



## Line agencies and communities, experiences in Faisalabad



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FAISALABAD IS THE third largest city in Pakistan. It has grown rapidly, from a population of about 70,000 in 1947, to the present figure of about 2 million. Government agencies have found it difficult to keep pace with this growth, and in many areas services are inadequate, or totally absent.

### Water and sanitation services

The Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA), Faisalabad, is the government agency responsible for the city's water and sanitation services. Currently it is estimated that its services cover about 60 per cent of the city. The demand for new services, and improvements in the existing services, is high.

Local groundwater is saline, and fresh surface water is limited. Most of the water comes from a wellfield about 30km outside the city. Where there are no piped water people rely on the groundwater and water vendors.

Because of the flat topography sewerage systems rely heavily on shallow gradients and pumping. However, unlike water supply, there are a large number of private schemes. Most have been financed by the communities themselves. In some cases funds have also been available through politicians. Disposal is by connection to a WASA system, often illegally.

WASA follows a traditional approach to service development. Capital works are funded from government or international agency funds. Most major projects are based on its Master Plan for the city. Smaller projects are based on a mix of WASA's own plans, political influence and requests from communities. Design and construction follows government standards. Most works are undertaken by contract. Operating costs are met from user contributions.

Revenue collection is improving, from a very low base. Most industries rely on their own water supplies, so industrial revenue is relatively low. There continues to be a very high proportion of illegal connections. In one large sewerage scheme studied recently it is virtually 100 per cent, in one water supply area studied it is as high as 85 per cent.

### Faisalabad area upgrading project

Faisalabad Area Upgrading Project (FAUP) is a community orientated development project in the government sector. It is funded by the UK government's Department for International Development (DFID) and the Government of Pakistan, and is working in several katchi abadis in the city. Its major goal is poverty alleviation, through the empowerment of communities and working in partnership with government. Other project goals include the strengthening

of line agencies, to enable them to respond to community demand for services, and sustain them, and creating procedures in government departments which will allow replication of the approach in other parts of Pakistan. The work is multi-sectoral, and includes infrastructure development, particularly at community-level.

FAUP's way of working is very similar to many NGOs, forming community groups and inviting them to identify projects and priorities. The cost of physical infrastructure at community level (tertiary level) is shared equally between FAUP and the community. FAUP is also funding some secondary and primary level water and sewerage projects, in order to facilitate the tertiary services. They are being implemented by WASA.

For sewerage services FAUP is using standards and construction methods that are similar to those of Orangi Pilot Project (OPP). Design is carried out in the field, by FAUP sub-engineers. They also supervise the works, in conjunction with community members. Wherever possible the works are implemented through community-based contracts.

### Community infrastructure unit

It can be seen that the approach to the development of services by FAUP and WASA is quite different. However, early in the life of FAUP the former Managing Director WASA felt that it would be helpful to have small unit in WASA that could help with the planning, design and implementation of FAUP's secondary and tertiary level projects. One objective was to speed up the rate at which projects could be completed. Another was develop a project approach that would be sustainable beyond the life of FAUP. This led to DFID agreeing to provide technical support through FAUP, for a Community Infrastructure Unit (CIU) in WASA in 1996. The unit was established in July 1996.

Other early objectives of the unit were:

- to help improve service levels,
- increase revenue generation, making WASA's services more stable and sustainable
- regularisation of community infrastructure within the WASA systems, and the role of [appropriate] construction standards other than Government standards,
- concessionary charges and tariffs
- community-based operation and maintenance.

WASA expressed a willingness to be flexible in its approaches to many of these matters, and agreed to provide one senior and one junior member of staff to work with an

external consultant, who would provide technical support on part-time basis. There was no written agreement or Terms of Partnership between FAUP and WASA, and also no provision for the establishment of anything resembling a CIU in the project documentation.

## Progress

Since it was established CIU has worked on all the topics outlined above. Other areas of work have included:

- the funding of tertiary level projects, i.e. 100 per cent WASA funding, shared funding, and/or 100 per cent community funding,
- community-WASA agreements for the development, ownership and operation of services, based on the above funding arrangements,
- recommendations about public awareness activities,
- proposals to develop pilot projects outside FAUP areas,
- initiating community involvement in the implementation of primary and secondary level works.

In all the activities CIU has attempted to act as an advisor, and encourage execution of the work in the relevant WASA directorates and external bodies, rather than undertake the work itself, although this has not always been possible.

The areas where most progress have been made to date are

- public awareness activities,
- programmes to reduce illegal connections and improve revenue,
- methods of funding tertiary projects,
- investigations of appropriate design standards.

## Public awareness

CIU has found that WASA provides little public information about its work, other than occasional news articles. It has also found that WASA's public image is probably better than suggested in the press. An ADB sponsored study found that 40 per cent of consumers rated its performance as good. CIU suggested that despite this the lack of information was not helpful for WASA's public image. A number of initiatives were suggested, ranging from a TV feature about water production, through leaflets and posters, to education activities in schools.

WASA agreed to fund a leaflet on water care and use, and distribute it to some trial areas, along with household bills. It was produced by CIU and the Public Relations Officer (PRO). A later impact study found that despite poor distribution, many readers had been able to learn and remember at least one thing that they did not know before. A significant proportion reported changes in their behaviour as a result. One conclusion is that if distribution can be improved, and the contents of the leaflets can be focused more towards community priorities, and not just WASA's, future leaflets will have an even greater impact. Also, because of the large number of illegal connections, leaflets should be distributed to every household, and not just those that are registered.

More recently some colourful stickers have been produced by the PRO, also at WASA's expense. They each

contain a slogan about registering connections, paying bills, or caring for sewers, etc.. They will be posted around the city, outside WASA offices, in shops and public places, as another way of improving awareness. A study to assess their impact has been recommended. The PRO is also contacting other WASAs in Punjab, to invite them to participate in similar initiatives, improving their overall impact, and also their cost-effectiveness.

## Improvements in revenue

WASA is taking a number of steps to improve revenue. These include waiving the penalties for regularising illegal connections, offering to accept payment of arrears in instalments, issuing disconnection notices for major defaulters, and initiating legal action against them. However, the improvements are slow. CIU has suggested that initially the programmes should be targeted towards to one or two areas, so that the effects are clearly seen and felt. It has recommended surveys to update existing records and prepare new base plans, initiating of public information programmes, meetings with communities to learn about and discuss the issues involved, and establish temporary offices in the area to facilitate registration of connections, and manage special disconnection teams. Community groups, FAUP and local NGOs are seen as key participants in all these activities.

The finding so far is that many people and groups are willing to participate in these initiatives, provided they feel that they will get a fair deal from WASA, and that services will improve. This includes a willingness to pay in many cases, at least from now on, if not for the arrears. It has also been found that WASA tends to be the reluctant partner, especially at field level. The perception that people will not pay, and that such programmes are politically risky, are often cited as reasons for this reluctance. Evidence from the field suggests that this is largely incorrect, especially if there is personal contact involved. Another reason given is personal interests, especially at field level. This is much more difficult to combat.

Progress with the disconnection programme has been slow, primarily due to the reluctance of WASA's field staff. However, in the areas where the priority is new connections there has been much greater progress. Surveys to gather household data have been undertaken by community groups, FAUP, NGOs, and/or WASA, and WASA has been willing to consider ways to reduce the expense of connections, primarily by offering to accept the money in instalments. Meetings with community groups have been held and a good number of application forms completed and submitted. In one area a revenue team has gone into the field, accepting applications and issuing invoices for the connection fees at the gate. This is a new initiative, and is primarily in response to the community's demand that WASA overcome delays in processing applications by the area's technical staff, and then submitting them to revenue staff.

Several of these programme areas have private sewerage systems. WASA is therefore having to decide whether it

wants the revenue from these areas, in return for accepting ownership of at least the secondary level sewers. These have been constructed using government money available through political representatives, and not by WASA. As WASA is already disposing of their sewage, via its primary sewers and pump stations, the choice may seem obvious. However, when these systems may be undersized, laid at shallow depths and gradients, some elements need immediate repair, and the sewerage tariff will cover O&M costs but leave little for later upgrading works the choice is not so simple. The WASA team currently studying the matter has recommended that it take over the secondary sewers, and leave the tertiary sewers in private ownership.

If agreed, and these programmes and approaches prove to be successful, WASA will be able to improve operational revenue substantially, because of the large amount of private sewerage in the city. Communities will be able to insist on improved services too, because of their direct financial involvement. It is hoped that through this work, facilitated initially with the help of CIU, and continuing through greater links with communities, the initiative can be replicated across the city, not only for sewerage services, but also for water supply.

### Partnership in projects

One of the objectives of the CIU initiative is, where appropriate, to encourage replication the FAUP approach in WASA. Because of the high demand for services, and the limited funds available for capital works, the funding of tertiary projects is one activity where this has been considered. The financial benefits to WASA of extending services at lower cost is obvious. It has also been seen that many communities are willing to finance services themselves, particularly if it means that they will get them now, rather than wait for the line agency to do the work in several years time.

The NGO Anjumani-i-Samaji Behbood (ASB) is an example of 100 per cent community financing of water supply and sewerage in Faisalabad, based on the OPP model. FAUP is an example of joint funding of services. WASA has supported both these projects, but until recently it has been reluctant to consider accepting either of the approaches itself. Following a recent World Bank report which highlighted the high level of investment required to provide essential services in the five main cities of Punjab, and the resources available, WASA has begun to reconsider this.

One problem is the difference in design and construction standards between government projects and what communities can afford. This has led to the development of simpler and lower cost sewerage systems in the private sector, including those promoted by NGOs such as OPP, and their variants, e.g. FAUP and ASB. These particular systems are claimed to work well, even though they are not acceptable to WASA. However, WASA has recently requested FAUP to investigate these systems, and alternatives, and find or develop one appropriate for community-based projects, which it can promote as 'approved'. The request for the

study demonstrates WASA's increasing interest in developing services with communities in mind.<sup>1</sup>

Another problem is the political implications of a government agency promoting this new approach. However, the recent preparation by CIU of a paper on the co-funding of tertiary level projects between WASA and communities, for presentation to the Board of Faisalabad Development Authority (FDA), is an indication that the situation is changing. FDA is the body under which WASA, and also FAUP, are established. The board includes local members of the provincial and federal assemblies, as well as government officials, senior FDA staff and local figures. Other indicators of a changing situation include more mentions of community participation by politicians in the press, new rural and small urban water projects that will be managed by communities, and national and provincial programmes to consider these alternative approaches, sponsored by World Bank, ADB and others.

Whilst not yet adopted, these requests represent a significant development in opinion by WASA, and probably placed it in the forefront of such developments in the urban sector in Pakistan. This in itself is a significant step.

### Constraints

It would be wrong to claim that the CIU initiative has been without difficulties. A few of them have already been referred to above. Others include the lack of an agreement between FAUP and WASA, setting out the objectives of the initiative, the responsibilities of each party, etc., changing objectives from the support for the development of new services, to improving revenue from the existing system, and back again. Staffing has also been constant constraint, with several suitable WASA staff being unwilling to join for any length of time, and it being difficult to obtain the release of others from their present duties. This has meant having to rely on externally funded staff, and WASA been seen as taking advantage of the initiative without being genuinely committed to it. WASA has found it difficult to be flexible, despite it promises, and unable to adopt many of the initiatives recommended, even if they are in line with the original objectives, including community ownership and O&M, and reduced connection charges and tariffs for community-based services. Other initiatives have had partial success, e.g. community involvement in primary and secondary works.

The delays in completing Phase 1 of FAUP, and starting Phase 2 have also been a problem. Until recently it has not been clear if the CIU initiative would be included in Phase 2. This now appears to have been resolved, with it included in the project documentation, although WASA has still to agree its exact form.

### The future of CIU, WASA and the community

Provided WASA and FAUP can enter into a suitable agreement, the potential for development of the initiative is good. To date many of the communities encountered have shown surprising degree of confidence in the CIU ap-

proach, and also in WASA. It is hoped that the progress made to date will give WASA greater confidence in the ideas and approaches being suggested, even if they require substantial refining and development to meet the local situation more effectively. The need to develop this success is vital. It is not sufficient that this has already been done in other parts of the world, and been successful.

Several outside bodies have shown an interest in the initiative, which is also encouraging. They include ADB, JICA, and advisors to the new WASA in Rawalpindi. A former Director General, FDA was interested in forming a similar unit in the Urban Development Wing of FDA too.

Phase 2 will move FAUP away from implementing projects and towards facilitating projects, linking communities with line agencies, strengthening the agencies, to enable them to respond more effectively to community demand for the provision and sustaining of services, and lobbying at a provincial level to demonstrate the need for a favourable political environment to enable all these things to happen. A CIU type initiative in WASA therefore becomes even more important. The commitment of human resources, funds for training and project development, and willingness to seek alternative approaches, is essential too. There will probably be the need to take risks on occasions too.

Without having stated it in so many words, the objective of the CIU initiative is 'Sanitation and Water for all'. It is

hoped that through the continued commitment of DFID and FAUP, and the developing commitment of WASA, and the communities of Faisalabad, this may indeed be the outcome. It is also hoped that agencies and community groups and NGOs with similar interests and responsibilities in other parts of Pakistan, may also be able to learn from the experience, and be encouraged to replicate and develop at least some of the work done in their own situations.

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<sup>4</sup>The work undertaken to date is discussed in the paper 'Cost-effective community-based sewerage'

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