The Global Network of Government Innovators
South Asian Regional Forum
Rai Foundation
A-41, M.C.I.E, Mathura Road, New Delhi
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"How can Improved Service Delivery in Governments Increase Citizen Trust?": Creating Trust by Measuring Customer Satisfaction — The Case of the US Federal Government

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What was the problem?

In 1992 Bill Clinton promised to reinvent government if elected. When President Clinton took office in 1993, he wanted to engage each of the more than one million federal employees—no matter whether their agencies were delivering services, collecting taxes, or approving permits—in restoring trust in government. To do this, he committed to creating a citizen-centric government that provided services that were equal to the best in business. No government had ever completed a reinvention or customer service initiative of this magnitude. Learning how to make government effective and service-driven required massive innovation.

What was the innovation?

From 1993 to 1999, each federal agency head developed customer service plans, standards and surveys; the Administration downsized administrative positions and added more front-line workers. Each agency was tasked with listening to the citizens it served and ensuring that services met citizens' needs. Individual agencies were experimenting with a host of different methods such as customer service comment cards, mystery shoppers—civil society members who tested the quality of the customer service they received, online and phone complaint systems, town hall meetings, and consultations with stakeholders and non-profit agencies. Yet there was no government-wide system of measurement that compared quality of services delivered, or that evaluated citizen satisfaction with the services they were receiving.

With little more than a year left of its final term, the Administration wanted to institutionalize the customer service policies to ensure they continued after the 2000 election. Vice President Gore's Reinventing Government staff chose the American Customer Satisfaction Index as a government-wide tool for evaluation of service delivery (www.theasci.org). This survey system also measures the customer service performance of the private sector in the United States. Agency heads were asked to sign voluntary two-year contracts to ensure that the policy spanned the election year. This voluntary process allowed agency heads to continue the measurement after 2001 only if they found value in the system.

What obstacles did they encounter?

Some agencies did not believe that the concept of customer service was applicable to governance or to government service delivery. Established civil servants often thought they knew what was best for the citizens they served. These agencies did not align their performance measurement systems and employee evaluations to proposed indices of customer satisfaction. Also, some agency heads did not want to make their service delivery transparent to the public. It is interesting to note that the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which infamously mismanaged the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, does not participate in this standard of customer service evaluation.

What were the planned versus actual results of the innovation?

In the processes of adopting customer service measures, many agencies found that citizens did not know their rights or would often not apply for benefits or permits because they did not know how to deal with the agencies involved. Individuals in some cases even paid professionals to help them navigate government systems that should have been transparent to the public. Each agency learned its own lessons from the process of reinventing government. For example, some agencies learned that their customers still did not understand the new system: from the letters and instructions they received or even the regulatory procedures they had to follow. The Federal Aviation Administration found that pilots did not understand their own air-worthiness directives. As a result, the FAA launched an initiative to rewrite all their directives in easily understandable language.

In addition to changes in program delivery, surveys uncovered what was most important to citizens. For example, while many agencies trained their agents to be courteous and polite, surveys found that many citizens rated efficiency and expertise to be more important than manners in their dealings with federal agents. Citizens wanted specific answers to their questions, not polite telephone conversation. This led to initiatives such as the Social Security Administration's publication of answers to Frequently Asked Questions, both online and in pamphlets.

After almost 15 years of work in the US, we can ask the question, does improved service restore trust in government? We have learned that trust is related to expectations. As service improves, citizen expectations rise. On the other hand, when service does not equal expectations, citizens lose faith in government. It is incumbent on each agency to ensure that their services meet or exceed the expectations of their customers, the American public. For that reason, the Customer Satisfaction Measurement Initiative that began with an evaluation of 25 services has grown to over 100 services using this customer service evaluation to improve their service delivery and train their employees.

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"How can Improved Service Delivery in Governments Increase Citizen Trust?": The Kafka Brigade

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What was the problem?

Those most dependent on public services typically suffer most from excessive bureaucracy: the chronically ill and disabled, the elderly poor, nascent immigrant entrepreneurs, and so on. Reform efforts to streamline agencies and simplify procedures rarely yield noticeable improvement.

What was the innovation?

The Kafka Brigade in the Netherlands takes a different approach. This independent, non-profit field research team assesses red tape from a citizen's perspective. It gathers together all involved front-line workers, managers and policymakers around a particular case that is representative of similar cases. The Kafka Brigade uses action research methods to draw more general lessons from these particular cases. The teams ensure that lessons are transformed into action and that actions lead to results by also reporting to the ministries involved.

What obstacles did you face?

The novelty of the approach of the Kafka Brigade in that it forces all parties involved to reflect critically on the working of their respective organizations as well as on the cooperation between those organizations. This can typically lead to anxious reactions with those involved and sometimes even retreatism or simply bold denial of the problem at hand. In order to overcome paralysis and get to concrete and workable results the Kafka Brigade must necessarily create an open atmosphere for discussion, removing the risk of the occurrence of a 'blame game'.

What were the planned versus actual results?

Since the Kafka Brigade handles a range of cases of various natures, it is difficult to clearly formulate one single set of planned or actual results. Virtually all cases investigated by the Kafka Brigade in the past have led to concrete improvement in the situations of the specific citizens central to those cases. Generalizing results of the single cases in order to bring about structural long-term improvement proves to be the biggest challenge. Through follow-up research and political support at the highest levels, the Kafka Brigade tries to ensure 'second order' change too.

Jorrit de Jong is a Fellow at the Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. His research, teaching and consultancy focus on innovations in the public sector. From 2005 to 2007, he was director of the Center for Government Studies at Leiden University's Campus, The Hague. Before that he was founding director of United Knowledge Ltd, an Amsterdam based Internet and consulting firm for public sector organizations. As a researcher, he served on missions in Bangladesh, Japan, Canada, Denmark, Belgium, Mozambique, Tanzania, Kenya and the Netherlands. He co-founded the Kafka Brigade, a field research team investigating excessive bureaucracy, reporting directly to the Dutch Minister of Public Sector Reform. Mr. de Jong has published on reinventing government, innovation, knowledge management, change management, and public services. He also co-authored the book *The State of Access: Success and Failure of Democracies in Creating Equal Opportunities,* which will be published by Brookings Institution Press in 2008. Mr. deJong studied Public Administration and Philosophy at Leiden University in The Netherlands and at The Humboldt University in Berlin, Germany.

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"What Are Governments Doing to Create Flexibilities that Make Them Better Able to Deal With Emergencies and Natural Disasters?: Setting the Context"

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What are governments doing to create flexibilities that make them better able to deal with emergencies and natural disasters?

India is among the most disaster-prone countries in the world. Two-thirds of its states are subject to annual devastation from floods, cyclones and drought. This situation compounded by further destruction from earthquakes and communal riots.

Perpetual exposure to the risk of disaster is the lot of at least one-fifth of India's poor, while about one quarter of its agricultural land is destroyed annually. As a result, an estimated 10% of the population cannot break free from the cycle of poverty. Although India may appear helpless in the face of such seemingly random acts of ferocity on the part of man and nature, it is in fact within the power of government and civil society to address and manage these risks. What is required is innovative and intelligent policymaking, plus the resources with which to implement them.

What lessons can be learned from government efforts to promote social justice?

Perhaps the most important lesson available through the presentations today is the necessity of challenging the orthodoxies that lie at the heart of development practice. It is this preparedness to adopt new practices and the ability to adapt to a new or unforeseen situation that lies at the heart of the concept of innovation.

A commitment to the importance of self-determination can also be observed—of giving to those affected by disaster a voice or stake in efforts to reconstruct their way of life. Affected communities have their own mechanisms for coping with disaster and have learned from its repeated impact. They possess the knowledge to mitigate loss, but for reasons of education or lack of resources cannot use this properly. It is the challenge of policymakers to harness this knowledge and channel it effectively. Related to this is the innovator's belief in the rights and parity of all disaster victims, be they children—who formed a disproportionate number of victims in the 2005 Kashmir Earthquake—or vulnerable women in tsunami-affected areas.

Disasters must be analyzed according to the long-term impact they have on affected communities. Work on relief and mitigation should be an ongoing process that occurs as much prior-to as post- disaster and which, to be effective, cannot be neglected until after the event. Each of these innovations has sought to extend preventative measures that don't seek to simply mop up once the damage has been done, but instead contend that disaster management begins in mitigation before disaster.

Inherent in any attempt at innovation and change are the inevitable impediments and resistance that will arise. These may assume the form of situational difficulties that render a particular course of action impossible, cultural or social dynamics that act against the innovation, governmental inertia, or a lack of capacity and resources. The expansion of AIDMI's *Afat Vimo* scheme has been slowed by a lack of immediate funds and changes in our insurance partners. However, these were eventually overcome and *Afat Vimo* has been extended beyond Gujarat to Tamil Nadu and to Jammu and Kashmir. Just as *Afat Vimo* has prospered in spite of these impediments, it is to the participants' credit that they have successfully adapted to and overcome obstacles placed in their paths.

Mihir R. Bhatt is founder of the All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI), a 63-member organization working in five Indian states and three South Asian countries. In his work with AIDMI, Mr. Bhatt has implemented a series of risk transfer initiatives such as *Afat Vimo*, a life and non-life disaster insurance and mitigation program, for the organization's micro-enterprise beneficiaries of the Livelihood Relief Fund (LRF). Mr. Bhatt has also evaluated tsunami recovery for the Disaster Emergency Committee, assessed Oxfam International's tsunami response in South India and Sri Lanka, and helped the United Nations Development Program mainstream disaster risk reduction in Sri Lanka. Currently, Mr. Bhatt is reviewing the Asian Development Bank's work on disaster risk reduction in Asia. He is a Senior Fellow at the Humanitarian Initiative at Harvard University, a Member of the Core Management Group of the Tsunami Evaluation Consortium, a Full Member of ALNAP, and a Member of Advisory Committee of ProVention Consortium. Mr. Bhatt has studied at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and is the recipient of the Russell E. Train Institutional Fellowship from the World Wildlife Fund (1997), the Eisenhower Fellowship (2000), and the Ashoka International Fellowship (2004).

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"What Are Governments Doing to Create Flexibilities that Make Them Better Able to Deal With Emergencies and Natural Disasters?: The Case of Afat Vimo"

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What was the problem?

The Munich Reinsurance Foundation has stated, "Of the four billion people on earth today who live on less than two dollars per day, fewer than ten million have access to insurance." These people face daily risks such as illness and accidents that may jeopardize their ability to earn an income. Furthermore, many of these people also live in high disaster risk areas such as in flood plains and coastal zones, or in poor quality housing with little seismic resistance. The recent tsunami and the earthquake in the Gujarat demonstrate that the poor are both disproportionately affected by and particularly slow to recover from natural disasters.

Around 1980, the Government of India began an initiative to encourage insurance companies to set aside a percentage of their coverage for the poor. Yet many of this initiative's target beneficiaries remain either uninformed or unable to take advantage of the scheme. Meanwhile, the insurance industry continues to regard widespread coverage for the poor as too much work for too little return. Under these circumstances, how could impoverished and marginalized people access the insurance they needed to face increasing risks of disaster due to climate change, rapid urbanization and population growth in high-risk areas?

What was the innovation?

All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI) acted in Gujarat as both a facilitator and an intermediary to bring together disparate groups of poor communities and commercial and public insurance companies to develop a policy (Afat Vimo) to cover holders against 19 disasters at an annual premium of US $5 (or an average of four days of wages). Through this scheme, AIDMI is teaching insurance companies, authorities, donor communities, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) how to facilitate the convergence of micro-finance tools and disaster risk reduction strategies. According to a recent study of micro-insurance policies in India by the United Nations International Labour Office, 45% of the micro-insurance schemes researched cover only a single risk. Only 16% of schemes cover three risks, making Afat Vimo one of the most comprehensive products in India. This not only makes the policy more attractive to clients, but also makes investment in the policy more efficient in economic terms. Another aspect of Afat Vimo that sets it apart from other micro-insurance policies is the extensive range of eventualities covered under the policy.

What obstacles did you encounter?

Extending micro-insurance services to the poor faces many challenges at the micro-level such as affordability, access, service delivery, lower renewal rates, and long-term sustainability. Similarly, macro-level challenges such as creating incentives for risk reduction, balancing public-private roles and responsibilities, and making up-to-date data available to decision-makers have been identified as key barriers in enhancing benefits of micro-insurance to the poor. Initial mutual scepticism between the poor communities and the insurance companies was an obstacle that was eventually overcome. Wider dissemination of benefits to the donors, insurance companies and poor communities, and scaling up to reach large numbers of poor are the future challenges.

What were the planned versus actual results of the innovation?

There are additional benefits to the communities that come from being organized as a cooperative around this scheme. For example, they are now able to make demands of the local authorities for social and physical infrastructural improvements. The renewal rate for Afat Vimo's policies is currently 88%. However, while donors and government authorities praise the scheme, the lack of upfront scaling funds has slowed down its achievement of a target of 10,000 beneficiaries. Equally, the extension of the scheme to other states of India has been difficult. Currently, the states covered under the initiatives include Gujarat, Tamilnadu and Jammu & Kashmir. In addition, a total of 18,325 students have been covered under student safety insurance.

AIDMI has received many demands from other organizations to share its model and expertise in the area of community-driven risk transfer practices. The Afat Vimo initiative has also influenced the Indian government's draft micro-finance bill and encouraged international NGOs to help their partners develop similar insurance plans for the deeply impoverished. The real impact of this policy is on disaster-induced debt reduction. Currently, AIDMI is working on designing an Asia-wide client impact study to compile evidence to demonstrate the need for more such policies in low-income communities of developing countries.

Yasemin Aysan is an independent consultant specialized in disaster risk management and post-disaster recovery and reconstruction planning. Formerly Director of the Disaster Preparedness Department at the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), Senior Adviser and head of Disaster Reduction Unit at the United Nations Development Program's Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery and Head of the Disaster Management Center at Oxford Brookes University, Dr. Aysan has been involved in disaster reduction issues for over 25 years. As part of her work with the IFRC and the UNDP, she has been an active participant in a number of inter-agency task forces. In addition to several projects she has undertaken for the UN, IFRC, World Bank, and the Swiss Development Cooperation, she also served as a member to the World Bank teams to Sri Lanka after the tsunami and to Pakistan following the Kashmir earthquake. She holds a doctorate with a case study on social and cultural aspects of post-disaster reconstruction planning.

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"What Are Governments Doing to Create Flexibilities that Make Them Better Able to Deal With Emergencies and Natural Disasters?: UNIFEM's Gendered Intervention Into Sri Lanka's Tsunami Recovery Process"

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What was the problem?

When disasters happen, it is common for everyone to rush in. The current disaster relief approach is based on welfare and focuses on the delivery of goods and services. The household is viewed as a homogeneous and benevolent entity, and women are generally excluded from the rehabilitation process. Such was the case in the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami, when the socioeconomic and cultural vulnerability of women was exacerbated in many ways by the relief process. Existing systems and mechanisms of resource distribution and rehabilitation were not gender-sensitive. Women had no platform where they could voice their concerns and priorities. Furthermore, many women who lost their husbands in the disaster were forced to take on additional responsibilities as they became sole providers for their families. Perhaps most important was the lack of sex-disaggregated data related to recovery efforts that might have assisted in gender-sensitive planning and recovery measures.

What was the innovation?

The backbone of our intervention was that it was demand driven, participatory and rights based. Disaster is an arena which was new to UNIFEM but our partners, especially a network of home-based workers, persuaded us to support them in the difficult time of the disaster. We went to Sri Lanka to consult with women of many different classes and social positions, including women affected by the tsunami, women in positions of responsibility, women's groups, the Ministry of Women's Affairs, the National Committee for Women (NCW), women home-based workers, and gender advocates. UNIFEM held several consultations with diverse stakeholders including the United Nations System, the Human Rights Commission and the Child Protection Authority, among others. UNIFEM's initiative took shape from these consultations.

Using a gendered lens, UNIFEM sought to look at the situation holistically, seizing on the process of rebuilding and rehabilitation as an opportunity to redress former gender inequalities. UNIFEM conducted multilateral interventions to:

- Promote leadership of women and women's organization in the recovery process;
- Facilitate the inclusion of women's voices in the formulation of policies and programs in relief and reconstruction measures;
- Build capacity of government field officials on gender issues;

- Use regional experts to assist tsunami affected women, revive their livelihoods and move up the value chain of production;
- Promote non-traditional employment opportunities for women (for example, teachers were trained as counselors and community health workers);
- Address issues related to women's mental health through a community approach adapted to the local context and build a cadre of local mental health experts;
- Analyze tsunami gender issues in mainstream statistical institutions;
- Publicize women's concerns through the media (newspapers, radio, and television);
- Ensure transfer of technical skills of regional experts on mental health, disaster management and livelihoods; and
- Place a senior gender advocate in the RC's Office to make the United Nations' tsunami responsive sensitive to gender issues.

What obstacles did they encounter?

The international media focus on Sri Lanka after the tsunami led to a deluge of foreign funds and volunteers, which slowed the efforts of Sri Lankan NGOs unable to manage the sudden influx of aid and attention. Advocacy for a gendered perspective on disaster relief is a relatively new concept, and certain civil society groups (particularly those under pressure from international donors expecting immediate results) questioned the relevance of gender concerns in relief and rehabilitation efforts. Many additional factors slowed service delivery in Sri Lanka after the tsunami, such as post-disaster trauma on the part of many local workers and escalating costs of goods and services that made budgeting difficult.

What were the planned versus actual results of the innovation?

Through the efforts of UNIFEM's Executive Director and the Regional Program Director to consult with decision makers—including the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister, the Minister of Women's Empowerment and Social Welfare, the UN, donors and the media—UNIFEM's interventions enabled women's voices to be heard by policy makers in Sri Lanka**.** Moreover, UNIFEM's media campaign of panel discussions on television and radio publicized critical issues such as entitlements, land rights, and violence against women. In addition, newspaper advertisements emphasized the need for gender-sensitive recovery processes. Finally, research and data reports on the multiple vulnerabilities faced by women helped raise awareness of gender issues in disaster relief and have become a resource guide throughout South Asia.

In situations of disaster or conflict, gender issues either get blown out of proportion or they become invisible. Such situations also increase the vulnerability of women, exposing them to human rights violations including human trafficking and sexual abuse. To offset these dangers, the Government of Sri Lanka took precautions to curb trafficking and to seal vulnerabilities related to adoption, the latter in collaboration with the Child Protection Authority.

Chandni Joshi is Director of the South Asia Regional Office at the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), where she is the highest-ranking Nepali in United Nations service. She has lobbied on behalf of women at major international conferences including the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro (1992) and the Fourth World

Conference in Beijing (1995). Before joining UNIFEM, Ms. Joshi served in several high-level government positions, including Joint Secretary and Chief of the Women Development Division at the Local Development Ministry of Nepal. Ms. Joshi has lectured extensively on issues of gender and development throughout the world.

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"What Are Governments Doing to Create Flexibilities that Make Them Better Able to Deal With Emergencies and Natural Disasters?: Mississippi's Response to Hurricane Katrina"

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What was the problem?

On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina landed at the Mississippi-Louisiana border. With an eye more than thirty miles wide, Katrina devastated the entire coastline. Hurricane forces extended inland more than 200 miles from the coast, resulting in tens of thousands of uninhabitable and often obliterated homes, thousands of small businesses in shambles, dozens of schools and public buildings ruined and unusable, and highways, ports, railroads, water and sewer systems all destroyed. Katrina left more than 45 million cubic yards of debris, more than twice the debris left by 1992's Hurricane Andrew.

What was the innovation?

Prior to the storm, the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) conducted an executive planning session that led to the signing of a State of Emergency order by the Governor. All state agencies and FEMA liaisons were briefed and a unified command was established to oversee the entire process of preparation for and recovery from the storm. MEMA and National Guard liaisons deployed to coastal counties and a MEMA representative traveled to Louisiana to help coordinate evacuations. In the final hours before the storm made landfall, a State Emergency Response Team deployed to Camp Shelby (60 miles north of the Gulf Coast), where National Guard troops were positioned in preparation for food, water and ice distribution missions

Before the storm had fully passed, crews from the Mississippi Department of Transportation began clearing massive debris from roadways. All structurally safe roads were opened to emergency responders within six hours, and the Mississippi National Guard began distributing food, water and ice at points in every county. However, sufficient supply to meet demand was not achieved until September 9, 2005.

What obstacles did you face?

The challenge presented by the storm as an obvious one: the hurricane was 30 miles wide and devastated the Mississippi Gulf Coast up to 200 miles inland. The damage generated 45 million square yards of debris and displaced over 100,000 people. One obstacle to providing water and food to displaced people was the challenge of blocked and damaged roads. The National Guard was deployed to assist in opening roads as quickly as possible, in conjunction with the Department of Transportation, but the State of Mississippi was still engaged in rebuilding bridges and restoring transportation over a year after the storm.

During the first part of the disaster, after miscommunication between state and federal emergency management agencies, Mississippi only received between 10 and 20 percent of its requested emergency water and food. Not until 12 days after the storm made landfall did the supply of emergency commodities equal the state's need.

Another major issue was housing supply. An unprecedented number of travel trailers were mobilized to house Mississippi's displaced people, but again there were not enough to meet the need. The state continues to work with the Federal Emergency Management Agency to supply housing because the trailers themselves remain vulnerable to high winds and to future floods should another major hurricane like Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast. An utterly unforeseen challenge has been the skyrocketing cost of housing on the Gulf Coast; these new homes are, in many cases, far too expensive to house the work force rebuilding the region. Insurance claims have also been frustratingly difficult to make. Many state resources have been employed to convince private insurance companies to pay claims that they have rejected due to technicalities in displaced people's home insurance policies.

What were the planned versus actual results?

Following the storm, volunteers at MEMA's Emergency Operations Center staffed a missing persons hotline that took over 11,000 calls from 40 countries in three days and converted the missing persons' addresses into coordinates on GIS maps for both state and national search and rescue teams. The teams performed more than 5,000 rescues in Mississippi. Travel trailers were put in place in record time; at the height of the temporary housing program more than 500 travel trailers were being placed each day. Over 100,000 Mississippians were living in more than 38,000 trailers. These travel trailers and mobile homes continue to be deactivated as people repair and rebuild their homes. The total as of July 11, 2007 is 21,000.

Through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact and the Statewide Mutual Aid Compact, more than 25,000 people from 40 states assisted Mississippi during the response and recovery process. Faith-based organizations played a tremendous role in feeding hurricane victims, especially in the shelters where some evacuees were sheltered until October. The Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Services operated a donations hotline that was staffed by Americorps team members who matched donations coming in with existing needs.The Mississippi Department of Finance and Administration, MEMA and the Commission for Volunteer Services ran a donations warehouse that processed donated goods coming into the state. Almost 10,000 pallets of donated goods were documented.

Hillman Frazier is a State Senator representing District 27 (Hinds County) at the Mississippi State Government, in which capacity he serves as Chairman of the Interstate and Federal Cooperation Committee and Vice Chairman of the Municipalities Committee. enator Frazier is a democrat with an extensive record of civil rights advocacy: in 1995, he led the Mississippi Legislature in ratifying the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution which abolished slavery in the U.S. (an amendment the state of Mississippi refused to support when first presented in 1865). Before his election to the State Senate in 1993, he was a member of the Mississippi House of Representatives (1980 to 1993). He has been both an Eisenhower Exchange Fellow and a Fannie Mae Foundation Fellow at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy

School of Government, and has received numerous awards for his legislative and social activism. Senator Frazier holds degrees from Jackson State University and from George Washington University's National Law Center.

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"What Are Local Governments Doing to Create Transparency and Accountability to Citizens?: Setting the Context"

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What are local governments doing to create transparency and accountability to citizens?

Panchayats (village councils, which represent 70% of India's rural population) and their city counterparts—the Urban Municipalities—together constitute the local government system in India. The Panchayats and Municipalities became the "institutions of self-government" per a series of constitutional amendments in 1993. The local government is nearer to the people and therefore has tremendous potential to combat corruption and mismanagement as they influence the everyday lives of India's citizens. However the social structures of India have permeated local government and administration in the form of clientelism, vote bank politics and casteism.

In the past 15 years, Indian states have introduced different strategies of checks and balances to combat local abuses. These mechanisms for accountability include the following provisions: (1) the state has power to act in place of local government; (2) state authorities can remove local officials; (3) the state can dissolve local government; (4) the state can direct local government; (5) the state can demand records for inspection and auditing; and (6) the state government has the power to conduct inquiries.

When it is active and functional, the *gram sabha* or village assembly (the basic unit of Indian democracy) is another effective instrument for transparency and accountability. Further, the newly evolved Social Audit (an independent evaluation of the performance and attainment of the social obligations, which arose from the principle that in a democracy the decision makers should account for use of their power) is a mechanism for introducing transparency into Indian local governance.

What lessons can be learned from local government efforts to create transparency and accountability to its citizens?

The ratification of the Right to Information Act two years ago has given local innovators a powerful instrument for demanding accountability. Both sub-national governments and civil society organizations have evolved their own systems for transparency. Government examples include Vigilance Committees instituted in several states, Rajashtan's Public Hearings, the Kerala State Ombudsmen, the *Jamabandi* in Karnataka, the Right to Recall in Madhya Pradesh, and, above all, regular elections every five years. Panchayats across several states have developed experiments for transparency and accountability that are situation specific.

This session will explore these innovations at the local level.

George Mathew is the founding Director of the Institute of Social Sciences in New Delhi. He has been a Visiting Fellow at the University of Chicago's South Asian Studies Center and a Visiting Professor of the University of Padova; he was also awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to pursue advanced research at the University of Chicago. Dr. Mathew has participated widely in conferences on political process, democracy, federalism, human rights, religion, and society, and has contributed a number of research articles and papers to a diverse range of national and international academic and research journals. His major publications include two books, *Communal Road to a Secular Kerala and Panchayati Raj -- From Legislation to Movement*, and several edited volumes, including *Shift in Indian Politics, Dignity for All: Essays in Socialism and Democracy, Panchayati Raj in Karnataka Today: Its National Dimensions*, and *Panchayati Raj in Jammu and Kashmir*. Dr. Mathew is currently specializing on the government system, decentralization, and gender equity.

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"What Are Local Governments Doing to Create Transparency and Accountability to Citizens?: Community Ombudsman, Concept and Practice — A Kerala Experience"

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What was the problem?

The Indian state of Kerala has faced many challenges to effective local governance and service delivery over the past decade, including: (1) lack of institutions supporting good governance; (2) absence of adequate tools ensuring transparency, quality service delivery, and redressing of grievances; (3) poor attitudes towards service delivery on the part of political and administrative heads at both the state and local levels; and (4) reluctance to accept public participation and community ownership of local governance activities.

What was the innovation?

In the last four years, the rural research center Grameena Patana Kendram has begun constructing a replicable and scalable methodology to institutionalize good, community-friendly governance practices at local level in the State. This methodology evolves ahead to the Community Ombudsman in the Local Self Government program of the State of Kerala. This initiative has many parts, including an initial evaluation of the situation of governance in the target region, the implementation of a comprehensive Citizen's Service Charter, and the establishment of an independent administrative monitoring system for public service institutions. These efforts have aimed for creating a citizen-friendly Communication and Information Support System to respond to public grievances and to disseminate information about the workings of the local government.

To improve access, innovators have planed gender mainstreaming activities to sensitize local officials to gender issues and to empower local women. Similarly, they have instigated the LSG of the State of Kerala to begin a project called the Children's Gram Sabha or Children's Panchayat, in which youth are trained to understand their rights and responsibilities as citizens.

By establishing institutional service delivery guidelines, they seek to streamline and professionalize government service delivery; job performance is then evaluated further through a system of social auditing. By laying out clear guidelines for expected job performance for civil servants, the LSG can be motivated to achieve their realistic goals and can make them accountable to their constituents for the achievement of these goals.

What obstacles did you face?

The Office of the Ombudsman encountered strong bureaucratic constraints on proposed reforms, particularly due to areas of administrative overlap amongst multiple divisions of the local government of Kerala. Established officials also resisted the decentralization and democratization of their offices, and were often suspicious of citizen participation and oversight of their programs. Some local community groups closely involved with the established state elites also organized resistance to these reforms.

What were the planned versus actual results?

The Community Ombudsman's goal was the role definition, clarification, and identification of the duties of elected representatives and local government authorities. The office's reformers also worked to mobilize local stakeholders in service delivery, such as political activists and local volunteers, to ensure better quality service. To improve service delivery performance, they have also worked to strengthen sectoral integration between the individual citizens and local government authorities.

At present, Grameen Patana Kendram's information gathering on the Ombudsman's work has allowed these efforts to be replicated in approximately 63 *Grama Panchayats* in the state of Kerala. The Local Self Government Department of the State has entrusted Grameen Patana Kendram, currently to identify between 20 and 35 of these 63 selected panchayats to develop their initiatives as working models of good governance planning and performance in the corresponding districts. The Community Ombudsman Internationalization and Institutionalization project is in the process of issuing guidelines for good governance implementation based on the experiences of these 63 panchayats and their functionaries and officials.

Suhruth Kumar is Director of Grameena Patana Kendram, a registered Charitable Society founded in 1998 as part of the People's Planning Program in India. The main objectives of the society include the collection and dissemination of rural technologies, as well as the provision of technical consultancy for People's Planning Initiatives. As a rural resource center, GPK provides information technology and human resource development. Major ongoing GPK projects include Responsive Administration (a management development mechanism), and Unsung Among Us, a participatory documentation project supported by the United Nations Development Program and the Asian Media Information and Communication Center. As a center for citizen education, GPK extended their initiatives in local self-governance and service delivery to include basic education, information technology, and youth programming. The People's Democratic Initiative in Local Self-Governance has now been extended into over 60 panchayats in Kerala, and GPK has been accredited as an official agency for supporting local self-governance planning and performance. Mr. Kumar has been personally involved in academic and activist research and studies on local governance; decentralization of democratic governance and administration process, decentralized planning and development, community based environmental management and livelihood rights as a professionally trained legal science and justice education expert in the State.

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"What Are Local Governments Doing to Create Transparency and Accountability to Citizens?: PATTAN Sopports Women in Pakistan's Local Councils"

Sarwar Bari, bari@pattan.org

What was the problem?

The introduction of the new Pakistani local government system in 2001 created many opportunities to improve governance at the local level. The new system reserved a minimum number of seats for representatives from marginalized sectors of the society in all three tiers of local councils. This paved the way for citizen's participation in local decision-making. By instituting a quota system, the new local government ordinance had the potential not only to fragment the traditional power base of the elite, but also to break long-standing clientelist bonds. A comprehensive system of monitoring committees was intended to introduce accountability into local government, thus further challenging the authority of the traditional gentry.

Despite the potential of the new policy to change the status quo, elites tried to recapture the local government system by nominating their family members, maidservants and farm laborers to control as many seats as they could in the new local government. Many *nazims* refused to convene mandatory monthly council meetings, choosing instead to patronize individual councilors to enhance their control. Rather than becoming accountable to citizens, many local officials continued to insulate themselves from public scrutiny. Popular candidates who did win election were often poor, inexperienced, and semi-literate, leaving them vulnerable to the institutionalized corruption of the established political elites. Furthermore, women councilors received no remuneration for their public duties, making it more difficult to encourage poor women to participate in local politics.

What was the innovation?

In order to support the participation of women in Pakistan's local government, PATTAN organized women councilors both horizontally and vertically. First, PATTAN organized a union amongst women at the neighboring council level, in groups drawn from three to four local neighboring councils. These unions provided a base to train elected women in politics, governance, advocacy, and lobbying. Using these neighboring council unions as a model, PATTAN then moved up the administrative ladder to train women at the tehsil and district levels. In addition to general training, PATTAN undertook more targeted coaching for women to raise their official capacities, guiding them through the processes of calling council meetings, contributing to agendas, negotiating, and compromising in order to make decisions.

By the end of 2003, there was a network of women councilors across the Punjab, with chapters in 21 districts and 1,835 members from all three tiers of the local councils.

After the 2005 local government elections, the network spread to other provinces, and now has over 3,000 members.

What obstacles did you face?

Official corruption and ineptness, combined with the stranglehold that the feudal elites still have on local power structures, continue to obstruct sweeping local reforms in Pakistan. Many of the so-called change agents lack the flexibility and innovative thinking needed to overcome these challenges. However, there are legal institutions now in place to make elected representatives accountable to the public; it is now the task of innovators to educate citizens about their legal rights and responsibilities.

Another issue is delay tactics on the part of high-ranking officials hoping to be bribed; these representatives do not always respond to public pressure. And the male leadership of various political parties, although they may encourage women to join their respective parties, still prevent women from taking leadership roles.

What were the planned versus actual results?

Confidence in collective action is perhaps the greatest achievement of our intervention. Women councilors have become more confident in raising demands and confronting difficult situations. For example, in the 2005 local council elections, the network developed an election platform called *Khawateen Ittihad Group* (Women's Unity Group), which supported more than 700 women candidates. Before the 2005 elections, the federal government reduced the quota of seats for women at the union council level by 50 percent (from six to three). The Women Councilors' Network launched a campaign against this decision and forced the government to return on seat. The Network also collaborated with PATTAN to launch a campaign in support of Mukhtaran Mai, a survivor of gang rape. About 7,000 women participated in a rally on her behalf. Both international and national media covered the event. As a result, the Supreme Court of Pakistan took *Suo moto* action and the culprits were rearrested.

The public approval rate of the minimum quota for women was as high as 87 percent in 2001. In order to sustain the support, it was imperative to help women councilors to perform well as councilors. We believe that PATTAN has been instrumental in achieving this challenge.

Sarwar Bari is National Coordinator of the PATTAN Development Organization, a grassroots development group that focuses on projects for attaining basic services such as health, education, and sanitation. PATTAN establishes and monitors health centers, schools, technical training centers, and community groups; it also seeks to educate and train women and to organize income generation initiatives. In its commitment to social justice in Asia, the organization backed Mukhtaran Mai in Pakistan's 2004 tribal justice rape case, which gained international notoriety. PATTAN has committed itself to informing marginalized individuals about health, family planning, sanitation, environmental conservation, legal rights, and community development activities. In addition to his community capacity building work with PATTAN, Mr. Bari is also a founding member of the Alliance for Reform and Democracy in Asia (ARDA).

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"What Are Local Governments Doing to Create Transparency and Accountability to Citizens?: Minnesota's Charter School Law"

Ember Reichgott Junge, ember@embercommunications.com

What was the problem?

Critical reports of education in America in the late 20th century focused on unmet student needs and the large number of students "falling through the cracks" of the traditional school system. A large number of students—particularly students of color and students with special needs—were not graduating from high school or were not prepared for the global workplace. In 1988, to stimulate more opportunity in the education system the Minnesota legislature passed the first open enrollment law in the U.S., allowing all students to attend any public school of choice in the state. In 1991, the public charter schools law was passed in answer to this question: What good is providing public school students more choices if there aren't new and different schools to choose?

What was the innovation?

Charter schools, once described by President Bill Clinton as "a real grassroots revolution in education," are a fundamental institutional innovation creating a new sector of American public education. They expand public school choice. Charter schools provide the incentive, the system leverage, and the financing tools to stimulate the public school system to accept innovative new choices. The charter school law provides the opportunity—the catalyst—for teachers and parents to create schools. The innovation is this: the legislature allowed someone *other* than the local board of education to start and operate a public school.

Parents and teachers are granted a charter by an authorizer and have autonomy as to the school's budget, staffing, curriculum, and teaching methods. Public school funding follows the student to the charter school. The school is exempted from most state and local regulation. In return, teachers must meet outcome-based performance standards as agreed in the charter. It's simple: no results, no charter. Teachers trade regulation for results, bureaucracy for accountability. If charter schools don't perform, they are closed.

In short, charter schools let citizens take the lead. They give teachers the freedom to be better. They provide parents and students more and different opportunities. As the sign on one charter school says, "It doesn't look like school. It looks like learning."

What obstacles did you face?

The powerful teachers unions provided fierce opposition to passage of the first charter school law, fearing charter schools would destroy teachers unions and lead to private school vouchers. They still resist charter schools today, and have with some success persuaded their Democratic allies and the public of the myth that charter schools “drain” money from district public schools.

Charter school leaders continue to work with federal and state policymakers to overcome an inherent financial disadvantage of charters as compared to district schools, since charter schools generally do not receive property tax revenues. Special funding sources for start-up planning and facility financing for charter schools have been provided by the U.S. Congress and the states to partially address the funding gap.

What were the planned versus actual results?

The charter school law was first enacted to provide more opportunities for children in Minnesota schools. Within one year, charter school funding initiatives were introduced in the U.S. Congress, and Governor Bill Clinton made them part of his presidential platform in 1992. Today there are over 4,000 charter schools in 40 states serving more than 1.1 million students. While charter parents and students have shown high satisfaction with their schools, it has been more difficult to evaluate academic quality and achievement by traditional measures. There has been documented academic achievement in many charters serving low income children or children of color. Other charters have closed, usually for lack of sponsor oversight or financial mismanagement. But the innovation isn’t about any one school. It is about the ever-evolving law that allows chartering to occur. That’s why some call chartering the “research and development sector of American public education.” It allows the freedom to innovate—and the freedom to be better.

Ember Reichgott Junge is a former State Senator for the Minnesota State Government and a business and nonprofit lawyer with The General Counsel, Ltd. She is President of Ember Communications, Inc., a strategic communications firm serving nonprofits and elected officials with focus on issues of education, women's leadership, and prevention of family violence and child sexual abuse. The firm also writes personal and family histories of inspiring leaders. As State Senator, Ms. Reichgott Junge was author of Minnesota's 1991 charter school law, the first such law enacted in the United States. The charter school law received an Innovations in American Government Award in 2000 from the Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. Ms. Reichgott Junge also sponsored into law the first public school open enrollment initiative in the country, allowing students to attend public schools of choice anywhere in Minnesota. She continues to be a national spokesperson on charter schools, and has appeared with President Bill Clinton, Vice President Al Gore, and U.S. Education Secretaries Richard Riley and Lamar Alexander on the subject. Ms. Reichgott Junge holds a law degree from Duke University and a Masters of Business Administration from the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota.

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"What Are Governments Doing to Promote Social Justice?: Setting the Context"

Amitabh Behar, amitabh.behar@gmail.com

What are governments doing to promote social justice?

Adequate food, healthcare, education, employment opportunities, and security are necessary to ensure human dignity and enable citizens to maximize individual development. Studies have indicated that globally, the avoidance of poverty, opportunities for education, gender equality, and social security are highest in democracies.

This panel will explore the challenges to governments in finding ways to use institutions, civic organizations, social networks, financial resources, and laws to insure equality of opportunity for all citizens.

What lessons can be learned from government efforts to promote social justice?

South Asian nations and other largely post-colonial states share a three-stage progression from idealism to disillusionment to compromise regarding the power of the State to ensure social justice. Following the formation of independent national governments in South Asia, the State was seen as the primarily vehicle for economic and social development. Innovators considered the State to be the best means for achieving social justice, particularly through the ratification of new and progressive constitutions. This was particularly the case in India and Sri Lanka, but even under the military dictatorship of General Zia ul-Haq in Pakistan, social justice remained an important item on almost all political agendas.

In spite of huge expectations from reformers in Pakistan in the 1950s, India in the 1970s, Sri Lanka in the 1980s, and Nepal in the 1990s, the states of South Asia have consistently failed to provide sweeping social justice. Political parties have not succeeded in achieving their proposed agendas. This popular perception of the failure of the State to make good on its promises of equity, access, and sustainable development, has led to a crisis of faith in the project of the State as a vehicle for nation building and economic growth.

Some of the rhetoric of earlier idealists remains in play, and social justice continues to be a central agenda item throughout the nations of South Asia. The international shift towards globalization, liberalization, and privatization presents grave challenges to innovators seeking social justice. To take the example of India, the nation is a site of huge inequity, with 80 percent of citizens living below the poverty line (here, poverty is rather generously defined according to daily calorie intake, and does not include housing, education, or other costs). Yet tragically, the State is abrogating its responsibility to ensure equity by privatizing education, health care, and other essential

human services. Across South Asia in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Nepal, the State is removing itself from service provision and becoming nothing more than a market regulator, which threatens the ability of government to make substantial contributions to social justice. It is the responsibility of the State to make good on its earlier promise and provide equal access to education, health care, and even basic human sustenance for all of its citizens.

Amitabh Behar is Executive Director of the National Center for Advocacy Studies, an organization working to strengthen community-centered social advocacy groups. Mr. Behar has worked with NCAS since 2004; before joining the Center, he worked actively in the civil society sector to support, coordinate, and implement sustainable development initiatives. Mr. Behar's primary areas of interest include civil society, governance, and Panchayati Raj (a decentralized, multi-tiered form of government in which the most basic governing unit is the village). Mr. Behar is currently the National Convenor of the “Don’t Break Your Promise Campaign,” a coalition of more than 300 organizations and networks spread across 12 states. He also serves as the Asia Convenor of the Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP), one of the largest international civil society campaigns against poverty, and as the Asia Representative on the GCAP International Facilitation Team. Mr. Behar is a member of the Board for the Voluntary Agency Network India (VANI), Navsarajan (A Gujarat-based organization working for Dalit rights), and the Center for Budget and Governance Accountability. Mr. Behar writes frequently on issues of governance and civil society, and has been a regular editor of the India Social Watch Report (Citizens Report on Governance) for the past three years.

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"What Are Governments Doing to Promote Social Justice?: The 'Right to Work' as Social Policy — The Experience of Recent Legislation in India"

Jayati Ghosh, jayati@mail.jnu.ac.in

What was the problem?

International perception of India today is that of a booming economy rapidly emerging as an economic powerhouse. Yet there are large parts of the economy which still operate with very low labor productivity and with worker consumption at subsistence levels. Despite relatively high growth there has been employment stagnation, especially in rural India. The most recent data indicate very sharp increases in unemployment rates as well, despite the complete absence of social security and unemployment insurance in rural India. Employment generation has become not only the most important socioeconomic issue, but also the most pressing political concern in the country.

The mandate of the 2004 general elections was clear: the people of the country decisively rejected policies that implied reduced employment opportunities and reduced access to and quality of public goods and services. Indeed, the promise to do something about rural employment generation in particular was probably one of the most significant promises that resonated with the electorate.

What was the innovation?

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), which came into force in 2005, reflects the commitment made in the UPA government's National Common Minimum Program. The NREGA offers 100 days of employment per rural household per year in public works. The implementation officially started in March 2006 and is currently operative in 200 most impoverished districts (150 of which were already covered under a Food-for-Work program). It will be extended to cover the whole of rural India within five years.

Employment generation schemes, if imaginatively conceived and properly implemented, can have very substantial effects in stimulating higher levels of economic activity and therefore growth, especially in the rural areas. Because of the obvious multiplier effects of such spending, additional wage employment plays an important role in reviving local markets and rural industries. In addition, since the NREGA ensures continuous minimum public employment, local authorities now have access to a permanent labor force, which in turn can be mobilized to improve rural infrastructure and development. Possible projects include creating durable rural assets, water management and watershed development, irrigation and land productivity improvement, sanitation facilities, and even midday school meal preparation.

What obstacles did you face?

In some states, corruption and weak delivery systems may prevent the target beneficiaries from receiving the benefits of the Act. Even the bravest supporters of governments at the state and central level would not argue that there are no leakages in government expenditure, or that there is still not widespread corruption in implementing government programs. Uneven levels of administrative capacity have lead to varying results for the program across different states, with some areas reporting poor dissemination of the nature of the program, inadequate awareness about the rights of workers, and lack of technical assistance for the program.

However, while obviously corruption and wastage cannot be condoned and must be minimized, the legal commitment to spend in rural areas rectifies some of the increasing urban-rural disparity observed in the past decade. Even if there are leakages, money spent in rural regions will play a positive role in improving local economies. Perhaps even more important are the mechanisms within the Act itself to improve transparency in the implementation of NREGA's plans. The Act provides for community participation, empowerment and control through locally elected bodies of administrators. The new Right to Information Act has also proved indispensable in monitoring the allocation of NREGA funds.

What were the planned versus actual results?

Among the four surveyed states of Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh, researchers found that NREGA is a major new intervention that has the potential to transform rural economic and social relations at many levels. However, this potential is still incipient and must be substantially supported in a variety of different ways. The field survey of the implementation of NREGA in the selected areas identified some important and unexpected positive results, such as the large and active participation of women, even in sectors in which women workers are rare. A major strength of the program has been the enthusiastic response of local residents, in particular the landless and marginal farmers.

Nonetheless, before the Act can produce more substantial results, it is clear that central and state governments will need to increase their financial and technical contributions. Such resources are required to ensure wider and more complete dissemination about the Act and all its features, to provide more assistance in the selection of works, to ensure prompt and correct payment of wages, to assist in the administrative work involved, and to allow for genuine public monitoring and social audit of the entire process.

Jayati Ghosh is Professor of Economics at the Center for Economic Studies and Planning, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Her research specialties include globalization, international finance, employment patterns in developing countries, macroeconomic policy, and issues related to gender and development. Before joining the faculty of Jawaharlal Nehru University, Professor Ghosh held positions at Tufts University and Cambridge. She is a member of the National Knowledge Commission, reporting to the Prime Minister of India; the Executive Secretary of International Development Economics Associates, an international network

of development economists; and is also one of the founders of the Economic Research Foundation in New Dehli, a non-profit trust dedicated to progressive economic research. Professor Ghosh has published widely: her major works include *Crisis as Conquest: Learning from East Asia* (co-authored with C.P. Chandrasekhar in 2001) and *The Market that Failed: A Decade of Neoliberal Economic Reforms in India* (2002). In addition to her academic work, she also contributes regular columns on economics and current affairs to Frontline magazine, Business Line, the Bengali newspaper Ganashakti, Deccan Chronicle, and Asian Age. She also works closely with progressive organizations and social movements.

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"What Are Governments Doing to Promote Social Justice?: Federation of Community Forestry Users in Nepal"

Suvas Chandra Devkota, suva.devkota@gmial.com

What was the problem?

Nepal's forest history has been largely characterized by the alienation of local rights. In the past, land grants and service assignments, known as *birta* and *jagir*, consolidated the position of the government and enabled landlords and local administrators to assume proprietary rights over forests with few restrictions. Access to and control over forest resources were regulated through localized structures of centralized control, encouraging rent-seeking behavior on the part of government officials. As massive deforestation of the Himalayas drew attention to the mismanagement of Nepal's forests, legislative changes in the nation's Forestry Plans and Forestry Acts provided the basis for the foundation of the Federation of Community Forestry Users in Nepal (FECOFUN) to counteract top-down, localized forestry management. FECOFUN addresses the problem of how to create a balance of power among stakeholders and ensure democratic process for the sustainable management of forest areas.

What was the innovation?

Establish in 1995, FECOFUN emerged out of the idea that forest users from all parts of the country should be linked in order to strengthen their role and voice in the policymaking process. FECOFUN is a national federation that advocates for forest user rights. It is autonomous, non-partisan, and membership-based, with about nine million members. Its office-holders and members are rural-based farmers, both women and men, many of who work as volunteers for the organization.

Nepal's community forestry program is a policy instrument that combines environmental, social, and economic objectives. Management rights are devolved to community groups able and willing to manage forests, with rights to collect, transfer, and sell forest products in perpetuity. The social and physical capital generated by these group initiatives supports the work of protecting and managing forest areas. There are now about twelve million rural farmers involved in community forestry throughout Nepal. The number of user groups has grown from several hundred in the early 1990s to more than 14,000 currently registered with the Department of Forest. About 15% of the total forest area has been handed over to user management.

What obstacles did you face?

Though the program is largely regarded is successful, there remain problems of good governance and the equitable distribution of forest products. However, FECOFUN

continues to explore new avenues for holding officials and user groups accountable by engaging in public debates about forest futures both locally and nationally. There is also resistance both to community forestry in general and to FECOFUN in particularly in the Forestry Department. Officials have criticized FECOFUN's role as an advocate for forest user rights, as advocacy organizations have a negative connotation in Nepal. There is also continuing controversy over the Forestry Department's slow handovers of control of certain valuable forests that FECOFUN fears will become subject to government exploitation for short-term gain.

What were the planned versus actual results?

Over the past twelve years, FECOFUN has grown into a social movement organization. It represents the interests of forest users, and works with them to improve the management, utilization, and protection of community forests. It has been instrumental in representing forest user interests to the media, the Supreme Court, members of Parliament, and officials within the Ministry of Forests and the Soil Conservation and Forest Department. It was also a key actor in the recent people's movement for democracy that helped end a decade-long civil war, and prompted Nepal's King to reinstate Parliament (which he had dismissed in 2002).

FECOFUN's organizational culture and structure has become a role model for other federations as a representative, inclusive, democratic, grassroots organization. The user groups are being encouraged to increase productivity of forests, reduce poverty through forest-based enterprises, and foster economic and community development with the income from the sustainable harvesting of forest resources. One point of critical transferability from the example of Nepal and the experience of FECOFUN is that proactive forms of local and national representation are necessary to affect the kinds of checks-and-balances required to gain and retain community-based resource management rights.

Suva Chandra Devkota is the National Program Officer for the FECOFUN Policy Advocacy Component: SAGUN. He is responsible for making alliances and networking among service providers, civil society organizations and political parties. He has visited 53 of the 75 districts of Nepal and he is experienced in working with multi-disciplinary and multi-cultural teams and is experienced in working in conflict in remote locations. He has held a variety of progressively responsible positions within FECOFUN and prior to joining the organization in 2005 he workd for the Natural Resource Management Sector Assistance Programme in Nepal. He has a Bachelor of Science Degree from the Institute of Forestry in Pokhara, Tribhuvan University and a Masters of Science in Natural Resources from the Nepal Engineering College at Pokhara Univer

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"What Are Governments Doing to Promote Social Justice?: BRAC's Three Decades in Bangladesh"

Salehuddin Ahmed, salehuddin@bracuniversity.ac.bd

What was the problem?

Bangladesh is an economically underdeveloped country with one of the densest populations in the world —145 million Bangladeshis live in 145,000 square kilometers. All major development indicators demonstrate the country has a long way to go to bring people out of poverty: 40% of Bangladesh's citizens live below the poverty line; the national literacy rate is about 45%; and infant and maternal mortality rates are among the highest in the world. The rich are getting richer, the poor poorer, corruption remains a challenge, and democracy is struggling. Yet, progress is certainly being made.

What was the innovation?

BRAC, which is one of the most successful private development organizations in Bangladesh, is also the largest national NGO in the world. It began as a small relief and rehabilitation initiative in 1972 with a staff of 50 to assist poor refugees returning to Bangladesh following its foundation as an independent nation. Over the last three decades, it has developed into a large, multi-faceted development organization working directly with the poor, with a particular focus women and children. Programs and interventions in microfinance, health, education, social development and training have evolved and consolidated. BRAC's two major goals are to alleviate poverty and to empower the poor, especially women.

Currently, BRAC has over 6 million micro-finance clients, 1.7 million students, and an annual budget of 330 million U.S. dollars. It employs a full-time staff of 47,000 and a part-time staff of 55,000, with branches in Afghanistan, Africa, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, London, and New York. BRAC's activities include legal services to support human rights, essential health care programs, and social development initiatives such as building village theaters. In 2001, BRAC established its own university to train future country leaders through undergraduate and graduate studies.

What obstacles did you face?

The disparity between rich and poor in Bangladesh continues to widen, and government corruption is a major challenge. In order to prevent corruption within BRAC, the organization's leaders have instituted a number of mechanisms for oversight. Each BRAC staff member must undergo rigorous training to create a value-driven institutional culture. The Training Division also plans regular activities to ensure that BRAC leadership capacities continue to grow, both in Bangladesh and abroad. An ombudsperson ensures that complaints within the organization can be arbitrated

impartially without regard to staff hierarchies. To improve accountability, the organization maintains its own strong Accounts and Audits Division.

What were the planned versus actual results?

The success factors for BRAC include substantial investment in research and evaluation, which supports continuous innovation in programming. The organization's leadership has also proven its commitment to the goals of poverty alleviation and empowerment of the poor. BRAC's reliance on professionalism has generated strong Training and Accounts and Audits Divisions, which work to improve the organization's capacity, transparency, and accountability. Finally, BRAC's evolving government relationship and network of partners has enabled it to implement programs easily and efficiently.

Salehuddin Ahmed is Pro-Vice Chancellor of BRAC University and a member of the BRAC University Governing Board. He is also the Chair of the BUILD-BRAC University Initiative on Learning and Development, a strategic think-tank of the University. Dr. Ahmed has published widely on development and poverty alleviation and currently teaches a range of topics including management, leadership, work motivation, and stress management. He also initiated, and is in the process of implementing, a three-year faculty capacity building agreement with George Washington University with funding from the United States State Department. Before becoming Pro-Vice Chancellor of the University, Dr. Ahmed served as Deputy Executive Director of BRAC, in which capacity he administered programs in Human Resource Development, Training and Capacity Building, Health and Population, Rural Development, Monitoring and Auditing, Finance, Logistics, and Construction. Dr. Ahmed has been a Visiting Professor at the School for International Training (SIT) and Marlboro College, Vermont. He was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship in August 2004. Dr. Ahmed holds a Ph.D. in Economics from Kharkov National University and a Master's in Management from the Asian Institute of Management in Manila, and has participated in several training programs at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.