WaterAid

Bridging the gap

Citizens' Action for accountability in water and sanitation

WaterAid/Jon Spaull

Photo: Women in the Outfall Slum in Dhaka, Bangladesh, share their knowledge of water, hygiene and sanitation services in their area.

WaterAid/Abir Abdullah

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www.wateraid.org/citizensaction

WaterAid – water for life The international NGO dedicated exclusively to the provision of safe domestic water, sanitation and hygiene education to the world's poorest people.

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Executive summary

While 2.6 billion people lack adequate sanitation and 1.1 billion lack safe water, the goal of universal coverage of water and sanitation remains a distant hope. The intermediate targets to halve by 2015 the proportions of people living without these necessities – as set out in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – also look like they will be missed by some distance. Despite all the efforts of those in the water and sanitation sectors something is missing. WaterAid believes that 'something' is accountability to the people.

In these dire circumstances poor people are asking not only where is the water and where are the toilets, but also, who is responsible? A new source of momentum is needed to ensure that agencies stick by their commitments, that governments put into place – and act upon – the legislation necessary to support service provision and that service providers meet demand.

This is the essence of the *Citizens' Action* project: citizens supported to engage in ongoing dialogue and negotiation with service providers and governments; citizens holding them to account for the provision – or lack of it – of water and sanitation services.

Not only are there discrepancies between words and action and between policy and practice, there is also a void between responsibility and action into which fall good intentions and other reasons for failure to deliver services. We call this the accountability gap and we believe that *Citizens' Action* projects help people to bridge it.

WaterAid, through its network of partner organisations, instigated a series of *Citizens' Action* projects in 2005, which are set to run for the duration of the UN Water for Life decade until 2015, the deadline for achieving the MDGs. Projects are underway in Nepal, Uganda, India, Ghana and Ethiopia with more soon to start in Bangladesh and Mozambique. Others will follow.

Bridging the gap

In a nutshell *Citizens' Action* helps communities prepare to engage with service providers and government and then supports that engagement for as long as required. Project partners **facilitate** the process, rather than mediate on behalf of citizens as is often the case.

Photo: A community discussion on water and sanitation issues, Bangladesh.

WaterAid/Abir Abdullah

WaterAid/Jon Spaull

"I lost my job, as I had to wait hours collecting water for the family. During the report card discussions I realised that we can mobilise ourselves and demand adequate and timely water supplies from the service-provider. I hope we can begin that soon. I can get my job back, since we are poor and need the income to lead a decent life and to educate my children."

Shabana, Reddy Palya slum, Bangalore

"We have just learnt to accept these services in the state that they are, as we never realised that we can mobilise ourselves and demand from the service provider better provision. Water is a human right – we did not know this! More awareness is required on issues of water, sanitation and hygiene. Now that we have some information, we can take this up with the local authorities."

Voice from Reddy Palya, Bangalore

"If people have open minds, do not mind being criticised, and can see the process as a way to improve services, for those of us who are willing to listen to the voiceless, the services can improve. We are so used to telling the poor what they need and what they should do, now we need to listen, we need to turn it around the other way."

Ms B B Batir, Director of Community Water and Sanitation Agency, Upper West Region

Each project first ensures that local people develop a fuller understanding of:
- Their entitlements to water and sanitation.
- Their current water and sanitation service situation.
- The range of responsibilities for policy and service delivery.

Communities are then supported in a process of dialogue and negotiation with those responsible for providing services or developing policy.

Citizens' progress so far

The experiences to date are fresh – some of the work is in its infancy. Local people are joining the process in large numbers, in numerous locations, with local NGOs and community-based organisations leading the work and spreading the word. This enthusiasm is radiating from participating citizens to service providers that have chosen, admittedly after initial reluctance, to take an active part in the work. This is clear from the progress made in Nepal, and is emerging in Uganda. They have come to see *Citizens' Action* projects not as a threat but as a way of moving forward cooperatively to achieve mutually satisfactory goals.

In India, local people have had public successes in areas such as freedom of information, right to water and making report cards, and are now developing their own forums for testimony and negotiation. In Ghana and Ethiopia, rural communities are also devising their own ways of engaging with providers which build upon structures and practices already in operation.

Citizens' Action for accountability in water and sanitation

WaterAid and its partners are engaged in 20 projects in six countries:

Country	Location	Partner	Key features
Nepal	Thimi and Bharatpur municipalities	Lumanti and NGO Forum for Water and Sanitation	A report card was created based on community interviews on governance issues in water and sanitation and has been used in negotiation with government for improvements.
	Kathmandu Valley	NGO Forum for Water and Sanitation	A programme of ongoing community consultation in response to government proposals on utility reform and infrastructure development which exclude poor people.
	Various rural districts	Federation of Water User Groups	User groups formed in numerous rural districts across the country to make their voices heard to service providers and government at both the district and national levels.
Uganda	Kawempe Division, Kampala	Local partner: Community Integrated Development Initiatives (CIDI); international partner: Pamoja Trust	The community is undertaking a slum enumeration and census to inform negotiations with the city's water and sanitation service provider. The methods are being adopted through exchange with community members from the neighbouring district of Kisenyi and will form the basis of replication through exchange with other districts in Kampala.
India	Bangalore, Karnataka State	APSA	Research with and by local people on adequacy, effectiveness and affordability of water and sanitation services leading to the production of report cards.
	Dumka and Godda districts, Jharkhand State	Sathee	Development of a network of NGOs and community-based organisations (CBOs) to conduct joint learning and community scrutiny of both policy and budgets.
	Jalon, Orai, Banda and Lalitpur districts, Uttar Pradesh State	Parmath	Assessment of state budget allocation and gaps to create the basis of an action plan on accountability and transparency in future allocations.
Ghana	Afram Plains, Eastern Region	Afram Plains Development Organisation (APDO)	Combination of waterpoint distribution mapping and community scorecards to use as negotiation and planning tools and as the basis for advocacy and scaling up.
	Wa, Upper West Region	Pronet Wa	
Ethiopia	Addis Ababa	Gashe Abera Molla Association (GAMA)	Three projects started but all except one was put on hold due to the political unrest throughout 2005. 1. Coalition has been formed to engage with the city authority on the urban renewal project. 2. Community scorecards created with slum and street dwellers to use in negotiation with authorities. 3. Formation of representative user groups to monitor services at public street taps, which are being handed over to local private sector operators.
	Benishangul Gumuz	Local government	Building on mapping work already underway. Local people to use the results to negotiate for full coverage of water and sanitation.
	Oromia: Hitosa/Gonde-Iteya and Ticho	Community boards and local government	Households will monitor service performance and engage with community management boards (of the large scale gravity schemes) to improve citizen-led management.

Pronet North

Challenges and next steps

The process is embryonic. To make a bigger impact, it needs to increase in scale. We are asking other organisations and individuals to join together with those already carrying out *Citizens' Action* projects, to share experiences of similar initiatives and to promote this way of working for accountability in water and sanitation service provision. We need this wider involvement for *Citizens' Action* to become a **movement**.

The financial and institutional requirements for initiating and sustaining this sort of action are not trivial. It is vital to avoid these becoming one-off exercises. Commitment is needed from all players:
• Partner organisations to get involved and spread the work further among poor communities.

• Governments and service providers to promote the principles and become engaged with communities in dialogue and negotiation.
• Donors to support and fund these processes.

Citizens' Action projects demonstrate WaterAid's belief that anything less than governments' and service providers' accountability to the people means that universal access will continue to be a mirage and the MDGs will be missed by some distance.

We were convinced, when *Citizens' Action* started, that generating context specific measures to bridge the gap between promises and reality, driven by local people on a large scale, could be a very significant boost towards achieving the MDGs and onwards to water and sanitation for all. The best advert for joining this process is that local people who are involved are convinced and spreading the word.

A call to action

In 2006, 1.1 billion people lack access to water and 2.6 billion are without adequate sanitation. The lives of these people are blighted by disease, poverty and indignity. Worldwide a child dies every fifteen seconds from water-related diseases. This is an outrage.

WaterAid, its partners and many others are dedicated to a vision of a world where everyone has access to safe water and sanitation close to their home.

Poor people urgently need to be able to hold governments and service providers to account to make universal coverage of water and sanitation a reality – this is the basis of *Citizens' Action*.

Despite the efforts of those in the water and sanitation sectors, basic facilities are still absent in countless communities; universal coverage never seems to get any closer. Different policies and methods – from supply driven to demand responsive approaches, from community management to privatisation – are not moving the world towards that goal quickly enough. Something is missing. WaterAid believes that 'something' is accountability to the people.

Everyone, at every level, who plays a part in providing water and sanitation must be able to be held to account for their actions. It is crucial that citizens should lead the way because:
- It is they who are seeing their entitlements to water and sanitation unmet.
- It is they who see many agencies acting without any urgency despite international understanding that access to safe, affordable water and sanitation are human rights.
- It is they who are the ones affected when water and sanitation are absent from the priorities of the poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs).
- It is they who will otherwise suffer or die. At the current rate of progress in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) target of halving the proportions of people without access to sanitation will not be met until 2105 (not by 2015), by which time an **additional** 133 million African children will have died.[1]

In these dire circumstances poor people are asking not only where is the water and where are the toilets, but also, who is responsible? A new source of momentum is needed to ensure that agencies stick by their commitments, that governments put into place and act upon the legislation or policies necessary to support service provision and that service providers meet demand.

There is an **urgent** need for action to ensure improved accountability. This is the essence of the *Citizens' Action* project: citizens supported to engage in ongoing dialogue and negotiation with service providers and governments.

Citizens' Action is set to run throughout the UN *Water for Life* decade until 2015, the milestone set for achievement of the MDGs. The first *Citizens' Action* projects are already well underway in India, Uganda, Nepal, Ghana and Ethiopia, with others in Bangladesh starting, more to start soon in Mozambique, Nigeria, Burkina Faso and Mali, and yet more to follow.

1 WaterAid (2005) *Dying for the toilet – the cost of missing the sanitation Millennium Development Goal*

Brent Stirton

This, the first report on *Citizens' Action* processes, provides an introduction to the work, an explanation of its methodology and an outline of progress so far. By setting out these experiences, we aim to inspire others to get on board and support, promote or implement *Citizens' Action*.

The accountability gap

> *"The brunt of deficiencies in service leaves poor people vulnerable to rudeness, humiliation and inhuman treatment by both private and public agents of the state …*
>
> *Dissatisfaction with services is compounded by the helplessness among poor people about public institutions, which they see as not accountable or as responsive only to the powerful and rich segments of society."*
>
> **Gopa Thampi, Chief of Programmes, Public Affairs Foundation, 2005[2]**

Not only are there discrepancies between words and action and between policy and practice, there is also a void between responsibility and action. Into this void tumble both good intentions and less well-meaning reasons for the failure to deliver improved water and sanitation services. We call this void 'the accountability gap'.

What creates this 'gap'? It appears that there are three interrelated explanations:

1. **Some governments do not act on their obligations to their citizens**
   Governments do not always prioritise what their poor citizens need and may instead serve the powerful or simply extract taxes and wealth. Others fail simply because they do not have the means to care for poor people, often because their debt obligations consume too many of their meagre resources.
2. **Governments delegate or avoid responsibility for service provision by passing it to other (less accountable) agencies**
   Often persuaded by donors, Governments have passed responsibility for water

and sanitation service provision to unaccountable private sector agencies in the misguided belief that this would lead to a better fiscal environment, or that this was the best way to get services to people, or on the basis that Governments do not have the skills, experience or resources to run services efficiently and effectively.

3. **The representative democratic process through which citizens' voices can be given priority is under-developed**
   People need channels through which they can reach those in power. Where these are absent, citizens' voices are not heard; where they are weak, they can be ignored.

However, serious questions of accountability arise, not only with Government, but at **every** level of service provision, for example:

- International financial institutions demand unrealistic and unfair conditions in return for the assistance that they trumpet they are providing.
- Some donors and NGOs actually undermine progress through uncoordinated interventions.
- There is a gap between implementing policy for better water and sanitation services and implementing actual taps and toilets.
- Decentralisation of responsibility for service provision can only work if the staff and resources to implement such policies are in place.
- "Community management" of water services, at least in rural areas, can amount to passing the buck of responsibility from local government to those who do not have the means to take the necessary actions.[3]

The result of these failings is that, in many countries, there is a breakdown of the 'social contract' between the state and its citizens. People 'exit' the relationship, not necessarily voluntarily. Given the choice of getting sick or dying as a result of access to dirty water on the one hand, or of having to substitute water payments for other basic necessities on the other, citizens will try to fend for themselves or resort to other unsatisfactory means of being served.

There is a need to rebuild this contract so that states and the Governments that run them not only care for their people but also generate the means to meet their obligations. The state

2 Thampi Gopakumar K (2005) *Community voice as an aid to* accountability, p.3, Public Affairs Centre, Bangalore

3 See many examples in Ton Schouten and Patrick Moriarty (2003) *Community water, community sanitation – from system to service in rural areas*, Practical Action

is the **only** entity that has a responsibility to ensure universal, equitable and sustainable access to water and sanitation; it doesn't always have to provide services itself, but it must ensure their provision. In turn, it is vital that citizens become active in playing their role in ensuring that the Government is accountable for the state's obligations.

To bridge the accountability gap requires local people to develop a fuller understanding of their entitlements to water and sanitation, their current water and sanitation service situation and who is responsible for policy and service delivery. Armed with such knowledge citizens can get into direct negotiation to change policy and practice, and gain their rightful services. These form the basis of *Citizens'* Action projects.

In each location this process is a necessary response to responsibilities for water and sanitation service provision being dodged, divested or devolved. It is also a response to a glimmer of hope in the seeming re-establishment of Governments' responsibility for service provision visible in the MDGs, a growing belief in a universal right to water, and increasing coverage of water and sanitation in PRSPs.

A right to water and sanitation

The right to water was confirmed by the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in its General Comment No. 15 (GC15) in November 2002 thereby indicating that governments have the duty to respect, protect and work to achieve this right progressively.[5] General Comments provide interpretation of existing law; GC15 points out the right to water is included in two of the six core human rights treaties and so the right to water exists for all – 50 states have acknowledged this.[6]

Building the bridge

In a nutshell *Citizens' Action* helps communities prepare to engage with service providers and government and then supports that engagement for as long as required. Local organisations **facilitate** the process, rather than mediate on behalf of citizens as is often the case.

To be able to hold service providers and governments to account, citizens collect information about services, entitlements and responsibilities. Citizens carry out the work themselves as far as possible; where specific techniques are used instruction is given so that future ventures can be carried out by the community without any outside assistance.

With data collected and contacts made, a challenging and perhaps lengthy process of dialogue and negotiation will follow. This may require the input of facilitating organisations for some time to ensure that those directly involved in the process receive adequate support for the tasks they are conducting, and to make sure that the platforms for continuing engagement and negotiation are institutionalised.

Millennium Development Goals

In 2000, all 191 United Nations states pledged to meet all eight Millennium Development Goals. The seventh relates to environmental sustainability and contains a target[4] to reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water. A further target, to reduce by half the proportion of people without access to adequate sanitation, was added. Despite this, the 2004 WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme Assessment showed that these targets are likely to be missed by some distance.

While the local situation determines the methods chosen, a typical *Citizens' Action* project follows a basic pattern:
• **Community mobilisation:** People are encouraged to become involved through existing community-based organisations.

4   See for example www.un.org/ millenniumgoals

5   See www.righttowater.org.uk

6   Amnesty International (2005) *Human rights for human dignity, a primer on economic, social and cultural rights*, Amnesty International Publications

Where these are weak, then the need for support is greater and longer.

- **Generating a picture of service levels:** Local people are assisted to choose and then implement a method for collecting and analysing information about their water and sanitation services. There are many methods to choose from; the following have been used to date:

Report cards:

Essentially a market research exercise, like an opinion poll. The report card brings together all the survey results for presentation.

Community scorecards:

Local people rank or score the range of their services at a communal level. They then refer to these ratings in their meetings with service providers or government officials.

Mapping water and sanitation:

1. Urban slum enumeration and mapping: based upon the experience of urban "slum federations", people are assisted to number and to make a communal map of the location of dwellings and households in slum areas, along with services and other amenities.

2. Rural waterpoint mapping: locations of water points are pinpointed using Global Imaging Satellite (GIS) pictures and Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) maps and are compared with population locations. This makes the equity of distribution clear and irrefutable and provides a firm basis for holding those responsible to account for future actions.

- **Raising awareness of entitlements to water and sanitation:** Community members are helped to understand more fully their water and sanitation entitlements by right, law or regulation.

- **Preparing for engagement with providers:** With the data they have collected citizens can compare the service they actually receive with their entitlements. If training in negotiation is needed, this can be given. People can discuss how to approach service providers and what their objectives will be in any dialogue.

- **Dialogue:** Communities can start negotiation with those responsible for providing services or who are responsible for developing policy. Partners give support for as long as necessary.

There are numerous examples of citizen-led action in the water and sanitation sector in various countries from which we can draw inspiration:[7]

- The name Porto Alegre has become synonymous with participation in municipal services – this Brazilian regional capital is the self-styled capital of democracy. It has earned this reputation on the basis of very extensive participatory budgeting and participation of civil society in decision-making over services such as water supply and sanitation.
- The right-to-information work of the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) organisation in India. Their efforts have won remarkable victories in the struggle against corruption, both at the village and national levels.[8]
- The Water Dialogues (multi-stakeholder dialogues on water and the private sector) aim to contribute to meeting the MDGs for water and sanitation by promoting constructive dialogue between a wide range of stakeholders in the sector. These examine whether and how the private sector can contribute to the delivery of affordable and sustainable services, especially to poor communities.
- In Recife, Brazil, a municipal conference was held during 2001 and 2002, in which local people, private sector, politicians and professionals discussed alternatives to proposed privatisation, before voting to retain, reform and regulate the utility. The municipal body is now performing well, extending water coverage into the poor areas of the city rapidly and making a financial surplus.[9]
- In Caracas, Venezuela, after President Hugo Chavez was elected in 1999, Water "Technical Roundtables" and Communal Councils were set up to scrutinise the actions of the water utility and ensure it sets goals and sticks by them. The approach has since spread across the country so that much of the management is now conducted by citizens. The service situation is improving markedly.[10]

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7 For a series of examples, see Balanyà Belén et al (eds) (2005) *Reclaiming public water: achievements, struggles and visions from around the world*, Transnational Institute (TNI), Corporate Europe Observatory

8 From www.*freedominfo.org* – accessed January 2006

9 *Reclaiming Public Water,* op cit. pp113 et seq

10 *ibid*, pp131 et seq

Crossing the bridge

In bridging the accountability gap *Citizens' Action* provides a way in which the 'social contract' between state and citizen can be built or rebuilt. This creates challenges, not just in political practice, but also in how professionals work. All elements of society need to respond to these challenges, even where such a response requires soul searching and perhaps considerable change of role and habits. This is the only way that people at all levels remain or become part of the solution, not part of the problem.

While communities are also challenged to get engaged, it must be acknowledged that people want services, not continuous mobilisation to get things done. *Citizens' Action* can be seen as a stepping stone – with people participating intensely in order to establish more 'normal' accountability and regulatory processes in the future. Indeed, through *Citizens' Action*, these processes will be institutionalised.

The work to date, reported in the following sections, shows that *Citizens' Action* results in improvements in service as well as improvements in overall accountability of service providers and policy makers. These sorts of actions need to be replicated far and wide.

The experiences are fresh – some of the work is in its infancy. But despite this, it is clear that huge progress is being made in setting up the work, in kindling the enthusiasm of communities and in inspiring positive inputs and participation from service providers and government.

Local people are joining the process in numerous locations, with local non governmental organisations (NGOs) and community-based organisations (CBOs) leading the work and spreading the word. This enthusiasm is radiating from participating citizens to service providers that have chosen, admittedly sometimes following a period of reluctance, to take an active part in the work. This is clear from the progress made in Nepal, and is emerging in Uganda. They have come to see this type of work not as a threat but as a way of moving forward cooperatively to achieve mutually satisfactory goals.

WaterAid/Caroline Penn

In India, local people have taken confidence from very public successes in such arenas as freedom of information, right to water and data collection methods such as report cards and are developing their own forums for testimony and negotiation.

In Ghana and Ethiopia, rural communities are also devising their own ways of engaging with providers which build upon structures and practices already in operation. In Benishangul Gumuz, Ethiopia, communities are building upon the GPS (global positioning systems) based mapping that the regional government has undertaken, while in Afram and Wa in Ghana, they are building upon the community scorecard process that was developed by the NGOs they worked with.

The process is embryonic. To make a bigger impact, *Citizens' Action* needs to increase in scale. Other partners are needed to join together with those already carrying out this sort of work, and for all to share knowledge, lessons and experience on methods, challenges and outcomes. It needs to become a **movement** across geographical boundaries, and development sectors. This is the challenge.

Citizens' Action in Nepal

Rationale

Nepal needs *Citizens' Action* for three reasons. The first is that poverty is rampant, especially among ethnic minority communities, and the links between the poor and service providers and Government is weak. Eighty five per cent of Nepal's people live in rural areas, around a third live below the commonly defined poverty line. The second reason is that Nepal is going through a critical period in its history in

> *"Our drinking water project was implemented in 1998. The situation is now pathetic. The reservoir is broken and lack of proper technical supervision causes intermittent water flow. Many water taps are dry. At the source there is enough water but we are forced just to look at it without being able to use it. Sanitation conditions are bad especially among ethnic groups, even the school does not have a toilet."*
>
> **Bhaldada and Chamdada from the Water and Sanitation Users Group, Kumpur District 5**

> *"Top-down approaches have failed due to lack of public participation. Service providing agencies are focused towards accessible areas."*
>
> **Ram Sharan Chimariya, Chief District Officer, Dhading**

which the prevailing civil and political conflict presents the major obstacle to development: Nepal is a nation in crisis. And the third is that the state and its donors have been promoting a truly controversial infrastructure project and reform process in the Kathmandu Valley. How can the people have a real say in determining what happens?

Creating accountability in such an environment may not be easy but is all the more important. The foundations to do this are in place, as *Citizens' Action* projects have been able to build upon foundations provided by the poverty reduction strategy paper, which values civil society's participation. The Tenth Nepal National Plan (2002-2007, which is also the PRSP), sets out a plan to reduce Nepal's poverty rate to 30% by 2007 and address

WaterAid/Jim Holmes

Photo: Women from the community in discussion, Nepal

WaterAid/Kelly Jones

but also generating grievances among community members. In armed conflict situations development is often overridden by the immediate need to maintain security and restore peace. However, provision of basic services, including water and sanitation, can address the underlying tensions that fuel conflict.

Citizens' Action is working in this context; ensuring that the poorest members of the community, disadvantaged groups and women have the chance to make their voice heard and so participate in decision-making. Entrenched social practices cannot be changed in the span of a short project. All activities have to try to sow the seeds of social transformation. So, *Citizens' Action* in this context is more than a series of projects. It is a method to reduce confrontation, resolve differences and meet demand.

Locations and methods

WaterAid's partners in Nepal are implementing *Citizens' Action* projects in three different ways across the range of geographical and cultural contexts and in areas both where the government and where the Maoists have effective control.

Report card on governance in Thimi Municipality

In Thimi Municipality, in the Kathmandu Valley, a report card process was carried out by NGOs Lumanti and the NGO Forum on Urban Water and Sanitation. Of Thimi's 45,000 population, 45% are not connected to a safe water supply. Those who are connected suffer from low quality and intermittent supply. This is how it was carried out:

Firstly, the NGOs briefed the municipality and Nepal Water Supply Corporation (NWSC). Initially, officials questioned the need for the process. The NGOs responded by pointing out service provision shortcomings and reassuring and convincing officials that they were not complaining but trying to constructively engage with them so that services could be improved.

social exclusion; it is built upon the principles of broad-based economic growth, human development, social inclusion and targeted programmes. It identifies access to safe water and sanitation as a main priority and allocates 6% of the development budget to these to increase coverage of water supply to 85% (from 72%) and sanitation to 50% (from 27%), envisaging increasing service standards.

Additionally, the *Local Self-Governance Act* (1999) provides local government with increased space and a bigger role in service delivery. In Nepal, inadequate services stem directly from weak institutions and critical limitations in government capacity to monitor and evaluate performance. So, citizen engagement in these first tentative steps in decentralisation of services is important.

Around 12,000 people have died in ten years of violence between Government and Maoist forces. Analysis of the root causes has identified issues of deep-seated political, economic and social exclusion of a range of people based on class, caste, gender, ethnicity, religion, language and geographical isolation. Water and sanitation service delivery improvements take place in the context of local conflicts (including source disputes), resulting not only in unsustainable projects

The next step featured discussions on how to proceed and how citizens, service providers and NGOs would work together. The 'rules of engagement' were established and agreed. The NGOs then introduced the concepts of report cards and governance issues that had been developed by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). An 11 member committee was formed to finalise the details of the indicators to be tested. The nine indicators of governance recommended by UNDP were agreed: participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus building, equity, effectiveness and efficiency, accountability, and strategic vision.

About 50 people were invited to take part in a workshop including former politicians, groups representing civil society, women, professionals, young people, plus individuals. In lively discussion, the participants then scored each indicator from one to five (very poor to very good), all being reminded to justify scores on the basis of evidence rather than bias.

> *"We [who are] living in Chandai Tole, Nasanani, Wachunani, Duipokhari had no access to a drinking water connection and were not informed of available budget and expenses. Another community complained that though they have private connections [they] are not getting satisfactory services but have to pay a tariff whether they get water or not. We filed a complaint but [got] no hearing."*
>
> **A group statement from report card participants, Thimi, December 2004**

NGO staff analysed the scoring and presented the results back to citizens, the municipality and NWSC. The scores averaged around one and two (very poor or poor). Since the scores were supported by evidence, the service providers accepted them (albeit a little reluctantly) and agreed to seek ways to make improvements. Further workshops were conducted, firstly to examine the recommendations proposed by the citizens and then to prepare an action plan.

This is now being implemented, and comprises ongoing engagement between the municipality, the NWSC and local people which means that:
- Regular reporting is to be undertaken.
- Annual progress reports are to be published and disseminated.
- Information display boards are to be placed at appropriate places with regularly updated information on water and sanitation projects.
- The same information will be disseminated to households, specified by locations.
- Citizens' discussion on good governance and its practices at municipal and ward levels is to continue.

Consultation on reforms in the Kathmandu Valley

The second *Citizens' Action* project, 'community consultation', is underway in the Kathmandu Valley urban centres, home to 1.5 million people. It is being conducted by the NGO Forum on Urban Water and Sanitation. Official figures show that 18% of people are unconnected but, as in the case of Thimi, those who do have a connection suffer from a low quality, intermittent supply. Kathmandu is a water scarce area and this *Citizens' Action* project is being conducted specifically to help affected people to have an input. This ensures access to information on reform proposals and the Melamchi project.

The Melamchi project is a $500 million project in the Kathmandu Valley and includes a proposal to build a 27km tunnel to bring water to the water-scarce capital. It has had a chequered history and has faced considerable debate. The initial World Bank conditions attached to the construction loans included that NWSC should be privatised. The Bank pulled out of the project and was replaced by the Asian Development Bank (ADB). In turn, the ADB proposed private sector participation under a management contract as part of overall reform process. Opposition to the scheme, disquiet with the conditions imposed and the current political crisis in Nepal mean that the future of the project remains clouded in uncertainty.

The first step was to ensure that local people were able to understand the proposals as they stood – translation and explanation were

needed; clarification was sought and gained from Government and project funders. A series of workshops, information meetings and site visits preceded lobbying meetings, and citizens involved the media to spread the message about the work. The main dialogue involved two-way interaction with both Government and funders based on community feedback. A process of mapping slums, squatters and public standpipes followed. The objective was to amend the proposals and reforms to make them more pro-poor. This achieved major success:

- It was agreed to reduce the average connection cost to utility services from the current US$156 to US$26 per household. Even then the cost was considered high for poorer citizens. However, negotiations have resulted in instalment based payment systems being agreed, which are far more affordable for the poor.
- A low cost tariff has been agreed for the first ten cubic metres; this incrementally increases by volume, to allow the operator to recover costs.
- Water will be provided through public standpipes irrespective of land ownership.
- The Chair of NGO Forum on Urban Water and Sanitation is to take a place on the Water Authority Board.[11]
- Community consultation reports on water utility reforms will be disseminated.
- Enumeration and mapping of slums, squatters and public stand posts with reference to their location, water-use status and willingness to pay is to be continued and used as the basis for further planning.
- A Low Income Consumer Support Unit will be set up with the water utility operator to ensure services are provided to poor people.

However, some issues are yet to be resolved:
- The poor who are unable to afford the initial connection cost still have to pay a higher tariff in the third year.
- The management contractor is not required to provide a connection for households which are more than 50m from the main line. As the poor are often in isolated locations, this will effectively exclude them from being served.

Users' voice in the rural districts

The third *Citizens' Action* project is being conducted in locations across the country and is known as Water and Sanitation Users' Group Voice. The national spread means that it is being conducted in very diverse geographic, socio-economic and conflict contexts, with similarly varied experiences of water supply. The Federation of Water and Sanitation Users Group (FEDWASUN) implements the activities through its network in 15 districts and its membership of 500 water and sanitation users groups (linked to about 50,000 households).

The nature of the activity is to strengthen NGO and CBO ability at national and district levels to make and strengthen stakeholder alliances and networks. Central to this work is documenting and analysing local citizens' perspectives and then help them to engage in constructive dialogue with service providers and local bodies. However, as FEDWASUN is a new body it needs support in some areas including lobbying skills. Accordingly, its members at all levels are receiving training on:
- Localising the MDG targets on water and sanitation.
- Water law.
- Issues of gender and poverty.
- Leadership skills.
- Collecting evidence and generating advocacy at district and national levels.

Additionally, there has been networking with ActionAid, UNICEF and the UK Department for International Department (DFID) to increase the scale and range of activities and FEDWASUN is now recognised as providing a potentially vital role in bringing in local users' perspective for improving services.

"Any issues raised by FEDWASUN will be positively taken up by the department."

Srawan Kumar Upadhya, Division Chief, Department of Water Supply and Sanitation

11 The NWSC is to be split into three parts:
- A water regulatory board.
- A water authority board.
- A water utility operator.

Citizens' Action in Uganda

Rationale

Uganda's population of 25 million is growing at 3.4% a year[12] – one of the highest rates in the world. Urbanisation is proceeding apace and severe deprivation is all too apparent in slum and squatter settlements where the explosion in size appears to dwarf the ability of the authorities to provide the necessary infrastructure.

While Kampala contains over 40% of the urban population, 60% of whom live in informal settlements, any infrastructure development initiatives largely exclude such areas. Basic services, where available, are over-stretched, leaving most residents no choice but to exit public provision: to fend for themselves and resort to rudimentary options for water and sanitation. The lack of these basic necessities and the poverty of the residents are compounded by dreadful living conditions, together causing suffering and ill-health on a massive scale.

Cholera – a constant threat

"My toilet is so poor that you cannot risk entering it! What you can only do is to use a kavera (polythene bag) and throw it in the drainage channel."

Ibrahim, aged 85, Bwaise II Parish, Kampala

There are no reasonable and adequate sanitation facilities for both the community and households, leaving the area prone to sanitation-related diseases such as cholera.

At the time the enumeration exercise described in this section was going on, there was a cholera outbreak. The statistics from the Komamboga Health Centre where all the cholera cases in the Division are handled indicate that in Kawempe in January 2005, there were a total of 268 cases, with four deaths.[13]

12 *The State of Uganda Population Report 2003,* Population Secretariat MOFPED/UNFPA, Government of Uganda

13 *Komamboga Health Centre, Patients' Registration Records 2005* – inspected by WaterAid staff, January 2005

Photo: Children collecting water from a poorly protected source, Kawempe, Kampala.

WaterAid/Peter Ryan

WaterAid/Peter Ryan

"Each time you go, you pay 100 shillings. What if you have a family of 10 people and each go four times a day? That is 4000 shillings and yet my husband earns 5000 shillings a day, so will it mean that we don't eat and go only to the latrine? What we do is to use the basin in our house and pour it in the drainage channel."

Maria, aged 75, Nabukalu Zone, Bwaise II Parish, Kampala

Relevant and appropriate policy is in place; its application is the issue. For example, it is national policy to achieve 100% water and sanitation coverage in large urban areas by 2015. The second Poverty Eradication Action Plan prioritises water and sanitation, resulting in increases in resources for the water and sanitation sector from 47 billion Shillings in 1996/97 to 101 billion in 2004/05;[14] but it still receives by far the lowest share of national resources compared to other social sectors. Despite policy priority and these increases in resources, coverage remains low. Also it is widely held that coverage figures are often inaccurate as they do not account for non-functionality of facilities nor for distances that people will actually walk to a waterpoint.

In the urban areas, the three year performance contract with the government of Uganda 2003-2006 commits the National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSC) to develop criteria to identify poor communities as an entry point for providing services and, consequently, a plan for serving the poor including consideration of the necessary subsidy levels.

However, despite this clear commitment of Government and the NWSC to move forward,[15] efforts are frustrated by the sheer size of informal settlements which make planning and construction complex, compounded by an unfavourable land tenure system and a lack of adequate information. Therefore the reasons for conducting *Citizens' Action* work in Uganda lie with the need to underpin and support the efforts that are being made in the water and sanitation sector in the country and specifically in the urban areas. There is in addition a need to address the issues that lie beneath the surface of official coverage claims, especially in the mushrooming informal urban settlements.

Locations and methods

Citizens' Action work is taking place in Kawempe division, one of five that comprise Kampala. Its population is officially 270,000 people (population census 2002), at a density

14 *Water and Sanitation Sector Performance* (2005) Ministry of Water, Lands and Environment (MWLE), Government of Uganda

15 The overall activity is known as the Kampala Urban Poor Water Supply Project.

of 11,000 people per km². Even though this is far higher than Kampala as a whole (7400 per km²) it is acknowledged that the actual population is even higher, well in excess of 350,000, so the issues it faces are, in reality, magnified. Kawempe Division has 22 parishes and the project has started in three of them: Bwaise II, Kyebando and Mulago III. The aim is to spread activity to all the parishes in the division.

Discussions were held among local people, NGOs and the authorities on an appropriate method for the action. The agreed method was found through researching and discussing jointly the activities of the urban slum federations in India (especially Mumbai) and in Nairobi where, through communal action on a large scale, great strides have been made in securing land tenure and new housing in urban slums, and also in developing sanitation facilities constructed and operated by the community.[16]

Local people prepare the ground by mapping and enumerating their own location. By doing this, local people make their communities and facilities (or lack of them) visible, firstly to themselves and then to agencies responsible for planning and service delivery. It is an important gesture to make themselves be seen to exist and to have rights and entitlements.

The basis for developing enthusiasm and 'buy-in' within the community for this type of action is savings. It has been found that exercises of this sort can only be successfully built through a process of creating some community 'gel' in the form of individual savings. This is not a form of micro-credit, instead, the act of depositing and managing small sums helps communities build significant savings that they can choose to use as they see fit – from secondary education, to funeral costs, to hospital fees. It is a confidence and empowerment exercise.

The community action in the three parishes commenced in July 2005 with mobilisation, followed by community mapping and enumeration, and then the development of savings schemes. All of this was supported by Pamoja Trust (the Nairobi federation affiliate of Slum Dwellers International) and the community from Kisenyi Division, which is acting on a similar project.

Three inception meetings at division, parish and community levels were organised and attended by community members, parish development committees, community health workers and community leaders. In addition, the meetings were aimed at lobbying politicians and officials to participate in and support the programme to influence the future planning of the division in line with people's needs which would emerge during the work.

Publicity drives were conducted using community meetings and radio advertisements as well as through information circulated by local leaders. Seventy-five enumerators were selected and trained in community mapping and enumeration, verification, settlement profiling, numbering and development of saving schemes. The team from Kisenyi was invited to share experiences on the successes of their similar projects which have led to mass community mobilisation in that division. An exchange visit was organized to Kisenyi and teams from Slum Dwellers International from Mozambique, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Namibia shared their experience in mapping and enumeration. During this visit, there was also a practical learning session on communication skills, teamwork and enumeration.

A questionnaire was developed and pre-tested, this comprised 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 then carried out to accomplish the mapping and enumeration exercise:
- Numbering: the identification of each dwelling by allocating it a unique number.
- Settlement profiling: the measurement and collection of data for each household using the questionnaire, administered by local people.
- Mapping: locating all households in relationship with each other and with infrastructure such as sanitation and water facilities, rubbish disposal places and drainage channels and facilities such as schools, places of worship, etc; and setting these out on paper.

At the end of this major exercise, the community had enumerated and profiled no fewer than 14,000 households, while 19 zonal maps and three parish maps had been drawn.

16 There is a wealth of literature on this and related actions, including for example, *Community toilets in Pune and other Indian cities*, Sundar Burra and Sheela Patel; accessed via www.sparcindia.org/documents (which contains many other papers of relevance and interest), 28 July 2005; *Beyond evictions in a global city: people managed resettlement in Mumbai*, Sheela Patel, Celine d'Cruz and Sundar Burra, in Environment and Urbanization, Vol 14, No 1, April 2002; also a number of related articles in *Environment and Urbanization* Vol. 16, No. 1, April 2004 – an issue devoted to participatory governance.

Six enumerators had been trained in database design and data entry and a complete database had been assembled from the data.

Outcomes and challenges

So far, the exercise has been both empowering and educative to the community and they are optimistic about its potential to bring about change in service delivery.

"Our people are really neglected in service delivery from the government and the division, we hope that with this programme a lot can be changed."

Ssempebwa Uthman, Mukalazi zone, Bwaise II, Kampala

But it is important to note that Government officials in Kawempe Division and in the NWSC do not have the data to inform them of the water and sanitation situation in the slum areas. NWSC has committed to support the process of mapping by creating digital maps out of the hand-drawn maps that will be provided from this exercise. They are also willing to work with other partners in the project to roll out this kind of work to the five divisions that comprise Kampala to meet its objectives of extending water to all the urban poor as set in the performance contract with the Ugandan Government. So, the potential scale of this project is startling: it offers the scope for community involvement across all of the unplanned settlements in Kampala.

The information will be useful in planning better not only for water and sanitation services, but also for other facilities like schools and health centres as these too are captured in the mapping and enumeration exercise.

This exercise is however not short of challenges. The timing in the country is politically charged with campaigns for presidential, parliamentary and local elections gaining momentum – community activities of this nature can be misunderstood in this environment. However, despite these challenges all concerned in the community and those facilitating the work are confident that the objectives of the project will be met.

"The programme is good because it will streamline development programmes since it will make data available even for other development partners for intervention."

Namagembe Aminah, Lufula zone, Bwaise II, Kampala

Citizens' Action in India

Rationale

> "I lost my job, as I had to wait hours collecting water for the family. During the report card discussions I realised that we can mobilise ourselves and demand adequate and timely water supplies from the service-provider. I hope we can begin that soon. I can get my job back, since we are poor and need the income to lead a decent life and to educate my children."
>
> **Shabana, Reddy Palya slum, Bangalore**

India is considered as one of the growing economies of the world but living among its population of more than one billion are one third of the world's poor. A quarter of its population lives below the poverty line.[17]

Government claims that rural water supply coverage is 94% and sanitation coverage is 20%, while for urban areas water coverage is claimed to be 88%, 61% for sanitation. However, major questions arise in respect of water quality, reliability and the functioning of water points. One goal of *Citizens' Action* is to address the disparity between Government claims and reality on the ground.

Another goal is to raise people's awareness of their rights, which is currently minimal – a feature which is compounded by low literacy levels. The final motivator comes from the potential for *Citizens' Action* to exploit the ruling given by the Federal Supreme Court of India in which it held that the "the right to life guaranteed in any civilised society implies the right to food, water, decent environment, education, medical care and shelter ….."

Locations and methods

Citizens' Action projects in India are being carried out through three NGO networks, which address specific concerns in selected districts and states, focusing on issues of access, affordability and adequacy as common themes. Currently the accountability of service providers in the selected locations is being studied and actions at different stages of implementation are being taken, as described below.

Currently, *Citizens' Action* is underway in the three states of Karnataka, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh (UP). In Bangalore, Karnataka, the project is in four peri-urban slum settlements in two municipalities of the city. Jharkhand and UP are the least developed states in the country. In Jharkhand, the NGO Sathee is working in two districts of the Gram Panchayat (or GP – a local government unit) of Santhal Paraganas; while, in Uttar Pradesh, the NGO Parmath has started work in four districts in two GPs (as this has just started, it is not covered in detail here).

The partners encouraged interactive processes and allowed methods to evolve through people's active participation. The main elements were:
- To build alliances and to set up public hearings for people to share and testify.
- To organise interactive forums for people's engagement with government, elected representatives and local service providers.
- To gather evidence from both people and relevant authorities to inform the poor and facilitate people's representation; and to amplify their voices to reach policy-makers so that pro-poor policies can be advocated and to promote schemes designed for better provision of utilities.

Karnataka

Citizens' Action was initiated in August 2004 and has progressed considerably. The NGO Association for the Promotion of Social Action (APSA) helped local people to embark on collaborative advocacy stemming from report cards built upon research through interviews with urban slum dwellers living in four peri-urban settlements. Access, adequacy, effectiveness, sustainability and affordability of basic services such as safe water and sanitation were addressed, as were hygiene and health practices and to what extent these impacted on the lives of the poor.

17 National Sample Survey (NSS) 55th Round data. However, this data is held by many to underestimate the problems. Sen (2000) has argued that comparability of data to be maintained; see Jha R (2001) *Rural Poverty in India: Structure, determinants and suggestions for policy reform*, Australia South Asia Research Centre, Australian National University, Canberra; and Sen A (2000) *Estimates of consumer expenditure and its distribution – statistical priorities after NSS 55th round*, Economic and Political Weekly, pp4499-4518

People from some 300 households were interviewed individually and in group discussions to understand their needs and to provide observations of the status of their facilities. The perception and needs of the people was documented and the report card developed. The following key issues were taken into discussion with service providers and Government:

- There is an inadequate supply of drinking water.
- Water quality is not satisfactory.
- There is a lack of adequate communal or household sanitation facilities.
- Open defecation is prevalent.
- Unhygienic conditions are rife due to indiscriminate disposal of rubbish and open defecation.
- Health conditions are often abysmal, particularly for children who are worst affected by outbreaks of water-borne diseases.

The suggestions and recommendations that emerged from the report card exercise were that there needs to be:

- People's participation and formation of slum-based committees for planning, implementing and monitoring of water and sanitation facilities.
- Better awareness on segregation of rubbish and a service to carry out door-to-door rubbish collection.
- At least one Primary Health Centre in each City Municipal Council (CMC) to be shared by the two slums.

> *"We have just learnt to accept these services in the state that they are, as we never realised that we can mobilise ourselves and demand from the service provider better provision. Water is a human right – we did not know this! More awareness is required on issues of water, sanitation and hygiene. Now that we have some information, we can take this up with the local authorities."*
>
> **Voice from Reddy Palya, Bangalore**

The initiative included efforts to build a cadre of community members able to negotiate with service providers and represent the needs of the community in relevant forums.

Twelve women who were identified were given leadership training by APSA and undertook awareness training in water, sanitation and hygiene-related issues. The findings were included in a report *Are they being served?*[18] launched in October 2005.

Representatives of the slums, with the help of APSA, have disseminated this document to all relevant authorities and are planning further activities to back this up. Already, residents of the four slums have started forming citizens' committees to look into the issues which emerged. APSA is facilitating their interaction with the local municipal officers. As a follow up to the citizens' report card process, to continue mobilising community support and imparting information, the findings of the study are being fed back into the community for them to respond and develop a plan of action for the future.

Jharkhand

Sathee's work in Jharkhand began in March 2005. The initial effort was to establish contact and develop a network with existing civil society and local government organisations in the area, through which the status of water and sanitation services was to be assessed. The area is remote and inhabited by multiple marginalised indigenous people. Since they are not in the Scheduled List of recognised tribes, they are excluded from the State's affirmative action programme. Sathee is also involved in the major Tribal Rights and Village Self Rule Campaign being undertaken; *Citizens' Action* dovetails with this iniative.

The work was launched in a two day workshop and strategy-planning meeting at Godda attended by 67 people representing traditional leaders of the Tribal Communities, Gram Sabha (village level governmental body) members, CBOs, NGOs, academics and the press. For two days the water and sanitation situation of the State was deliberated upon and people shared their experiences. What emerged as the core issue was a lack of awareness among people about government water and sanitation schemes which were intended to benefit them. The rampant corruption in some public works departments was also found to be a key issue.[19]

18 Sekhar Sita, Nair Meera and Reddy Venugopal (2005) *Are they being served? Citizen report card on public services for the poor in peri-urban areas of Bangalore*, Association for Promoting Social Action (APSA), Public Affairs Center (PAC), Bangalore, India

19 Specifically in relation to the government *Food For Work* social security scheme for able-bodied people in drought-prone areas who are otherwise in danger of starving to death or being forced to migrate.

WaterAid/Asha Ramesh

Photo: An open defecation community toilet, Nellore Puram, Karnataka.

"Water is a major problem here – by March we are trudging long distances to fetch drinking water. In such a scenario my Gram Panchayats has over 10 ponds, but they are all just on record – try finding one on the ground!"

Jarman Baski, a Traditional Pahariya Leader

A core group was set up for strategy planning of this initiative with expertise from different sectors and traditional leaders from Santhal and Pahariya tribes. This was followed by training on social audit techniques and an analysis of Jharkhand's *Vision Document*,[20] its budget allocation and flow of funds. This was followed by mapping of water and sanitation facilities in Gram Panchayats for the audit process.

20 The *Vision Document* is the official submission by the state government of where it sees the state by 2020 in terms of development; it provides the basis of forward planning in the state.

The strategy that emerged centred upon:
- Understanding Total Sanitation Campaign and Swajaldhara (the sanitation and drinking water scheme intended to reach all).
- Decoding budget allocation and fund flow mechanisms.
- Disseminating information on these to four Gram Panchayats (GPs).
- Understanding on-the-ground reality of implementation of these schemes in the four GPs.
- Conducting social audits of the 'Below Poverty Line' list provided by the GP.
- Presenting the findings of these social audits in a public hearing with people giving testimonies before officials from the service provider's office.
- Setting up micro-level planning for all the four GPs where people, their traditional leaders, NGOs, CBOs come together with government officials and Panchayats' representatives to plan specifics of budget, time-line, number and construction issues for water points and sanitation facilities.
- Setting up a joint team of people and officials to monitor implementation.
- Putting in place mechanisms for spreading the work to neighbouring areas.

Next steps

The work in the next year will be to incorporate research issues which will be addressed over the following two-year period. It is envisaged that there will be reports (for the three network project activities), thematic reports (on access, affordability and adequacy) and research reports in the first three years. In the fourth year the project will be assessed and scaled up to the national level through alliances giving voice to citizens.

Citizens' Action in Ghana

Rationale

Ghana is an emerging democracy and as such there is a plurality of political activity, freedom of speech and association, and a vibrant press. Ghana's governance and policy frameworks emphasise transparency, integrity, accountability and participation in all spheres of development. The political context is therefore a helpful one in which to conduct *Citizens' Action* projects.

In policy terms, the Government of Ghana has made water and sanitation major priorities in the Ghana poverty reduction strategy (GPRS), which explicitly links water and sanitation to poverty. It also emphasises that increasing access to safe drinking water and sanitation is key to achieving health outcomes and sustained poverty reduction. Despite this, the Government's spending on water and sanitation in comparison with other Sub-Saharan African countries is not impressive – spending less than 4% of its budget on these areas (as against Tanzania spending over 10%).

So, while some of the issues which drive *Citizens' Action* are social in nature, others are due to failed systems of planning, decision making and policy implementation:

- Exaggerated coverage figures lead to support being shifted to other locations while people are left to suffer the consequences of drinking water from unsafe sources; this leads to high rates of guinea worm and trachoma.
- Unreliable data leads to inequity in service provision.
- Even though lifeline tariffs[21] are available as a result of the GPRS, implementation is patchy.
- Ethnic issues, difficult terrain and poor communications lead to unwillingness among public officials to visit remote areas.

Locations and methods

The community scorecard process has been used in a number of locations in Ghana, and forms the basis of new *Citizens' Action* projects getting underway there, alongside assessment of the equity of distribution of waterpoints using GIS-based mapping.

In 2004, NGO Pronet, based in Wa in the Upper West Region of the country, initiated a community scorecard assessment of a range of services being provided to rural areas of the region. One of the benefits was in terms of developing and clarifying the method itself, to the extent that NGOs in Ghana now have a valuable source of experience in how to conduct such work.[22] But for the participants themselves, from the community through to the service providers themselves, the experience was instructive and valuable.

The work was proposed by a sector donor, DISCAP,[23] and the work taken forward through a local umbrella NGO/civil society organisation, the Northern Ghana Network for Development. On the ground work was facilitated by region-based NGO, ProNet North, while the following actual assessment was carried out by the community members in the district of Eggu:
- Preparatory work to engage with communities and service providers.
- A series of community meetings in which they familiarised themselves with the

Photo: Citizens conducting the community scorecard assessment in the Eggu district, Upper West Region.

Pronet North

processes and then gathered to rate the services that they had chosen to assess.

- These were then tied together in a synthesis workshop, which also allowed community members to prepare for their meetings with service providers.
- The service providers and relevant local government staff were engaged in "interface sessions", where the scores were made clear to them and clarifications discussed.
- All the community scorecard exercises were brought together in a district multi-stakeholders forum, where results were compared and ways forward agreed.

"The community scorecard is a good idea because it can bring you closer to the people and it brings the people closer to you. With mutual interaction you begin to address problems. We exist to solve problems, and if we don't get in touch with them, we can't do that."

Rufai Mohammed, Assistant Director, Wa Municipal Assembly

"Before the community scorecard assessment, we had no latrines in the community, although we had been promised some. During the assessment, we made a lot of noise about latrines and now 30 households have latrines ... the wells have been disinfected, the water is safe to drink, [which] has relieved the community of sickness."

Margaret Korkaara, Eggu community, Wa Region

"If people have open minds, do not mind being criticised, and can see the process as a way to improve services, for those of us who are willing to listen to the voiceless, the services can improve. We are so used to telling the poor what they need and what they should do, now we need to listen, we need to turn it around the other way."

Ms B B Batir, Director of Community Water and Sanitation Agency, Upper West Region

Looking forward, three locations have been identified in two areas to conduct new *Citizens' Action* projects in Ghana; the choice was based upon a desire to conduct them in poor communities in different regions of the country:

- Wa Municipality (urban) and Sissala West District (rural), in Upper West Region – building upon the success of the work detailed above.
- Afram Plains District, a rural part of Eastern Region.

Two main methodologies are being used in combination across the locations. Firstly the water points and other facilities will be mapped using GIS techniques. These will form the basis of planning across the entire areas. Communities will go on to use the maps and other information as a basis for compiling community scorecards and use these in negotiations with service providers and Government officials.

Outcomes and challenges

Poor communities and organised civil society in Ghana have generally been unable to engage constructively with national and local governments. As can be seen above, *Citizens' Action* has been shown to trigger ongoing engagement between communities and service providers. Not only have benefits flown to the community but service providers and government participants have also found the process valuable. *Citizens' Action* assists local Government to carry out its work to plan and implement better services and target the poor in doing so. Currently this is a major challenge to district governments. Some of the key challenges that have emerged are that:

- Obtaining political buy-in and commitment from all relevant actors is difficult.
- While the skills and willingness to engage in *Citizens' Action* are growing among intermediary institutions, the process of doing so in communities can be slow.
- The financial and human requirement for initiating and sustaining such processes should not be underestimated.

Citizens' Action in Ethiopia

WaterAid/Jenny Matthews

Rationale

Ethiopia has one of the lowest rates of water and sanitation coverage in the world: 78% (53 million) are without access to clean water, 96% (68 million) without improved sanitation.[24] Despite this, 70% of the country's annual budget allocated to the water sector goes unspent.[25] On its own this outrageous disparity would be reason enough for *Citizens' Action*.

In addition however, community involvement in project design, implementation and monitoring is limited and interaction between citizens and government is poor. In WaterAid's assessment, "government is still reluctant to make concessions or negotiate policy directions with civil societies."[26] Such non-participatory methods have led to a lack of sustainability.

To make the situation worse, the impact that water and sanitation has on health, poverty and education is not widely understood by the Government and communities. There is little information exchange between the

Government and citizens: on the one hand the public has very limited awareness of their rights to information, on the other hand the Government lacks information about the day to day realities. Women are the ones who carry most of the burden for fetching water and who suffer the most inconvenience from the lack of sanitation, and yet their voices are rarely heard.

Public participation in development activities is also limited and in different ways discouraged by government. There is a dearth of community-based organisations and local non governmental development agencies that can mobilise people. In addition, Government authority and dominance over the development agenda is strong. All these factors create an environment conducive to minimal public participation.

Policy implementation is not coordinated across sectors, communities are not consulted, and political agendas and hardware-focused approaches (to meet the diverse agenda of

24 UNDP 2005 Human Development Report available at www.hdr.undp.org/ statistics/data/ indicators

25 See Redhouse D et al (2005) *Getting to boiling point: Ethiopia National Water Sector Assessment*, WaterAid

26 *ibid.* p7

donors) skew the process. The Government dominates all development activities through state-owned enterprises, supported by strict controls over the local private sector, a bureaucratic tendering process and Government's doubts about the role and capability of the private sector.

Locations and methods

WaterAid and some local NGO partners embarked on a series of *Citizens' Action* projects in both rural and urban areas – in the capital Addis Ababa and the rural regions of Oromia and Benishangul Gumuz. Due to the recent political disturbances, however, progress has been limited to activities in Benishangul Gumuz.

Benishangul Gumuz

In June 2005 a *Citizens' Action* project began in the remote woreda (district) of Menge in Benishangul Gumuz region, in the far west of Ethiopia. Benishangul Gumuz is one of the poorest regions in the country, sharing a long border with Sudan. The majority of the population in the region (estimated at 580,000 in 2000/01) live in remote, inaccessible areas; presenting difficulties to the regional government in the provision of services. Only about 8% live in urban centres, compared to the national average of about 15%. In 2003, the regional government reported water coverage to be 32% and sanitation coverage to be about 20% in 2001.[27]

In the north western part of Menge there is very low rural water and sanitation coverage with many areas unserved. Water accessibility is very low during the dry season when the use of potential water resources is limited. The functionality of water points is also decreasing (with a 77.8% functionality rate in 2001 decreasing to a 60% functionality rate in late 2004). There is difficulty in developing consistent and sustainable action plans to address this problem. In addition sanitation and hygiene promotion is a very low priority. The slow pace of decentralisation has not addressed district governments' limited capacities to plan, budget, implement, monitor and evaluate development projects.[28] There is a shortage of skilled labour as well as high

turnover rates, which are major constraints. Vacant posts, frequent changes of structural set ups, workload and burden at bureau level are all considerable constraints in delivering services.

The *Citizens' Action* project started with community discussions among groups of influential elders, youths, women and groups of disabled or otherwise marginalised people to create an understanding of current conditions. The discussions ranged around community knowledge of woreda (district government level) and kebele (local government unit) plans. The community discussed their right to knowledge of the local government's annual plans and budgets. This revealed that the communities were aware of their rights to participate actively in government initiatives but highlighted that they had not been involved to date.

It became clear that no-one had ever asked citizens for their views or active participation in decision-making. In December 2005 a workshop brought together a range of woreda representatives and community representatives to discuss the concept of community involvement in all aspects of development work. Obstacles and opportunities around community access to water and sanitation facilities and the sustainability of such facilities were discussed at length.

This was the beginning of the process to develop guidelines for community members in kebeles that are already served with water facilities. This will help them to undertake community-to-community experience sharing and advocacy so that communities in unserved areas can attain full water and sanitation coverage.

Challenges

The disturbances in Addis Ababa and other major towns following the May 2005 elections have created an uncertain environment, forcing a postponement of the urban activities in the *Citizens' Action* projects. This poses the largest challenge to the process. However, structures are being built to undertake the next steps: a network of NGOs is being established to enable citizens to engage in the urban regeneration

27 Government of Ethiopia Water, Mines and Energy Resources Bureau (WMERB), 2004-2006 Strategic Planning and Management document

28 WaterAid Ethiopia (2004) *Benshangul Gumuz Baseline Survey on Water Hygiene and Sanitation*

WaterAid/Jenny Matthews

issues in Addis; and partnerships between local government and NGOs are being set up in Benishangul Gumuz to take forward the combined work in that region as well as in Oromia.

In the areas where *Citizens' Action* projects are being created the generation of the process is very important. Where confidence can be nurtured and fostered, large potential impacts can follow – both within the communities currently undertaking *Citizens' Action* projects, and later when projects are started in other areas.

Challenges and next steps

At the beginning of this report, we asked other organisations to join together with those already carrying out *Citizens' Action* projects, to share experiences of similar initiatives and to promote this way of working for accountability in water and sanitation service provision.

We need this wider involvement for *Citizens' Action* to become a **movement**. But people listening to this call – whether they be a Government staff member, a service provider or a person from the community – will ask "why?"

WaterAid/Gavin White

In the case of local government and utility staff, through the experiences detailed above, WaterAid would say that *Citizens' Action* projects help them because:

- They can give staff better data which in turn improves management information systems to provide an accurate basis for planning.
- Their (sometimes negative) status and profile with the public will be enhanced.
- They will see that if local government improves service delivery then increased revenue will result, allowing a virtuous circle to be set in motion.
- They experience improved cooperation and planning.
- Many of them are committed to the transparent democratic processes which result.
- It is sometimes politically expedient to do so.

Their often – initial – reluctance to take part stemmed from perceptions that:

- The process might disempower the tier of government or at least some employees, their jobs might be devalued or that some people's power bases may be eroded.
- Capacity and resource weaknesses might be exposed which the district may not necessarily be capable of responding to.
- They may not have the power to respond positively, even if they wish to, where local government have to act according to policy directives of central departments.
- They may be publicly and personally embarrassed; they may be shown up as incompetent or even corrupt.

And for local people, what has inspired them to take part and give up their precious time? The answer is that while some may enjoy the enhanced status and empowerment, most are participating because they know that by joining together they strengthen their community and their voice is better heard. People do not get involved because they necessarily want to become politically mobilised. People want what they are often promised. People want taps and toilets.

Based on the future progress of existing *Citizens' Action* projects, along with the ones soon to start, we will be able, in the next full report, to address some of the hard questions that are being posed by participating partners, and potential partners who are interested in joining, notably:

- How can *Citizens' Action*-type projects be conducted in environments where policy is weak?
- How is it possible to generate and sustain community-led processes – including how to ensure sustainability of process; how to ensure that women, the most marginalised and vulnerable participate meaningfully?
- How is it possible to move advocacy from local to national levels, retaining the citizen-led philosophy of the process?
- What are the roles for participating organisations in a process which is mainly one of facilitation and how are alliances to conduct the process best built?
- How to conduct monitoring and evaluation of *Citizens' Action*-type processes?

Additionally, the financial and institutional requirements for initiating and sustaining this sort of action are not trivial. Mobilisation, follow-up on commitments and action are all significant commitments and it is vital to avoid these becoming one-off exercises. This commitment is needed from all players:

- Partner organisations to get involved and spread the work further among poor communities.
- Governments and service providers to promote the principles and become engaged with communities in dialogue and negotiation.
- Donors to support and fund these processes.

We stated our concern at the start of this document that what is missing in the provision of water and sanitation services – or lack of it – is accountability to the people. *Citizens' Action* projects demonstrate our belief that anything less means that universal access will continue to be a mirage and the MDGs will be missed by some distance.

We at WaterAid were convinced, when *Citizens' Actions* work started, that generating context specific measures to bridge the gap between promises and reality, driven by local people on a large scale, could be a very significant boost towards achieving the MDGs and onwards to water and sanitation for all. The best advert for joining this process is that local people who are involved are convinced and spreading the word.

WaterAid – water for life

WaterAid is an international non governmental organisation dedicated exclusively to the provision of safe domestic water, sanitation and hygiene education to the world's poorest people. These most basic services are essential to life; without them vulnerable communities are trapped in the stranglehold of disease and poverty.

WaterAid works by helping local organisations set up low cost, sustainable projects using appropriate technology that can be managed by the community itself.

WaterAid also seeks to influence the policies of other key organisations, such as governments, to secure and protect the right of poor people to safe, affordable water and sanitation services.

WaterAid is independent and relies heavily on voluntary support.

WaterAid

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