



Community partnership with government

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MANY OF THE Government institutions like Development Authorities and Water and Sanitation Agencies – WASA in Pakistan, presently, are facing a serious problem toward their sustainability as unable to meet the expenditure for the operation and maintenance of the services they are providing. Resultingly options like downsizing are talk of the day. This situation is going to be worst day by day unless some drastic measures are not taken at the operational level as well as policy level.

These institutions have following two major sources of income:

1. Development programs funded through Annual Development Schemes (ADP) by the government.
2. Revenue collection from the consumers.

In this paper the focus will be to discuss and analyse the:

- Situation of revenue collection from the consumer against services delivered by the agency WASA in Faisalabad.
- Acceptance of community based self help initiatives by WASA.
- Possible role of NGOs for working as partner with the government agencies in bridging the gap between communities and government departments.

Community Action Program (CAP) a registered organization (established in early 1996) was strongly believing on the idea that 'Community participation with government can result in sustainable development'. Thus, from the very beginning, start working on issues like bridging gaps between communities and WASA – Faisalabad. Faisalabad is the third largest city of Pakistan, with an estimated population of more than 2.0 million. The city developed as a market town from around 1900, attracting agricultural business from the surrounding area. In more recent years the industrial activities have developed, in particular agrobased production. In spite of its large size (about 150 sq.km) the city retains 'village' characteristics. Rapid population growth and lack of planning over a long period, have resulted in a mixed development pattern.

Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA), falling under the Faisalabad Development Authority (FDA), was created in 1978. WASA's organization is hierarchical. The O & M Directorate accounts for about 75 per cent of all personnel. About 90 per cent of all costs are being funded by external means. About 60 per cent of the revenue

amount is being spent on salaries of the staff. Energy and staff costs are steadily increasing and consequently less money is available to spend on WASA's O & M activities thus WASA is operating with a severe deficit. The operating revenues collected within the actual year of billing have been in the range of 50–60 per cent of the recorded billings. It is also a fact that a large number of customers are not billed and many of the recorded bills do not reach their customers. Table 1 below clearly shows the situation of revenue collection and deficit of WASA Faisalabad.

Table 2 shows an interesting picture of Shadab Disposal Station based on the latest investigation of Community Infrastructure Unit (CIU), WASA. Out of the total connection of 5100 only 75 were registered with WASA. The example shows the situation about areas located at the periphery of the city particularly where people have laid the tertiary lines at their own on a self help basis. The situation is not as bad in the inner areas of the city.

Cap's experience

Salfabad Sewerage Improvement Program (SSIP)

Community Action Program (CAP) started work for community mobilization and organization in a slum area called Salfabad, covering about 100 acres of land having a population of about 20,000.

This area was served by a main secondary system, laid some years ago by a Local Government department through an MPA grant, and tertiary sewer lines were laid by the community on a self help basis. The sewerage main was connected with overall system of the city without consultation of WASA. The community of this area spent 1.2 million rupees for these tertiary level lines. Although their lines were connected with WASA system, WASA was not giving due attention due to their illegal status. Thus revenue collection was nil from this area. On the other hand, the community was facing difficulties in terms of maintenance. The community was helpless to resolve this issue.

Role of CAP

In this situation, CAP started work on one side by facilitating the community towards the formation of their organization and for pleading their case with WASA on the other side. CAP started the process of sensitization of WASA official about the benefits of the community participation resulting in an increase in revenue. Similarly CAP hold a number of sessions with

Table 1. Revenue collection and deficit of WASA, Faisalabad

Year	Revenue Rs: (Millions)	Expenditures Rs: (Millions)				Deficit Rs: (Millions)
		Salaries	O&M	Electricity	Total	
1992-93	37.32	37.79	11.40	48.40	97.59	60.27
1993-94	57.33	38.71	6.12	22.50	67.33	10.00
1994-95	82.50	45.70	7.80	31.76	85.26	2.76
1996-97	82.17	75.67	9.20	30.00	114.87	32.60

Table 2. Current WASA revenue chart for Shadab Disposal Station

No. of households connected	Legal connections	Revenue income (Rs: million)	O&M cost (Rs: million)
5100	75	0.018	0.5

(Source: CIU investigation study)

the local Community Based Organization (CBO) named New Public Welfare Society and collected data required for the case. The case was then forwarded to WASA requesting for the legalization of their system.

Community Response

Initially the response was not encouraging. The main reason behind this was the community's own efforts to lay the sewerage lines. People were of the view that there are communities in other parts of the city who are not paying the revenue even WASA has laid the services so why should they pay the revenue. As a result of interaction with CAP, people are ready to get their connections registered provided WASA's satisfactory services.

WASA Response

Initially WASA management was reluctant to own the system. The main argument was the low standard of work done by the community. The Community Action Program (CAP) through Community Infrastructure Unit (CIU) of WASA continued its efforts to sensitize the WASA staff.

Achievements to date

The Managing Director of WASA has formulated a committee to look at the Community laid sewers. The committee has already visited the area and submitted a

report to the Managing Director of WASA with recommendations that:

- the Community will be responsible for minor repairs on the main line;
- the Community will be responsible for maintaining the tertiary (street level) system; and
- at least 60 per cent of households become WASA consumers.

WASA will take over the system provided the above conditions are met by the community. After undertaking the system (i.e. regularization of connections) improvements in the main system if required will be done by WASA.

A visit has also been made by the Director of Revenue to start the process of regularization of connections. The community was involved in the survey work and their involvement also played a role of sensitization and mobilization of the community at large.

Results

Increased Revenue

At present WASA is facing difficulties in collecting the revenue due to which WASA is under crisis. As a result of this initiative of CAP, hopefully WASA will be successful in getting Rs: 0.3 million as revenue, in the

beginning, from this area. Annual revenue collection from the area will be about Rs: 0.2 million at the prevailing tariff rates. The same experience can be replicated in other areas as well as resulting in increased revenue contributing towards the sustainability of the institution.

Acceptance of Community Role by WASA

Through this experience WASA staff come to know the important role of the community which is missing at the moment. The experience has demonstrated another approach of involving the communities for resolving different issues of operation and maintenance.

Role of NGOs in Development

This experience is also determining the possible role of NGOs working with government. The experience clearly demonstrated that local level organizations like CBO or city level NGOs can play a vital role in bridging the gap between the communities and government departments.

The majority of issues related with the community can be better handled with the assistance of the NGOs. The strong collaboration can help the institutions towards their sustainability on one side and empowerment of the community on the other.

Abbreviations

WASA : Water and Sanitation Agency (responsible for the delivery of sanitation and water services in Faisalabad city).

NGO : Non Government registered organizations.

CBO : Community Based Organization.

O&M : Operation and maintenance.

CIU : Community Infrastructure Unit (established within WASA to address community needs).

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