reimagining Education as a Public Good

CBPS' work positions education as a public good by exploring its systemic structures, emancipatory potential, and community-rooted practices.

Overview

Education has been central to CBPS since its inception, growing into a core area of research and policy engagement over the last 15 years. The approach to education is not just as a service or entitlement, but as a transformative public good that intersects with governance, equity, public finance, and inclusion. CBPS' research on education spans the entire continuum – from early childhood to higher education – and integrates critical perspectives on access, pedagogy, participation, and institutional resilience. It is examined through an interdisciplinary lens, contributing to academic debates, public policy discourses, and practical interventions. CBPS' work on education remains grounded in field realities, committed to amplifying community voices while building equitable systems of learning.

CBPS' Approach

CBPS engages deeply with the philosophical, institutional, and community-centered dimensions of education, investigating how structural inequities intersect with pedagogy, access, governance, and public financing of education.

Across projects, feminist, intersectional, and critical pedagogical lenses are employed to understand the ecosystem of education. Education is viewed as emancipatory – central to enabling citizenship, participation, and justice. Connecting field-level innovation with systemic reform, CBPS' work in education has delved across all domains – from early childhood education, the intersections of caste, gender and poverty with secondary education, tertiary education to analyses of flexible delivery systems like Open and Distance Learning (ODL), especially for marginalised populations. By advocating for participatory governance, CBPS also places importance on the role of the community in strengthening local education systems and inclusive spaces.

Through work in education, CBPS remains committed to the primary goal – to enable innovation, empower marginalised communities, and strengthen the education ecosystem at multiple levels.

Researcher's Viewpoint

"At CBPS, education is not just a thematic silo – it is a lens to reimagine society. Our work constantly interrogates systems, not just to identify gaps, but to propose transformative, grounded alternatives. The ECD CRM model redefines what it means to provide care and education for the most marginalised, while the KLP study questions how public institutions like libraries can serve as community-rooted spaces for critical learning. These projects reflect our belief that education must empower, not merely deliver. They represent CBPS' commitment to inclusive, resilient, and context-responsive education systems."



Neha Ghatak
Research Advisor,
Lead - Education

Livelihoods



▲
Photo: Anita Ramesh

Evidence and Insights for Inclusive Livelihoods

CBPS tries to understand the various structural and political-economic factors that impact access to livelihood security through research and use the insights gained to improve livelihoods through evidence-based policy advocacy, training, and capacity building.

Overview

Access to livelihood security is an important concern for many marginalised communities in India. Quality of livelihood opportunities available, working conditions, and wages constitute different aspects of the right to a dignified livelihood. Understanding important aspects of livelihood security such as public finance, education, skill enhancement and social protection are a pathway to analysing and influencing public policies that involve work and livelihoods. This is vital, given that the vulnerabilities arising out of insecure livelihoods are further exacerbated by global forces such as climate change, disruptions in labour markets, and political-economic factors such as trade-wars, which alter markets and supply chains. Given that all of these redefine the stability, location, and nature of work opportunities, CBPS works on understanding the impact of these factors, both micro and macro, on the lives and livelihoods of workers and advocates for policies that create and enhance access to livelihood security for the marginalised.

CBPS' Approach

CBPS adopts an intersectional and ecosystem approach to understand issues plaguing the domain of work especially for marginalised communities. Intersectionality as a lens lends itself to understanding differential access to economic opportunities whereas an ecosystem approach helps in gathering the understanding of interrelated multiple factors that prevent the access to decent means of livelihood. Using the insights gained from these interactions, CBPS hopes to influence public policy for creation of equitable access to livelihood security. For instance, in the past year, CBPS has engaged with diverse communities – informal and formal waste workers, sex workers, street vendors and women artisans to understand their perspectives, approaches and the challenges that they face when they work. Additionally, CBPS also works with civil society organisations, community-based organisations, and policymakers to help engender government interventions so that they are more responsive to the specific economic and social mobility requirements of communities, so that they are recognised not as workers or beneficiaries, but as citizens with the right to a dignified livelihood and work conditions.

Researcher's Viewpoint

"We believe that the foundation for a fair and just society relies significantly on the right to work and livelihood security. Hence, livelihood security should not be a privilege for few, but accessible to even the most marginalised. Yet, too often, barriers such as discrimination, inequality, and weak protections deny people access to dignified work. Research can shine a light on these gaps, reveal the lived realities behind the data, and build the evidence needed to influence public policy. By connecting insights to action, research can help create public policy that removes barriers, protects the vulnerable and creates equitable opportunities."



Archana Purohit
Senior Research Advisor,
Lead - Inequalities; Quantitative Methods

Health



▲
Photo: Anita Ramesh

Strengthening Public Health Systems

CBPS' focus on health has primarily been to understand the health services that are accessible and available to the most marginalised. By doing in-depth research on various aspects of health systems including health budgets, health governance, and public health systems, the aim is to promote equitable and holistic health policies and practices.

Overview

At CBPS, the work on public health is rooted in studying health systems that are essential for the well-being of the public. The focus on this area stems from the direct relevance of health to social and economic development outcomes, and the critical need to address wide disparities in the access, availability and quality of health services. With expertise in public finance, gender, education, and governance, CBPS has been able to document systemic gaps in policy frameworks, evaluate government initiatives, document the health ecosystem (including health pedagogies), and advocate for policies that prioritise inclusion and equity.

CBPS' Approach

For over 25 years, CBPS has approached health research as a study of systems. Instead of only examining health policies and programmes in isolation, CBPS has been able to understand the impact of the entire ecosystem -- including the influence of government officials, the expertise of health professionals, and the challenges faced by marginalised communities. In doing so, CBPS has historically paid particular attention to children and marginalised populations, recognising their centrality in achieving inclusive health outcomes. CBPS has been able to conduct a diverse set of studies on health including those involving nutrition, government schemes that target health outcomes, health implications for early childhood development, reproductive health, health facilities and insurance. Through rigorous analysis of budgets, programme design, and implementation, the aim is to inform and strengthen decentralised and community-driven approaches to health governance at both the state and central levels. In recent years, CBPS's work on health has expanded to include mental health as a critical area of study.

Researcher's Viewpoint

"CBPS occupies a unique space in health research. Over the years, we have been able to dive deep into the programme implementation, action plans, costing, challenges and policies that are particular to the health outcomes of the marginalised. As the world's needs are shifting towards climate sustainability, aging, and mental health, we too are gearing up to these newer areas of studies to provide research-backed insights."



Gayathri Raghuraman
Research Advisor,
Lead - Health

Public Finance



Photo: Rupixen/Unsplash

Public Finance as a Perspective for Policy

CBPS engages with public finance by analysing budgets, examining governance frameworks, and addressing decentralisation challenges to encourage inclusive and transparent decision-making processes.

Overview

At CBPS, budget and public finance are foundational tools to deepen examinations into resource allocation, fiscal priorities, and decentralisation processes. The work on public finance cuts across multiple domains including health, education, governance, gender, and nutrition offering insights towards the needs of marginalised communities and creating more inclusive and equitable socio-economic development policies.

CBPS' Approach

CBPS has been actively involved in various facets of public finance research and advocacy initiatives including estimating district incomes, analysing financial resources, establishing norms for resource allocation, and cost estimation of public services, among others. Two major principles have historically informed CBPS' ventures in this area are as follows.

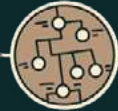
Budget as a policy tool

CBPS' research engages with the budgeting process and the budget document, beyond an accounting process or a summary of revenues and expenditures. Viewed as a planning and accountability tool, budgets help understand the implications of policy decisions and priorities. It is also considered a foundational political instrument for understanding the implications of state policies, which help build critical understandings of resource allocation within fiscal frameworks.

Public finance as a central pillar

CBPS adopts a citizen-oriented approach to its research, regularly engaging with policy through budgets to answer questions relating to the larger macroeconomy. Public finance is not seen as an isolated discipline; rather, it functions as a perspective that frames the mode of inquiry into a range of other domains. The application of tools relating to public financial analysis or management can be regularly observed across the CBPS roster, with this approach informing critical insights into a major body of our work across the areas of governance, education, health, gender and more.

Projects



Improving Lives and Livelihoods by Building Women’s Capacities in Craft



▲
Photo: Anita Ramesh

Domain Gender and Livelihoods
Funder Commonwealth of Learning
Duration Apr 2024 - Ongoing

Women have been an integral part of the craft production systems for ages, but their contribution to the production has been highly undervalued and invisibilised. Being central to the sustainability of many craft traditions, women have been honing their skills and supporting their families. This action research project focuses on improving livelihood prospects of women artisans in two craft clusters in Karnataka- namely the Channapatna toy town in Ramanagara district and the Ikal weaving clusters in the district of Bagalkot of Karnataka.



▲
CBPS team interacting with Ilkal saree weavers in Gudlegudda, Bagalkot in December 2024. Photo: Akshitha Unnithan

The project is centred on building and developing grounded strategies to address the various challenges that women artisans encounter in these two selected handicraft and handloom clusters. By introducing a gendered perspective on understanding the skill requirements of women artisans, CBPS hopes to create a capacity building module that can enhance women's knowledge systems as well as social and economic mobility.

Highlights of 2024 – 25

- Signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the National Livelihood Mission under the Skill Development, Entrepreneurship and Livelihood Department, Government of Karnataka, to undertake research and capacity building activities with the support of the concerned government agencies, both at the state and the local level.
- Prepared a baseline report and a needs assessment report based on extensive literature review of the existing schemes in the handicraft and handloom sector as well as a critical review of the current skilling landscape in the country.
- Prepared a consolidated report based on contextual data collected through interviews of key informants which focused on the emerging themes in the craft ecosystem identified based on 16 in-depth key informant interviews. Key informants were strategically selected to include development professionals working in the craft sector, academicians, and activists.
- Drafted an initial field visit report based on the visits to Channapatna and Bagalkot which captured the observations from the field, mainly focusing on the gendered nature of the craft work in these two locations.
- Designed frameworks for capacity building in an interactive way to acknowledge and build on the existing knowledge systems of women in the craft communities. Prepared frameworks on three themes namely:
 - Identity, Knowledge Systems, and Voice
 - Design, Marketing System, and Financial Sustainability and
 - Policies, Schemes, and Entitlements

Team

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Mapping of Child Vulnerabilities in Cities, and Understanding the Role by ULBs in addressing them



▲
Photo: Wilsan/Unsplash

Domain	Governance & Accountability
Funder	Ford Foundation
Duration	Jan 2024 - Ongoing

With India’s accelerating urbanisation, there is a growing need to make cities more responsive and sensitive to the needs of children, particularly those from migrant families and slums in cities. Urban environments often overlook their needs, exposing children to limited essential services and increased vulnerability to risks. This project seeks to map the vulnerabilities of children living in Indian cities, explore how Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) respond, and arrive at potential pathways for the local bodies to address those vulnerabilities.

The project focuses on the Constitution's 74th Amendment which enables the creation of formal urban local governments across India. It lists 18 functions that ULBs have jurisdiction over, including the supply of essential services like water and sanitation, transport, safety, nutrition, and more – all of which are critical to children's well-being. Ground realities, however, are quite different due to an overlap or lack of convergence with other stakeholders, thus compromising the role of ULBs.

CBPS is conducting action research in three urban contexts – Mysuru, Visakhapatnam, and Chennai – to study how ULBs understand and address these child vulnerabilities. These field assessments that have reviewed the vulnerabilities include interactions with government officials, elected representatives, child rights experts, and civil society organisations. The project also examines Mission Vatsalya – a scheme that aims to address child vulnerabilities. Fieldwork has also provided valuable insights on the workings of the various child protection machinery of the state, how child vulnerability is defined and operationalised. Recommendations derived from the study will enable policymaking, budgeting, and governance strategies.

Highlights of 2024 – 25

- Created an assessment framework based on literature review and secondary data analysis to rank states on:
 - Child Vulnerability – based on indicators related to education, health, and child protection
 - Extent of Decentralisation – based on indicators related to the 3Fs: funds, functions, and functionaries
- Conducted fieldwork to identify determinants of vulnerabilities and the roles of key stakeholders (including ULBs) in addressing the same
- Organised two in-house workshops with the research team to:
 - Define child vulnerability in the Indian urban context
 - Facilitate discussions on the potential role that ULBs can play in addressing the vulnerabilities, drawing insights from key informant interviews
- Multiple rounds of consultations with the Additional Commissioner and the Administrator of Mysuru City Corporation (MCC) and proposed to help them with a roadmap to transform Mysuru into a child friendly city. Proposed roadmap included undertaking a child vulnerability survey, assessing the needs of children through *Makkala Nagara Sabhas* and streamlining the MCC's efforts with other stakeholders

Team

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Unravelling the Threads of Gendered Labour Force Participation



Domain Governance & Accountability

Funder Gates Foundation and
Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies

Duration Dec 2024 - Ongoing

The discourse on gender and labour force participation has undergone a significant transformation, with an increased focus on understanding the factors that are responsible for the disparity between men and women's gender workforce participation. While the rise and fall of women's workforce participation has been heavily documented, the major reasons that have been identified are: larger macroeconomic uncertainties, limited access to decent work, restrictive social norms, caregiving expectations and barriers to quality education, and/or the lack of flexible jobs that are determined by who can and cannot enter or stay in the workforce.

◀ Photo: Tessa Thomas

This project focuses on the relationship between these socio-cultural and economic factors. The project seeks to understand the manner in which individual agency interacts with household dynamics and community norms to shape work aspirations and opportunities for women.

The primary research question of the study is: What are the factors that determine gendered work force participation at the household level? To answer for this question, the team is in the process of undertaking:

- a. a comprehensive review of the factors, determinants, and pathways that contribute towards gendered workforce participation
- b. analysis of the impact that macroeconomic factors such as access to education and training programmes, skill development, provision of safe and accessible transport, or sector-specific macroeconomic policies have on gendered participation in the workforce
- c. examination of the nature and influence of household bargains or decision-making as influenced by the composition of the household members and their specific socio-economic characteristics (such as age, working status, education levels, gender etc.)
- d. a comparison of the gendered intra- and inter-sectoral labour practices of specific industries (such as within and across manufacturing, service, or agriculture) to examine gender-specific factors, determinants and pathways that enhance and restrict gendered workforce participation, and
- e. document systematically the time poverty of individuals within the household (across generations) and its contribution to the household decisions related to gendered workforce participation. This study will be conducted in four states: Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Meghalaya, and Karnataka.

Highlights of 2024 – 25

- Undertaken a comprehensive literature review in the areas of labour force participation rate (LFPR) of the country and the four states mentioned, examined the attributes of LFPR, and the labour force surveys undertaken at national level.
- Recognised three central themes through literature review: identifying measurement errors in the labour force surveys, understanding the care-related bargains and negotiations at the household levels, and landscaping the nature and trend of LFPR in the four states.

Team

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Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) based analysis with reference to Gender Violence in Public Spaces



Domain Gender and Public Finance

Funder Ford Foundation

Duration July 2023 - Ongoing

Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) is a powerful governing tool to enable the development and resourcing of gender transformative policies. To arrive at a comprehensive framework that incorporates women's articulated needs and requirements, this project uses qualitative data from two projects: gender violence in public spaces (GVPS) and gender street games (GSG). The objectives of the project were two-fold: the first was to assess, review, and analyse the secondary data available on current budgetary processes both in India and globally, and the second was to devise an analytical framework to reimagine and reconceptualise the current gender budgeting framework.

This has largely been done using an extensive mapping of literature available on the topic, the analysis of gender budget statements of individual states, and matching the articulated needs of women (as visible in GVPS and GSG projects) to the potential policies in the areas of mobility, safety, care work, mobility, access to public spaces, financial inclusion, and livelihoods.

◀ Photo: Vidhi B Shah

Using lessons learnt from examining the various GRB frameworks from the selected states namely, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Karnataka, and Telangana, about the power and potential of the GRB process, the next steps are being undertaken. These next steps are:

- a. examining the practices of GRB at multiple levels of governance, specifically district, block, and gram panchayats
- b. building a framework of integrating GRB into the governing processes at different tiers of the government, and
- c. providing guidelines for a comprehensive and responsive GRB.

Highlights of 2024 – 25

- As part of a consolidation and theory building exercise, the team organised two in-house workshops, using information gathered from the literature review, landscaping, and data analysis exercises. These workshops strengthened the team's collective understanding of gender responsive budgeting and its foundational principles, functions, implementational challenges, negotiable and non-negotiable principles of our potential ideal GRB framework, and policies that respond to needs identified from the GVPS and GSG projects. The team used these learnings to build a framework for the ideal GRB process.
- The team designed an evaluation framework and evaluated the rationale, methodology and content of the Gender Budget Statements (GBS) of various states from across India. Given the situation of the GBS as one of the few insights into Indian gender budgeting processes, the evaluation process looked to measure the depth and extent of the government's efforts to integrate gender sensitivity into the budgeting process. This process aided in building an understanding of how different governments across the country prioritise and carry out their respective gender budgeting processes.
- The team reviewed and analysed GRB frameworks from across India as well as from across the world, consolidating a repertoire of international GRB practices across South-East Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe, South Asia, Oceania, North America, and South America. This investigation aided the team in the preparation of negotiables and non-negotiables for its ideal GRB framework.
- The team designed three interactive exhibits for the organisation's 'Neeti Habba' festival, based on learnings from the study so far. The exhibits consisted of a Snakes and Ladders board which incorporated positive and negative practices in gender responsive budgeting, an atlas and trivia display denoting some of the unique gender budgeting practices present in the international forum, and a personality quiz to determine which country's GRB practices aligned most with the respondent.
- The team conducted an in-depth needs and policy gap analysis using ethnographic data collected during the GVPS project. This analysis utilised data pertaining to the following areas of interest – financial inclusion, care-work, safety, access to public spaces, mobility and livelihoods, which was used to identify recurrent needs articulated by women to CBPS researchers while in the field. These articulated needs were used to evaluate the fit of schemes in the current policy landscape, and to establish shortcomings in their approaches.

Team

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Landscape Study of *Arivu Kendras* in Karnataka



▲
Photo: Akshitha Unnithan

Domain Education and Governance
Funder Ford Foundation
Duration Jan 2024 – Ongoing

In collaboration with the Department of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj (RDPR), Government of Karnataka, CBPS is undertaking a statewide landscape study of *Arivu Kendras* – rural public libraries governed by Gram Panchayats. The study aims to deepen the understanding of AVKs as decentralised knowledge institutions that support inclusive community development.

The study explores the evolution of *Arivu Kendras* by tracing their journey through policy shifts, local adaptations, and community engagement models. It maps the libraries' institutional structure, examining governance mechanisms and orders, budget allocations, integration with panchayat systems, and staffing patterns. Using a people-centric and inclusion-oriented approach, the project also focuses on the everyday realities of these spaces – how they operate, the types of services they provide, the usage patterns, and the challenges they face.



▲
CBPS team interviewing a librarian in Doddajala, Bengaluru on March 2025. Photo: Akshitha Unnithan

The project engages with Rural Development and Panchayat Raj (RDPR) officials, Gram Panchayat members, *Arivu Kendra* librarians, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) engaging with libraries, and the community members who interact with these spaces – especially regular users such as children, youth, and women. With collaborative and grounded methodology, the aim is to generate evidence that can inform policy recommendations for strengthening *Arivu Kendras* as inclusive public knowledge institutions.

Highlights of 2024 – 25

- **Comprehensive research design:**
Employed a multi-method approach, including policy and literature review, historical analysis, stakeholder interviews, field visits across all administrative divisions, and secondary data analysis on infrastructure, budget, and access.
- **Key thematic areas investigated by:**
 - Tracing *Arivu Kendras* transformation from the Department of Public Libraries to RDPR, including key milestones like the Oduva Belaku programme
 - Mapping decentralisation efforts, operational guidelines, and core philosophies driving the libraries
 - Studying decision-making processes for staffing, budgeting, and book procurement, including stakeholder roles at all levels
 - Analysing budget flows, district-wise allocations, and spending patterns on infrastructure and salaries
 - Documenting services like reading spaces, adolescent engagement, digital literacy, and regional usage diversity
 - Reviewing state and CSO-led capacity-building efforts such as the 100-Day Reading Campaign
 - Identifying mismatches between policy vision and practice, particularly in language diversity, accessibility, decentralised governance, and gender/inclusion-sensitive planning
 - Capturing the role of civil society in enhancing outreach, programming, and collaborative governance models with RDPR

Team

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Kumar Chandan Samal
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Protecting and Enhancing Early Childhood Development (ECD) in India



▲
Photo: Anita Ramesh

Domain ... Education, Health, Governance & Accountability, Public Finance
Funder UNICEF
Duration Aug 2022 – Sep 2024

This multi-state research and advocacy initiative focuses on improving public investment in Early Childhood Development (ECD) services in India for children aged 0–6 years. It promotes a Comprehensive and Responsive Model (CRM) rooted in five foundational principles – child rights, integration, inclusion, defeminisation of care work, and resilience. The model is informed by a landscape study, comprehensive costing exercise, and fieldwork across Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, and Kerala. It aims to guide policy planning, budgeting, and system reform to ensure accessible and high-quality ECD services across diverse contexts.



▲ Workshop in progress on early childhood education on building an ideal anganwadi at Neeti Habba, 2024.
Photo: Chethan Basavaraju

Highlights of 2024 – 25

- **Field Research and Costing Framework:**

The team completed a detailed costing analysis of 12 ECD models across three states and developed investment estimates for two quality standards – base-case and best-case to enable states to have a gradual approach for augmenting ECD services based on CRM recommendations. The findings revealed a need for 5–8 times increased per-child investment in UP and 4–6 times in Gujarat and Kerala for improved service quality.

- **Policy Engagements:**

The team held a state-level workshop in Lucknow in 2023 with participation from the Department of Women and Child Development (Uttar Pradesh), UNICEF, and civil society organisations. The workshop for national-level advocacy is planned for 2025–26.

- **Global Dissemination:**

A paper showcasing how CBPS operationalised abstract principles of quality into a scalable, state-led ECD model with a focus on marginalised communities, was accepted for presentation at The Education and Development Forum (UKFIET) Conference, 2025.

Team

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Gender Violence in Public Spaces: Studying the Approaches and Theorising the Pathways of Change



Domain Gender
Funder Ford Foundation
Duration Jul 2020 - Oct 2024

Engaging with women's use of public space is a critical lens to understand the experiences of equality and independence that are afforded to women. One of the ways to examine this level of equality and independence is to examine the nature and factors responsible for gendered violence in public spaces. Given that often these definitions do not emanate from women's own contexts of experiences, this project worked closely with three organisations – Doosra Dashak, Bhumika Women's Collective, and Society for Women's Action and Training Initiative – to understand the different ways in which women articulate their experiences in public spaces, and to document the complexity of actions that women take to assert their personhood in public spaces.

◀ Photo: Shruthi Gurumoorthy

Using the analytical framework for complex adaptive systems (CAS) and embedded ethnography, the team was able to collect observational and interactional data for two years in Telangana and Rajasthan to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of: (1) the varied and diverse definitions of gender violence in public spaces (GVPS), (2) the factors that are central in influencing GVPS, and (3) a framework for process indicators that can potentially track the manner in which social change can be enabled.

Highlights of 2024 – 25

- Thirteen workshops on the topic of - The Development and Utility of Process Indicators (PI) for Social Change, using Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS) - have been conducted in Karnataka, Telangana, Rajasthan, and Delhi, with over 54 stakeholders including funders, philanthropists, researchers, CSOs, community members, and students.
- Audio-visual materials curated in 2023-24 with women based in Telangana and Rajasthan as part of a workshop on creating visual stories, such as:
 - [Let's Play Power \(Ep. 1\)](#) and [Let's Play Power \(Ep. 2\)](#): a two-part podcast on the idea of power (in sociological understanding) when a direct translation of the word does not exist in Telugu (in Telugu with English subtitles available)
 - [Chavi](#): a podcast on what makes a good and a bad photo of self, from the eyes of the society (in Hindi)
 - [Dailiness of Violence](#) and [How She Moves](#): two short videos of women in Rajasthan sharing, in their own voices, their everyday experiences of violence in public spaces, and their relationship between their 'self' and the spaces they inhabit (in Hindi with English subtitles available)
 - ['Power' According to Me](#): a short story on what 'power' means to a determined woman from Telangana, in her own words (translated in English), as she asserts her freedom and agency to live the life she has built for herself. A postcard was also designed for the same.
 - [A set of postcards](#) designed using wall paintings by a woman from Telangana, as the paintings emerged from the pain as a young woman who married the love of her life shares her poignant story of a heart breaking in silence.

Team

Amukta Sistla
Niveditha Menon
Sridhar R Prasad
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Vidhi B Shah

Building an Alternate and Game-based Framework to Understand and Support Women Working in and Engaging with Public Spaces and Institutions



▲
Photo: Anita Ramesh

Domain	Gender and Livelihoods
Funder	Ford Foundation
Duration	Aug 2022 - Jul 2025

Rapid urbanisation, rising inequalities and the resulting lack of access to basic infrastructure in the Indian context have adversely impacted women working in public spaces. Despite working alongside each other in public spaces, solidarity between women from diverse backgrounds and occupations has not been very visible. This is true, especially in the countering of specific forms of exploitation, discrimination and gender-based violence that is particular to working within public spaces.

This project is aimed at understanding the experiences of women who work in public spaces in urban areas, particularly on streets, and designing a game-based toolkit grounded in this understanding. Four occupational groups – street vendors, sex workers, formal sanitation workers, and informal waste pickers – were chosen as the communities of interest for this project. The study is located in Bengaluru and Mumbai, to understand the contextual differences between two very different urban spaces.

Using contextual and community data as the foundation, the purpose of the toolkit that is being developed is to enable opportunities for women from these different professions to come together, articulate their needs, understand each other's experiences, and to recognise and build networks for long-term knowledge sharing and cooperation within the public space. It also aims to enhance the awareness and understanding of laws and policies and build vital pathways to access entitlements and public services. The larger objective is to foster long-term engagement across and within communities of informal women workers, as a first step towards building solidarity.

Highlights of 2024 – 25

- Four tools have been developed over the course of the last year, informed by the substantive literature review, policy mapping, and primary data collection undertaken by the team. The tools are oriented towards understanding communities' interactions with public spaces and policies, as well as their relationships with each other. The tools aim to capture communities' experiences and needs, with a focus on developing advocacy strategies emanating from the information gathered.
- As part of the process of tool development, the team participated in tool ideation, prototype testing, and review of the tool's functionalities and objectives. The tools have undergone multiple rounds of internal and community playtests in order to observe the mechanisms, gameplay, and outcomes. The playtests were conducted in Bengaluru and Mumbai, with participants from the four communities of informal waste pickers, formal sanitation workers, street vendors, and sex workers. One of the tools was also playtested at Neeti Habba.
- The team conducted community data collection in Mumbai, and visited the sites in which many of the participants worked. This process was undertaken in order to understand lived experiences of women informal workers in public spaces, their challenges, support systems, daily lives, and requirements. This data subsequently informed the tool development process.
- The team also conducted an extensive mapping of laws, policies, and schemes pertinent to the four communities to consolidate a framework of government-citizen engagement for relevant legislation. This exercise allowed the team to understand the policy landscape that communities were currently operating within, and the kinds of potential negotiations and actions that could be pursued for greater participation in policymaking.
- The team also created a set of hypotheses regarding diverse dimensions of solidarity, which helped inform a collective understanding of solidarity for the project's objectives.

Team

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Yasmin Rosammal Daniel

Details of the funds received for projects

Ongoing projects

Period	Name of the Project	Amount (INR)	Funder
Aug 2022 – Oct 2025	Building Alternate and Game-Based Framework to Understand and Support Women Working in and Engaging with Public Spaces and Institutions	4,50,52,160/-	Ford Foundation
Apr 2024 – May 2025	Improving Lives and Livelihoods by Building Women's Capacities in Craft	14,08,663/-	Commonwealth of Learning, Canada
Nov 2024 – Apr 2026	Study on Female Workforce Participation in Partnership with RNP	52,48,980/-	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
Dec 2024 – May 2026	Exploring Factors that Affect Workforce Participation Rate in Various States of India	50,00,000/-	Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies Foundation
Feb 2025	Ideation Workshop - Building Evidence between Heat and Mental Health for Women Working in Public Spaces	5,00,000/-	Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies Foundation
Feb 2025 – Jan 2026	Attainment of the Objectives of the Organization	50,00,000/-	Rashesh & Vidya Shah Family Foundation

Completed projects

Period	Name of the Project	Amount (INR)	Funder
Aug 2022 – Sep 2024	Protecting and Enhancing Early Childhood Development (ECD) during Covid-19 Crisis across the Indian States of Kerala, Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat	1,73,28,170/-	UNICEF India Country Office, New Delhi
Jun 2020 – Sep 2024	Gender Violence in Public Spaces: Studying the Approaches and Theorising the Pathways of Change	2,32,00,000/-	Ford Foundation
Jun 2023 – Jun 2024	Strengthening Decentralized Educational Planning under the Strengthening Teaching-Learning and Results for States Program (STARS)	12,28,800/-	The World Bank
Jun 2023 – Jun 2024	Strengthening Decentralized Educational Planning under the Gujarat Outcomes for Accelerated Learning (GOAL) Program	12,20,400/-	The World Bank

Centre for Budget and Policy Studies presents
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Neeti Habba ನೀತಿ ಹಬ್ಬ 2024

What is **Public** in Public Policy?
ಸಾರ್ವಜನಿಕ ನೀತಿಯಲ್ಲಿ **ಸಾರ್ವಜನಿಕ** ಎಂದರೇನು?



22 - 23 November 2024
22 - 23 ನವೆಂಬರ್ 2024



Infosys Science Foundation, Bengaluru
ಇನ್ಫೊಸಿಸ್ ಸೈನ್ಸ್ ಫೌಂಡೇಶನ್, ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು



Venue
Partner

www.cbps.in
[@cbpsblr](https://twitter.com/cbpsblr)

The Centre for Budget and Policy Studies (CBPS) hosted its flagship *Neeti Habba* - a Public Policy Festival at the Infosys Science Foundation in Bengaluru. Free and open to all, the two-day event drew over 150 participants from non-profit organisations, government bodies, universities, and research institutions.

This year's central theme was: *What is 'Public' in Public Policy?* Through workshops, performances, and conversations, the festival aimed to make policy ideas accessible, participatory, and meaningful for diverse audiences.



Keynote by Smt. Uma Mahadevan

The keynote address was delivered by Smt. Uma Mahadevan, IAS, Additional Chief Secretary and Development Commissioner, Government of Karnataka. She drew from her extensive administrative experience to discuss the journey from policy to action, with a focus on Empowering Communities for Food Security, Health, and Nutrition.

"The best policy is actually what works in practice. What works is what works for everybody, what works in an inclusive way, what works in a sensitive way, what works without intimidating different groups, what works without marginalising people, what brings people closer"

Smt. Uma Mahadevan, IAS, Additional Chief Secretary and Development Commissioner



Workshops, Games, and Conversations

The festival offered an immersive experience for participants through game-based multilingual workshops, hands-on activities, and audio-visual displays.

A workshop on Early Childhood Education - "Come, Let Us Build an Anganwadi" helped participants understand the real-world challenges of creating ideal early childhood centres. Workshops also explored social protection systems, the use of process indicators, and complex adaptive systems to address gender-based violence in public spaces.



A creative touch to understand policymaking came in the form of a familiar board game – Snakes and Ladders, where players learned about good and bad practices of gender-responsive budgeting while navigating the familiar board game. Conversation corners allowed field practitioners to share stories and insights directly with attendees.



"Our goal is to create open, diverse and accessible knowledge systems and to figure out what we collectively mean by inclusivity, diversity and equality, and putting them in action."

Niveditha Menon, Director, CBPS

Arts Meets Policy

Neeti Habba was also a celebration of expression. Performances across the two days included:

- A Feminist in Fragments, a music and spoken poetry piece by Urvija Priyadarshini (CBPS researcher)
- WePushTheSky, a play by Nisha Abdulla
- Santimi Pakshipurana and a reading of Bachchisu by Du Saraswathi
- Performative conversation by Rumi Harish

These acts added emotional depth to the festival, blending narrative, music, and theatre to highlight policy-related themes in everyday life.



Clockwise from top right: Urvija Priyadarshini, Rumi Harish, Du Saraswathi

All Photos: Chethan Basavaraju and Mahesh

CBPS Research Fellowship



▲
L to R: Ariyan Pal, Akshitha Unnithan,
Arvind Thadi [Research Fellows - Cohort
2024-25]. Photo: Anita Ramesh

The Research Fellowship found its origin in a conversation between senior researchers who envisioned a space for recent graduates to enter the world of public policy – not just as learners but as active contributors. The fellowship took shape in 2023 as a one-year initiative, as CBPS celebrated its 25th Anniversary.

Since its inception, the fellowship has nurtured young scholars to develop a public policy perspective while equipping them with research skills in the areas of education, gender, governance, health and nutrition, public finance, and livelihoods. The fellows work closely with each other and with the organisation's staff in a collegial and academically rigorous environment which also includes in-house talks, seminars, workshops, and public events.

Encouraged by the success of the inaugural cohort, CBPS welcomed the second batch of fellows in 2024 comprising three young promising scholars: Akshitha Unnithan, Arvind Thadi, and Ariyan Pal.

Testimonials from the Cohort of 2024-25

Akshitha Unnithan

I joined the research fellowship at CBPS with a simple goal: to learn to be a good researcher. What I have found here has been so much more. Although I have a long way to go before I can say that I am a “good researcher,” the fellowship has certainly given me a clearer sense of what to strive towards. Through the course of this year, I have been nurtured not just as a researcher, but also as a person – I have been encouraged to be critical of my own assumptions and to be inquisitive. Most importantly, I have been given the space to make mistakes and learn from them. This fellowship taught me what it means to do research that is not just rigorous and collaborative but also - joyful! At CBPS, I learned to find joy in the process and in the company of the people who are part of the process with me. I will forever be grateful for the opportunities I was provided, the lessons I have learned and the wonderful friendships I have forged here.

Arvind Thadi

I applied to the CBPS Research Fellowship in my final year, expecting to explore the applied social sciences and to work in the real world, outside of the university silo where I had spent much of my bachelor's degree. However, what I ended up gaining was much greater than what I had initially bargained for. While the factual knowledge I had gained from my project work is valuable, my time at CBPS helped me improve as a researcher - helping me develop my perspective, improving my understanding of interdisciplinarity, building a healthy appreciation for ‘process,’ and most importantly, giving me a taste of a work environment built around mutual respect and care, a feature often absent from many workspaces.

Ariyan Pal

It has almost been a year at CBPS, and I have nothing but gratitude for all the learning—right from the smallest moments of asking questions to the biggest of being part of an ideation workshop. CBPS as an organisation has never been afraid to step into new domains or areas of study. That is one thing that has helped me tremendously throughout my fellowship and in shaping my own perspective and thought process—I got to learn the ins and outs of research: from ideation to implementation, from a thought to an action. That is how I would sum up my fellowship journey at CBPS.

Abbreviations

3ie	International Initiative for Impact Evaluation
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AJWS	American Jewish World Service
APF	Azim Premji Foundation
APU	Azim Premji University
ATI	Administrative Training Institute, Mysuru
BWC	Bhoomika Women's Collective
CARE	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
C&S	Crafts and Skills
CAS	Complex Adaptive Systems
CBPS	Centre for Budget and Policy Studies
CHRI	Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative
CIVIC	Citizens' Voluntary Initiative for the City
CoL	Commonwealth of Learning
CRM	Comprehensive and Responsive Model
CRY	Child Rights and You
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
CV	Child Vulnerabilities
DAC	Decentralisation Analysis Cell
DES	Directorate of Economics and Statistics
DFID	Department for International Development
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EPF	Employees Provident Fund
ERC	Expenditure Reforms Commission
ESIC	Employees State Insurance Corporation
FCRA	Foreign Contribution Regulation Act
FED	Foundation for Education and Development
FPI	Fiscal Policy Institute
GBS	Gender Budget Statements
GDN	Global Development Network
GRB	Gender Responsive Budgeting
GSG	Gender Street Games
GVPS	Gender Violence in Public Spaces
GWFP	Gendered Workforce Participation
IAS	Indian Administrative Services
IBP	International Budget Partnership
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Services
ICSSR	Indian Council of Social Science Research
IDPMS (partner)	Indo Dutch Project Management Society
IDMPS	Initiatives for Development Through Participation of Marginalized Sections
IDRC	International Development Research Centre

IDS	Institute of Development Studies
IPEL	India Partnership for Early Learning
IFMR	Institute of Financial Management and Research
IIITB	International Institute of Information Technology, Bengaluru
IIM	Indian Institute of Management, Bengaluru
ISEC	Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bengaluru
ISST	Institute of Social Studies Trust, New Delhi
JEPC	Jharkhand Education Project Council
KAS	Karnataka Administrative Services
KLP	Karnataka Library Project
KMEA	Karnataka Monitoring and Evaluation Authority
KKRDB	Kalyana Karnataka Region Development Board
KSDA	Karnataka State Department of Agriculture
KSHSRC	Karnataka State Health System Resource Centre
LFPR	Labour Force Participation Rate
MAHE	Manipal Academy of Higher Education
MCC	Mysuru City Corporation
MoPR	Ministry of Panchayati Raj
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NFI	National Foundation of India
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NIAS	National Institute of Advanced Studies
NIAS-DST	National Institute of Advanced Studies - Department of Science and Technology
NUEPA	National University of Educational Planning and Administration
ODL	Open and Distance Learning
PBET	Purva Bharati Educational Trust
PHFI	Public Health Foundation of India
PI	Process Indicators
PRIs	Panchayat Raj Institutions
PSA	Participatory Safety Audit
PSEA	Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
RDPR	Rural Development and Panchayat Raj
RNP	Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies
SCERT	State Council of Educational Research and Training
SIRD	State Institute of Rural Development
SWATI	Society for Women's Action and Training Initiative, Gujarat
TEDT	Tata Education and Development Trust
TERI	The Energy and Resources Institute
ULB	Urban Local Bodies
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNU-WIDER	United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research
USAID	United States Agency for International Development



The Centre for Budget and Policy Studies (CBPS) is an independent, non-partisan, non-profit research institution in Bengaluru since 1998. We advocate for effective public policies in the areas of budget and public finance, governance, gender, health, education and livelihoods while adopting an interdisciplinary approach in all our work. Founded by academics, activists, and former civil servants, CBPS aims to create and share knowledge for a more empowered, equitable, and democratic society.

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