

# Institutions and Public Policy: CBPS 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations

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March 16-17, Bangalore

(Venue: National Institute of Advanced Studies - NIAS auditorium and conference hall, Bangalore)

Centre for Budget and Policy Studies, Bangalore ([www.cbps.in](http://www.cbps.in)) will be completing its 25<sup>th</sup> year in February of 2023. To celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of CBPS, we are hosting a 2-day conference titled *Institutions and Public Policy* on 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> March, 2023 in Bangalore. The objective of the conference is to explore the relationship between institutions and public policy, especially in relation to the following themes:

1. Independent institutions and policy discourse
2. Public space and gender violence
3. Education as a public good
4. Public finance and governance, including but not limited to:
  - a. Public expenditure, fiscal policy, processes and structure of public finance
  - b. Urban and rural governance, decentralization, and democratic processes
5. Health and social security, including, but not limited to:
  - a. Nutrition, healthcare, and public health
  - b. Livelihoods, income security, poverty, and migration.

Two plenary sessions, one **Inaugural** and one **Closing**, will focus on the first theme. Two parallel sessions each will be organised for the remaining four themes.

## Theme 1: Independent institutions and policy discourse

The **opening plenary** session titled ***Building and Sustaining Independent Institutions*** will primarily engage with the question of building independent institutions that can contribute towards building the democratic discourse of the country. Especially in a knowledge economy, where opinions start to diverge from facts, knowledge or context, the panel will address the importance of creating and sustaining local and national institutions that can build an engaged citizenry. Some of the questions raised would include: What is the role of the independent research institution? What are the challenges faced by these institutions? What are the potential strategies for sustainability and longevity of these institutions?

We will have a **keynote lecture** and an **invited panel discussion** in this inaugural session (16<sup>th</sup> March Morning).

The **closing plenary** on the second day titled: ***Role of Independent Institutions in policy discourse and delivery*** will deepen the conversation on Institutions and Public Policy. In this plenary, we hope to link the discussions in the parallel sessions to this theme and the discussions that would have taken place in the opening session.

We will again have a **keynote lecture** and an **invited panel discussion** in this closing plenary session (17<sup>th</sup> March afternoon).

## Themes 2: Public space and gender violence

Access to public spaces, viewed as a physical, cultural, economic and social space is crucial for the functioning of democratic processes. Especially for people in marginalised communities, they are often the source of informal labour, shelter, and food. At the same time, public spaces, especially for women, are spaces of exploitation, discrimination and violence. The experience of violence is not only restricted to experiences of violence, but also the fear of it. These experiences and fears not only affect a person's sense of self, but also has implications for accessing basic public utilities such as education, health, sanitations, and livelihoods.

In this context, we will explore the various dimensions of public space, the diversity of gender violence perpetrated within these public spaces, the gendered use of public spaces, the laws and rights that govern public spaces, the manner in which rurality and urbanity influence various experiences within public spaces, the relationship of masculinity in defining public spaces, the influence of public spaces on citizenship of marginalised groups, strategies employed by social groups to utilise the potential of public spaces, public spaces as spaces of resistance, leisure, and joy, and the institutional process / impact of public spaces. The focus of this theme largely lies in exploring the nature, definition and relationship between public spaces and gender violence

## Theme 3: Education as a public good

When education is administered as an empowering process by which children learn to question, to think and to act, it has the potential to be truly transformative. In fact, the notion of education as a public good is based on the foundational principle that the State has the primary responsibility in providing and funding educational opportunities to all. But we all know that this principle is being increasingly diluted and challenged by the current trends of privatisation and marketisation of education. In the light of increased polarisation of social values, the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on educational outcomes, as well as the changes in educational policies, we have to understand the governance of education as a public good in this changing context.

Here, we will explore the aspects of diversity and pluralism in education, importance of or changing processes of value-based education, inclusion of critical thinking pedagogies and curricula, addressing or challenges of teacher autonomy and independence, incorporating equality in education, the promise, use and failures of ICTs in education, the impact of privatisation of schooling and the proliferation of training centres, the progress, gaps and options for improving access to education, understanding new and old forms of inclusion and exclusion within education, the reframing of education as lifelong learning processes, the pitfalls, challenges, and potential of institutional autonomy and accountability, mapping quality, equity and inclusion, and the importance of integrative education among others.

## Theme 4: Public finance and governance

A central aspect of governance that is often simultaneously overstudied and overlooked is public finance. While 'budgets' are often a central site of popular and public discourse, the structure and processes of public finance are largely ignored. Understanding governing institutions and actions, decision-making in the government, the fiscal health of various governing bodies, the flow of funds and the political economy of the budget is central to democratic processes and practice. The importance of budget as a crucial tool for analysing and assess the functioning of various levels of government cannot be understated. Moreover, the manner in which governing mechanisms are able to translate the political manifestos into priorities within the government is central to the foundational principles of democracy and accountability. Governance, in other words, is closely linked with functions, funds and functionaries, all of which are the central to public finance and governance.

The themes related to public finance and governance, therefore, focuses on the institutional processes and structures that are related to public expenditure, fiscal policy, processes and structures of public finance, understanding the dynamism of urban and rural governance, the importance of decentralisation in governing, and the centrality of democratic processes in public finance and governance. More specific themes can include: autonomy in decision-making in institutional structures, relationship between local and administrative governing bodies, usage and management of citizen data, various challenges and strategies related to resource generation and service delivery mechanisms, the relationship between governance and decentralisation, and analysis of various planning budgetary and implementation processes.

## Theme 5: Health and social security

Understanding the functioning of public institutions and social security / protection systems is a central aspect of analysing public policies. These analyses provide an insight into the ways that public services and utilities such as health, water, sanitation, transportation is central to state-defined development goals. Through our understanding of the provisioning of these public service and social protection systems, we can understand the landscape of human, social, and infrastructural resource deficiencies as well as the implications of such deficiencies. Moreover, understanding public services and utilisation allows us to understand the role, importance and implications of unequal distribution of resources and social inclusion. The manner in which resilience and vulnerability is shaped by and corresponds to systems of social protection, social security and public services and therefore, they are often at the core of most public policy research.

In keeping with the centrality of this theme, we will explore aspects of nutrition, health care, public health, livelihoods, income security, poverty and migration in conversation with institutions and public policy. More specifically, papers can concentrate on: the impact, influence, and chimera of social protection schemes and policies, the perils and potential of migration, the vulnerabilities of informal labour markets, the influence of demonetisation and Covid-19 pandemic on precarious livelihoods, the impact and

response of the healthcare systems, disaster preparedness and response, resilience and coping strategies of vulnerable populations, equity in social protection schemes, and decentralisation and accountability practices in public utilities and institutions.

**Themes 2 and 3 will be two parallel sessions on the 16<sup>th</sup> March afternoon and themes 4 and 5 will be two parallel sessions on the 17<sup>th</sup> March morning.**

The format for each of these four sessions will be as described below:

- a. One invited expert speaker**
- b. Three papers from young scholars**

We are soliciting three papers from young scholars on each of these four themes. We will include two external papers and an internal paper based on CBPS research in respective areas to create a panel on each of these themes.