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Citizens' Action for Accountable Governance **Reflections from South Asia**

Tom Palakudiyil and Josantony Joseph

Abstract

Citizens' Action (CA) is an advocacy initiative which aims to transform present levels of state accountability by building an empowered citizenry capable of engaging constructively with governments and other service providers and hold these entities accountable for the provision of quality, accessible and sustainable services.

CA is founded on the belief that an informed and empowered community, confident to engage with the government and other service providers to demand that they deliver on their commitments and obligations is an essential precondition for ensuring accountable governance in a given community. As a methodology, CA is designed to facilitate this process of knowledge generation, empowerment and constructive engagement.

The paper will reflect on the findings of a review of WaterAid's experience in South Asia, over the past 5 years, of using this to 'bridge the gap' between responsibility and responsiveness, in the delivery of WASH services. It will also dwell on aspects of this methodology which call for further reflection and improvement, as for example, the re-designing required to ensure that the process of empowerment does not stop with the leaders of civil society organisations, but reaches also the members of the communities themselves.

It will also reflect upon some of the dilemmas encountered in the course of using CA, as for instance, the dilemma faced by an agency which wants to facilitate a truly empowering process and at the same time is 'obliged' to promote its core mission, and hence the inherent risk of 'outsiders' determining which of the entitlements a given community might work on! Or in contexts where corruption is all pervasive, the need to go beyond the core mandate of the participating organisations, and instead to focus on the need to making all systems work.

Even though there are aspects of this tool that require further reflection and improvement, CA is based on an extremely meaningful and valid insight regarding the role of the community (the ordinary citizen) in ensuring basic rights of people. It is hoped that the discussions that will be generated by the paper will help refine and fine-tune its application in a way that will draw out the full potential of this insight – not merely people's right to water and sanitation are recognised and met, but people's right to all basic needs are met as a result of having established better and more accountable governance.

Keywords

Accountability, citizen voice, empowerment, entitlements, rights

INTRODUCTION

Ensuring access to basic services like education, health, drinking water and sanitation to all is considered one of the primary responsibilities of the State¹. Despite different schemes and substantial investments towards this end, the basic needs of large sections of the poor in most developing countries remain unmet.

While financial and other resources are important factors, for the most part, failure of State-run schemes can be attributed to the failure of the State apparatus to properly plan and implement these programmes with a pro-poor focus. Therefore monitoring the performance of the State vis-à-vis its commitments assumes special significance, for pro-poor policies and programmes to be translated into actual delivery of services and the fulfilment of the basic needs of the poor.

Citizens' Action (CA) is an advocacy initiative which aims to transform present levels of state accountability by building an empowered citizenry capable of engaging constructively with governments and other service providers and hold these entities accountable for the provision of quality, accessible and sustainable services. It is founded on the belief that an informed and empowered community, confident to engage with the government and other service providers to demand that they deliver on their commitments and obligations is an essential precondition for ensuring accountable governance in a given community. As a methodology, CA is designed to facilitate this process of knowledge generation, empowerment and constructive engagement.

The paper will reflect on the findings of a review of WaterAid's (WA) experience, since 2004, of using this tool in three countries in South Asia (Bangladesh, India and Nepal) to build an informed and empowered citizenry, and how it has been used to 'bridge the gap' between responsibility and responsiveness, in the delivery of water and sanitation services. While the findings relate to the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) sector, the reflections and conclusions in the paper have relevance also for the other sectors. Hence this paper is submitted under Conference Theme 3.3 *Strengthening Systems of Accountability: state of the art approaches*.

THE CURRENT WASH SCENARIO IN BANGLADESH, INDIA AND NEPAL

¹ In this document, the term 'State' refers to the nation, while the terms 'state' or 'states' (i.e. in lower case) refer to the various states that form the union of India. The 'Government' in power is the current face of the State. In addition to the people, the constitution and the geographical area of the country, the State consists of the Legislature (which may change in every election), the Executive (consisting of the Political and Administrative executives – the former also changing at every election or with every change in cabinet) and the Judiciary. The STATE is therefore not to be confused with the Government. Of course the current face of the Government can significantly influence the Administrative Executive and the Judiciary, though ideally speaking these should be independent and function as a check and balance

Despite significant State outlays in absolute terms (even if not in terms of percentage of national budget), one in eight people do not have access to safe drinking water and two in five lack access to adequate sanitation². Across the region there are a number of policies, schemes, and substantial budgets. In Bangladesh, India and Nepal, for instance, there are elaborate state infrastructures for the delivery of water and sanitation services. Yet as the JMP Report reveals, as many as 69% of the population in India and Nepal do not have access to improved sanitation. Though the situation in Bangladesh is not as serious, here too a substantial proportion of the population (47%) lack access to improved sanitation³. Hence effective implementation of State schemes, and ensuring quality and sustainability in WASH services remains a formidable challenge to all the countries in this region.

The inadequacy of State schemes in Bangladesh, India and Nepal – both at policy and implementation levels - to fully provide for the WASH requirements of its poorer citizens can be broadly attributed to the unwillingness and/or perceived inability of Governments in these countries to accept/acknowledge WASH entitlements as justiciable rights – rights that a citizen can demand that a judiciary enforces.

The National Policy statements of Bangladesh, India and Nepal acknowledge WASH ‘needs’ as essential to its citizens and critical to each nation’s development. However, all three Governments have failed to clearly define water as a fundamental and justiciable human right. Significantly, the classification of WASH entitlements as ‘needs’ is consistent with the trend of recognising water as a socio-economic ‘good’ - and therefore a tradable commodity - rather than as an inalienable human right.

At the implementation level, a common feature in both Bangladesh and Nepal is the belief among State and civil society actors that the Government is incapable of fulfilling the WASH needs of its citizens without the active participation of local and international agencies including the private sector. This expectation of sharing the sectoral burden between the State and external agencies dilutes the presumption of absolute State responsibility to provide basic services to its citizens. In other words the Government in both Bangladesh and Nepal is presumed to be incapable – by claims of a lack of State resources – and therefore not absolutely obligated to provide safe drinking water and basic sanitation to the people.

In such a scenario of diminishing State responsibility, civil society involvement in the WASH sector plays a crucial role in bridging the gap between State services and the needs of poor communities. However, the level of civil society interventions to make up for State inadequacies is perceived to be more significant in Bangladesh and Nepal, while in India civil society is expected to rather play the role of a watchdog. Furthermore, in Nepal, even more than in Bangladesh, private commercial bodies play a significant role in this respect. As a result local and international NGOs as well as private commercial bodies have mostly adopted a service-delivery approach with significant funding and resources being channelled

² UNICEF/World Health Organization Joint Monitoring Programme (2008) *Progress on Drinking-water and Sanitation: special focus on sanitation* [pdf] Available at

http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/monitoring/jmp2008/en/index.html [Accessed 27 August 2010]

³ Ibid

towards building and maintaining WASH infrastructure. Private commercial service providers that have sprung up in Nepal and their profit oriented approach to service delivery has introduced a new set of problems to the equitable distribution of WASH services to the poor. With time, the limitations of an exclusively hardware based approach – which involves NGOs and private commercial bodies supplementing and often substituting the State as a service provider – have become increasingly evident. Therefore, a number of recent civil society interventions have introduced a software element as well as advocacy based initiatives which include a rights-based approach to WASH services. Importantly, civil society initiatives have also begun to recognise and reflect on the interconnectedness of water and other livelihood issues for the poor. Consequently, there has been an attempt by many civil society groups to integrate WASH interventions with other livelihood needs as identified by the local community.

WATERAID REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

Against the above background, WA introduced CA in 2004 as one of the advocacy initiatives to transform the present levels of State accountability by building an empowered citizenry capable of taking action to demand and obtain proper delivery of services from the State as a matter of right.

The reflections and recommendations in this paper are based on a review of WA's experience, over the past 5 years, of using this tool in 3 countries in South Asia (Bangladesh, India and Nepal).. The review took place from February to April 2008 in India and Bangladesh and in July 2008 in Nepal. The review was conducted mainly based on field visits to partner organisations, interviews with sector experts, WA partners and WA staff, document surveys and literature reviews for each country. Team members visited all the partner agencies leading on this initiative in the 3 countries – two in India (PARMARTH in Uttar Pradesh and SATHEE in Jharkhand), three in Bangladesh (DSK, VERC and GREENHILL), and two in Nepal (FEDWASUN and LUMANTI).

Citizens' Action: the approach

CA is an approach aimed at **facilitating a process** whereby the **citizen is empowered** to hold the **State accountable** to honour their **rights and entitlements**. CA is based on the assumption that no real and sustainable progress can be achieved in WASH services in the absence of accountability and responsiveness on the part of public authorities and service providers to the needs of end-user communities. CA has been developed as a means to 'bridge the gap' between responsibility and action and to build accountability into the WASH service sector by encouraging transparency, accountability and participatory decision making at the policy and implementation level. Bridging the gap requires an informed and empowered citizenry, capable of demanding improved services and holding those responsible accountable for the proper delivery of WASH services. CA is founded on the belief that citizen empowerment will generate the momentum needed to ensure state accountability so that service providers meet the demand for WASH services in a sustainable and quality oriented manner.

Citizen Empowerment

'Accountability' occurs when there is a change in the power equation between the claimant and the entity from which accountability is being demanded. Therefore the degree of success in claiming entitlements would be directly proportional to the degree of the empowerment of the rights holders. The first degree of citizen empowerment is **knowledge** - having enough knowledge regarding WASH entitlements. However, information by itself does not necessarily empower. The communities must also have the ability to connect and apply the information regarding their entitlements to their own lives in practice. Furthermore it is only when the 'other side' realises that people have knowledge – for example knowledge of their rights and knowledge of where there is a leakage in the system – will there be a change in the power equation. Knowledge enables the community to move to the second degree of empowerment, **voice**. It refers to the ability of the community to use the knowledge about their entitlements to express their claims for entitlements. The third and final degree of empowerment, **influence**, occurs where citizens are capable of - and know they are capable of - influencing the Government and service providers through people pressure or legal pressure or some other forms of pressure and are able to ensure that their entitlements are received.

While the actual **methodology employed** under CA is governed by the local context in each area, key ingredients of the CA initiative can be identified, beginning with awareness raising and information gathering. This first step is based on the understanding that for citizens to effectively demand accountability for WASH services they first need to have a complete understanding of their rights and entitlements and present levels of service delivery. Therefore the initial process of CA is dedicated to answering three basic questions regarding (i) present actual levels of WASH services they experience, (ii) their own entitlements to WASH services as per Government documents, and (iii) identifying those responsible for policy and sustained service delivery. This then prepares the ground for generating a dialogue between the State, other service providers if any, and the community. Through such a process CA hopes to bridge the accountability gap between State and citizen, thereby paving the way for improved WASH services.

State Accountability

As in the case of citizen empowerment, there are degrees in the realisation of state accountability.

- i) **Access** refers to the ease with which the rights holders can relate directly with the State entities that are responsible to ensure their WASH (or other basic) rights.
- ii) **Transparency** refers to the willingness of the State and its officers to allow the rights holders to get all the information that is relevant to their entitlements in a comprehensible form.
- iii) **Responsiveness** refers to the attitude and actions of State authorities in genuinely taking into consideration the demands/concerns of the rights holders.
- iv) **Compliance** refers to the readiness of the State authorities to fulfil what they have been entrusted to do in ensuring these WASH rights of the citizens, and even to enforce sanctions on those officers who have failed to fulfil their duties.

The State authorities who are entrusted with carrying out these duties include both elected representatives (from the village to the national levels), as well as appointed authorities (administrative executive or the bureaucracy and the judiciary), and it is possible that with regard to each of these categories mentioned above, the different authorities would relate to the rights holders differently. It must also be remembered in such efforts to demand accountability from the various actors in the State, that each category would have different responsibilities. Thus it would be pointless to demand change of policy from those who are “appointed” to the Executive, though some aspects can be explored with those who are “appointed” to the Judiciary. However ultimately for policies to become law one has to deal with the appropriate Legislature. On the other hand efforts to ensure implementation of already established laws, policies, acts, can be focussed on those who are “appointed”, - whether to the administrative, executive, or the judiciary.

Facilitating the Process

Creating an environment where the citizens feel empowered to hold the State accountable is often not possible without the involvement of a facilitating agent. The role of the partner organisation has been crucial to the success of the CA initiative by WA. The role assigned to the partner, it is to be emphasised, is that of a facilitator and not that of a mediator or a leader.

Facilitation itself could be approached from two different angles. The first is the analogy of a wheel. In a cycle wheel, for instance, the **central hub** holds all the spokes and the tyre together and in that sense facilitates these to function effectively and smoothly. This facilitation role is crucial and, more significantly, is continuously needed. The second is the analogy of a **catalyst** for a chemical experiment. The catalytic agent creates an environment which helps two other chemicals to react to each other. The catalyst facilitates the starting of the chemical reaction. However, once the reaction is initiated, the catalyst is no more needed and the two chemicals involved in the reaction continue on their own. There are obvious differences in these types of facilitation, even though in both the role of the ‘outside’ entity is crucial.

Basic needs as basic rights

The fourth aspect of CA approach is the importance it places on the internal attitude with which citizens approach the State or other duty bearers vis-à-vis their responsibility to fulfil the entitlements to basic services like WASH – as claimants of their rights, rather than supplicants whose needs are to be satisfied. What is entailed in this shift from a needs based to rights-based approach is a re-drawing of the existing power equations between the claimant (the disadvantaged) and the power holders (the State). CA seeks to work towards the change in the mindset of the claimants so that they can see that their basic needs are truly their basic rights.

WA REVIEW FINDINGS

The review of the WASH related CA projects in Bangladesh, India and Nepal revealed many instances that prove that when civil society and the Government work hand in hand, much can be done to ensure these basic entitlements for the marginalised. Thus for example, in Bangladesh WA and DSK were able to work with the Dhaka Water and Sanitation Authority to motivate the latter to issue a circular in December 2007 that would 'legally permit' water connections for the slum dwellers, despite the latter not possessing tenurial rights to their homesteads - and within a couple of months the connection was made and water reportedly delivered to a number of slums. Similar success stories are also available in the areas where VERC and GREENHILL operate. In India, in the Bundelkhand area, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Authority stipulated that the Government should seek the cooperation of PARAMARTH in organising effective social audit of the scheme. Similarly in the same area the 'Tehsil day' mandated by the state Government was used effectively by ordinary citizens to claim entitlements. Similar success stories are available from the areas where SATHEE is working. In Nepal the work of FEDWASUN to help a particular Village Development Committee to pressurise a private service provider to allocate over a million NRS in a lift-water project to ensure electricity, and of LUMANTI which through its partner agency was able to work towards 24x7 electricity supply to a water treatment plant in Thimi Municipality are both examples of how people can influence their service providers whether Government or private.

The significance of these 'success stories' assumes even more significance against the background of increasing liberalisation where the market is beginning to hold increasing sway by pushing for the commodification of the basic requirements of life (water, air, etc), while the Governments are shying away from taking responsibility for marginalised groups, and basic rights being gradually eroded.

When we pass the WA experience of CA work in South Asia through the Access-Transparency-Responsiveness-Compliance prism, the review revealed that as far as Access was concerned, there was certainly greater access than there was before the CA project was introduced as far as WASH entitlements were concerned. However on the other three dimensions, while there were positive achievements, these were very critically dependent on the active presence of the facilitating NGO. Thus, in getting hold of the relevant information (Transparency) it was evident in all the places reviewed that the community, including the agency-selected community leaders depend heavily on the partner agency and its staff to get them the relevant information. Even in places where the selected community leaders have become very articulate, when they were asked whether it was now appropriate for the partner agency to move out and work in other villages, the one inadequacy that these articulate villagers themselves pointed out was their dependence on the partner agency to get them the requisite information.

The community-based leaders as well as the villagers recounted instances where people's mobilisation and demands drew a positive response from Government officials (Responsiveness). While these instances or examples certainly offer anecdotal evidence that there is a change on the part of unresponsive government officials, it seems more likely that it is only when a community group is actively supported by a partner agency, that responsiveness is present. In fact in all three countries, it was clear that the people

themselves do not believe that State officials would respond to them if they did not have the backing of the partner agency.

In all CA projects reviewed it was also apparent that the process started with a cycle-wheel type of facilitation and hence it is going to be an uphill task for the catalytic type of facilitation to take place. As a result, it was difficult not to conclude that wherever there was compliance (Compliance) it was largely on the strength of the partner agency and - currently at least - had not much to do with the strength of the community of rights holders. SATHEE's efforts in Jharkhand, to work with traditional leaders may however be a step in the right direction, though it remains to be seen how 'dependent' they are on the strength of SATHEE itself.

REFLECTIONS

CA methodology and the limits of empowerment

As discussed above, there was certainly greater access than there was before the CA project was introduced as far as WASH entitlements were concerned. A dispassionate look at the effect of current CA work in the different partner agencies in South Asia, however, indicates that not all citizens are equally empowered in this regard. Different categories of citizens within the same context (even in the same village) attain different degrees or levels of empowerment.

In the case of the various groups that the partner agencies in all three countries are working with, one could identify at least four different types of 'people': (i) the heads/founders/leaders of the partner agency selected by WA, (ii) the staff who are hired by this partner agency (or in the case of Nepal the specific local partner agency which has been selected to carry out this work) (iii) the community members who have been selected/elected to function on the water users' committees, or as community leaders, core group, or citizens' forums or volunteers etc. and finally (iv) the remaining community members who constitute the general group of the marginalised. Obviously the last two groups are those that must be empowered to ensure sustainability of CA, since they constitute the rights holders for whose entitlements, accountability is being demanded of the State and other service providers. Within each of these four groups there would be several sub-categories of 'people' with differing levels of empowerment based on socio-economic considerations such as caste, tribe, gender, wealth etc. Thus even within the last named group above there would be differences of power among the different castes and classes in the community where CA is taking place.

The level of empowerment (in all the areas reviewed) is clearly much greater for the leaders of the partner agency and correspondingly less and less as one moves down the hierarchy of staff members in each partner agency. Therefore, the CA methodology/project could claim to have primarily empowered the staff appointed for the CA project – though even here the CA project head/coordinator in each partner agency would perhaps be more empowered than the rest. From the villagers' point of view, the level of empowerment of the community-based leaders (e.g. lead cadres, core group members, volunteers, user

committee members, etc) is certainly much higher than that of the ordinary villagers or slum dwellers, and one could clearly conclude that empowerment among these 'local leaders' is directly related to the CA project methodology – except in the case of SATHEE where the lead cadres were already empowered before CA began. However, the fact that the real target, - namely the ordinary slum dweller or villager, who constitute the vast majority of the population even in the villages/slum areas where CA is being run - are not empowered in any real and discernible way, highlights the need to reflect on the methodology used in trying to create an empowered and self-motivated citizenry.

The choice of agenda: who decides?

One specific area where this reflection on the methodology is called for is in the area of 'agenda setting' for the CA work. Even in the case of access to WASH - the focus of WA's CA projects under review - on whose importance to people's lives there is no dispute, the reality is it is the 'outsider' who decides (perhaps because that is what the agency is getting funds for) as to which entitlement the people must work on and claim accountability for. Obviously there are compelling arguments for an agency having to remain true to its mandate and focussed in its programmes. However in the context of CA type activities, unless the agency staff rigorously adhere to their role as facilitators, and not leaders of the process, the risk of what should remain the ultimate 'end' (people empowered to claim their entitlements) being reduced into a 'means' to achieve the agency's agenda. The challenge under such situations is to transform the methodology which notwithstanding its intentions, becomes in practice 'outsider centred' into a 'people- centred'.

This would involve starting the effort of empowerment from an area of entitlement which the ordinary villagers/slum dwellers consider a pressing issue, already feel strongly about, and are willing to take action on. In such areas the ordinary people would have the energy and commitment to do something for themselves, if they are helped to strategise more effectively in this felt-need area – and not necessarily from the pre-ordained area that the facilitating agency or the donor agency have decided upon. If this significant change in approach is introduced then there is the possibility that the CA project might truly take off from the people who are the most disadvantaged.

In this context the distinction made above between the cycle wheel and catalyst types of facilitating role assumes much significance. It is to be noted that the experiences of most CBOs and NGOs (not limited to those working with WA) seem to indicate that once the cycle-wheel facilitation is initiated, it is very rare or unlikely that it can transform itself into the catalyst variety at a later stage. This perception is further strengthened by a common experience that very few NGOs that have started with the former style of facilitation ever seem to feel that the people are strengthened enough and that they can withdraw from the leadership in that area. If the NGO does withdraw, it only does so for its own reasons (e.g. lack of funds or other problems faced by the NGO), and rarely if ever because the people have been strengthened so much that the NGO is no more needed to carry on the work that was started. Furthermore, the cycle wheel-type of facilitation also seems to bring with it the belief that a lot of the work can proceed only when there are funds available from outside

sources (not from the people themselves) to conduct meetings and initiate various actions. In that sense this cycle-wheel type of facilitation is not self-sustainable.

Likewise, the specific approach adopted in engaging with a community - the service delivery approach (usually out of a needs-based approach) or the people-centred rights-based approach – has important bearing on this issue. While both are important and may co-exist, it would seem that the starting approach is crucial. If the initial foray into a community is from a service delivery approach (whether the service is hardware related or advocacy related), the experience of numerous civil society groups is that it is well-nigh impossible for the same ‘outsider’ group to lead the community into adopting a community-centred/initiated/self-motivated approach. The reason for this is simple: Once a pattern of dependency is created, and a hierarchical relationship of giver and recipient has been established, such a pattern is almost impossible to break – and this is true even more so when dealing with those who have never experienced themselves as having the power to change anything in their larger environment and society.

It would seem that efforts that start with a cycle-wheel form of facilitation would find it extremely difficult to move into a catalytic form of facilitation. It is the very same phenomenon that in the past nudged NGOs to move out of the service-delivery approach (which was seen over many decades to create much dependency) into a rights-based approach. However, it must be also remembered that even what is termed a rights-based approach can become a different form of service-delivery - except that in this case instead of the marginalised becoming dependent on the outside agency for material goods, the same marginalised become dependent on the outside group to help them get their entitlements. Therefore if the approach must lead to the rights-based outcome, then it would seem that the entry MUST start with a rights-based approach that eschews service delivery, though it may later move into essential service delivery.

Implications for donor support and funding policies

The control over the choice of the agenda in CA also poses significant questions regarding how a donor agency which is particularly concerned about a specific entitlement (e.g. WA’s focus on WASH entitlements) could offer funds for such an open-ended approach where the villagers may not choose initially to work on those entitlements that the donor agency was particularly interested in. All this leads to the conclusion that one of the crucial elements of the CA project – namely that the partner agencies must function in a facilitative role and must not take up a mediating role – is an issue that needs to be debated carefully, and the implications clearly articulated. Clarity is needed all around as to what facilitation means for the different actors involved, and how the support provided by external actors can be an investment not in people’s dependency but in their dignity and realisation of their rights.

Further, this reflection on methodology also leads to the question of replicability/ and financial investments required to upscale such a CA project. It would seem that as long as the cycle type of facilitation is in place, the requirements of finance and outside resources would be considerable, whereas if the catalytic type of facilitation is resorted to right from the beginning, the amount of outside resources would drastically reduce over time, and

hence would be more replicable. Wherever the latter approach has been used (not necessarily among CA partner agencies), the community itself raises most of its own resources to keep their efforts going. It is this latter kind of situation that can truly be called a movement of the people, unlike the outside-resources centred efforts - however useful the latter may be to help improve services for the marginalised.

Sector specific vs 'systemic' approach

Creating an environment of accountability would demand making all systems work, not just those connected with WASH entitlements. The need to go beyond the core mandate of the participating organisations, and instead to focus on the need to making all systems work is all the more crucial in a context like the one in South Asia where corruption has become all pervasive. As reported by Transparency International's recent report on water sector, all 3 countries under review display very high degrees of corruption⁴. The report went so far as to claim that in India every single person, either directly or indirectly, ends up paying some sort of bribe to obtain drinking water. Hence creating an environment to empower citizens to demand accountability cannot be seen in a compartmentalised manner; instead, there is need to work on accountability with regard to all basic human rights, and not just on WASH issues.

Unfortunately, for many civil society groups in the region, the effort to collaborate with the State to make the systems work effectively in favour of the common citizen is often too strenuous and the gains perceived as too minimal and time-consuming.

But CA is precisely about dealing with these very issues. Hence it would not make sense to be involved in a CA project that shies away from making the State systems work as they ought to be working.

CONCLUSIONS

CA is based on an extremely meaningful and valid insight regarding the role of the ordinary citizens in communities in ensuring basic rights of people: through a sustainable, rights-based approach, ordinary people themselves should be able to hold the governments and service providers to account through negotiation and dialogue and negotiation based on information and data they access and apply with confidence. While the forgoing discussion focussed on how CA was used to 'bridge the gap' between responsibility and responsiveness in the delivery of WASH services and WASH rights in South Asia, the reflections and conclusions on the methodological aspects of the CA approach are of relevance to securing people's rights to all basic needs being met.

In drawing out the full potential of this insight, the following are proposed as areas of special significance:

⁴ The studies brought out by Transparency International Bangladesh on the level of corruption in certain State public bodies forced introspection and some action.

Clarity on the ultimate goal of CA. Securing people's rights to all basic needs are met is undoubtedly is of great importance. However the way in which this is secured is also of paramount importance – as claimants of their rights, rather than as supplicants whose needs are to be satisfied by the 'goodness' of those in power. The ultimate goal of CA is not merely fulfilment of people's basic needs, but change in the mind set of the people which enables them to access the knowledge related to their entitlements and feel empowered and confident to enter into a dialogue, negotiation - or even confrontation when called for - with the duty bearers to claim their rights.

Empowerment of all the citizens. CA aims to secure the rights of people as a result of the ordinary citizen being informed and empowered. However in the socio-political context in a given society where differential access to power and wealth are integral features of the fabric of that society, not all citizens experience the same level of empowerment. Unless the unequal distribution of power within the society is recognised, and conscious measures are taken to overcome the historical and social barriers to ensuring that those 'last in the line' are also empowered in a discernible way, CA would remain incomplete. .

The nature of facilitation. The facilitating agency has a crucial role to play in creating an environment where the citizens feel empowered to hold the State to account. What was highlighted in the foregoing discussion is the criticality of the nature of this facilitation if the ultimate goal of CA is to be realised. If the approach taken is that of a cycle wheel type of facilitation then it becomes well nigh impossible for hierarchical relationship of giver and recipient not to develop and a pattern of dependency not to set in. Hence if the external agency is committed to contribute to a truly empowering process, it is the catalyst type of facilitating role that it should aspire for.

The above consideration also has important implications for other supporting agencies like donor agencies. A meaningful contribution to a truly empowering CA initiative would require that in pursuing their own core mandate and organisational focus, they do not cut off the ground of genuine CA work through funding policies and conditions of support that militate against it, and that their representatives rigorously adhere to their role as facilitators. , and guard against the risk of what should remain the ultimate 'end' (people empowered to claim their entitlements) being reduced into a 'means' to achieve the agency's agenda. Moreover creating an environment of accountability cannot be seen in a compartmentalised manner; instead CA initiatives should encompass all basic human rights and move from sector specific or issue specific approaches to an approach that contributes to all systems work. This is all the more imperative in contexts where corruption and lack of transparency are wide spread.

Finally, it must be remembered that the degree of legal compulsion or controllability with regard to entitlements that can be brought to bear on any Government is greater if it such entitlements are found articulated in case law or parliamentary law. Hence one of the crucial goals of CA work should be to work for the inclusion of rights to basic services in the realm of Parliamentary Rights – i.e. getting entitlements articulated in an Act and subsequently translated into a Law. Likewise, it is also crucial to get redressal mechanisms

and sanctions included in the Rules/Regulations that are subsequently drawn up once a law is passed. Ambitious though this goal be, it is important that CA initiatives are planned and undertaken, keeping this broader ultimate goals firmly in mind.

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CONTACT DETAILS

WaterAid

47-49 Durham Street,
Londong SE11 5JD
United Kingdom
Tom Palakudiyil

tompalakudiyil@wateraid.org

B-503 Bhakti Complex
Link Road, Kandarpada
Dahisar West, Mumbai 400068
Josantony Joseph

josantonyjoseph@gmail.com