ECA Regional Forum Report on Social Accountability in the Water Sector

23-25 MAY, DUSHANBE, TAJIKISTAN
WORLD BANK, GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY & OXFAM
### List of Abbreviations

<table>
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAB</td>
<td>Community Advisory Board</td>
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<td>CBO</td>
<td>Community Based Organization</td>
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<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil Society Organization</td>
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<td>ECG</td>
<td>Effective Citizens Group</td>
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<td>GPSA</td>
<td>Global Partnership for Social Accountability</td>
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<td>GWE</td>
<td>Global Women’s Empowerment</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organization</td>
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<td>PTA</td>
<td>Parent Teacher Association</td>
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<td>SAMI</td>
<td>Social Accountability Media Initiative</td>
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<td>SDG</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goals</td>
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<td>VNR</td>
<td>Voluntary National Reports (of the SDGs)</td>
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<td>WASH</td>
<td>Water and Sanitation, Hygiene</td>
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<td>WB</td>
<td>World Bank</td>
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<td>WSS</td>
<td>Water and Sanitation Services</td>
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Introduction
This report holds both proceedings and key learnings from the Eastern European and Central Asia (ECA) Regional Forum, held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, from May 23-25, 2017. It will first explain the rationale behind the Forum and its key objectives, the set-up of the Forum, and then elaborates on the learnings from each specific session. The report furthermore holds links to useful reference materials for participants or other interested parties who would like to continue working on social accountability in the water and sanitation sector (WASH).

Background and objectives of the ECA Regional Forum 2017
The Global Partnership for Social Accountability (GPSA), in collaboration with Oxfam and the World Bank’s Water Partnership Program, held its first Regional Forum from 23 to 25 May, 2017, in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. The Forum was hosted for ECA countries on the topic of Social Accountability in WASH, and brought together over 90 participants from more than 10 countries, including Tajikistan, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Belarus, Bulgaria, and more. Among the participants were national and international civil society organizations, service providers, government, academia, the private sector and representatives from Oxfam and the GPSA, sponsors of the Forum.

The ECA Regional Forum 2017 was designed to provide a wider perspective and application of social accountability in WASH, and to immerse participants in learning experiences from social accountability processes that are taking place in the ECA region. The Forum furthermore offered extensive opportunities for networking and peer-to-peer exchanges. The goal of the Forum was two-fold:

1. To facilitate knowledge sharing among practitioners from ECA countries working on social accountability initiatives involving state, citizens and civil society actors to improve public service delivery, especially in water and sanitation sector; and
2. To provide space for discussing current trends, challenges and learning on social accountability and reflect on strategies for taking forward social accountability agenda in ECA region.

Description of the Forum structure and flow
The agenda of the Forum was broadly divided along three thematic strands: (1) multi-stakeholder constructive engagement through social accountability; (2) mechanisms and tools for social accountability; and (3) adaptive learning & effective communication on social accountability. Along the lines of these three strands, GPSA and Oxfam hosted eight workshop sessions.

On day one, multi-stakeholder constructive engagement through social accountability, participants could either attend a session on the main ingredients of constructive engagement from the ECA region or a session on citizen-led monitoring for social accountability. Participants engaged in discussions on the key elements for successful social accountability programing and discussed ways in which governments and civil society groups are experimenting with co-producing results through social accountability processes. Based on experiences shared by participants, common and distinctive elements that distinguish these processes across countries and sectors were identified. In particular, the sessions focused on learning from experiences, identifying drivers of collaborative processes, discussing needs (e.g. knowledge, capacities, networking/communities of practice) and what different stakeholders could do to push for more and better collaborative social accountability processes.
On day two, the strand *mechanisms and tools for social accountability* featured sessions on gender and social accountability, poverty diagnostics, citizen engagement, and transformative change. Participants learned how development partners, including the World Bank, are supporting collaborative social accountability processes in the ECA region and opportunities and challenges to advance cooperation and common approaches.

On day three, the strand *adaptive learning & effective communication* offered sessions on learning for improved results and a session on communication strategies and tools. These sessions were designed to complement each other, and to provide participants with a meaningful learning experience on social accountability in the water sector. After these sessions, there was time reserved for a marketplace during which participants could present their organizations and network with each other. The Forum was closed by several speeches from both participants and the organizing teams from the World Bank and Oxfam.

The Forum was opened by speeches by Mr. Jeff Thindwa, GPSA’s Program Manager; Mr. Rahimzoda, First Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Energy and Water of the Republic of Tajikistan; Mr. Islomzoda, Chair of the State Unitary Enterprise (KMK) of the Republic of Tajikistan; and Mrs. Shovcat Alizadeh, Country Director of Oxfam in Tajikistan.

Mr. Thindwa welcomed all participants and reminded everyone that “we can achieve much more when we pool our resources and strengthen each other.” He praised the leading role that the Government of Tajikistan is taking in the water sector, both within its own country and beyond. Mr. Rahimzoda stated he is proud of Tajikistan’s leading role, and expressed gratitude to all participants for attending the Forum, “Through bringing together our efforts and activities we can improve the wellbeing of our populations.” Mr. Islomzoda also expressed his gratitude and presented the state of the water supply in Tajikistan – by the end of 2017, 57% of the Tajik population will have been provided with drinking water. Mrs. Alizadeh stressed the great diversity that was present in the room as it’s “important for constructive engagement and taking collective action.” She also encouraged participants to use the three days for learning from the wealth and diversity of expertise and experience that was present in the room.

**Value of Networks: Evaluating Stakeholder Power Dynamics Influencing Change to Improve Performance**

Mr. Duncan McNicholl, a doctoral candidate at Cambridge University, presented part of the results of his research, which examines if increased understanding of networks could improve social accountability in the water sector. Infrastructure is important for water service delivery, but it is not sufficient on its own. It is the people that make service delivery possible, and the people that use the service. This research mapped out the relationships between all the stakeholders involved in the water service delivery process. He studied both formal and information relationships, looking at interactions on information, skill-sharing, and funding.
Part of the study was conducted in Tajikistan, where he found a rich and collaborative stakeholder network at the national level (see Figure 1). A diverse set of actors ranging from the government, private sector and civil society work together, and information is shared through the Tajik Water Supply and Sanitation Network (TajWSS). These relationships are linking to actors at the regional level to share information and technical support. At the district level, local problems are identified, feedback is gathered that can be used by the network at district and national level to support local networks in solving these problems.

For more information, see Duncan McNicholl’s presentation [here](#).

**TWISA Project: Social Accountability in the Water sector**

After the keynote presentation, Mr. Orkhan Aliyev, Oxfam’s Tajikistan WASH programme manager, presented Oxfam’s Tajikistan Improving Social Accountability in the Water Sector (TWISA) project, and discussed the various Social Accountability steps and interventions in this project through an interactive session with panel members. The TWISA project, supported by the GPSA, works to improve social accountability in the water sector through the development of quality standards indicators and citizen-led monitoring framework. The project aims to ensure the voice of the poor and marginalized are taken into account in the decisions that affect their lives. By engaging citizens through civil society, providing them with access to information and technology, and encouraging their participation in public decision- and policy-making, the project creates a process of constructive engagement between citizens, government and service providers. To do this, Oxfam works with Consumer’s Union, a Tajik civil society organization that protects the rights of consumers in various public services, particularly in the water sector. Find more information on the TWISA project [here](#) and the work of Consumer Union [here](#).

Mr. Orkhan Aliyev was joined in the panel discussion by Mr. Ilhom Abidov and Ms. Shifo Sharifzoda from the Consumer Union; Mr. Tagiimurod Gulov, Head of the Department for Water Resources from the Ministry of Energy and Water Resources of the Republic of Tajikistan; Mrs. Gulsunbi Bakhtirova who is a community mobilizer from Farkhor district; and Mrs. Olambi Latifova who is head of a Community Advisory Board in Muminabad district of Tajikistan.

A great platform for consumers to participate in the dialogue on water services delivery are Community Advisory Boards (CABs). These boards are community based, and consist for 70% of community members, and for 30% of representatives of service providers. Through this platform, all parties can be made aware of their rights and obligations. Mr. Ilhom Abidov from the Consumer Union explained that “we always tell consumers that first of all, they have to fulfil their obligations, the payment of the fees, and then they can discuss the quality of the services they receive.” In one district,
the instalment of a CAB had increased the payment collection rate with 10% according to the local water provider.

Within the TWISA project it was ensured that the discussions around water service delivery that are being held in these CABs are being actively participated by women as well. Women play a disproportionately large role when it comes to water, and when talking about water service delivery, gender issues need to be considered. In Tajikistan, as in many other countries, women are the ones responsible for fetching and managing the water resources. In aiming to improve water service delivery, it is important that we use the knowledge of these women to evaluate and improve the quality of services.

Mr. Aliyev explained that it is crucial to build monitoring mechanisms that are led by citizens, and which consider these gender differences. This will enable a constructive engagement between consumer and provider, while building capacity on both sides of the spectrum. Mrs. Bakhtirova talked about one of the trainings for women and girls in her district, and said that “these women had a great awareness about the drinking water issues in their area, and wanted to improve their knowledge and awareness on their rights.” Ms. Sharifzoda from the Consumer Union shared that she was pleased to see these women’s confidence growing, and also to see the support from men when these women were sharing their opinion and expressing their ideas on water service delivery. According to Ms. Sharifzoda, this was huge progress.

The plenary discussion was concluded by stressing that water service delivery could only be improved if communities, private and public service providers work together.

Eight sessions on social accountability in the water sector
This section of the report presents the key content from each of the sessions, which were organized along the three thematic strands. Each section provides an overview of the key lessons from each session as well.

Multi-stakeholder constructive engagement on social accountability
Session 1: Constructive multi-stakeholder processes: Experiences from the ECA region
It can be quite a challenge to set up a constructive and collaborative process in which multiple stakeholders engage and work together to achieve social accountability. In order to improve the understanding on multi-stakeholder processes around social accountability, this session discussed the constraints and opportunities for collaboration.

Ainura Djunushalieva, Development Policy Institute, Kyrgyzstan “Collaboration is possible if you find the common interest that will unite all the stakeholders, to achieve the solution for the problem at stake.”

Social accountability means...
- Establishing a specific structure with all stakeholder, each of them having a say at all levels;
- Defining the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders;
- Selecting measurable indicators at all levels;
- Having a system that can verify the information that is collected at all levels;
- Knowing the motivating factors to incentivize all stakeholders;
- Improving the overall governance system.

Throughout the session it became clear that there are several constraints and opportunities to promote collaborative multi-stakeholder processes. One of the constraints comes from the aftermath
of the Soviet Era. Countries are still adjusting from the shock of the collapse of the Soviet Union. During the Soviet era, there was a centralized state system through which all the budgets were allocated. Along this period, water was free in most countries. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, national governments had to arrange their own water supply systems. Besides financial and technical challenges, a significant cultural shift remains slow to take place: people are not used to pay for water provided, hence do not understand the cost recovery model some governments have to set up with private or public service providers. This change of mindset may take many years and is a fundamental success factor of a sustainable water system, underpinned with a strong social and economic contract between citizens and government.

Opportunities were seen in engaging citizens in the process. Florencia Guerzovich of the GPSA explained the importance of organizing a critical mass of people. In mobilizing the right people, and after time creating a critical mass, the wheels of the clockwork will start turning and push other wheels to start turning as well. In this manner, the needs and feedback of the people regarding the service delivery will create a chain reaction in the clock, mobilizing different stakeholders at different political levels.

Maria Poli, Senior Advisor Governance and Citizen Engagement, GPSA said, “There are many different organizations part of the system that are trying to bring changes to governments’ performance and people’s quality of life. It is important that we reflect on the role of each of these actors, and their role in establishing a collaborative process. There is not one actor that by itself who can solve the problems in the water sector.”

**Key lessons**
- Building trust between different stakeholders involved is essential if you want to achieve constructive multi-stakeholder collaboration;
- Finding your ‘champions’ at the community level can be very helpful in engaging a larger group of citizens, but for more structural and policy change it is important to identify a high level influential ministry to engage early as an ally – and include both political and bureaucratic levels of power;
- Depending on the context and civic space available, it may only be possible to engage at the local level, where the lines between public authorities and citizens become blurrier and incentives to improve access and quality of water are very similar for all stakeholders.

**Session 2: Citizen-led monitoring frameworks**
Social accountability can be done in a variety of ways and is very context specific. While the concepts that form the basis of social accountability are not new (think about integrity, inclusion, participation, etc.), what is new is the systematic monitoring by citizens of performance within the sector to drive improved service delivery. This is accomplished through a combination of supply-side approaches (e.g. user groups, complaint & grievance systems) and demand-side approaches (e.g. civil society monitoring, public hearings, budget tracking).

In this session, we looked at social accountability examples from three contexts: Tajikistan (transitional economy), Pakistan (decentralized government systems), and Sierra Leone (fragile state). A key outcome of discussions in all three groups was that trust is necessary between all stakeholders for social accountability to work. It was also found that citizens should be more involved in evidence gathering, and that using their network as an informal system can be a very powerful tool.
Case Study 1: Tajikistan (Consumers Union) – Transitional Economy

In Tajikistan, the Consumers Union facilitated the creation of Community Advisory Boards (CABs) to establish a mechanism of constructive dialogue and interaction between water service providers and consumers, with the ultimate goal of improving service delivery. The CABs work to establish a regulatory legal framework under the water service provider, lobby for consumer rights and interests under the supplier, and conduct public hearings for improved transparency and engagement.

- Consumers were trained not only on their rights, but also on how to best advocate for their rights within the CAB.
- One effective tool that the CAB utilizes is ‘score cards’, a method of providing consistent feedback to the service provider regarding their performance.

Case Study 2: Pakistan, Effective Citizens Groups - Decentralized State

In Pakistan, Oxfam established Effective Citizens Groups (ECGs) in urban areas where decentralization of essential services has not gained traction at the municipal level, and citizens lacked knowledge of their rights as consumers. The objective of the program was to empower poor communities to demand effective WASH services as their right from service providers, and to create responsive social accountability mechanisms between the private sector suppliers, public sector suppliers, and consumers.

- While several national policies exist, which protect consumers rights (Right to Information Act; Consumer Protection Act, National Drinking Water Policy, etc), there was a lack of awareness of these – not only amongst consumers, but also with local government.
- When empowered with knowledge and awareness, several ECGs engaged service providers in innovative and effective ways – using mass media to raise awareness, obtaining the duty schedule of municipal sanitary workers to identify ‘ghost employees’ not performing their jobs, and organizing mass mailing campaigns to their elected officials.

Transitional Economy

Key lessons

- Feedback between stakeholders is critical;
- An opportunity exists to monitor the effectiveness and impact of the feedback structure – this must be done if this system is ever to be taken to scale nationally and embraced by the national government;
- Sustainable funding for CABs is a critical issue that must be addressed;
- Risks: Limitation of civil society due to limited resources and lack of information.

Decentralized State

Key lessons

- Introduction of legislation on Social Accountability within the water sector and sensitization on its implications is necessary for this approach to take hold at a national scale;
- Public hearings and discussions on water tariffs and budgets – how funds are spent and how new work is prioritized - have been found to spur heightened public engagement and should be replicated at all levels;
- Social accountability measures must be funded not only at national level, but also at sub-national level;
- Local reporting through social media can be an effective tool to highlight ‘on the ground’ issues;
- Risk: Lack of sustainability of social accountability, since funding for social accountability programs typically comes from external donors. If sustainability and true social accountability is to be attained, governments should fund social accountability initiatives and independent performance monitoring from their own budgets.
Fragile State

Key lessons
• Laws and legal measures must be in place at national level for social accountability measures to effectively take hold;
• In fragile and resource-poor contexts, multi-municipality support structures could be established to support each other on a regular basis, sharing technical and financial resources;
• Monitoring and evidence collection is critical. Innovative and context-appropriate methods for monitoring must be developed for fragile contexts; some ideas included: online water quality maps using Google Maps; using WhatsApp groups for effective and rapid communication; sharing of digital photos with duty bearers to highlight problems;
• Risk: Sometimes government or service providers do not have the ability to provide quality service – the pressure to maintain the service is overwhelming, so even supporting the poorest is insurmountable sometimes. Having an independent body or platform can only help to an extent, but can’t overcome this issue completely.
Diana Ismailova, Gender Coordinator, Oxfam, Tajikistan: “Our own organizations also have to take responsibility on gender, and think about the barriers and constraints that their individual employees might experience within their own environment. These barriers and constraints will trickle down to the project that this person is working on, and ultimately, will reflect the organization this person is working for. Not only our projects need to have gender objectives, also our organizations need to think about increasing social security for their employees.”

Shifo Sharifzoda, TWISA Project Trainer, Consumer Union, Tajikistan: “During the TWISA project we discovered many barriers to women’s participation in the water sector. Barriers that prevent women’s full-fledged participation in the water sector stem from lack of professional education, physical access from remote rural areas and specific societal norms, that prevail in rural areas, with activities and professions divided along gender lines. There is a need to encourage rural communities to motivate women to move from their household sphere to the public decision-making sphere. In trying to transform these three barriers, we aim to achieve gender equality.”

After hearing these stories, participants discussed barriers to gender equality at these different levels, and strategies we could employ to overcome these barriers.

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<th>Individual level</th>
<th>Barriers:</th>
<th>Strategies:</th>
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<td></td>
<td>• Lack of voice</td>
<td>• Involving men in trainings</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• No representation</td>
<td>• Time saving solutions such as childcare</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Mobility restriction</td>
<td>• Role models and mentorship programs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Discrimination in the workplace</td>
<td>• Breaking with stereotyping from early childhood</td>
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<td>• Occupational stereotypes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Lack of self-esteem</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Not considering that women are not a homogenous group</td>
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<th>Organizational level</th>
<th>Barriers:</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Gender related professions</td>
<td>• Gender policies for CSOs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Stereotypes (even in business and market)</td>
<td>• Top management commitment in CSOs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Conservative communities</td>
<td>• Gender marker + budget from donors</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Lack of gender background of CSOs</td>
<td>• Gender communications for CSOs in projects</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Lack of funds on gender allocated by donors</td>
<td>• Multiple allies, not women’s rights organizations only</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Women’s economic empowerment</td>
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<th>National level</th>
<th>Barriers:</th>
<th>Strategies:</th>
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<td></td>
<td>• Low representation of women in national government/parliament</td>
<td>• Adopt legislation on quotas for women’s representation</td>
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<td>• Limitation in education (existence of male-dominated fields such as water)</td>
<td>• Adopt national legislative policy in education field encouraging girls to access male dominated fields</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Lack of gender sensitive policies and legislation (child marriage, domestic violence)</td>
<td>• Effectively enforce legislation and policy on gender, having a monitoring and enforcing system</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Implement international instruments on the national level</td>
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Global level

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<th>Barriers:</th>
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<td>• Legislation loopholes</td>
<td>• Integrate the recommendations/outcomes of the High-Level Symposium of SDG 6 into Voluntary National Reviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Weak private sector, low incentives</td>
<td>• Integrate G(GLOBAL)-W(Women’s)-E (Empowerment) indicators into Voluntary National Reviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Low capacity of women to participate in decision-making</td>
<td>• Make water sector more appealing for women and girls</td>
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**Key lessons:**

✓ The water sector is a male-dominated sector, which means women are underrepresented at the international and national political level, as well as in decision-making at the community level;

✓ CSOs should critically reflect on their own actions – they should promote gender equality within their projects but also within their own organizations;

✓ Women are generally faced with three barriers: A physical barrier (heavy labour burden); an educational barrier (early marriage drop outs, and gender typical study choice); and a societal barrier (gender norms in culture). These barriers put a constraint in women’s participation in the water sector;

✓ Having a 50% men – 50% women quota could induce further inequality. The quota should take into account both demographic balance and value the roles of women in WASH;

✓ Women are not a homogenous group. Social norms can prevent young women from participating, when there are active older women from the community that already representing the women of that particular community. We should work with various groups of women so that they support each other and understand the importance of inclusive representation;

✓ If women are elected or appointed for higher level political positions, it is mostly for stereotypical posts such as Social Protection. The water sector remains also politically a male-dominated field.

**Session 4: Poverty diagnostics**

During this session, Ms. Farzona Mukhitdinova, Water Resources Specialist at the World Bank, presented the preliminary findings of their Poverty Diagnostics study in the WASH Sector. This study was carried out by the World Bank in 18 countries, including Tajikistan. The main objective of the study was to identify the key challenges and opportunities to improve the access, quality and sustainability of WASH services, specifically to the poor and marginalized. The study consisted of a combination of household surveys, spatial analysis, qualitative research and surveys, and water scheme reviews. Ms. Mukhitdinova presented the results from the study in Tajikistan, showing that the proportions of rural households with access to ‘improved water supply’ remained at 36%, and one in four households have reported to not have access to sufficient quantities of water when needed. In terms of water quality, it was found that there are relatively high levels of coliform bacteria in the drinking water, and on average the chlorine concentrations were below national and WHO public health standards. Another interesting finding was that only 58% of households indicated that they pay for their water services (although this rate is higher in urban areas), and the consumer satisfaction with piped water service is ‘moderately bad’.

[more results of the study in this PowerPoint presentation]
During the group work, water and sanitation in rural areas and in schools were discussed, as well as how the data presented in the World Bank study could be used in the different projects and programs of the organizations present. The groups came up with three key things to improve the water and sanitation scheme. First, it was agreed that awareness raising campaigns were needed to keep people motivated to financially contribute to the water scheme. This will require a culture shift, since many people were used to not having to pay for their water during the Soviet Era. Second, it is necessary to involve all stakeholders as early as the design stage of the project. Third, the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of the water scheme should monitor the involvement of stakeholders, the economic performance of the system as well as the customer satisfaction should be monitored and evaluated.

Key lessons:

✓ There are high level inequalities in WASH conditions between urban and rural areas;
✓ Consumers are incurring very high monetary and coping costs to deal with poor service delivery;
✓ There is an urgent need to improve the quality of service delivery – restoring transparency and accountability of service providers is key;
✓ Local leaders and communities are currently unable to hold service providers accountable;
✓ The World Bank study is very rich in data to inform SDG 6.1 and 6.2 about Tajikistan’s performance, however, for local projects more specific data is needed per village.

Session 5: Citizen engagement mechanisms in public sector reforms

Hanna Susha, Society of Consumer Protection, Belarus: “It is thanks to the World Bank’s presence in Belarus that I now understand what Social Accountability is all about.”

In this session, Jeff Thindwa, GPSA’s Program Manager, elaborated on the World Bank’s relationship with civil society. The insights that come from civil society actors on citizen engagement in social and environmental issues have historically always informed the policies of the bank. Since 2014, the Bank has adopted a strategic framework to formalize and mainstream citizen engagement into their operations. This means that since 2014, all activities that are funded by the World Bank should engage citizens, and such projects should also include beneficiary feedback from start to finish to inform the project cycle throughout. The World Bank has created this push for citizen engagement because the project results demonstrably improved and the projects have shown to be more customized to the specific context.

The World Bank considers four levels of citizen engagement:

1. **Informing:** This is the lowest level of citizen engagement and a one-way street, providing information to the citizens. However, one should note that information will not always be available in every context.
2. **Consulting:** This is a two-way street, based on interaction with citizens. At this level, citizens can voice their interest.
3. **Collaborating:** This level means that there is partnership developing between the stakeholders involved, and they all share the responsibilities of the project.
4. **Empowering:** This is the ultimate level, in which citizens are co-creating together with the government and the private sector. Citizens have ownership over the decision-making process.

To further ensure that national governments are serious about working on citizen engagement the World Bank has set up the Global Partnership for Social Accountability. The aim of the GPSA is to support civil society organizations and citizens in the monitoring of governments’ performance, and in return for governments to use this information to improve their services.
Session 6: Transformative change in the water sector: linking citizen engagement and social accountability

Stephanie de Chassy, Gender and Governance Lead, Oxfam UK: “When you manage to change structures or policies, and at the same time tackle social norms and stereotypes – then change can be transformative as it addresses both formal and informal barriers.”

The objective of this session was to get insights from practitioners and experts as to how best to drive transformative change in the water sector through social accountability through understanding the contextual drivers, and identifying priorities and strategies to nurture and support transformative social accountability practice in the water sector. Over 50 participants held a lively discussion on the role of states, donors, civil society organizations and M&E systems to promote transformative social accountability in the water and sanitation sector. The discussion was framed around four key questions:

1. What can states do to create an enabling environment for social accountability in the water and sanitation sector?
2. How might civil society actors best represent citizens and influence state actors to deliver transformative change?
3. What can donors do to nurture and support transformative social accountability practice in the water and sanitation sector?
4. How might M&E be improved to demonstrate impact, and support learning for social accountability in the water and sanitation sector?

Figure 2 shows the top ideas and recommendations that came out of participants’ experiences, opinions and thoughts. This core set of recommendations have been chosen as key priorities during the session, for the GPSA to take forward in future initiatives.

Figure 2 How different donors should push for transformative social accountability in the water sector

= Transformative change
The four boxes below provide an overview of all ideas and recommendations that were put forward during the session for each of the actors. The recommendations in bold, the first two in each box, were the ones that were voted top recommendation by the participants.

### What can states do to create an enabling environment for social accountability?
1. Strengthen information sharing and transparency at all levels of government
2. Establish participative and inclusive platforms for engagement at all levels of government
3. Install good governance principles
4. Promote better feedback mechanisms
5. Have a strong legislative system in place

Ms. Zebo Kurbanova, Sugd, Tajikistan: “If the government and state agencies want to work in a transparent manner, they should provide clear and correct information. This means that all information with regards to costs and transactions should be clear, not hidden.”

Mr. Orkhan Aliyev, Oxfam Tajikistan: “Besides transparency, it is important that states create a platform for engagement that will ensure information to flow. Without this information flow, there is no accountability.”

### How might civil society actors best represent citizens and influence state actors to deliver transformative change?
1. Capacity building for CSOs and media to understand how government prioritizes, plans and budgets, and how to influence that process
2. Providing both positive and negative feedback to service providers and duty bearers
3. Cooperation with other organizations and partnerships to influence with evidence
4. Highlight opportunities for change and collaboration
5. Being honest mediators between community and government through both formal and informal mechanisms

Ms. Ketevani Beradze from Georgia: “CSOs must have experience in working with local communities. It is crucial to build trust with these communities in order to best represent their issues.”

Mr. Absatar Tashiev, Balasagyn National University, Kyrgyzstan: “CSOs can play a vital role in the creation of legal frameworks around water provision by local governments. In Kyrgyzstan, CSOs have contributed greatly in the discussions around these frameworks.”

### How might M&E be improved to demonstrate impact, and support learning for social accountability in the water and sanitation sector?
1. Tool to measure the impact of change, to empower citizens, and to hold duty bearers accountable
2. Qualitative and quantitative indicators for measurement. Measure both the process of SA as well as the outcomes of the process
3. Innovative approaches to measurement
4. Unmeasurable individual trust

Mr. Kumar Bekbolotov, Aga Khan University, Kyrgyzstan: “M&E is not just a tool to measure the organizations’ own impact, it also empowers citizens to improve social accountability.”

Ms. Stephanie de Chassy, Oxfam, UK: “We need to come up with new and innovative approaches, to record how communities feel about their empowerment, if they felt their voice was heard and taken into account in the agenda.”

What can donors do to nurture and support transformative social accountability practice in the water and sanitation sector?

1. Provide long-term integrated support on SA in all programs
2. Multi-sectoral implementation of SA mechanisms. SA initiatives should cut across all program areas for sustainable uptake
3. Strengthen linkages between state and implementing partners
4. Donors should know how resources are spent

Dr. Hasnain, Oxfam Pakistan: “There should be financially independent monitoring for SA attached to every project; wherever the government gets funds, some funds should be given to independent monitoring and social accountability.”

Ms. Walburga Roos, Swiss Development Cooperation: “We do not need piecemeal work, but instead urge for long-term integrated interventions and support from the donor community. We must have CSO support to bring challenges from the local level to raise awareness at the national level.”
Adaptive learning and effective communication
Session 7: Learning for improved results

Learning from our social accountability work is important yet difficult, since social accountability processes are complex and non-linear. Learning means something different to different people, and different stakeholders will focus on different elements of learning.

For many civil society organisations, talking about how they adapt and learn is not something they are comfortable with, especially not in a competitive context between peers, when donors are involved. This session therefore focused on CSOs capacities to adapt and learn, and how the GPSA works to support this adaptive learning process. The GPSA has set up specific learning questions for the CSOs that they are working with:

**GPSA Learning Questions**

- How are your programs and projects informed by previous successes and failures?
- Does your project approach learning as an exercise to course-correct and improve its work?
- Does your project identify a specific time and nature for learning opportunities?
- Does your project identify trade-offs and give justifications for the chosen approach?

The biggest constraints for CSOs to learn are often that their M&E systems have too many indicators and their project plans are overly ambitious. Moreover, CSOs still get incentives from donors to show the results of their projects in (big) numbers. Since the water sector remains one of the most donor dependent sectors, this has an influence on the sector’s ability to learn.

Jola Miziniak, WASH Governance Advisor at Oxfam: “It would be helpful if donors were more open to flexibility and learning, and would provide more space for (learning from) failures.”

Maria Poli, Senior Advisor Governance and Citizen Engagement, GPSA: “Reporting on our programs and projects needs a balanced perspective of qualitative and quantitative indicators.”

Case study: Parent-teacher associations in Mongolia

In Mongolia, rural areas are characterized by low students’ performance in learning outcomes and suffer from disparities in access to education, a problem that is aggravated in geographically isolated regions. Furthermore, relevant government authorities have limited data available on education performance and budgets from provincial and district levels. Globe International Center (GIC) is a Mongolian organization with almost 20 years of experience working on governance issues. They have been awarded a GPSA grant to improve the quality of service delivery in education, by strengthening citizen engagement. GIC learned that especially parents with a nomadic-lifestyle overly entrust schools to take care of their children, and have no requirements, needs, nor complaints regarding their children’s education. By setting up parent-teacher associations (PTA’s), schools performance started to be monitored and evaluated, and parents and teachers together came up with support plans.

- PTA groups often use new technologies such as Viber to inform each other about what is happening at the school their children attend
- In Bulgaria, “parents can speak louder than their children,” PTAs help to voice the discontent of the children.

Find more information on the PTA project in Mongolia [here](#). For more information on the GIC, go to their [website](#).

Adaptive learning

Organizations need to learn – to create new ideas and approaches, to improve their efficiency and collaborations, to share their knowledge and to self-develop.
Organizations need to **adapt** – to ensure sustainability of the project and its’ results, to expand their influence, to build trust among stakeholders and to achieve those positive results.

**Case study: Collaborating through Village Health Committees in Kyrgyzstan**
Under the oversight of the Ministry of Health and national agencies, local authorities in the Kyrgyz Republic are tasked with delivering health services in the country’s 40 districts. Officials have established 1,600 Village Health Committees (VHCs) to empower rural communities to advocate for their needs and interests among LSGs across districts. The Development Policy Institute (DPI), a Kyrgyz NGO with a track record in community-driven development, received a grant from the GPSA to ensure community needs are accounted for in local budgeting processes. However, they quickly learned that simply providing a platform for Village Health Committees to engage with local authorities is not sufficient for constructive collaboration. When both parties sat together at a table to discuss the health issues that were prevalent in the area, the conversation quickly negatively spiraled and parties started accusing each other. The lesson learned here for DPI was to first get to know the VHC and local authority individually before putting them together at the table. In this way, DPI can early on identify context specific local sensitivities that might spark negative and unconstructive conversations.

- In Tajikistan, the Consumers Union learned to first convince water providers of their interest in the existence of a Community Advisory Board, before setting one up.
- In Tajikistan, the Sanitation and Epidemiology Agency (KMK) learned that for successful working groups, committees or boards, people’s mentality needs to be changed towards cooperation.

Find more information on the Village Health Committees in Kyrgyzstan [here](#).
For more information on the DPI, go to their [website](#).

**Key lessons**
- Trust and power dynamics between communities, NGOs and donors affects how we measure, report and learn;
- We need to stop treating social accountability as a separate component. Instead, social accountability should be linked with the long-term sustainability of our program and project results;
- We should bring in learning from different sectors and contexts to challenge the way that decisions are made regarding investments in the water sector.

**Session 8: Communication strategies and tools in social accountability**
It is sometimes a challenge to be a successful advocate of the work of your organization. At any time of the day, you should be ready to step into your advocacy role, and provide a concrete and concise message about your organization’s mission, goal and strategy. Tom R. Lansner, Social Accountability Media Initiative (SAMI) Project Director and Kumar Bekbolotov, SAMI Mentor for Kyrgyzstan, presented several strategies for organizations and individuals to improve their media performance. The key in any advocacy message, is that it should state the problem, suggest solutions, and demands action. Read [this](#) for more advice on your advocacy message.

During the session, group discussions talked about how organizations could best cultivate media partnerships, what the most appropriate media is to use in which situation, what the new media channels are and how to use these, and how to find and tell success stories as part of your organizations’ advocacy strategy. The table below provides an overview of the main insights of these discussions.
CULTIVATING MEDIA PARTNERSHIPS

• It is important to cooperate with media to properly inform your audience
• We should network with media to benefit from the skills they have that CSOs do not always have (yet)
• CSOs communication and advocacy cannot be improved without a communication/media person involved
• CSOs can for example invite media organizations and journalists for a training on their topic, in order for them to be better informed and better able to share the CSOs advocacy stories

MOST APPROPRIATE MEDIA

• It is almost always necessary to involve mass media
• Appropriate media depends on the goal and audience of your story
• Think out of the box: e.g. theater could also be a channel to promote your advocacy message
• In remote villages, organizations can also use ‘unconventional’ media such as boxes for people to hand in proposals, or Integrated Voice Recording (IVR) telephone services.
• New media channels are less accessible in remote areas.

NEW MEDIA CHANNELS

• Facebook, WhatsApp and Viber bring new media opportunities that cover all age groups and both men and women
• Public groups are formed on Viber and WhatsApp
• New media could be used to promote an advocacy message taking place on old media (e.g. TV or radio show)

FINDING AND TELLING SUCCESS STORIES

• It is key to find examples that will lead to people taking action
• Stories should touch upon your soul, there should be a hero(in) or a person that changes something
• Sometimes the smallest stories can have the biggest impact
• Pictures will help to promote these stories through mass media

Key lessons

✓ Advocacy and communication are an integral part of social accountability work, and should therefore be considered from the inception phase;
✓ Each organization should have specific resources (time and people) to work on communication.
✓ Each organization should have a communication strategy, in which all advocacy outings are carefully planned and considered;
✓ We should change our perception on media and establish contacts and trusts with media actors. Giving media the right information will help us out in the long run;
✓ We should feed back to our audience when we have solved an issue, e.g. share our success stories
✓ It was identified that trainings on social accountability, storytelling and photography are needed to improve the media performances of organizations.

Closing Plenary

On the closing day, Madina Aliberdieva provided some space for participants to share their opinion about the Forum, and how they had experienced the past three days.

Mrs. Marta Korchemlok from the Urkanian NGO Mama 86 stated that “the Forum was a great platform to share opinions, knowledge and skills. And it showed here that all these different organizations are doing the same work along all these different countries in the ECA region.”
Mr. Karapet Ohayan from Veolia in Armenia expressed that the Forum was a great learning experience for him, meeting so many people that are part of civil society organizations. “At Veolia, we are going to use these learning experiences to provide our consumers with an even better service.”

Ms. Ainura Djunushalieva from the Development Policy Institute in Kyrgyzstan said, “Social accountability is the common red thread through all our stories.” She appreciated the openness of all participants to share their stories, and hope all would take home their lessons learned to use these in taking their work forward.

Mr. Vladilen Prokofiev from the Urban Institute in Russian Federation expressed that he was very pleased with the up-to-date information that was provided in all of the sessions. He added, “This Forum was a great platform for networking. I have made many friends from many countries in the ECA region.”

Ms. Hanna Susha from the Belarusian Society of Consumers Protection said, “It was the number of participants from so many different countries that made the richness of this Forum.” She also thanked the facilitators for creating such an open and safe environment for all participants to share their stories.

The official closing speech of the ECA Regional Forum 2017 was given by Mrs. Shovcat Alizadeh, and Mr. Jeff Thindwa. They expressed their gratitude to all participants for making time available to come to the Forum, for their enthusiastic participation, and for their engagement with each other. They urged participants make use of this momentum and remember what we learned about social accountability in the water and sanitation sector, in order to continue this in their work. “Organizing a Forum such as this one really speaks to the need that we all have for continuous learning on social accountability,” said Mr. Thindwa.

Conclusions of the ECA Regional Forum 2017

Main takeaways from the Forum.

▪ The Forum showed that not one of these organizations is alone in working on social accountability in the WASH sector. Creating a space to share experiences, challenges and good practices is more important than focusing on training on new tools and approaches;

▪ Gender equality is not simply a check box exercise or a ‘50-50’ ratio – In order to transform power relations, barriers need to be tackled from individual (social norms) to global levels (institutions and frameworks);

▪ Context determines what is possible, with whom and at what level (local / national) – However, building trust and understanding incentives, drivers and constraints of each stakeholder group is essential to convene multi-stakeholder processes;

▪ Learning and communication are strategic, not ad on – MEAL and communication staff must be involved from the onset of the programs and resources allocated to sustaining strong integrated Learning and Communication interventions – that is core to sustainability;

▪ Social Accountability processes should commence in the inception phase of any project, ensuring that all stakeholders are involved from the start.
Acknowledgements
This Forum was co-organized by the GPSA, Oxfam Tajikistan, Oxfam GB and Oxfam’s Knowledge Hub on Governance and Citizenship.

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This report was authored by Roselie Schonewille, Knowledge & Learning Officer at Oxfam’s Knowledge Hub on Governance & Citizenship.
## Agenda

### Day 1: Tuesday, May 25, 2017

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<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:30 – 9:15</td>
<td>Registration &amp; Continental Breakfast</td>
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| 9:15 – 10:15 | **Opening Plenary | High-level Panel**  
The Ministry of Energy and Water Resources of the Republic of Tajikistan (TBC)  
State Unitary Enterprise KMK (TBC)  
Ms. Shovcat Alizade, Oxfam Country Director, Tajikistan  
Chair: Mr. Jeff Thindwa, Program Manager, GPSA, World Bank |
| 10:15 – 10:30 | Setting the stage for ECA SA FORUM 2017  
*Value of Networks: Evaluating stakeholder power dynamics influencing change to improve performance*  
Keynote Speaker: Duncan McNicholl, (PhD, Cambridge University) |
| 10:30 – 11:00 | Refreshments Break                                                 |
| 11:00 – 12:30 | Plenary Presentation:  
Social Accountability project in WASH sector in Tajikistan (TWISA project, Oxfam & partners) |
| 12:30 – 13:30 | Lunch                                                               |
| 13:30 – 14:30 | Plenary – Presentation of Afternoon Workshops:  
Introduction of Participation Rules and Topics  
Flash presentations of the afternoon workshop sessions |

### PARALLEL SESSIONS

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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Workshop I</th>
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<tr>
<td>14:30 – 17:00</td>
<td>Constructive multi-stakeholder social accountability processes: Main features drawing from experiences in ECA region</td>
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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Refreshments Break</th>
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<th>Time</th>
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<td>17:00 – 18:00</td>
<td>Citizen-led monitoring frameworks: Myths versus realities of how citizens can lead monitoring processes</td>
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### Day 2: Wednesday, May 24, 2017

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<tr>
<td>8:30 – 9:00</td>
<td>Continental Breakfast &amp; Networking Space</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:00 – 9:30</td>
<td>Recap of Day 1 Sessions &amp; Day 2 Activities</td>
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| 9:30 – 12:30 | PARALLEL SESSIONS      | Clinic – Gender and Social Accountability<br>How to genuinely engage women – from institutional to individual and from global to local? What does it take to build structural and informal capacity in institutions and civil society to change mindsets on gender? | 11:00 – 11:15  Refreshments Break  
9:30 – 11:00 | Workshop               | Why do poverty diagnostics matter, and where do social accountability approaches fit? How can we use poverty diagnostics data to improve targeting of beneficiaries? | 12:30 – 14:30  Extended Lunch  
14:30 – 17:00 | Workshop               | Advancing social accountability through World Bank supported citizen engagement mechanisms in public sector reforms: Learning from experience. | 15:30 – 15:45  Refreshments Break  
15:30 – 15:45 | Fishbowl Debate        | Roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders in delivery of WASH in humanitarian and long-term development setting |  

**Day 3: Thursday, May 26, 2017**

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| 8:30 – 9:00 | Continental Breakfast & Networking Space |  | 9:00 – 9:30  Recap of Day 2 and Agenda Day 3 Activities  
9:30 – 12:30 | Workshop I             | Learning for improved results through adaptive learning and management in social accountability processes in WASH sector | 11:00 – 11:15  Refreshments Break  
| 12:30 – 13:30 | Lunch |  | 13:30 – 15:00  Networking Fair  
Open lounge for CSOs and donors to connect and share | 15:00 – 16:00  Plenary Session  
Conclusions of ECA Forum: Learning and ways forward  
Closing remarks |
Reference material

- GPA working papers and dissemination notes Knowledge Platform www.gpsaknowledge.com
- Opening the Black Box: the contextual drivers of social accountability https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/21686
- Oxfam Case studies
  - Different contexts where Oxfam works on social accountability, in fragile states, transitional economies and decentralized states http://water.oxfam.org.uk/en/case-study-en/world-water-day-case-studies/