From "Brakes" to "Accelerators"
How informed public opinion facilitates behavior changes in public officials.

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"First they ignore you
then they ridicule you
then they fight you
then you win"
– Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948)

The Context

Modern democracies with its concern for nation building and welfare have made use of a centralized public policy as the key mode to design and deliver public services. While the basic premise underlying the use of public policy as a means of intervention has often gone unchallenged, the modalities of state actions in operationalising the public policy have increasingly come under critical scrutiny. Various reasons account for this. Firstly, public policies of the state seeking to dominate the social and economic space of a large mass of humanity have been extremely reductionist in its approach; many would argue that this is because of the compulsions of complexity. But, in the practical terrains where public policies impact on the lives of citizens, this approach has come to represent insensitivity, narrow vision, opaqueness and non-responsiveness. Perhaps this reductionist approach is sustained by the continuing obsession with normative models of public policy which prescribes and seeks maximization. And the state in its obligation to impose and validate its own rationality in the exercise of power inevitably tends towards one-sidedness, absence of feedback and a dominant bureaucracy, which co-opts the political system into its role of designing and implementing equitable, efficient deterministic solutions to problems of development.

The reductionist approach often brings in its wake serious problems in the interface with society. Leaving aside geographical variations, there are significant social, cultural and economic variations that have a significant bearing on the capacity of the polity to respond to competing demands from society. These variations have also to be understood in the context of existing historical niches of pluralism that have been achieved through collective protest and organized movements (like India and Kenya). Despite all the shortcomings, a major advantage in most democracies is the availability of a state committed to political transaction as the central ordering mechanism.

The second theme in the debate is the use of public policy in designing a governance system for modern societies. Each time a welfare scheme, decentralization model or development project is designed for the nation, assumptions about existing social conditions and processes do not seem to get serious attention. Be it developing physical infrastructure or policing of ground water use, public policy often overlooks traditional institutions that have operated (perhaps sub-optimally) in many areas with a good deal of success. Notwithstanding the specific benefits that the intervention seeks and achieves, unanticipated consequences abound, which act as "terminators" of traditional institutions upsetting a wide range of local processes.

The third issue is the limited manner in which public policy initiatives look at implementation methodologies. An essential weakness is the assumption that successful "end-game" positions achieved elsewhere can be organised as a single step operation. For example, improved service delivery by writing up Citizen Charters, is a typical limited public initiative, which does not integrate performance appraisal within service providers, or citizen awareness and capacity to make use of the provisions envisaged.

The Case Studies

Can informed public opinion bridge some of these divides and create a stimulus for public officials to be responsive to organized public feedback? Rest of this paper will attempt to answer this question by exploring some recent work of Public Affairs Foundation in Delhi, India and Kenya. The Delhi case study reflects a unique instance of an elected political leader openly seeking public feedback on the delivery of critical public services and using this information to bring in operational changes within organizations and behavioural shifts among public officials. The Kenyan experience, on the other hand, is largely a civil society led initiative, located within an environment of reforms, to make citizens' voice resonate effectively in existing reform agenda to make it more inclusive, responsive and transparent. Though the contexts and triggers vary between the two cases, the common thread uniting these experiences is the potency of informed public voice to influence public service delivery and facilitate internal reforms within the utilities.

1.   Monitoring of Public Service Outcomes in Delhi: A People's Audit

1.1   Background

In September 2005, the Chief Minister (Head of the Provincial Government) of Delhi Mrs. Sheila Dikshit invited the Public Affairs Foundation (PAF) to monitor the outcomes of key public services in Delhi, using citizen feedback on the service providers involved. The project was completed in September 2006 and the findings were presented before the media and officials on September 4, 2006. What made this case stand out was that the Chief Minister publicly announced the launch of this audit and also openly committed to disclose the findings to the public, irrespective of the nature of the results. The audit was modeled after the well known Citizen Report Cards, pioneered by Public Affairs Centre.

The National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi is a unique administrative set up with administrative controls spread across three sets of actors – the central government, an elected state (provincial) government and local (municipal) government. A reformist government headed by Mrs. Sheila Dikshit has been in power since 1998. During the last 5-6 years, huge investments have been committed to improve public infrastructure, followed by a wide range of reforms in public administration. Two major strands that stand out in the reform agenda are: (a) significant investments on public infrastructure (especially in improving mass transport, and provision of water) and (b) wide range of e governance applications (e.g., computerization of land registration, online grievance redress etc.) that have been implemented across the board to make public services more accessible, responsive and accountable.

The People's Audit covered 14165 respondents in Delhi and elicited focused feedback on user's experiences across nine public services viz.

- Provision of Drinking Water to the urban poor through water tankers operated by the Delhi Jal (Water) Board
- In Patient services provided by public hospitals run by Municipality & the State Government
- Out Patient services provided by public hospitals run by the Municipality & the State Government
- Public bus transport services provided by the Delhi Transport Corporation
- School education provided by Municipality-run Primary Schools, State Government-run Primary Schools, and State Government-run Secondary Schools
- Services provided by Fair Price Shops and Kerosene Depots
- Services provided by the Motor Licensing Offices
- Services provided by the Sub Divisional Magistrate's Offices
- Services provided by the Sub Registrar's Offices

1.2   Organizational Anchor

The Department of Administrative Reforms (DAR), Government of NCT Delhi was the anchor for this exercise. The organizational mandate of DAR (to act as a facilitator, in consultation with Government of India, Departments of Delhi Government, its Autonomous Bodies and Undertakings etc. to improve Government functioning through administrative reforms in the spheres of restructuring the Government, process improvement, organization & methods, grievance handling, modernization, citizens' charters, award scheme and best practices) gave a strong legitimacy to the exercise and also, brought in a clear ownership within the government. Also, the fact that the initiative came from the highest public office also made the heads of the utilities participate in the entire project run-up discussions (this, as discussed in a later section, had a major impact on the exercise).

DAR contracted out the study to PAF to design the audit, ensure quality of field survey, carry out the analysis and interpretation of the findings and identify key pointers for reforms and improvements. The field survey was outsourced separately to Nielsen, a leading market and social research agency.

1.3   Finding Institutional Champions

For PAF, the key challenge in implementing the audit was manifold. For one, hitherto institutional experiences of PAF and its sister concern, the Public Affairs Centre (PAC) hinged around using the power of public feedback as a civil society-led accountability mechanism. This was the first time that the "instigator" happened to be from the other side (state)! Secondly, there was a huge political risk. To what extent will a technical exercise like this insulate itself from unexpected political undercurrents? Also, will the Chief Minister renegade on her promise to come clean with the findings publicly. An early strategy adopted by PAF was to create a common understanding among the utility managers on the intent of this "audit". It is interesting to note here that the Chief Minister was not too comfortable with the phrase "Citizen Report Card" and instead, suggested the term "Social Audit"; the reasoning was that Report Cards conveyed a notion of evaluation and assessment from outside, while Social Audit would reflect a more transparent and open initiative by

the state. However, during the initial interactions with the utility managers, it was clear that a majority of them was not comfortable with the term "audit". PAF had to make repeated presentations to assuage all misplaced concerns on this; ironically, it was the illustration from the Bangalore Report Card that convinced many utility managers of the neutrality and diagnostic power of this approach.

1.4   The Big Headlines from the People's Audit:

A major finding of the audit was that government has extended access to most services, but has not been able to fully deliver on the quality and reliability of services. A disconcerting pointer from this study was the wide variations across geographical locations in Delhi on different aspects of service delivery. This means that in addition to service quality issues, equity in service delivery is also a matter of major concern. Spatial variability was observed to be high for most pro-poor services like provision of water to poor localities through water tankers; food and civil supplies and land registration. User feedback on interfaces with agencies also pointed to the limitations of reforms that aim to tackle front end changes. While increasing adaptations of technology in operations have clearly streamlined processes, the continuing existence of middlemen and weak monitoring of actual delivery show that more systemic changes are needed to make service delivery more transparent, reliable and responsive to people. Though Citizen Charters have been created for most services, knowledge about the same is quite limited. However, on the positive side wherever users were aware of Citizen Charters, they recognized their value and found the content useful. The Social Audit also highlighted the fact that there were very few instances of effective grievance redress whenever users complained about a problem. Also, the study underscored the fact that very few users who faced a problem actually lodged formal complaints, perhaps indicating low faith in formal grievance redress mechanisms.

1.5   From Symptoms to Reforms: Institutional Responses to the Audit

The preliminary findings from the study were presented to the Chief Minister, her senior officers and the utility managers on May 25, 2006. The findings were reviewed and discussed threadbare and the openness exhibited by the Chief Minister to acknowledge shortcomings was remarkable; interestingly, the Delhi Jal Board (Water utility) of which she is the Chairperson was the worst rated in terms of overall satisfaction. Whenever a utility manager came up with a positive secondary statistic (like the overall pass percentage for schools), she would immediately point to the overall messages indicated by the end-users and asked them to pay attention to that. Her message was very clear "I appreciate all the financial and physical data put out by all of you, but at the end of the day, as a political leader and as the Chief Executive of this government, my interest is on what people in the ground say about the services". It was quite clear that this informed public feedback gave her a new and powerful perspective to address issues of public service delivery that are far removed from the mumbo-jumbo of official statistics.

The draft findings were then circulated to each service/department head to review them thoroughly and pose any queries or clarifications to PAF. The final report was drafted end of August and on September 4, 2007, the Chief Minister released the findings to the public at a press conference. Acknowledging the findings as a clear indicator to the government to focus more on the pro-poor sectors, the Chief Minister also announced that a high-level committee will be set-up to address the concerns that have come out of this audit and also, to assist individual departments and utilities to

draft actionable measures. Following this, the Chief Minister unexpectedly requested the Foundation to assist the departments to prepare focused reform measures to address some of the emergent concerns. To make this initiative more embedded within the government, a small task force was created under the leadership of the former Chief Secretary of the Delhi Government, who was a major champion of the social audit during the initial phase; PAF provided technical support to this Taskforce.

The Taskforce then designed a series of highly interactive and focused brainstorming sessions with a small team of staff from each department; it was made clear that the team should be representative and cut across different levels within the organization. The first round of meetings focused on creating a consensus on the diagnosis of the problems (symptoms) identified in the audit. Following this, the subsequent rounds focused on generating specific reform measures. The draft reform measures suggested were then discussed widely within the departments to create a broader ownership and consensus.

Round 1.From Symptoms to Diagnosis	
Key finding (Symptoms)	Possible reasons (Diagnosis)

Round 2. From Diagnosis to Reforms				
Key finding (Symptoms)	Possible reasons (Diagnosis)	Suggested measures	Expected risks / barriers	Timeline

Round 3: Generating a Consensus on the Reforms				
Key finding	Suggested measures	Comments on the suggested measures	Other doable ideas	Required resources
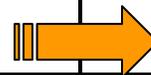
These intra-department discussions created an unprecedented ambience of dialogue and consultations. As one senior staff remarked: "This is the first time in my entire 27 years in government that we are actually sitting down and talking about how to solve people's problems". A remarkable experience was that many junior-level staff were giving suggestions and creative options. In the food and civil supplies department, a key point of discussion was how to tackle the widely reported cases of under-weighing of kerosene (used as a cooking fuel by poor families). One junior official came up with a suggestion of deploying automated vending machines which would give kerosene in sachets. The suggestion was immediately accepted and today, there are

many vending machines in operation. Similarly, during discussions to solve the overcrowding of inpatients in government hospitals (the audit had revealed that on an average, 2-3 patients share a bed!), a lady health official from the Municipal health department came up with the suggestion of converting the under-utilized medical staff quarters as health facilities. The point to note here is that the entire reform ideas and initiatives came from within the departments and utilities. The huge reservoir of organizational knowledge and experience was creatively harnessed to bring in a collective effort to examine the informed public voice that was articulated through the social audit and use the pointers emerging from that to carry out internal diagnosis and design effective response mechanisms.

Once the key reform measures were identified, the departmental teams with help from the Taskforce unbundled the suggestions to four specific domains: Infrastructure improvements, Systems/Process Re-engineering, Personnel and Community Empowerment/Engagement. This was also a significant development as the usual trend is to ask for more resources. A comprehensive matrix evolved out of this exercise that detailed out the response mechanisms following the audit. A sample is depicted below:

Services/↓ Reform Type →	Infrastructure Improvements	Systems / Process Re-engineering	Personnel Related	Community Empowerment / Engagement
Education	☐ Creative options like mobile & chemical toilets. ☐ Discourage practice of locking up toilets from outside. ☐ Additional toilets for Principals & Teachers – Pota Cabins	☐ Separate engineering wing for school infrastructure. ☐ Mandatory competency testing of children. ☐ Teaching through Cable TV slots.	☐ Improve teacher selection procedures.	☐ Setting up Vidhyarthi Kalyan Samitis (Student Welfare Committees) for monitoring & raising resources.
Health	☐ Upgrade existing centres – explore options for vertical expansion. ☐ Explore innovative options like bunker-type beds. ☐ All encroachments near the entrance of hospitals to be removed. ☐ Empty doctor's quarters to be utilized – waiting room for bystanders. ☐ Tender out ambulance services	☐ Audio Video information at hospitals. ☐ Centralized information systems at the front desk. ☐ Installing colour coded signage. ☐ Re-designing the physical layout, especially the information counters. ☐ Scientific staff requirement audits/studies.	☐ Presence of grievance redress officer to be made mandatory at the hospitals.	☐ Adopting Rogi Kalyan Samitis – successful patient welfare forum pioneered in many states. ☐ Setting up helpdesks with assistance from NGOs; study existing good practices for scale-up. ☐ Enlisting community volunteers.
Food & Civil Supplies	☐ Use automatic dispensers for Kerosene.	☐ Toll free helplines to be set up. ☐ Setting up complaint boxes in each Circle Office which will be opened by respective area	☐ Circle Inspectors to visit each retail outlet every month.	☐ Citizen Watch Committees to be set up for each outlet and trained through Bhagidhari workshops. ☐ Encourage

Services/↓ Reform Type →	Infrastructure Improvements	Systems / Process Re-engineering	Personnel Related	Community Empowerment / Engagement
		officers once a week.		independent audits by NGOs on issues of transparency. ❑ Citizen Charters to be reviewed and published in other local languages like Punjabi & Urdu. ❑ Enhance awareness through media advertisements, street theatre.

Appropriate government orders were then issued to facilitate the implementation of these reforms. The entire process – from the release of the audit findings to the implementation and roll-out of reforms – took just four months! In the meantime, the Chief Minister has requested PAF to prepare for the repeat audit. The findings from the first round is also being published as a book (with a preface by the Chief Minister); the Delhi Government has given PAF the go ahead to print 1000 copies and the Chief Minister is planning to send a copy of the same to all other chief ministers in different states of India to encourage them to carry out similar social audits.

2. Strengthening Consumer Voice in the Water & sanitation Sector in Africa: Citizen Report Cards in Kenya

2.1 Context

In the last two years, the Water & Sanitation Programme (WSP) has implemented a project that aims to build capacity of civil society groups to engage proactively in the process of water and sanitation sector reform. A specific problem in reform is that many local organizations which represent the interests of the poor may have little knowledge of the issues surrounding urban sector reform, including institutional re-structuring, tariff reform, private sector participation and the current status of legal and regulatory frameworks. This gap exists at the same time that many projects are being formulated in the expectation that civil society groups will play a role as partners; usually as intermediaries or service providers for the poor. This gap in understanding is sometimes used as a reason to exclude civil society organizations from the debate on reform altogether. Where they are brought into the debate, or into project planning, it may be without an adequate grasp of the issues, or even the vocabulary of reform. This is unfair and counterproductive, and does not lead to healthy partnerships or well designed transactions.

The aim of the on-going WSP project is to facilitate creation of a constructive environment with respect to reform; one which will allow consumer associations and other civil society groups to advocate their interests (the poor, the environment) and contribute their skills and capacity.

The first phase of the project established a partnership between WSP-AF, Consumers International (CI) and four consumers associations (in Kenya, Chad, Senegal and Zambia). During the project, these partners worked to determine what capacity-building needs consumer organizations had, and to develop methods and strategies to engage consumer associations and consumers themselves. This led to the publication of the joint WSP-CI report *Moving From Protest to Proposal: Building the Capacity of Consumer Organizations to Engage in Urban Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Reform in Africa*. A key learning from the first phase was that most consumer/civil society organizations lack objective and credible strategies and tools to engage the service providers and policy makers.

During March 16-17, 2005 WSP-Africa in association with WaterAid organized a "practioners" meet for partners in Africa to explore potential tools for advocacy and consumer engagement in reforms. Five tools (applied globally) were presented and discussed at the meet – Community Score Cards, Slum Mapping, Equity Distribution Indicator, Enumeration & Citizen Report Cards. Each of these tools was presented by a practioner and after clarifications, participants discussed the utility, replicability and contextual fit of these tools. At the end of the deliberations, the Citizen Report Card model pioneered and promoted by PAC/PAF was selected (there was another CRC model presented by the Social Weather Station, a polling and research agency in the Philippines) as the most potent approach to strengthen consumer voice in the water sector in Africa. WSP-AF subsequently contracted PAF to support an 18 month-long capacity building intervention in selected countries in Africa.

2.2   Context Setting & Consensus Framing

Given the untested terrain of CRC applications in Africa and the deeply divided and polemical terrain of water, PAF & WSP decided that the technical part of the exercise need to be preceded by an awareness building and consensus creating phase. An innovative approach designed in this regard was the "Report Card Roadshows". These were a 5-day long event in each of the proposed project site which included individual consultations with key stakeholders – utility managers, regulators, civil society organizations, media, community-based organizations, survey agencies and academia – and a highly participatory and transparent one-day workshop. The individual consultations focused on creating awareness on what a citizen report card is – concept, methodology, outcomes and applications. The multistakeholder workshop created a space to understand, discuss and critique the CRC and then collectively evaluate the merit and the contextual fit of the tool.

A key highlight of the CRC-evaluation workshop was a stakeholder evaluation of "8" criterion against which the merit and contextual fit of the tool was discussed and evaluated. The "critical 8" are as follows:

- **Political Context** – How would the political institutions in the country support or hinder methodologies like CRC?
- **Decentralization** – Do local bodies have reasonably high degree of financial & policymaking power?

- **Ability to Seek Feedback from Citizens** – Would organizations feel safe conducting public feedback exercises like the CRC?
- **Citizens Ability to Voice Experience** – Do citizens feel free to give honest feedback about government services?
- **Presence & Activism of Civil Society Organizations** – Are there active CSOs in the country? Are they independent & non-partisan?
- **Survey & Analysis Competency** – Are there demonstrated local skills for survey and analysis?
- **Quality of media** – Is the media independent? Do they cover issues related to public services? Will they cover CRC findings and present them in an unbiased manner?
- **Responsiveness of Service Providers** – Do service providers seek consumer/user feedback? How open would they be to independent assessments on their performance

Each stakeholder then proceeds to discuss each of the criterion and score it along a scale of 0-10 (0 indicating highly disabling environment and 10 highly enabling). A live example from Kisumu in Kenya is given below:

Criterion	Government	SSIP	Media	CSO	Average
Political Setting	7	5	5	6	5.8
Decentralization	6	6	3	3	4.5
Ability to seek feedback	8	8	8	8	8.0
Ability to voice experience	5	8	9	8	7.5
Activism of CSOs	8	6	2	6	5.5
Survey/analysis competency	7	7	7	8	7.3
Quality of Media	5	5	6	8	6.0
Responsiveness of Providers	4	6	1	6	4.3

SSIP – Small Scale Independent Providers; CSO – Civil Society Organizations

As evident from the above scores, there are a few themes where there seem to be lot of divergence. One is the whole process of decentralization and the other is the civil society sector. While most participants agreed that there has been progress on decentralization, the lack of a clear policy on this seems to be the bone of contention. Though there are enabling cases of effective interventions by local government institutions, these seem to be more *adhoc* and driven by internal champions. The Kisumu civil society scene on the other hand is seen as a highly competitive space with organizations jostling for visibility and resources. Interestingly, at the end of the workshop there was a strong consensus among the CSO participants that the CRC may indeed provide a neutral platform to bring together different CSOs and in that sense, provides a good opportunity for networking and solidarity building.

These scores are then discussed, debated and analyzed by all the participants. Following this, each stakeholder group then proceeds to identify specific opportunities, challenges and gives the final verdict. Each group then openly commits to a specific role or input they will bring on board (see example below):

Opportunities & Resources	Challenges & Obstacles
- Existing human resources - Ongoing local & central government reforms i.e., water sector reforms, LASDAP, Performance Contract etc. - Existing institutional structures - High level of literacy (compared to other parts/regions) - Democratic space - Intensified public-private partnership agenda	- Unprofessional media – often relays wrong information - Public apathy & tolerance with status quo - Poverty - Impact of HIV - Political euphoria – fast rise in expectations and very quick fall in the same
Issues still needing examination	**The Verdict**
- Representation of sample size and distribution in terms of gender, income, location etc - Training & education - Awareness generation	Yes: ☺ Timing Now: ✓
Specific role: (a) Institutional anchorage (b) Political direction (c)legal mandate	

What this "Roadshow" does is to bring in a process of openly examining the tool/approach from the vantage point of each critical stakeholder. The process also facilitates a forum to voice apprehensions and concerns about the tool/approach and the likely impacts. Based on this participatory assessment, three cities in Kenya were identified for the project – Nairobi, Kisumu & Mombasa.

2.3   Selecting Local "Drivers"

Two major pointers emerged from the CRC Roadshows: (a) the civil society field was extremely competitive and the selection of a "lead agency" to drive the CRC in each city has to be managed in an open and transparent fashion and (b) the field survey has to be managed by a non partisan and technically competent organization. Accordingly, bids were invited from both CSOs and research firms. Two separate panels consisting of representatives from WSP-AF and PAF shortlisted candidates and made the final selections. These processes in fact reinforced the neutrality

2.4   Institutional Arrangements

The CRC process was implemented by stakeholder alliances at two platforms – at the national and city levels. The process involved broad participation of diverse partners to facilitate open dialogue at local and national levels, and also ensure ownership of the outcomes.

At the national level, a stakeholder alliance was formed to facilitate top level dialogue on issues around the CRC process. The National Consortium comprised key policy and decision makers from national institutions, including directors from the departments of water, health and local

government; chief executives of the regulatory board, water service boards and utilities; and key officials from NGOs and national civil society institutions.

The city-level consortia were established to jointly own and implement the CRC process in the each of the three cities. They comprised representatives from local-based institutions that focus on or are concerned with issues affecting delivery of water supply and sanitation services in their respective locales.
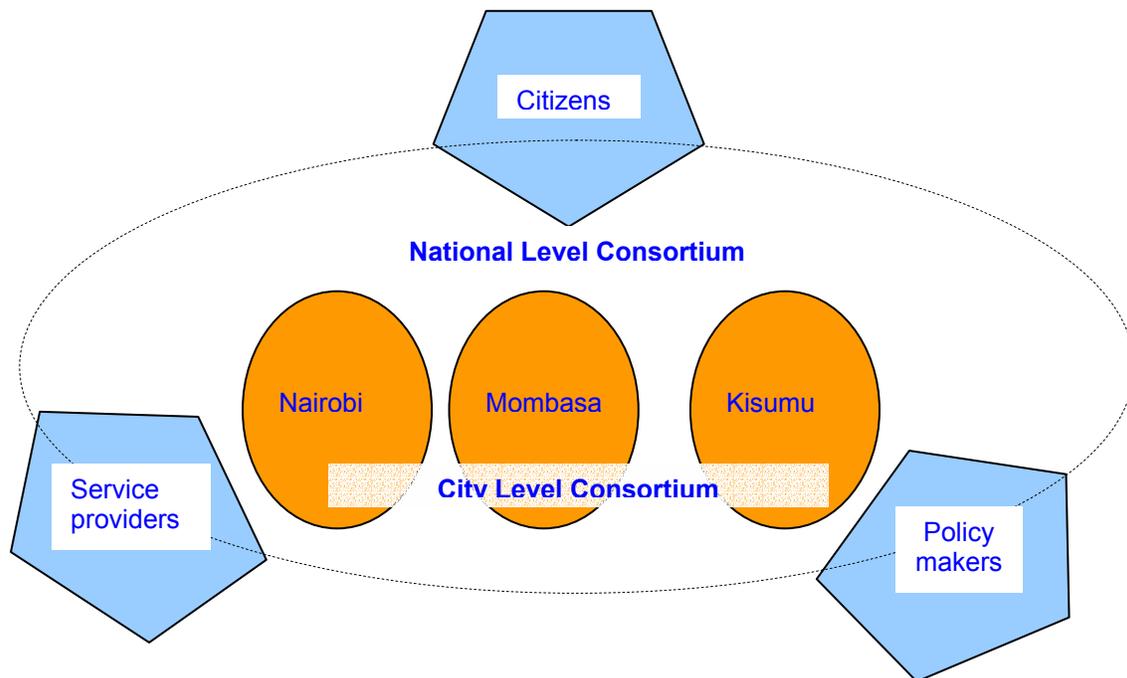
These tiers helped to attract a broad range of actors into the fold of the initiative. While bridges were created horizontally across similar stakeholders like CSOs, critical links were also created vertically between CSOs and utilities and also, across different levels of government.

2.5 Institutionalizing the Findings & Designing Post Survey Responses

As a lead-up to the public release of the findings, city-level workshops were organized by the Consortia in the three cities to discuss the draft findings and facilitate the utilities to prepare a response to the findings; the process was modeled after the PAF's experience in Delhi (as described earlier). The Consortia also held preparatory sessions for the press conference so that the key messages are articulated in a positive and proactive manner.

The findings from the CRCs in the three cities were released at a public function on May 29, 2007 in Nairobi. The Guest of Honor was the Assistant Minister of Water and Irrigation, Hon. Raphael Wanjala. He officially received the city level reports from the Lead Agencies and the overall report was presented to him by citizen representatives from the informal settlements. The event attracted about 500 participants including senior utility managers, CSO representatives, Mayors and media. A slogan was adopted during this event to unify citizens, service providers and policy makers in the spirit of dialogue, and not confrontation. The slogan in Kiswahili was *'Maji na Usafi? Njooni Tujadiliane'* This translated means, *'Water and Sanitation? Come all, lets discuss and agree.*' This

was repeated throughout the launch, was displayed on the T-shirts, banners and repeated by various presenters. The service providers were comfortable with the mood which was conciliatory and calling for dialogue over service improvements. Breakaway sessions were held to discuss in-depth the city level findings and also, to review the responses from the utilities. There was an unmistakable willingness to present commitments to citizens by service providers and policy makers – not just from the water sector but others like health, environment and local government. The Minister in his speech encouraged the consortiums to continue meeting to monitor improvements and jointly explore solutions to the issues raised in the CRC. The Water Boards welcomed continued participation and the Coast Water Services Board in Mombasa actually committed to sharing their workplans with the stakeholders to enable them monitor the outcomes.

Insights and Pointers

Though the contexts differed and the triggers varied, the two case studies discussed above reveals a set of pointers that may have implications for the growing repertoire of social accountability tools and approaches. To discuss some pertinent ones:

a. **Power of Empirical Data**: There is, undoubtedly a clear advantage in "counting" the facts and experiences. To a large extent, institutional apathy can be traced to a lack of informed demand from citizens. Civic engagement, quite often tends to be anecdotal and emotive and in the process narrow down to confrontation and contestation. When accountability tools like citizen report cards, community score cards and social audits raise the level of discourses from the anecdotal to the factual, there is less defensiveness from public officials in receiving the findings. This was openly articulated in the Kenyan case, where many previous civil society initiatives have failed to create an effective engagement as the issues remained mostly in the anecdotal domain. As one official remarked quite poignantly during one of the CRC " Roadshows": "This clearly separates the "*noise*" from the "*voice*"! The credibility, objectivity and neutrality of the tool certainly help in opening door and windows for a more effective engagement between the citizen and the state.

b. **Context Setting & Consensus Creation**: Capturing and articulating citizens' voices without adequately preparing the response side will at best result in some quick-fixes. It is critical that the process be inclusive, transparent and participatory in nature. The CRC Roadshows were clearly instrumental in changing the way public officials view demand-led interventions. There was a lot of negativity, skepticism and apprehension on the intent and focus of the CRCs; the phrase "report card" itself carried with it a tone of criticism and evaluation. The roadshows created a forum where the entire processes were subject to a collective scrutiny and evaluation. The initial roundtables held in Delhi with the utility managers and agency heads also helped in creating a balanced view of the tool and its implications. These initial set of activities created a win-win ambience right at the beginning of the intervention itself.

c. **Public Opinion as a trigger for institutional responses**: As narrated in the examples above, public officials played a key role in using the symptoms arising from the citizen feedback as diagnostic pointers to design appropriate institutional responses. Usually, consultants and external resource persons act as the facilitators/designers of internal reforms – though, technically they often bring in cutting-edge practices and ideas, very seldom do these find ownership within the department. However, here the series of diagnostic exercises and

brainstorming sessions created a sense of internal ownership and commitment to change. The scientific nature of the information collected, the transparency in reviewing the findings prior to the public release and the fact that the findings reflected the good and the bad combined to provide a highly enabling momentum within the departments to identify areas and processes for reforms. The very fact that in Delhi, all intra-department reform strategies incorporated themes/ideas on empowering citizens is a testimony to the acceptance of the demand-side actors within the traditional institutional mindsets of the bureaucracy.

d. **Role of strategic communication**: The dissemination of the findings from initiatives such as Citizen Report Card is extremely critical to derive the maximum benefits from the effort. The usefulness of the approach will be quite limited if findings are not shared and used to bring about improvements and reforms. The design of an effective and focused strategy depends on a series of important steps:

- Identifying the target audience/stakeholders;
- Deciding the channels/network and specific activities to reach the audience;
- Focusing on project management considerations;
- Considering strategic issues.

Some specific cases where communication played a key role in enhancing the impact of a CRC are discussed below:

Stage of CRC	Communication Activity	Objectives	Target audience / stakeholders
Planning a CRC	Workshops	Sensitizing stakeholders who are part of the CRC implementing team to create a shared understanding of the CRC concepts and applications	Peer CSOs, utility managers, media, academia and higher government officials.
Pre- launch phase	Workshops	Sharing and vetting the findings	Peer CSOs, utility managers, and sector experts
Dissemination	Press conferences, press releases	Disseminate the findings from the CRC	General Public
Post- launch presentations	Targeted presentations	Explore policy advocacy and wider implications of the findings with specialized groups	CSO networks, professional bodies etc.

How communication and advocacy multiplied the effect of CRC findings:

CRC Stage	Impact of Sharing of Information
Planning	Created a shared understanding of the rationale, objectives and potency of CRCs. Underscored the transparency of the entire effort. Assisted stakeholders to understand and unbundled the tasks involved.
Pre-launch phase	Ensured quality checks and endorsed the veracity of findings. Enabled stakeholders to plan in advance media strategies.
Dissemination	Raised awareness on critical issues in public services. Credible and objective findings created a shift in public information from the anecdotal to the evidential Issues like corruption that hitherto existed in the realm of the abstract became an objective benchmark
Post launch	Customized information packages enabled focused advocacy efforts with critical and influential groups

Some Communication Tips We Picked up!

Throughout the dissemination process, attention should be given to present the findings in an unbiased manner. Based on past experience with Citizen Report Cards, listed below are a few pointers:

■ *Preparing the media in advance*. A successful strategy adopted in the Kenya case and followed in other recent CRC initiatives is to hold media roundtables to sensitize the print and visual media about the CRC and how the media could act as a proactive partner in this endeavor. These interactive sessions held with journalists were to ensure that they understand how the data were collected and analyzed, and to give them pointers on how to report them. In Kenya, special attention was also made to sensitize columnists and TV chat-show hosts to ensure sustained coverage of the key findings in the media, long after the initial "big bang" headlines fade out. These events covered both the "voice" and "response" sides of the story – alongside, the depiction of the major findings, institutional responses were also covered.

■ *Presenting information in a holistic manner.* It is important to highlight the good and bad areas of performance. A complete picture--both the successes and failures--must be shared! Effective communication in a CRC is both a "pat" and a "slap"!

■ *Allowing for shades of gray.* Descriptions, such as waiting time and proportion of users who are completely satisfied, make it possible to present feedback in different shades of gray—instead of a simple good/bad or yes/no. Remember that the Citizen Report Card captures the subjective experience of users in an objective manner.

■ *Conveying findings in a value-neutral manner.* Let the findings speak for themselves instead of using descriptive adjectives or value-laden or biased language.

■ *Selectively comparing across services.* Although there are major differences between services, a comparison across providers on comparable criteria puts pressure on poor performers. This comparison creates peer pressure and develops into a substitute for the market.

■ *Using a question-answer format to present findings.* Past experience has shown that using a question-answer format during presentations is an easy way for the audience to digest information. For example, during a presentation, instead of listing statistics about various aspects of drinking water services, ask the question: "In what areas do drinking water services need to improve?" A set of bulleted comments for service aspects where citizens gave poor ratings could follow. In addition, if the questionnaire included any direct questions about areas for improvement, these findings could be included.

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