

6.3 Reaching the entire population

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands has only one major newspaper and that is printed and published in Hindi and English by the UT Administration. There are very few private newspapers and these all have almost negligible circulation and that too in the Port Blair area. The services of All India Radio (AIR) is limited and there is no FM channel, Doordarshan, Port Blair is live for only two hours every day. Very few people watch the local cable channel.

The most powerful medium of communication is National Television and all the mainland channels are extremely popular.

In this situation, it becomes very difficult to reach out to every member of the population and to disseminate messages. Thus while the total electorate was only 268940, there seemed to be no avenue to reach all of them and share communication materials.

This issue was discussed at length and it was decided to learn from the practices which were prevalent decades ago in many states when the travelling artists used to be the main method of communicating information and spreading vital messages as they travelled from village to village.

Therefore, the SVEEP team evolved, a very grass roots based strategy through the **VATAN** that is, **Voters Awareness Team for Andaman and Nicobar**

Five Master Trainers were identified and given training and orientation at Port Blair. Four of them then moved out to the other districts and in association with the DEOs they setup VATAN teams comprising local performing artists, college students and volunteers. These teams performed street plays, sung songs and encouraged people to come out and vote. The VATAN teams covered all the Polling Station areas in this UT. They distributed leaflets and interacted with the locals and moved from place to place, just like the nautankis and jattras of decades ago.

Under SVEEP, the media plan included printing and distribution of leaflets, inserts in newspapers, radio jingles and TV spots on voter awareness on Doordarshan and Cable TV as well as hoardings and special songs for the occasion. It was for the first time that such a media plan was done in these islands and it was hugely appreciated.