



Independent observer
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ELECTIONS HELD FOR CIVIL SOCIETY REPRESENTATIVES ON INDIA CCM

Earlier this year, the India CCM organised elections to fill the eight seats on the CCM allocated to civil society organisations (CSOs). This marked the first time that CSO representatives were elected to the India CCM. Some CSOs expressed concerns about some parts of the process.

This article describes the elections process and the outcome.

Background

There are currently 40 seats in the India CCM (up from 33 previously). Eight of the seats are allocated to CSOs, broken out into the following constituencies: organisations working on HIV/AIDS (two seats), organisations working on TB (two seats), organisations working on malaria (one seat), organisations working on gender issues (one seat), organisations working on issues of sexual minorities (one seat), and organisations working on issues of child development and rights (one seat). (The NGO and FBO sectors are lumped to together in this allocation.)

In addition, three seats are allocated to representatives of organisations of persons living with the diseases, one for each disease. (The selection of the representatives of people living with the diseases was not included in this elections process. A separate elections process was used for the selection of the representative of persons living with HIV/AIDS. The representatives for the other two diseases appear to have been appointed by the CCM, based on recommendations from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.)

The terms of the “old” members of the CCM were to have ended in March 2009. Recently, the CCM went

through a reconstitution process; for details, see GFO 108, available at www.aidspace.org/gfo.

The elections process

In January 2009, the CCM formed an Election Sub-Committee to oversee the selection process. The Sub-Committee included representatives from USAID, UNAIDS and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The Sub-Committee met five times in February-March 2009.

As well, the CCM decided to hire an outside agency (an “Elections Management Agency”) to conduct the elections electronically. Requests for expressions of interest were sent out. The Elections Sub-Committee developed terms of reference (TORs) for the Elections Management Agency. Eleven agencies were invited to send expressions of interest. Three responded. One of them could not attend an in-person meeting, so the Sub-Committee weighed the strengths and weaknesses of the other two, and selected the Health Institute for Mother and Child (MAMTA).

In order to pay for the elections, the CCM requested and received permission to reallocate \$12,750 in the CCM operating budget funded by the Global Fund.

A registration drive was initiated to identify CSOs that would be eligible to vote in the elections; over 3,000 organizations were contacted. Various help lines were set up to answer the queries of the CSOs regarding the election process, and to help CSOs to register and vote; and telecalling was undertaken to mobilise CSOs to contest the elections and to vote.

In order to undertake what the CCM termed “a fair, transparent and open election process,” an election website was launched on 9 March 2009. (The website is no longer functioning.) The following information was available on the website: generic information on the elections, the elections schedule, information on how to register for elections, a list of organisations eligible to stand for elections, eligibility criteria for contestants, voting numbers, and a description of the voting process. Links to the elections website were included on the websites of the National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO), the Revised National TB Control Programme (RNTCP) and the National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme (NVBDCP), as well as all six networks of MAMTA. In order to participate in the voting, CSOs had to register on the elections website.

The elections website said that the CCM Election Sub-Committee “will be managing and monitoring the whole process and will ensure the transparency in the election process. In case of any conflicts of interest, the Election Sub-Committee will take the final decision.” CSOs were provided with an email address for submitting queries about the elections process.

In order to stand for election, CSOs had to meet certain criteria and they had to submit supporting documents. The process was as follows: (a) the CSO expressed an interest in standing; (b) the CSO was contacted by MAMTA concerning the documents it had to submit; (c) the documents had to be submitted to the CCM Secretariat by 29 March 2009; and (d) the CCM Elections Sub-Committee reviewed the documents and decided which ones met the eligibility criteria. Those CSOs deemed ineligible had a right to appeal to the CCM Elections Sub-Committee.

A list of eligible voters and a list of eligible candidates was published on the elections website by 2 April 2009. Brief profiles of the eligible candidates were posted on the website by that same date. Eligible voters received voting numbers on 5-6 April (via the website and email).

In all, 1,636 CSOs registered to vote in the elections, and 547 CSOs registered to contest the elections, of which 102 submitted the necessary documents as per the eligibility criteria established for each constituency. Of these 102 CSOs, initially 32 candidates were found eligible to contest the eight seats. Four of the CSOs that were deemed not eligible to stand for election launched an appeal. One of the

appeals was successful, meaning that there were a total of 33 candidates eligible to contest the seats.

The results

The successful candidates were as follows: HIV/AIDS:India HIV/AIDS Alliance, and Solidarity and Action Against the HIV Infection in India. TB:Ramakrishna Mission, and Swiss Emmaus Leprosy Relief Work. Malaria:Caritas India. Gender:Society for Social Uplift Through Rural Action (SUTRA). Sexual minorities: Suraksha WRHCP. Child development and rights:Vasavya Mahila Mandali.

The results were scheduled to be announced on the website on 13 April 2009, but the announcement was delayed until 1 May, possibly because of the need to obtain CCM endorsement first.

Civil society concerns

Although some CSOs said that the CCM had genuinely attempted to ensure that the elections process was transparent, some concerns were expressed about the selection of the Elections Management Agency; about the fact that voting was entirely electronic (i.e., using the internet), even though many CSOs in India do not have ready access to the internet; about the fact that the announcement of the results was delayed with no communication concerning the delay; and about the fact – according to some – that NACO dominated the process.

This article is based primarily on information provided by the CCM Secretariat and information on the CCM's election website. This website is no longer functioning, but the results of the election are posted on the CCM's website at www.india-ccm.org.

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