

HOW TO ACCELERATE... BY USING SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY TOOLS

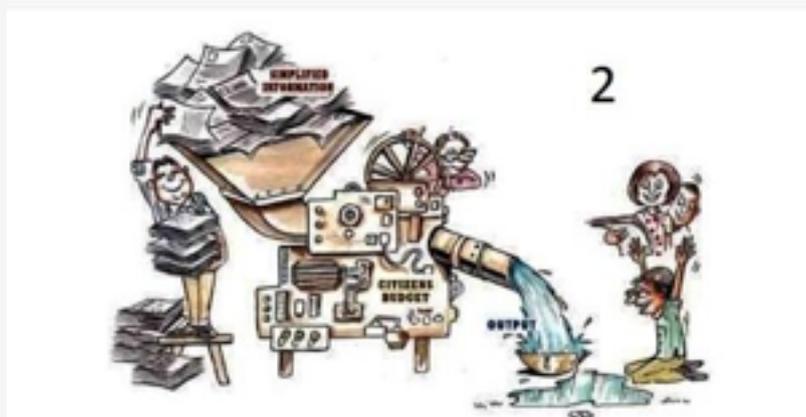
Context Social Accountability approach

Many governments around the world have acknowledged Right to Water and Sanitation as a basic human rights. National WASH policies and regulation of these countries often include the provision to address this right. However, most people in the communities are neither aware of their WASH rights nor of the national policies. Therefore they are not able to demand provision of quality WASH services from their government or other service providers. Local government authorities and service providers often lack the political will, knowledge about the national policies, technical capacity and other resources to take communities demand into consideration and improve access to equitable WASH services. Uninformed communities, lack of enabling environment and absence of sustainable WASH facilities are three major causes preventing fulfilment of any goal for universal access and use of sustainable WASH services.

To give voice to the voiceless at the community level social accountability tools can be used. Social accountability is an interactive process that aims to increase citizen influence (voice) and to strengthen the response of the local WASH providers and decision makers. It breaks social and systematic barriers in a context where national policies seem to be adequate, but where, in reality, these policies are insufficiently implemented at local level and where inequality prevails. Ultimately it aims to realize structural improvement in availability of equitable WASH services for all forever. WASH budget monitoring, WASH budget advocacy and Citizens Score Cards are among the social accountability tools, which can be used for this purpose.

Our experience show that if the social accountability tools are developed in the context of a country; if roles and responsibilities of different actors (in particular users, local regulating authorities and services providers) are cleared and agreed upon; if the communities and/or WASH multi-stakeholder platforms are empowered to use these tools; and if they got the experience to effectively hold the local authorities and service providers accountable to fulfil their responsibilities, they continue to do so with minimum supervision.

Furthermore, observing the successes of social accountability would encourage users, service providers and other organisations such as NGOs and local governments to use these tools in other locations. In this way, use of Social Accountability tools can lead to sustainable acceleration in use of WASH services.



Method: how does the approach work?

As was mentioned, this approach suits the context where the national government and its policies and regulations acknowledge the right to water and sanitation and are conducive to citizen engagement. If this is not the case in your country, you need to first focus on lobby and advocacy for this to happen.

The steps following this pre-condition can be summarized as follows:

1. Analyse the national policies and regulation to identify the main duty bearers to provide WASH services in the country (i.e. relevant government departments, private or public service providers, water utilities etc.) and understand the assigned roles and responsibilities according to the policies and regulations
2. Identify other enabling regulations in the country that can help you in the process (i.e. Right to Information or other existing "rights" for the citizens)
3. Conduct a study at the local level to identify the main challenges in WASH service delivery and opportunities to improve them
4. Identify at which local government level(s) the WASH budget has been decided. This could be at sub-district or lower level, district level, etc.
5. If the policies allow making the public WASH budget and plan of different duty bearers known to the citizens, develop tools to monitor this. We call this a WASH budget-monitoring tool.
6. Inform and educate the communities about their WASH rights and responsibilities at lowest local level, through community court yard meetings, workshops, posters/billboards, campaigns and radio or TV talk shows
7. Organise and mobilise community structures (i.e. WASH committees) and or WASH platform that can represent community demands. Ensure that those who are often excluded are represented in these structures or platforms are able to speak up, are listened to and can influence the decisions made. Take into account that for this to happen facilitation and extra coaching for those who are often excluded might be needed. Train these community structures and or platforms on the WASH budget and planning monitoring tools. It is important here to look for existing structures to avoid creating extra community structures.
8. To encourage acceleration at later stage, find or form a WASH platform (or civil society groups) at an intermediary level (such as a sub-district) that has access to both lower local level and higher-level stakeholders.
9. Engage in dialogue with local government authorities (at different levels) and service providers about their responsibilities to reflect the demand of the community in particular those who are often excluded in their budget and plan. Try to get them motivated and interested in the process.
10. Facilitate dialogue and set up meetings between representatives from community structures and platforms (including community members) and the local government and or service provider.
11. Assist the community structures and platforms to use the WASH budget and monitoring tools with the local government and public service providers.
12. Encourage or demand from the local government and service providers to openly disclose their WASH budgets and plans to the public. Try to encourage them to use a method, which can stay visible for longer period (i.e. writing on the wall or billboard). This way, the budget from one year can be compared to the previous year. Further, it is more powerful if they would also indicate at the end of the year how much of the budgeted amount has been actually spent on WASH. It is also useful to allocate separate budgets for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene.

A possible format of such a budget overview can be:

Budget description	Year 1		Year 2	
	Planned budget	Expenditure	Planned budget	Expenditure
Water				
Activity 1				
Activity 2				
...				
Sanitation				
Activity 1				
Activity 2				
...				
Hygiene				
Activity 1				
Activity 2				
...				

13. Assist the WASH community structures, platforms or other civil society groups at various levels to check and monitor timely disbursement of the budget by using monitoring tools. Collect the data generated from these budget/monitoring tools, analyse them and use them as evidence for possible improvements or as best practices.
14. In addition you can facilitate dialogue between community and service providers to agree on the service level standards. You can then assist them to prepare scoring cards for different service levels (i.e. 'red' for x days in a certain period under the standard Service level, 'orange' for y days in a certain period under the standard service level, 'green' for always above standard service level). Facilitate using community scorecards regularly to monitor the service level and demand the necessary improvement. It would be best if the service provider adapts this system as their part of "client satisfactory surveys" otherwise the community structures or platforms need to be coached to do it regularly.

Recommendations for implementation

- It is recommended to start the work with an organisation that is specialized in lobby and advocacy. After the method is well established, other organisations can replicate the method and contribute to acceleration accordingly.
- Keep in mind that after elections or appointment of new authorities, you and or the community structures may need to discuss the use of these social accountability tools again with them.

Acceleration mechanisms

The Social Accountability approach includes the following four acceleration mechanisms:

Peer pressure

As you could have read in section xxx in the acceleration manual, peer-to-peer pressure works very well on a household level. This Social Accountability approach shows however that it is also proven on a community level. When neighbouring villages saw the positive effects of WASH Budget Monitoring, they started copying and practising components of this approach in their own communities. After 3 years the WASH Budget Monitoring programmes scaled up from 6 to 24 unions without increasing the budget.

Mobilising the private sector

Another mechanism is about facilitating the supply side of WASH, and raising awareness amongst entrepreneurs that there is a market for WASH products and services, from building toilets to installing water tanks and from emptying pits to selling menstrual hygiene products. In similar vein, financial institutions can be motivated to develop financial products when they understand how they can make money in WASH. Once the private sector is functioning, it will take care of (social) marketing and increasing demand (releasing you from this task).

The availability of service providers whether they are public or private as well as that their capacity and willingness to provide the necessary services is the pre-condition to use Social Accountability tools. If they are not available you need to use other strategies such as lobby and advocacy for service provision and strengthening their capacities. What we use in Social Accountability methods is to link the citizens, in particular the often voiceless ones to the service providers and those who are accountable to ensure provision of services (i.e. local government).

In Bangladesh, DPHE (Department of Public Health Engineering) is seen as the main (public) service provider responsible for WASH services. Their engineers (paid by DPHE) are training and advising mechanics. Normally these engineers and mechanics are invisible in/for the community but "WASH Desk" has made it possible for community to be linked with both engineers and mechanics. The mechanics are paid by community/individual when attending to their claims.

Governments see the benefits of WASH

The government is the main target group when it comes to using Social Accountability methods/tools. They have different role in ensuring Sustainable WASH services provision to the people including:

- Provision of services (public service providers)
- Regulatory and supervisory role: to ensure that the laws and policies are properly implemented and that other service providers (i.e. private sector) provides affordable, reliable and quality services. They can also set tariffs and so on.
- Ensure availability of sufficient budget for provision and maintaining the WASH service

We try to hold the government accountable to these duties when we use social accountability tools so it is to me more than that the government sees the benefits of WASH. It is about Government being accountable for Sustainable WASH services to its people.

Standardized products & approaches are available for all

A simple acceleration mechanism is developing or using replicable training material, appropriate technical designs, communication materials and campaigns and turning these into easy-to-use products. Making these available throughout the alliance, paves the road for low-cost expansion to other villages or districts or even countries, boosting scale and acceleration. Replicating training material, appropriate technical designs, communication materials and campaigns and turning these into easy-to-use products, paves the road for low-cost expansion to other villages or districts. See for example the attached WASH Budget Monitoring tools developed by DORP, which can be (after slight modification) used by you in your country as well.

Acceleration indicators

- Increased WASH expenditure
- Improved WASH services in the area, in particular for those who are often excluded

Financing Social Accountability

"Facilitation of Social Accountability" is a service provided by an NGO or CSO, which needs to be paid for. The major clients for this type of service include local governments, foundations or other (international) NGOs.

Timeline

Depending on the local capacity and context it can take 2 - 4 years for the local WASH structures or platforms to be able to do WASH budget monitoring on their own and for local authorities to become responsive.

Tools

- [WASH budget-monitoring Bangladesh](#)
- <http://citizenreportcard.com>

Read more

- [Using of Revolving Fund, by SLOPB Bangladesh](#)

For more information

If in your country the national government and its policies and regulations acknowledge the right to water and sanitation and are conducive to citizen engagement, Social Accountability could be a valuable approach to accelerate WASH. For more information you can contact [Simavi](#), [Amref Flying Doctors](#), [IRC](#), [DORP](#) (Bangladesh), [Wateraid](#), [KWASNET](#) (Kenya) and [UWASNET](#) (Uganda).

BEST PRACTICE:

ACCELERATING SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE WASH ALLIANCE

March 2011, WASH Alliance partner called “Development Organisation of Rural Poor” (DORP) started an action-research project called “Health Village: WASH Monitoring Perspective” in six Union Parishads (districts) selected from six different divisions (in coastal, haor (wetland), flood prone and plain lands areas). The main idea beyond this selection was to use the “budget” as an advocacy tool to identify the discrepancies between WASH budget allocation at the national level and expenditure at the local level, taking into account different geographical and political situations.

Making use of existing networks

The Bangladesh government allocates WASH local budget at national level via two main channels: the Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE, government functionaries) and Local Government Institutions (LGIs, elected bodies i.e. Union Parishads for rural areas). According to national policies, except big cities where Water and Sewerage Authority (WASAs) operate, DPHE is responsible for the water and sanitation services in the whole country. LGIs are responsible for managing all matters relating to drinking water and develop water supply, sanitation and sewerage facilities in rural and urban areas.

National WASH policy

In 2008, the government of Bangladesh passed the bill “Right to Information Act”, which gives the people the right to request any information from the service providing authorities. Further, according to the guidelines, the responsible authorities need to consult with the communities about their needs to formulate their budget 60 days before the end of the fiscal year (June). They do this in so called pre-budget discussion sessions. After the approval of the budget by the national government, the local authorities need to inform the public on that through so called “Open budget” meetings. This is to make people aware of the available resources for their communities.

The challenge: no implementation of the Right to Information Act

Despite existence of these policies, prior to implementation of budget monitoring project by DORP, this was not happening in any of the selected unions. In the beginning of the project, DORP developed budget-monitoring tools to monitor the allocated and spent budget by different authorities in each of these unions. They also used social mobilisation strategies to make the communities aware on these procedures and empower them to voice their demands to the local authorities. DORP also established “Budget Monitoring Clubs” and actively participates in the “NGO network” at the upazila levels (sub-district level). Communities are encouraged to bring their WASH needs to “Water and Sanitation” and “Health” standing committees of Union parishads and discuss these with their elected representatives in the Union Parishad.

Result: low-cost expansion to other districts

Despite many challenges, the WASH budget in the unions where DORP has been working has increased 12-18%. In March 2014, DORP scaled up its intervention to 24 unions of the same Upazila’s with a similar budget. So, where in phase 1 we could facilitate social accountability processes in six unions, in phase 2 we could do the same in 24 unions, reducing the costs per union to one sixth of initial budget. About 90,000 people benefitted from this intervention. Moreover, in 2016, it was observed that the “Budget Monitoring Clubs” that were established during the programme, facilitated the Open Budget meetings without further the support of DORP. This is what we call sustainable acceleration of WASH.

WASH Desk:

Another initiative that took place in the 2nd phase of the programme, was the establishment of so-called “WASH desks” to link the service provider DPHE to the users. In Bangladesh, DPHE is responsible for operation and maintenance of the WASH facilities at rural level. However, considering each engineer of DPHE is responsible for 4 Union Parishads, most of the time people had no idea how to reach them. Through direct lobby and advocacy, DORP encouraged Union Parishad to make a room in their building available for a WASH Desk. At this WASH Desk, once a week a DPHE engineer sits to receive all requests of communities on the repair of the WASH facilities. Communities were also informed and encouraged to use this services. After receiving the requests of the communities, the DPHE engineer assigns their trained mechanics to visit the place and make the necessary repairs. The community members would pay the mechanic directly for his services. This WASH desk has been established in all 24 unions where DORP has also implemented the WASH budget monitoring. The number of requests and cases handled by mechanics and his income are being monitored and openly reported on a flip chart at the WASH desk. It is observed that the number of requests addressed, and hence the income of the mechanics, have been increasing each month. This way, the initial investment in lobby and advocacy and community awareness has led to a process which is self-regulating and accelerating and is bringing technical support, operation and maintenance at the doorstep of the community.

