

“Let the study be more courageous....” emphasise the members of advisory group of WASHCost (India) during the deliberations on 28th Jan 2010 at CESS, Hyderabad, India



Figure 1: Mrs. Chitra Ramachandran, Principal Secretary, RWSS - AP

“...Thanks to WASHCost (India) Project. It is an excellent attempt... for me and many of my colleagues; sitting in an intellectual atmosphere like this itself is highly invigorating and rejuvenating.., we learn and go back with so many new ideas...” Mrs Chitra Ramachandran, Principal Secretary, Rural Water Supply & Sanitation Department, GoAP and Chairperson, Advisory Group of WASHCost (India) Project.

Mrs Chitra Ramachandran was highly appreciative of the efforts made by WASHCost (India) to generate new knowledge on the costs of WASH services. She asked perceptive questions about the initial findings of the project and raised several pertinent issues related to research methodologies, analytical framework and the relevance of recommendations for WASH governance. Mrs Ramachandran chaired the advisory committee meeting of WASHCost (India) on 28 Jan 2010 during which members from several departments and institutions contributed ideas and inputs.

Dr Snehalatha (Country Coordinator), Dr Ratna Reddy (Lead Researcher) and MV Rama Chandrudu (WASSAN) updated Advisory Group members on preliminary recommendations from test bed villages and methodologies related to accountability and transparency in the WASH sector. This report highlights some of the concerns, suggestions and key points raised by the members of advisory group in response to these reports. Key statements by various participants are presented, to give a flavour of the discussions.

Externalities in the framework

..Plans prepared by the department are subjected to changes due to some inexplicable reasons.... The reasons cannot be put on paper.... how can you factor in such externalities, in a research project like this?

...Let the study be more courageous and bring out such factors, externalities and gaps in WASH governance... Though it is difficult to measure the importance of such factors...

Importance of software in WASH Sector

... The importance of hardware (infrastructure) is well recognised. Every habitation wants one or two overhead storage reservoirs (OHSR), irrespective of their actual need. However, the importance of a software approach is not yet completely realised or valued. The “costs” of such interventions are not clearly designed. There is a need to harmonise the needs of various groups

within the WASH sector – end users, administrators, technical experts, political parties and so on. This process also has implications on the costs of various projects...

Credibility of data

...There is a difference between the data sources of government and other sources. Research studies like this need to highlight these gaps and make an assessment of the quality of data from various sources. This will help in validating various types of data sources...

...It is important to put various categories of costs separately. As an illustration, the Cost of Capital should not be included with OpEx¹. Mixing up various costs leads to confusion...

Variables and analysis

...Several variables that determine costs in the WASH sector. As an illustration, the choice of technologies strongly influences the cost. Similarly, the level of service also has strong bearing on the costs. The cost of providing sanitation services is not same for different options such as individual septic tanks or underground drainage. The cost of water itself is often ignored in assessing the cost of water supply... The cost of providing water to a large scale multi village scheme is obviously different from that of a system in which water is locally procured...



Figure 2: Mr. S Chary (at the centre) Administrative Staff College of India making a point

...How objective is the set of tools and methodologies used in the research? Are they standardised to arrive at same set of inferences on life cycle costs, by different researchers? Can such tools be used as planning tool?

... How are costs and services benchmarked? When there are several variables, it is difficult to benchmark the life cycle costs and services. Since the spectrum of variables is so large in costs, it may be difficult to synthesise the data and arrive at conclusions in an objective manner...

...Sampling for the research should cover all different parts of the state, to reflect various influencing factors on costs and WASH governance...

Target groups and application of research findings

...The analysis has to target different target groups including economists, administrators and lay persons. Can the analysis be inclusive of cost of irrigation projects, from which water is

¹ This point was clarified during the meeting where it was pointed out that different types of costs are separately estimated. The cost of capital is a separate item and is not mixed with other costs such as O&M. However, there is a huge data gap on some of these components at local level. It is a methodological challenge to discover the exact costs of such components and to present them separately in the cost analysis.

transported? For an economic analysis this approach may be necessary. For an administrator, the requirements could be different in terms of understanding costs. An administrator is more concerned about the costs involved in source protection and prevention of damages/ depletions. On the other hand, a layperson may simply want a different set of cost details. The WASHCost (India) project could cater to the needs of various target groups...

Accountability at various levels



Figure 3: Mr. Malla Reddy
Director, Ecology Centre, AF

...To some extent, automation helps to make systems transparent. The databases and other related systems make everyone accountable to their roles and eliminate the partisan ways of WASH governance...

...Accountability and transparency are important concerns in WASH sector governance. When there is high accountability and transparency, usually the services are also high..

Role of NGOs in WASH Sector

...NGOs in Gujarat are organically linked to the WASH systems and they are local. They are not outsiders in the system. It is very impressive to understand how they communicate and motivate local communities...

... Creating infrastructure is meaningless without worrying about operation & maintenance. The people of Gujarat understood the value of O&M and the need for discipline. The responsibility for O&M is vested with local bodies, which are strong in Gujarat...

Research - action research – participatory action research

...Finding of ailments is part of the research. But an action research project should also find the medicine. As part of action research project, can WASHCost (India) think of developing few model villages within the normal band of costs. This approach would help the government to improve implementation by government departments...

...Does this research end up with a list of policy guidelines and documents OR anything on the ground? Can the approach of this action research project be shifted to “participatory action research”? Can this participatory action research project be implemented in real life situation as WASH services meet the most basic needs? Successful experiences in watershed development project and SHG movement are relevant to WASH sector.



Figure 4: Mr. AK Jain,
Special Secretary, Irrigation Department

...The Government of Andhra Pradesh (GoAP) has initiated a major programme for motivating and educating 2.5 lakh² sarpanchs/ village presidents on WASH issues. Participatory approaches and principles are most relevant in the WASH sector and there is high potential and relevance for software inputs in the sector. GoAP intends to document some of the good practices in the WASH sector in the state, to promote participatory processes in the WASH sector...

...There is also high scope for convergence between the WASH sector and the rural development department/ National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme to enhance the sustainability of sources in the drinking water sector...

Dr Ratna Reddy reacted to some of points.

...The framework and methodology is designed to understand a variety of situations/ variables to generate insights on various influencing factors, services levels, costs. A ladder approach is proposed to explain the influence of all these factors on WASH service levels. In such a research project, a large sample with a diversity of situations is an essential necessity. When variations are high, the research would be much more meaningful and lessons would be relevant. Depending on the availability of data (availability of data for some of the external factors is difficult), the project intends to develop various models for conducting a rich analysis.



... Costs on various components are separated for the purpose of analysis purpose. (For example, the Cost of Capital is not included in O&M costs and efforts are being made to generate data on each component of costs from the field work... However, data on certain costs is not available at local level and they require separate tools such as sector analysis...

...The project is also slowly moving towards the “embedding” phase. Based on the good practices identified by WASSAN, WASHCost Project intends to identify new opportunities for implementing models under Integrated Water Resource Management framework in which relevant costs would be estimated. This process is expected to be in collaboration with GoAP and relevant departments...

The meeting concluded with a vote of thanks from Dr Snehalatha.

² A lakh is 100,000, so 2.5 lakh = 250,000

Participants in Advisory Group Meeting 28 Jan 2010

- Mrs. Chitra Ramachandran, Principal Secretary, (RWSS, GoAP);
- Mr. Manoj Panda Director (CESS);
- Mr. A. K Jain, Special Secretary, Irrigation Department ;
- Mr. VS Chary, Director, CCDUGI&D (Administrative Staff College of India);
- Mr. Premchand, Commissioner, (Municipal Administration);
- Mr. S.R Nalli, WES Office (UNICEF);
- Mr. S. Krishna Das, Joint Commissioner (Rural Development);
- Mrs. T. Swarna Kumari, Joint Director, (Ground Water Department, GoAP);
- Mr. Y.V. Malla Reddy, Director, (Rural Development Trust);
- Mr. R. Chakrapani, Project Director, (CCDU, RWSS);
- Mr. GVS Raju, (Engineer in Chief - Tribal Welfare Department, GoAP);
- Mr V. Ratna Reddy (LNRMI);
- Mr MV Rama Chandrudu and Mr R Subramanyam ; WASSAN from WASHCost (INDIA)
- Mrs M. Snehalatha, Mr M.S. Ramamohan Rao; Mr M. Venkat Swamy; Mr VSN Murthy; Mr N. Jaya Kumar; and Ms Anitha.V ; CESS from WASHCost (INDIA)