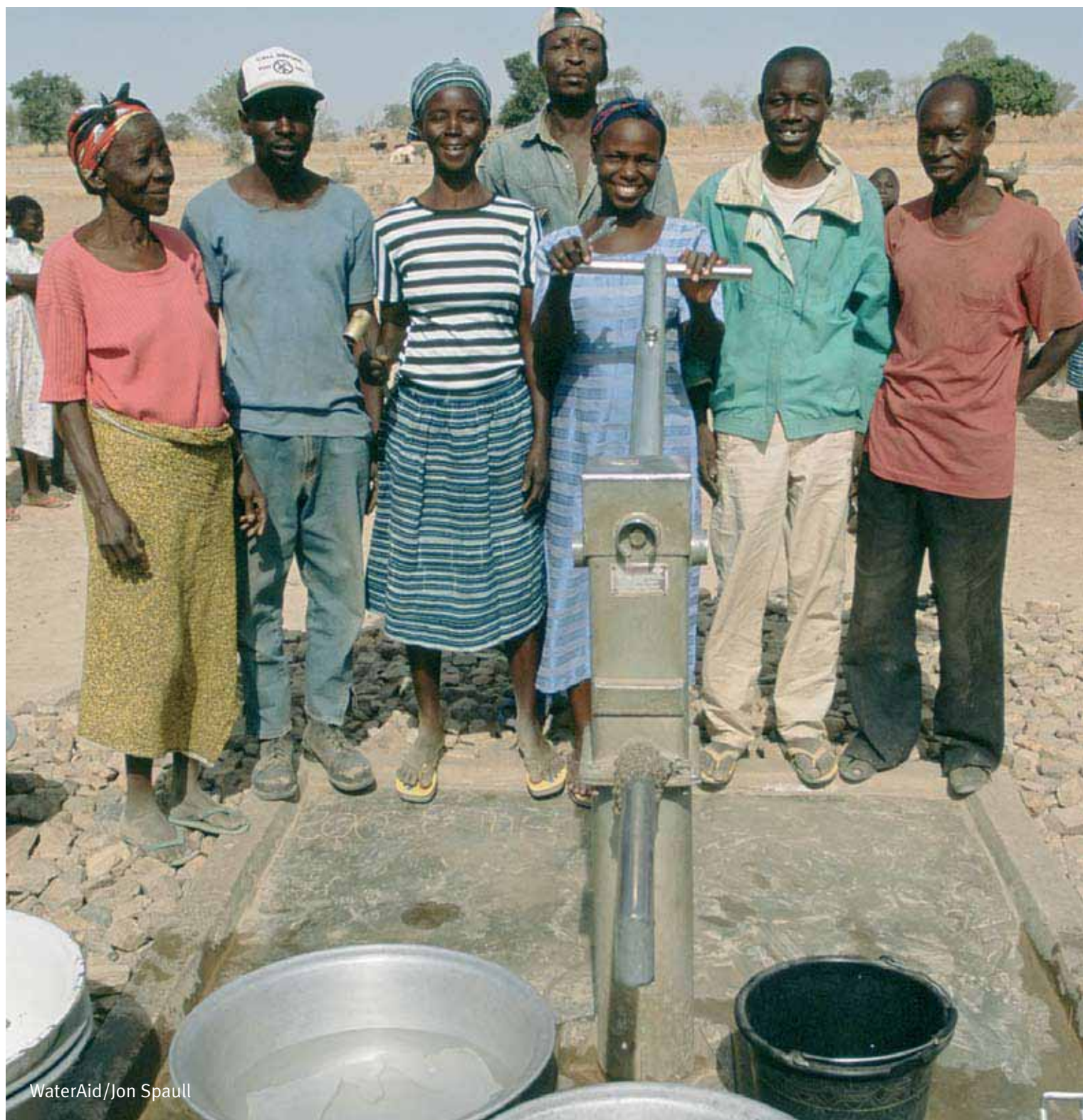


# Stepping into action

The second report on *Citizens' Action* for accountability in water and sanitation





**Photo:** A clean, safe water supply is a basic human right.

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This report is an update to WaterAid's report *Bridging the gap: Citizens' Action for accountability in water and sanitation*, published in March 2006.

Copies of both reports can be downloaded from  
**[www.wateraid.org/citizensaction](http://www.wateraid.org/citizensaction)**

** WaterAid**

WaterAid's mission is to overcome poverty by enabling the world's poorest people to gain access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene education

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# 1 Introduction

This report details how *Citizens' Action* initiatives have empowered poor communities in developing countries to assert their demand for equitable, sustainable water and sanitation services, and work with service providers on developing action plans to achieve this. Using the *Citizens' Action* approach poor people have been given a voice and have succeeded in making public authorities address issues of inadequate water and sanitation provision.

## The need for *Citizens' Action*

Despite being acknowledged as basic human rights, currently 1.1 billion people in the world lack access to a safe water supply, and 2.6 billion lack adequate sanitation.

A lack of water and sanitation spans a range of service experiences. In many remote rural locations access to safe water can be close to zero, with the vast majority of the population having to collect water from unprotected sources. In cities, many people living in informal slum settlements also lack official water and sanitation services. However, some can access water via informal connections to the city water supplies or by paying vendors inflated prices for water of dubious quality.

Some poor urban communities have official water connections, but are still not immune to shortage and hardship due to the poor quality of water and irregular service they receive from failing utilities. In many cities the mains water supply system is only active for a couple of hours a day.

In Africa a total of 40 billion hours is spent fetching water every year. The heaviest burden is carried by women in particular. The burden is literal. It

involves carrying loads of up to 20 kilograms of water for sometimes kilometres. But it is also a burden on livelihoods. Girl children are frequently denied an education because of water-fetching labour, while women are unable to work to earn money or grow food because of the time spent walking to fetch water in rural areas or waiting in queues for the intermittent water supply to flow in urban slum areas.

As for sanitation, in rural areas a lack of latrines usually means that communities defecate openly in secluded areas of vegetation. In cities, where there are fewer places to hide, many people use plastic bags inside the home which are then thrown away in the street, a practice which has earned the name 'flying toilets.' The unsafe disposal of human waste leads to the contamination of water sources and food with deadly diarrhoeal diseases that kill 5,000 children a day.

It is government's responsibility to ensure that every citizen has access to sufficient, affordable, safe water and adequate sanitation within an accessible time and distance. It is not necessary for government itself to deliver water and sanitation services, but it has a duty to oversee the sector to ensure these basic needs of its people are met.



WaterAid/Marco Betti

**Photo:** 1.1 billion people rely on unsafe water sources.

WaterAid believes that improving water and sanitation services is dependent on the capability of governments and their responsiveness to citizens' needs and demands for safe water and effective sanitation. *Citizens' Action* was developed as a means to develop citizens' 'voice' and empower people to play an active role in highlighting the deficiencies of current service provision.

### **Civil society's response to the water and sanitation crisis**

Civil society is responding to the water and sanitation crisis through growing activism aimed at securing improvements to services. Through various activities new alliances are being created, for example between:

- water and sanitation civil society organisations (CSOs), trade unions and public utility managers
- water and sanitation CSOs, environmental CSOs and consumer associations
- rights-based groups, public interest advocates and water and sanitation groups

### **What is *Citizens' Action*?**

WaterAid launched *Citizens' Action* in 2005 as a contribution towards the UN's Water for Life decade. The essence of *Citizens' Action* is helping communities to understand governments' water and sanitation policies and plans and the level of water and sanitation services to which they are entitled, and supporting them in engaging with public authorities to plan how services can be improved. The aim is to provide poor and marginalised groups with sufficient information, evidence and confidence to be able to advocate for themselves.

The initiatives bring citizens, public authorities and service providers together in active and participatory decision-making processes regarding the design, implementation and monitoring of policy and service provision. The initiatives aim to

institutionalise accountability mechanisms and ensure that the resulting improvements in services are sustainable through ongoing dialogue, information provision, progress monitoring of action plans and commitment from all stakeholders to work together.

## The main ingredients

For any group to obtain a service to which they are entitled, they need to fully understand how the current service provision is failing. In the case of *Citizens' Action* for safe water and sanitation, this means answering three basic questions:

1. **What is the service like now?** This means gathering information to yield a community-wide picture of prevailing service levels.

2. **What should it be?** Are there standards, either through right, legislation, decrees or policies, against which the picture gathered above can be compared, measured and described?

3. **Who is responsible for providing it?** What agency has been given the responsibility of meeting needs – a local government, utility, community body, private sector body – or some combination?

Once local people have this data and analysis (information), they are in a position to inform public authorities and service providers of the gaps in service delivery and recommend solutions to bridging those gaps. The ultimate goal of *Citizens' Action* is to gain agreement between all relevant parties to deliver higher quality, more reliable and responsive public services

**Photo:** Poor sanitation spreads diarrhoeal diseases that kill nearly 5,000 children a day.



WaterAid/Abir Abdullah

and to implement pro-poor policies ensuring that the needs of the poorest and marginalised are taken fully into consideration.

### The first steps to a *Citizens' Action* movement

This report describes the context, achievements, hopes, limitations and scope for improvement of *Citizens' Action* initiatives under way in various countries. From a concept that generated enthusiasm but

had not been tried, *Citizens' Action* has grown through the efforts of disparate communities, assisted by local organisations, in many countries across sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia to become an embryonic movement of real promise.

The types of *Citizens' Action* described in this report do not comprise a full picture of all possible types of action; they are merely those which have been chosen so far. There will be many other types undertaken and methodologies will be adapted to context and culture.



## 2 Scoring service provision

The first step of *Citizens' Action* is for communities to assess the current service provision. A range of methods of rating or scoring services has emerged in recent years. Within *Citizens' Action* initiatives, considerable experience has been built in Community Scorecards, on which this section concentrates. However, Community Scorecards have some limitations, which have been tackled in an emerging methodology, Citizens' Report Cards, outlined later in the chapter.

### Community Scorecards

Community Scorecards have become an established method of local people presenting the case for service improvement to public service providers. The process involves community members scoring the aspects of service delivery they find important in a structured way, providing reasoning, while allowing for differences of view between groups within the community to be articulated.

A key to the success of Community Scorecards is their simplicity and transferability in diverse contexts. The necessity for the community to engage in dialogue with service providers in a structured and managed way reduces the scope for unproductive confrontation, and develops a basis for a constructive dialogue with officials.

The scoring system means that there is a yardstick which is visible, easily understandable and capable of being revisited when the community wishes to reassess service provision. The outline of the process is available in publications by WaterAid<sup>1</sup> and others.<sup>2</sup>

#### Method

The Community Scorecards method has two distinguishing features.

Firstly, the community is the unit of analysis, establishing the key unit of accountability at the local level. In this respect, it differs from conventional surveys which use individuals as the unit. Second, there must be a definite and almost immediate feedback mechanism built in. This is done by means of an 'interface meeting' between the service users and the providers and ongoing monitoring of the action plan thereafter.

The steps generally followed by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are:

- **Organisation of community engagement** – meeting with leaders and community members, sometimes in groups, to discuss the concept and main issues in setting up the activities. The intended outcome is clarity, agreement, buy-in and support for the process.
- **Development of an 'input tracking matrix'** – this is a summary, generally compiled by the NGO working with the community, of the items that local people should be made aware of, including policies, budgets for different programmes, outputs envisaged and achieved, costs and contracts. At this stage, a statement of community entitlements as identified by national

1 See examples of *Citizens' Action Tools and Methodologies*, on WaterAid's website at [www.wateraid.org/citizensaction](http://www.wateraid.org/citizensaction)

2 See for example *Community Scorecards: a Tool for Accountability and Information Flow* by Robinson Orozco Associates, at [www.roboroz.ca/scorecard/index.html](http://www.roboroz.ca/scorecard/index.html)

or local decrees, policies, reports or statements is compiled into short information briefs and shared with community members.

less defensive discussion with the community, where the service providers are able to set out their position more clearly.

- **Community scoring of performance** – here the community discusses, with women certainly and perhaps other marginalised people in their own groups, their experience of the services provided, as compared with the inputs that should be provided (from the previous part of the exercise) and the services they would like to receive. They then score the services against a ranking on a three or five point scale.
- **Preparation for community engagement** – the scores are compared against the input matrix and discussions are held on how to organise a meeting at which the discrepancies can be brought to the attention of the service provider: who to invite, what tactics should be used at the meeting, what the desired outcomes should be etc.
- **Provision of self-evaluation scorecard** – this is not done in every case but is useful. Service providers are asked to score their own service provision, using the input matrix prepared for the community. The benefits of this step include a
- **Interface meeting between community and service providers** – the findings and assessments are presented by each side and an action plan to address and improve the situation is discussed.
- **District Multi-Stakeholder Forum** – if a number of community interface meetings are held then it is useful to bring them together in a district forum attended by community representatives, service providers, local government and policy makers to cement local action plans to address the issues raised. If such mechanisms can be scaled up and replicated across one or more districts, this can be useful in spreading the word and obtaining interest and buy in from regional officials, members of parliament or even ministers.
- **Mechanism for follow-up on recommendations and actions** – every action plan developed by the communities should include follow-up mechanisms that institutionalise citizens' engagement in planning and in monitoring service provision.

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## Case study **Community Scorecards in Nigeria**

**Location:** Yelwan Durr, Dass Local Government Area, Bauchi State, north-east Nigeria.

**Context:** A poor rural community without access to safe water.

**The process:** A pilot Community Scorecard exercise held in Yelwan Durr revealed that the community had not benefited from any projects implemented by Dass Local Government Authority (LGA). According to the supply information, the LGA had plans to drill boreholes in every ward before the end of 2006 and had accomplished this in most of the wards, but Yelwan Durr was not reached due to lack of funds.

**Photo:** A table of the community's scores for different aspects of the water service in Yelwan Durr, Nigeria.



The photo shows a man in the foreground holding a large, hand-drawn table. The table is titled 'YELWAN DURR COMM. AVERAGE SCORES (2012)'. It lists seven indicators with their corresponding average scores. The background shows a group of people sitting on the ground in an outdoor setting, likely a community meeting.

S/NO	INDICATOR	AVERAGE SCORES
1	AVAILABILITY	- 1.5
2	DISTANCE (250M)	- 1.4
3	VOLUME (45 LITERS)	- 2.0
4	TIME (15 MIN)	- 1.3
5	COLOR	- 1.1
6	TASTE	- 1.0
7	ODOUR	- 1.0

**The results:** The chairman of the LGA reported that the *Citizens' Action* experience had raised awareness within the LGA of the need to set up a Water and Sanitation Unit (WASU). Despite the limited funding available, this has now been constituted and has its own bank account, into which the LGA makes monthly deposits.

The community members also secured the LGA's agreement to undertake the following activities, all of which have now been implemented:

1. Rehabilitation of a broken borehole in the village centre
2. Acceleration of the electrification scheme
3. Construction and equipping of a maternity centre

The people of Yelwan Durr report being happy with the outcome of the *Citizens' Action* and are now building on the experience to call on the government to provide them with good roads and more improved water, sanitation and hygiene promotion facilities.

*"We thought it was a big joke but we thank God that we are better off with these facilities that have been put in place as a result of the Citizens' Action."*  
Hussaini Madaki and Yunusa Bawa, community leaders, Yelwan Durr

**Key lessons:**

- Adequate training and follow up by the facilitator is required to build their understanding of the process. Community members also need adequate

training to help them understand the scoring process. The training should be factored into resource allocations

- Momentum needs to be maintained, eg community leaders should continue to engage with LGA officials to monitor progress and participate in joint advocacy activities
- The unit of scoring and analysis should be standardised for the community and LGA to make the interface meeting less contentious
- If possible, local representatives of state level actors (Ministry of Local Government, State Planning Commission, State Executive and Legislatures) should be involved in the interface meeting in addition to the key players of the community and service provider. These state actors control LGA budgets and their presence at the meeting provides an advocacy opportunity for putting the case forward for increased funding flows to the LGAs

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## Case study **Community Scorecards in Bangladesh**

**Location:** 27 villages in Jahanabad Union, Bangladesh.

**Context:** A rural population of 26,400 people, comprised of 6,700 households, half of whom are considered very poor.

**The process:** A *Citizens' Action* project using Community Scorecards started in Jahanabad in early 2006. The process began with Village Education Resource Centre (VERC), the NGO that initiated the Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) approach, sharing the idea of community assessments of service providers' performance with all 84 community-based Water and Sanitation Action Committees (WACs) functioning in Jahanabad.

A group of WAC leaders met with all the area's water and sanitation service providers and secured their agreement to the proposal of communities assessing the current status of water and sanitation service provision and identifying areas for improvement. The parties represented at the meeting included the Union Parishad (UP), which is the lowest tier of local government in rural Bangladesh and has direct responsibility for water and sanitation service provision, and the Department of Public Health Engineering, which is responsible for ensuring there is adequate service provision and is directly responsible for repairs.

The citizens began their assessment by selecting an 18-member Core Group (generally community spokespersons) and 32 Community Volunteers to lead and implement the process respectively. The volunteers were democratically selected by the community including the WAC leaders. Some of the volunteers were selected from WACs and some from the communities.

A paper called *Odhikar Potro*<sup>3</sup> on community rights and entitlements was developed by VERC to outline some key government commitments for improved

<sup>3</sup> *Odhikar Potro* was written in Bangla and is available from WaterAid in Bangladesh – visit [www.wateraid.org/bangladesh](http://www.wateraid.org/bangladesh) for contact details.

service provision in general and to the poorer segment in particular. This assisted the Core Group members in setting the performance assessment criteria. The Community Volunteers were then trained in facilitating community sessions and filling out Community Scorecards.

The Community Volunteers conducted 279 Community Scorecard sessions that directly involved every household, and prepared a synthesis report of the assessment, which showed that:

- 2,074 households assessed that the UP had never provided any water supply service to them, while 588 assessed the UP's performance on existing service provision as poor
- 2,689 households assessed that the Department of Public Health Engineering never approached them for tubewell repair services

**Results:** The Core Group publicly shared the synthesis report with all the service providers at a union-wide interface meeting. The atmosphere at the interface meeting was mixed. The UP Chairman reacted negatively at first, but eventually committed to improving the service in the next fiscal year.

On the basis of the meeting, a joint action plan was developed to improve water and sanitation services, especially for the poor. The UP committed to allocating four deep tubewells to the deprived communities identified in the process and the Department of Public Health Engineering committed to repairing all the non-functioning tubewells in the coming months.

Community spokespersons are now lobbying the providers to get seats in their policy fora and influence the local decisions in favour of their community, especially the poor.

**Photo:** Regular maintenance of handpumps is important to keep them in good working order.



*“I filled out a Scorecard the day before yesterday. I can’t read and write but my son helped me. All of my neighbours gathered at our courtyard. Our neighbour asked us whether we were willing to make such a scoring. Many of us were a bit hesitant for a while, but I stood up first. When I started doing that, I saw all my neighbours joining me. We listed down our own judgements about the water and sanitation services provided so far by the UP, DPHE, Barind Development Authority and NGOs such as VERC, BRAC, CCDB and Shotophul Bangladesh. We also suggested about how they should improve their services... I really liked doing this”*

Monowara Bibi, aged 45, Uttar Para, Jahanabad Union, Bangladesh

*“The assessment criteria included service availability and satisfaction relating to water supply, hygienic latrines, solid and water waste management and hygiene promotion. These were set by the Core Group members in a meeting. They are leading the process. They sent us to VERC’s Mohonpur office for training. We learnt how to talk with a group of villagers and what to talk about with them. We also learnt what a Community Scorecard is and how to facilitate the villagers filling out the Scorecard. Now I am running the community sessions. I am excited to see my neighbours filling up the cards with huge enthusiasm. It also made us think a lot about how we can use these assessments”*

Imran Ali, Community Volunteer, aged 22, Moddho Para, Jahanabad union

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## Case study **Community Scorecards in Ghana**

**Location:** Afram Plains District, Ghana.

**Context:** The Afram Plains is one of the country’s poorest, most remote and most marginalised districts.

**The process:** Entitled “Akunta Bubu” which means ‘accountability’ in the Ewe language, the exercise focused on empowering local authorities and communities to monitor the quality of water, sanitation and hygiene service delivery with respect to achieving targets of the Local Millennium Development Goals (LMDGs). The initiative aimed to:

- Initiate and sustain a process of regular dialogue whereby citizens and service providers could discuss equity in the allocation of resources
- Identify key advocacy issues related to factors likely to affect the achievement of targets for the LMDGs in the water and sanitation sector
- Motivate communities to become proactive about projects in their localities and source funds for their own development

- Enable service providers and the community to assess the situation, identify shared indicators for achieving the LMDGs and plan a way forward for improving service delivery to the poor

The following steps were taken:

In August 2006 a one day sensitisation meeting was organised between coordinating NGO Afram Plains Development Organisation (APDO) and service providers including heads of departments, Area Council Executives, Assembly Members and others. The objectives, purpose and activities of the *Citizens' Action* exercise were explained to the participants, along with a description of the role service providers would be expected to play. A key outcome of the forum was that participants developed and agreed on criteria for the selection of communities for the community engagement process.

Area Council Executives selected ten communities from five Area Councils in the District and meetings were held in each participating community to inform them about the project and the role of the community.

Training on the use of the Community Scorecard was given to 15 facilitators comprising extension staff of local government departments and community members who already had knowledge and skills in the use of participatory tools. The five-day training workshop involved demonstrations and field practice of the community scorecard tool in one community.

In the actual community engagement in October and November 2006, a team of facilitators took the target communities through the process, ensuring men, women and children were represented in different focus groups. They sought the communities' perceptions on whose responsibility it was to ensure that they have good quality water and sanitation services, and helped them to develop parameters for assessment of their water and sanitation services.

The communities selected to use the parameters of availability, access, transparency, reliability, quality and satisfaction, and recorded their scores against these criteria, backed up with reasoning including evidence and personal anecdotes.

APDO then engaged water, sanitation and hygiene promotion service providers in assessing their own performance. A Self-assessment Scorecard was developed, which involved local service providers attributing scores and reasons against indicators they generated themselves.

An interface meeting was held between the community and the service providers to provide feedback on the Community Scorecards and the service providers' Self-assessment Scorecards.

#### **Problems identified:**

- The exercise revealed that most communities still do not have access to potable water. It was observed that many of the existing boreholes that are being counted by service providers as sources of potable water are not functioning, either due to serious breakdown or loss of yield

- Hygiene and sanitation services are tied to the provision of water supply and so communities lacking potable water also lack sanitation and hygiene services
- Water, sanitation and hygiene service delivery in the district is skewed towards one part of the district. The interface meeting highlighted that the Dwarf Island area had not benefited from any service in terms of access to potable water and does not have any sewer providers
- There is poor collaboration among service providers in terms of planning, monitoring and evaluation of water, sanitation and hygiene projects. This was made evident by the variation in the indicators presented by the service providers in their Self-assessment Scorecards
- Communities are not involved in the planning of water supply projects but rather are only enrolled at the implementation stage of projects in the name of community ownership and management

**Photo:** A lack of safe water has left many people in rural Ghana blind from trachoma.



**Results:** While access to potable water, sanitation and hygiene services in the Afram Plains District remains a great challenge, a dialogue has now been opened between communities and service providers to address the situation together. Service providers and communities had been largely ignorant of their counterparts' major concerns and constraints. The interface session in particular created a platform for both sides to understand and appreciate one another's efforts. They also came to realise their responsibilities.

An agenda for change was agreed upon through action planning on the recommendations that both sides had made independently. The interface meeting also established that as much as communities have the right to demand accountability from service providers, they also have the responsibility to contribute to and support water and sanitation programmes. A common understanding was reached as to the roles and responsibilities of every stakeholder that would lead to the desired improved service delivery.



## Community Scorecards: overall implications

Community Scorecards represent a transparent method of stimulating community-wide knowledge about the condition of service levels, entitlements and how to appeal for improved services. One of their benefits is that they generate increased engagement between the community, its representatives and the officials who are meant to serve it, in a process that can be managed with sensitivity.

While Community Scorecards (at least in the experience of those associated with *Citizens' Action* work supported by WaterAid) have been implemented mainly in rural areas, the process is being embarked upon in Bangladesh's capital city Dhaka too. However, the direct scoring method, where individuals record their own scores, as against alternative methods where they are aggregated or represented, may present challenges within larger communities in urban areas. The process can be successfully scaled up by concurrently running several processes across a district, rather than increasing the size of one operation.

Ultimately what matters is whether the action generates better services and whether this level of engagement can be sustained after the initial enthusiasm has waned. It is important that Community Scorecards are not implemented as a one-off approach. To sustain momentum, mechanisms need to be developed so that community leaders can continuously engage with the service providers to monitor the implementation of agreements.

## Report Cards

Report Cards came from a quantitative research exercise carried out by trained market research personnel, who interview a sample of residents about their experience and perception of suppliers. These are like opinion polls, or structured market research exercises.

The data from all the interviews is entered into a database and subjected to a standard statistical analysis package, then set out in a publicly digestible format. The summary of key findings – the 'Report Card' – is disseminated, generally by newspapers or other media outlets, who may identify those responsible for poor performance and seek promises of better services.

Considerable success with the use of Report Cards on water services has been generated in India and elsewhere. They have also been used to assess the state's performance in delivering HIV/AIDS-related services in countries including Malawi, Mozambique, Jamaica and the Philippines.

The process was developed by Bangalore-based NGO Public Affairs Centre (PAC). The best feature of Report Cards is the ability to provide statistically verifiable indicators of community perceptions of service provision. This comes from interviewing sufficient numbers of people to act as a representative sample from a good cross section of the total population.

The requirements for a large resident population, for market research and data analysis skills and for media outlets with sufficient confidence and weight to cover the issues raised, all point to Report Cards' limitations. The fact that the data is extracted from residents, and that advocacy is done

on their behalf by the promoting NGO (which also dictates what questions are asked in the first place) also means that the process cannot be accurately described as ‘citizen-led’.

While very valuable in many contexts, Report Cards are not likely to be appropriate where a more citizen-led advocacy effort is sought or where the above conditions are not met.

### Citizens’ Report Cards

Citizens’ Report Cards retain the positive features of both Community Scorecards and Report Cards, while tackling their drawbacks. Citizens’ Report Cards allow more input from the community to the process than the opinion poll-based Report Cards do, and use the outcomes from the assessment processes in advocacy.

The Citizens’ Report Cards process brings together representatives of sections of the community in workshops to:

- agree the key items of importance in their community
- agree an assessment framework that should be used to provide a uniform analysis of the services that are/are not provided
- score the services using the assessment framework

All of the scores are analysed and a further workshop is set up to present the scores. Communities are supported in undertaking advocacy and lobbying work to strengthen local level accountability by calling on service providers and government representatives to attend the workshop and listen to the case for improving

services. The required outcome of the workshop is a plan of action, agreed upon by all present, and an agreed method for assessing progress towards reaching the targets.

As long as organisers ensure all sections of the community are adequately represented at the meeting, this process can be very valuable. It is relatively rapid, transparent, leads to engagement of the ‘target’ in a non-confrontational way and has a clearly visible end product of a plan of action and a monitoring process. A case study outlining use of this process in Nepal was presented in detail in WaterAid’s *Bridging the gap* report.<sup>4</sup>

### Implications of Citizens’ Report Cards

The Citizens’ Report Cards process has several advantages. The involvement of community members in the process of analysing the adequacy of water and sanitation services helps to develop their ownership of the adjoining process. Their active participation is not a separate element which follows at the end of it (as in Report Cards). In many contexts, especially where the media cannot or will not operate on behalf of citizens, this is critical.

<sup>4</sup> *Bridging the gap, Citizens’ Action for accountability in water and sanitation*, WaterAid, March 2006, available to download at [www.wateraid.org/citizensaction](http://www.wateraid.org/citizensaction)

## 3 Mapping as a basis for accountability

Mapping the location of services and distribution of population can clearly demonstrate who does and does not have access to adequate water and sanitation services. This process represents a powerful tool that can inform planning processes for service delivery expansion.

### Urban slum enumeration and mapping

The Citizens' Report Card process outlined in the previous section is appropriate where some level of service exists to score. However, in many locations little or no service is provided to citizens. In rural areas, Community Scorecards can be used in these circumstances, but in urban areas they are largely unfeasible due to the sheer numbers of people who would need to come together to undertake the process. The urban slum<sup>5</sup> enumeration and mapping method can be used to develop a community assessment of services in these circumstances.

This process is based on initiatives conducted by local organisations working on housing and land tenure with slum and pavement dwellers, such as the Slum Dwellers Federation, SPARC and Mahila Milan ('Women together' in Hindi) in Mumbai and Pune in India.

The process involves a community drawing a map of their locality. All dwellings and facilities such as places of worship, schools and markets are marked on the map, as are the problems the community faces such as the lack of functioning water points,

open drains, inadequate or absent latrines and rubbish heaps. Every dwelling is numbered and a census of occupants is carried out, detailing age, sex and occupation.

Citizens then compile the statistics and map critical deficiencies in local infrastructure and service provision. The process of discussion of the maps and aggregation of numbers provides an important verification of the information. The data provides an input into comparisons with what people are entitled to according to government policies and plans. Slum dwellers are often not entitled to service provision by local law or decree, in which case the relevant comparison is with what others are entitled to.

The maps, data and discussion of entitlement provide the basis for community-led advocacy to demand improvements to their services. The community meets with service providers to present the information and produce action plans. In some cases, such as in Kathmandu in Nepal, donors and government representatives are also involved to enhance their buy-in to the process and agreement on the information gathered.

The interactions can be lengthy and frustrating, but can lead to real progress. They can show where service

<sup>5</sup> The term 'slum' is used here to denote all situations where people live in informal or unrecognised settlements, where service provision is largely non-existent or poor. The term 'slum' is therefore merely used as shorthand for these conditions.

providers cannot react positively and so lead to further community action. Alternatively, plans can be made where the service provider supports the community in constructing its own

facilities (as in the case of community toilets in Pune, India). Overall the process acts as a platform for identifying solutions, it is not merely a compilation of problems.

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## Case study **Urban mapping in Uganda**

**Location:** Three parishes: Mulago III, Bwaise II and Kyebando in the Kawempe Division of the capital city Kampala, Uganda.

**Context:** 65,000 people, living in 16,800 households, 80% of whom live in crowded slums or single rooms. 35% of people have no access to piped water or garbage disposal facilities.<sup>6</sup>

**The process:** The *Citizens' Action* project in Kampala began in July 2005 and has been implemented by local NGO Community Integrated Development Initiatives (CIDI).

CIDI supported the community in carrying out a mapping and enumeration process, and developing savings schemes. A household questionnaire was undertaken, comprising questions on occupancy, age and sex of respondents, and their health, water and sanitation, income, education, service delivery and housing needs. The following steps were carried out to complete the exercise:

1. **Numbering:** each dwelling was identified through a unique number
2. **Settlement profiling:** data was collected from each household
3. **Mapping:** all households and infrastructure such as sanitation and water facilities, rubbish disposal places, drainage channels, schools and places of worship were mapped

At the end of the exercise the communities had enumerated and profiled 14,000 households and drawn 19 zonal maps and full maps of all three parishes. The community produced a narrative report on the utilisation, reliability and quality of services, and captured the general level of community dissatisfaction with the services provided.

The community then undertook exercises to verify and disseminate the data from parish to village levels. Participants met local government leaders, NGOs working in the area, parish chiefs and religious leaders. Advocacy fora were established in each parish to hold stakeholder dialogues and develop community action plans identifying the prominent issues that needed to be addressed and by whom.

*"I wish we had done this before... this will help the local government to come up with plans that will address the community concerns."*

Mrs Christine Katende, Kawempe Division Community Development Officer, talking about the parish advocacy forum.

6 Kawempe Division; The Three – Year Development Plan 2004/05 – 2006/07, p.18.

**Photos:** Community members prioritising their concerns in Mulago III Parish, Kawempe, Kampala



The community presented the data and action plans to municipal government, service providers and NGOs in a series of meetings which were purposefully arranged prior to the local government's budgeting process.

**Results:** Agreements reached between the community and service providers included making public information such as the schedule of garbage collection, how to access the cesspool emptier, and how to approach landlords who do not construct toilets for tenants or empty latrines in drainage channels.

The service providers, development partners and some of the NGOs present at the dialogue meeting, including the African Medical and Research Foundation (AMREF) and Plan International, all agreed to address community priorities in their 2007/8 financial years. It was also agreed that a water and sanitation service providers and development partners stakeholders' forum would be formed with the aim of ensuring that development plans are implemented in the best interest of the community. This was the first time such an agreement had been reached between sector players in Kawempe.

## Case study **Urban mapping in Nepal**

**Location:** Kathmandu Valley, Nepal.

**Context:** Slums and squatter areas in Kathmandu Valley, which is undergoing major institutional reform in water supply service delivery. The NGO Forum for Urban Water and Sanitation, supported by WaterAid in Nepal, is constantly monitoring the reform process and establishing constructive engagement with the government and Asian Development Bank (ADB) to endeavour to ensure the poorest communities are considered in service providers' plans.

**The process:** Poverty mapping was started in 2002 and established a good map base in identifying slums and squatter areas. The map was further updated in 2004, with additional information on the location, functional status and dependent populations of public water stand posts. The updating work was done under the supervision of a task force comprised of donors, government, the NGO Forum and WaterAid in Nepal.

**Results:** The ADB acknowledged the importance of the study findings and is using them in planning a new project to provide water services to the urban poor in Kathmandu Valley through public stand posts.

The government had proposed to demolish public connections and thereby promote household water connections, but following lobbying from the NGO Forum that demonstrated these would be unaffordable for poorer households, the solution of rehabilitating public stand posts was agreed upon.

Under the new project, funded by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), 300 old public stand posts will be rehabilitated and 50 new ones constructed. It was proposed that DFID bear the total cost of rehabilitating old public stand posts, but where new ones are required the community will contribute 20% of the construction cost. Each public stand post will be metered and the users will have to pay tariffs through their user groups.

**Photo:** Having a safe water supply close to home is especially important for vulnerable groups such as the elderly.



WaterAid/Marco Betti



WaterAid/Jon Spaul

**Photo: Mapping builds up a good base of information on the location and functionality of existing water points.**

It is clear from these examples that slum enumeration and mapping is a potent tool in bringing the needs of people living without adequate public services to the attention of service providers and governments. The verification built into the process ensures that the information gathered is credible, and means that, often for the first time, planners cannot use lack of data as a reason for inactivity.

A crucial question arising from the experience is: once the data and information has been collected, has the community got the energy and time left to engage in the advocacy and planning that follows, or will the service delivery agencies take over the process from that point onwards? It is apparent that these processes are time consuming, with a degree of complexity that raises the risk of failure. It is important therefore to keep momentum going in order to maximise the end results.

7 The source material for much of this section is *WaterAid Learning for Advocacy and Good Practice: Water and Sanitation Mapping*. A synthesis of findings by Katharina Welle, of ODI for WaterAid; June 2006.

## Mapping as a rural community advocacy tool<sup>7</sup>

From the above examples from urban areas, it is clear that good spatial information is an important basis for planning. WaterAid's positive experience with mapping extends into rural areas.

Water point mapping in Malawi and Tanzania focuses on assessing how the equity of distribution of water points, by producing maps of their locations. The objectives are to improve the planning and monitoring of water service delivery at district and sub-district level. The main target groups are the district staff responsible for water supply and sanitation and for planning. The method used for information gathering entails identifying the locations of water points using global positioning system (GPS) equipment and recording whether they are currently functional,

allied with a short questionnaire inquiring about basic technical and management issues.

The mapping process has been marginally participatory in the sense that a small number of local government staff is involved in data collection. Data analysis and report writing are done by the local NGO or WaterAid with a feedback session to validate results and to introduce the basic IT features of the GIS<sup>8</sup> software.

Water and sanitation mapping by WaterAid's partners in Ghana, Nigeria, Burkina Faso and Mali is incorporated into a wider initiative where other facilities<sup>9</sup> and amenities are mapped in addition to water points. Mapping

is mainly conducted in rural areas but also used in some small towns. The methodology used broadly follows the mapping methodology in Malawi and Tanzania but puts greater emphasis on socio-economic data collection and on participatory processes.

The main purpose here is for targeted communities and the poor to assess the level of service provision by identifying which communities benefit most and which are excluded. This can become an important basis for advocacy with LGAs for improving equitable service provision. Feedback sessions carried out at district and sub-district level focus on the prioritisation of future actions rather than on technical aspects.

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## Case study **Rural mapping in Bangladesh**

**Location:** 47 villages with a population of 8,200 people in 1,700 households, in the Wagga Union of the Rangmati Hill District in eastern Bangladesh.

**Context:** A hilly district, home to two ethnic minority groups, called Marma and Tonchoinga, as well as Bangladeshi households. The water supply coverage for the union is just 17% while that of sanitation is 34%.

**The process:** The process was facilitated by the NGO GreenHill, who began by sharing the idea of mapping with the area's other water and sanitation providers. A multi-stakeholder steering committee was formed to improve the local water and sanitation planning process. At a union-wide meeting a consensus was built across the community to map the water and sanitation facilities of the whole union.

Locals selected 77 Community Volunteers (CVs) who were trained in GIS mapping and conducting focus group discussions. In addition to maps of water and sanitation facilities, the community also gathered information through a questionnaire on affordability, accessibility, equity, gender sensitivity and management of water and sanitation facilities by various classes of households.

The analysis of the survey allowed the compilation of the socio-economic data for the Wagga Union. All of the stakeholders including the community held a large meeting at the Kaptai Upazila Auditorium where the community volunteers shared and understood the information base.

**Results:** The stakeholders jointly developed an action plan to improve the water and sanitation services for the Wagga community, especially for the poor and disadvantaged.

8 GIS: Geographical Information Systems.

9 For example in Nigeria, health and educational facilities are also mapped.



*“I really like this joint work. The Steering Committee members regularly visit my office. They support me in doing the mapping exercise in my union. The Ward Members of my UP and the traditional community leaders of the villages extend their all out cooperation regarding the work.”*

*“A few months ago, all of them along with some key villagers gathered in my office and selected community volunteers for the work. After receiving GIS training jointly from GreenHill and ICDP, they held community sessions in villages; developed village water and sanitation maps and gathered information on whether people can afford and reach the facilities; who is managing the water points and; how women are overburdened with everyday water fetching for their families.”*

Aong Hla Ching, aged 38, Chairman, Wagga UP, Kaptai Upazila, Rangamati Hill District

**Photo:** In hilly areas of Bangladesh, the daily walk for water can be a very arduous task.

Better coordination among stakeholders has gradually been established in Kaptai Upazila. Both the community and UP officials in Wagga have demonstrated their ownership and leadership of the process. The water and sanitation maps have generated commitment in the community to getting involved in a shared planning process to improve the local water and sanitation services.



WaterAid/Juthika Howlader

## Lessons from rural mapping

Mapping responds to a number of important shortcomings in existing approaches to poverty reduction, such as the MDGs and Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) processes. The mapping process breaks the MDGs down to the local level, thereby giving an abstract formula a very concrete meaning. The information can be used by local governments to develop realistic plans based on real information on the current status of services and the desired status according to government policies. The increase in transparency of information also has the potential to reduce corruption by either local governments or service providers.

In addition to being a useful planning, monitoring and fundraising tool at a district level, mapping can empower citizens when the design of the process is tailored to the skills and resources they have available. When appropriate mapping systems are chosen that match the capacity at different levels, the sustainability of subsequent usage is enhanced, meaning communities gain an ongoing system for monitoring progress in expanding water and sanitation coverage.

At regional level, where good technical skills are demonstrated, GIS mapping is often an effective tool for water and sanitation agencies. At district or local level, where government capacity is lower and/or there are plans for community advocacy, simpler tools such as the ranking of different sub-districts according to their number of sanitation and water facilities in the Afram Plains in Ghana can be a more appropriate choice.

It is not just the map, but the process around it which is crucial in improving the targeting of poor people and the sustainability of service delivery: the importance of process and follow-up cannot be over-emphasised.

The overall challenges of mapping are twofold. Firstly, there is a need to support local government structures in planning processes and in securing the financial resources for water and sanitation that have been allocated to them but are not currently reaching them. Secondly, mapping requires a high level of engagement on the part of external, local organisations who can support citizens with information and skill development.

## 4 Public fora for accountability

This type of *Citizens' Action* work recognises the limits of legal approaches to obtaining basic service provision, and bases the demand for these services in open collective action, ie extra-legal action.

Some of the locations where *Citizens' Action* is being undertaken do not have a tradition of advocacy between citizenry and public servant – either there are too many risks associated with direct activity, or it would have no chance of yielding success. India is one of the exceptions, where public and judicial activism in support of rights for the disadvantaged and vulnerable is a normal course of action.

*Citizens' Action* initiatives in India have successfully supported poor communities in two remote, inaccessible regions in redressing the non-implementation of programmes and under-utilisation of allocated funds by the local government and service providers.

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### Case study **The People's Jury in India**

**Location:** Santhal Parganas in the eastern state of Jharkhand, India, and Bundelkhand on the border of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.

**Context:** Santhal Parganas is an area inhabited by isolated, so-called 'primitive tribes' called Pahariya. Bundelkhand is a poor rural area.

**The process:** Citizens took action on the Swajaldhara rural drinking water scheme in Santhal Parganas and the Total Sanitation Campaign, collaboratively run by the Federal and State governments, in Bundelkhand.

In both areas the following processes (with minor variations per location) were undertaken:

1. The details of the schemes were simplified and explained in terms of entitlements and responsibilities to the communities.
2. A group of community cadres was built out of local youths who had past track records in taking the initiative in social security schemes and community action. They were trained on the details of the schemes; how to disseminate information on these and on legal provisions for accessing government information especially:
  - Social audit methods – the Ministry of Rural Development mandates that before the release of second tranche of budget for any works, the first tranche expenditure has to be ratified by villagers in a public meeting. The community cadres' training highlighted the need to do this properly

- The Right to Information Act 2005
- The Jharkhand Panchayati Raj Act (on local self governance and the powers and duties of Panchayats)
- The Panchayat Extension of Scheduled Areas Act (specifically applicable to this region where the Gram Sabha, ie the lowest unit of constitutionally recognised body, gives every adult a say in the village works, plans, programmes and expenditure)

This knowledge was used by the community cadres to access official water and sanitation allocation and expenditure data, and, with the communities' support, cross-validate the claims and records with existing field realities and social audits. It was then collated and presented in an understandable tabular format to the communities, government officials and service providers in widely promoted public hearings. At the hearings, the local NGO took a back seat and the citizens took over.

The public hearings were held in a central location which was easily accessible, but in the citizens' domain, making it clear that the officials and dignitaries were invitees. During the public hearing a jury panel was announced, which typically included community members who were respected by the community, the service providers and government officials.

The stage was set with contextual, relevant and witty street-theatre sketches on the programmes being audited and on the problems of the people. One of the trained community cadres acted as a moderator, sharing the accounts and the performance of the programmes being audited. In the spirit of complete transparency, the accounts of the community organisation and NGO and the cost of the entire process were also shared.

Then some of the community members gave testimonials regarding their experiences in accessing their entitlements. Some spoke about the dysfunctional systems, the long down-time and the lack of awareness regarding the programmes. The government officials were given an opportunity to respond. Sometimes the fora were confrontational, particularly when corruption was exposed, but officials were also able to explain genuine problems they faced. For example, in the Dumka Block of 25,000 people there was only one member of maintenance staff, who was due to retire.

The People's Jury then passed a resolution outlining its findings, conclusions, verdict and an action plan with a timeline for the officials.

**Results:** The systematic approach of looking at and analysing government programmes and expenditure has generated many benefits:

- Accountability has been established by setting up much needed user level monitoring and fora which allowed the different stakeholders to listen to each other

**Photo:** Training women in the community as handpump mechanics is an effective way of avoiding water point breakdowns.



- The establishment of a robust set of data on the financial and physical infrastructure at the sub-district level. The government's monitoring system only provides district level information, so the community cadres are filling an essential gap by collating and cross-validating data on the existence and functionality of water and sanitation infrastructure and their associated costs and maintenance budget allocation and expenditure at sub-district level
- In the Dumka Block 50 women identified by the community cadre were trained as handpump mechanics in preparation for the eventuality of no official maintenance staff. The cadre also advocated the need for technical maintenance staff to the department heads
- Contact details for the Public Health Engineering Department's (PHED) staff responsible for the entire two districts (not just the five localities where *Citizens' Action* was initiated) were put in the public domain so people now know who to contact when there is a breakdown
- Jharkhand being a state with very detailed GIS data, the community cadres are mounting a lobby with their local representatives and PHED to select all drinking-water location sites through GIS and cut out the individual discretion of individual PHED staff in decisions about where to site handpumps
- An unintended positive side effect has been the pro-active interest of the Gram Sabha villagers in monitoring the implementation of the new National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), which gives the creation and restoration of water bodies maximum priority. The villagers are showing a keen interest in deciding which community assets should be created through the works

**Photo:** The community gathers to present their assessment of water and sanitation services in India.



# 5 Budget and performance monitoring

Community-based monitoring of the budgets and performance of water and sanitation authorities represents a valuable way of citizens maintaining pressure to improve services on an ongoing basis.

## Budget and performance monitoring

As expenditure on water and sanitation is effectively at the ‘sharp end’ of the demands of local people, it makes sense in many circumstances for communities to monitor the

expenditure, especially where there has been a perception of past promises being broken or resources being diverted away from the envisaged target. Budget tracking is new to many local NGOs and communities, but will feature increasingly in the years to come.

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## Case study **Budget and performance monitoring in Bangladesh**

**Location:** **Area 1:** Mohammadpur Union Parishad, Thakurgaon Sadar, District-Thakurgaon **Area 2:** Wagga Union Parishad, Kaptai Upazila, Rangamati District, Chittagong Hill Tracts **Area 3:** Six wards in Narayanganj Municipality, Narayanganj.

**Context:** Areas with significant proportions of ‘hardcore poor’ households who were felt to be denied the sanitation subsidies to which they were entitled. Nationally it is estimated that between a third and a half of government-provided sanitation subsidies<sup>10</sup> intended for the ‘hardcore poor’ are captured by the non-poor annually. This amounts to 20% of the Annual Development Programme (ADP) block grants. If the subsidies were used as intended, they could provide over 300,000 additional sanitary latrines for the poor each year in Bangladesh.

**The process:** Helped by local NGOs, a number of communities in Bangladesh documented the utilisation of water supply and sanitation subsidies.

They attempted to identify the obstacles to channelling the subsidies to the poorest households and outline ways the obstacles could be overcome. The work was carried out in two phases. First the community was mobilised and empowered to monitor the water supply and sanitation budget spending in the first year. Secondly, they were involved in formulating and implementing a pro-poor budget through advocacy and dialogue.

<sup>10</sup> 105m – 162m Bangladesh Taka; at US\$1 to BDT68 this is equivalent to \$1.5m to \$2.4m annually.

**Photo:** Effective latrines are vital in the fight against deadly diarrhoeal diseases.



The work used simple participatory techniques and tools such as focus group discussions, social mapping, matrix ranking, case studies and panel discussion sessions. Community Based Organisations (CBOs) became sufficiently empowered to carry out the whole process from data collection and analysis through to effective lobbying and advocacy with local government institutions and stakeholders.

Community members identified the water supply and sanitation facilities that had been provided on a free or subsidised basis by public sources and divided the beneficiaries of those facilities into two groups: those who were eligible for subsidised services and those who were not.

### **Findings**

The findings were that in Area 1 35% of sanitation subsidies were captured by the non-poor, in Area 2 the figure was 54% and in Area 3 the disbursement of sanitation subsidies was much delayed.

The process revealed a lack of accountability and transparency in the distribution of government-subsidised latrines. It was clear that more educated and vocal people and those with local political and family connections largely determined who received subsidised latrines from public agencies and the local government. Community members from Mohamadpur UP identified the capture of a number of government subsidised latrines by the middle classes.

Data on the amount of money allocated for sanitation and the number and quality of subsidised latrine sets are not publicly available. In some cases the hardcore poor appear in the distribution list of subsidised latrines despite not having received them. Community members said that since they are poor and have no influence over official bodies, they are often overlooked in the decision-making processes.

The hardcore poor also reported that they had little time available to collect information on subsidised water supply and sanitation allocation. They considered that the provision of information in local languages or in pictorial form in public places would ease this task.

It was clear that using non-participatory and top-down approaches exacerbated the situation. The lack of community involvement in the drawing up, implementation and monitoring of distribution lists of subsidised latrines meant that the distribution did not target those most in need. Additionally, as the distribution was not demand-driven, many of the latrines that were distributed were never installed.

### **Implications**

Community members believe the budget and performance monitoring model can empower them and communities in other areas to achieve pro-poor accountable sanitation subsidies, and attain benefits in other sectors such as infrastructure and education.

Community members in all three research locations stated that the government fails to monitor the effective utilisation of subsidised latrines, and this is currently a factor in preventing the hardcore poor from benefitting from them. This model can help communities to make local government institutions more transparent and accountable and make their budgeting system more pro-poor.

Bangladesh has made rapid progress in sanitation, with official coverage increasing from 33% in September 2003 to 84% in October 2006 (although there is widespread speculation based on field observation by sector stakeholders that the actual progress rate is considerably lower than the official figures). Timely disbursement and effective utilisation of water supply and sanitation funds could help Bangladesh to achieve its target of 100% sanitation by 2010. By enabling communities to effectively participate in sanitation issues, this model could also help ensure that sanitation programmes are sustainable in the long term.

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## 6 Scaling up: sector-wide accountability and a basis for district-wide implementation

*Citizens' Action* can inject momentum into tackling the lack of accountability in the water and sanitation sector. The challenges now are to encourage others to adopt the model and coordinate their activities, and to support service providers in building their capacity to respond to the articulated demands of communities.

### A sector in crisis – but there is a solution

The *Citizens' Action* initiative started from the premise that local people would get access to better services if they had information about the services they were entitled to and about whose responsibility it is to provide the services, and were then able to make representations to service providers and government departments, focusing on agreeing an action plan.

The preceding chapters highlight examples where *Citizens' Action* processes have yielded public policy responses and released resources for improving access to safe water and sanitation services.

But while stimulating the demand for action, the challenge has been to deal with some chronic supply-side weaknesses. How can urban slum dwellers obtain better services if their utility has failed? How can rural communities expect action from their local government if it does not have the skills or capacity to respond, or if the relevant staff members do not have sufficient technical skills?

Stimulating local communities to engage with service providers risks failure in some locations if the ability of the service providers to react is not supported to respond.

As a stand-alone activity *Citizens' Action* provides a powerful tool for individual communities to put pressure on their service providers to improve how they meet those communities' needs. Linking *Citizens' Action* with local government skill and resource development will provide a way of improving the ability and motivation within local government organisations to respond to the demands.

If local people can articulate their needs and local governments and utilities can be helped with their ability to respond, then an impressive tool is revealed. If mapping skills – especially when rooted in communities – are a central feature of this combined process, then perhaps for the first time there is the spark of coherent local programmes to make progress at a larger scale.

Of course, national processes are vital too and pressure for political support for water and sanitation; for sensible institutional homes to be established;

for more and better focused resources for the sector and for decentralisation of responsibility and resourcing must also continue.

### Stepping into action

The call is for integrated programmes of support for communities to articulate their needs, accompanied by efforts to enhance the ability of local government and service providers to be able and willing to respond. These programmes should not be limited to individual communities. Ideally they

**Photo: As Citizens' Action grows, more communities will be empowered to seek improvements to their water and sanitation services.**



will merge across districts into regional and then achieve national programmes to create universal coverage of water and sanitation.

Planning and implementing such programmes will require organisations involved in water and sanitation to coordinate activities across the sector so that resources can be effectively targeted where they are most needed.

There are challenges associated with scaling up Citizens' Action, including overcoming the reluctance of service provider staff to participate and their resistance to the involvement of citizens in monitoring processes.

But in the end, the positives outweigh the negatives by some distance. Stepping into action and helping communities and service providers engage in meaningful dialogue has the potential to reap significant, sustainable improvements to water and sanitation services.

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