



Helpdesk Research Report

Social mobilisation in urban contexts

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Question

Identify effective social mobilisation approaches for service delivery in urban contexts. Where possible, look to identify and map approaches that are relevant to, or are used in, Pakistan.

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1. Overview

Research for this paper looked to identify effective social mobilisation approaches for service delivery in urban contexts and in particular for Pakistan. Though there is a range of material which uses the term social mobilisation or concepts similar to it, and even focuses on Pakistan, much of this material does not relate to social mobilisation for service delivery. For example, there is social mobilisation material on conflict or insurgency (e.g. Staniland, 2010), or material on advocacy campaigns for health programmes, which are considered to constitute social mobilisation (e.g. Haq et al., 2013). Among the literature on social mobilisation, including the literature specific to Pakistan, a significant proportion focuses on rural contexts (e.g. Khan, 2006).

Consequently, this paper focuses on a broad range of environments. It looks to identify material on social mobilisation, initially in South Asian urban contexts. It then goes on to material from other contexts which could be applicable, including suggestions from general guidance material on social mobilisation. In the time available for this report it has not been possible to fully map the range of approaches that are relevant to, or take place in Pakistan.

Suggestions for improving urban social mobilisation include:

- **Self-help groups:** Creating community groups for expectant mothers, for example, or certain types of workers, can provide a basis for social support. These can be used as a basis for social mobilisation to enable the public to demand and gain access to services.
- **Issue-based targeting of individuals and groups:** This involves identifying issues first and then targeting individuals and organisations in communities, who have already shown a demonstrable commitment on these issues.
- **Education:** Greater education is linked to greater social mobilisation. Classes can provide a way for people to meet and form groups on which to base social mobilisation. Education can be vocational or non-vocational.
- **Use and build on accepted institutions and ways of working:** These can be cultural institutions such as the Pahstun *jirga*, the Islamic concept of *shura*, and *sanghas* often associated with Buddhism. They can also be based on historical institutions such as anti-dictatorship or anti-apartheid movements.
- **Use and build on existing associations:** Social mobilisation movements can build on a number of existing ethnic associations, issue-based associations (e.g. water user associations, saving and loan associations), or work associations, such as unions.
- **Focus on different resources for urban environments:** People in urban environments may be less able to spare time and labour but more able to contribute cash. They may also be better positioned to influence local business and governments.
- **Work with cultural practices:** This can mean meetings and associations segregated by gender, and different genders being associated with different services.
- **Foster good, long term relationships:** Building good relationships with the community, including with women and children. Suggestions for improving this include learning and using people's names, including children's; and patience and commitment.
- **Prevent conflicts of interest among mobilisers:** Social mobilisers should only be accountable to the public. They should also have clear roles free of professional conflicts of interest.
- **Multi-pronged strategies:** Using a number of techniques such as media, home visits, drama, music, public events and formal meetings. Media in particular can be useful to gain support but also to gauge public interest in different service delivery issues.
- **Map community structure:** Use of types of social analysis, including political economy analysis, help understand how communities in urban contexts are structured and can help identify individuals and organisations that are relevant to social mobilisation on service issues.
- **Use community members in delivery of services:** This can improve efficiency of service delivery and also motivate social mobilisation.

2. Defining social mobilisation

The material on social mobilisation can cover a number of activities. This paper understands social mobilisation along the lines of the following definitions. UNICEF (2014) defines social mobilisation as “a process that engages and motivates a wide range of partners and allies at national and local levels to raise

awareness of and demand for a particular development objective through face-to-face dialogue". The description notes that members of institutions, community networks, civic and religious groups and others work in a coordinated way to reach specific groups of people for dialogue with planned messages. Social mobilisation seeks to facilitate change through a range of players engaged in interrelated and complementary efforts.

The Asia Foundation (2008) provides a similar definition and aim stating that the "objective of social mobilization is to create a process to mobilize hidden democratic elements and potentials for good governance, resources, self-help initiatives and joint efforts for trusted partnership-building" (p.20). With their definition it is noted that the concept of social mobilisation would cover community mobilisation, institutional mobilisation, stakeholder mobilisation, resources mobilisation, economic mobilisation, and environmental mobilisation.

3. Case study material

Kolkata, India

In Kolkata, India, self-help groups have been used for slum dwellers to support each other but also result in greater use of and demand for public services (ADB, 2008). The self-help group approach originated with the Kolkata Environmental Improvement Project (KEIP) to upgrade the sewerage and drainage systems. The lack of consultation in the upgrade programme resulted in public anger and protests, as people feared they would have to move, or pay a lot for a new pipe connection. In 2005, a Social Development Unit (SDU) was integrated into KEIP in Kolkata to inform communities about the inconveniences and ultimate benefits the project would bring. This work went on to provide 'hand-holding support' for poorer communities to take steps to improve their quality of life. The SDU appointed NGOs to mobilise and counsel self-help groups, also known as *sangha*, in nearly 100 slums around the city.

The SDU team leader notes that it was initially extremely difficult persuading women in the slums to meet each other in groups as many are from remote villages, lack education, are shy, or had jobs that meant they were free only after work. To reach this group, it was important to have people with grassroots experience, and lots of patience and commitment (ADB, 2008).

From the start, the goal was to encourage women to talk more openly about their problems and find solutions by joining self-help groups. Such efforts can help shy women, confined to the home, become more confident and adventurous (ADB, 2008). The self-help groups might then branch out into other areas. Examples of how groups formed around certain issues went on to better use public services are:

- **Health:** One woman went through her first pregnancy without eating properly, taking any supplements, or seeing a doctor and had her baby arrived prematurely, underweight and only survived two weeks. Following self-help group advice she received advice both from a doctor and her *sangha*.
- **Vocational Training:** A six-month vocational training course in embroidery was undertaken by a group of women. This allowed them to work from home and create a professional group to work with, as well as improving earnings.

- **Skills training:** Another class involved a group of women taking lessons in bookkeeping where they learned to open a bank account, purchase accident insurance, to save money, and to approach a bank, either individually or as a group, to borrow money for equipment and materials. Bank stipulations mean that staying together in this group for a year would make them eligible for a loan equivalent to four times their savings. Such groups can give women access to commercial bank facilities and loans significantly better than those offered by loan sharks.

An example of a self-help group focusing on men include:

- **Cooperatives:** Men with limited incomes formed a self-help group to pool their modest resources. With small monthly contributions from members, the group opened a bank account and looked to take out a loan to invest in a Tata Sumo van to rent out. Registering as a cooperative allows them to qualify for government grants for communal facilities. The group has organised social and sports events, as well as eye care clinics and an HIV/AIDS awareness campaign for the community.

A 2007 monitoring and evaluation report on KEIP, concludes that NGO involvement has been crucial in reaching out to vulnerable communities and delegating the ‘soft’ components of development initiatives such as awareness creation, consensus building, and participatory approaches. NGOs have played a key role in mobilising self-help groups and getting them ‘on their feet’, and such groups will likely continue on their own after KEIP is completed.

Peshawar, Pakistan

Khadka (2010) documents experience and lessons learned from work on social mobilisation in internally displaced person (IDP) camps on the outskirts of Peshawar, Pakistan. The Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster composed of UN agencies and implementing partners ensured that basic services such as health, food, water, shelter, non-food items (NFIs) and protection were provided in the camps. UNHCR provided funds and technical support for camp coordination and social mobilisation.

The report notes that the *jirga* (council) system is fundamental to the Pashtun culture of the tribal people and was used effectively in the form of sectoral committees for social mobilisation in the camp. A *Grand Shura* was responsible for coordination of all sectoral committees in the camps. Khadka (2010) notes that according to the local culture, mixed committees of men and women are not permitted, so separate men’s and women’s committees were formed. There were a greater proportion of women in sectors where women’s roles were culturally considered more significant, such as in education, health, and awareness raising for protection of IDPs themselves.

The main challenges and potential obstacles to social mobilisation in the camps were:

- **Diversity of IDPs:** The IDPs were diverse in terms of factors such as their place of origin and their social, economic and political situation. This was manifested in their levels of general awareness and interaction with outsiders and their willingness to be involved in groups and to work together. There was also previous friction among IDPs in their place of origin, which emerged as a major trigger for breakdown in social mobilisation and harmony in the camp.
- **Cultural restrictions and aversions:** There are restrictions on women for cultural reasons. Women’s participation in groups and group meetings, interaction with men, as well as male staff, and even interaction of women with female staff without the permission of a male member of the

family was at times not possible. In some cases there is cultural aversion to the very idea of participation in such groups. There was also a sense among many IDPs that NGOs do not respect their culture, norms and customs.

- **Lack of technical expertise and experience:** There was inadequate understanding among implementing partners of, and expertise in, IDP dynamics, aspects of social mobilisation and coordination with other actors. There was difficulty in ensuring proper representation of the whole community in groups and there was a lack of equity in the distribution of relief items. Initially, more vulnerable persons could not easily access food and non-food items.

In response a number of strategies were adopted to meet these challenges:

- To build a rapport between service providers and IDPs and to improve socialisation and interaction, staff began to address them all, even children, by their name.
- There was a sustained effort to interact with community elders – especially men.
- There was an effort to promote the importance of the group approach and the role of NGOs.
- A system was set up for conveying decisions taken by the *Grand Shura* to the women and for reflecting back the women's viewpoints to them, so as to help them to understand each other's perspectives and decisions.
- The groups were involved in the distribution of relief items.

Khadka (2010) concludes that these strategies have been broadly successful. There is a much stronger understanding of the importance of community participation and relief materials are now distributed fairly, with priority given to the most vulnerable. There have been improvements in security, in girls' enrolment in schools, and in camp residents' awareness of and attitude towards hygiene and sanitation. IDPs are sharing problems and are actively involved in registration and in the management of services and in addressing gaps in, for example, water, sanitation and health services as they arise.

Based on this experience, Khadka (2010) argues that it is essential to:

- Undertake proper capacity building for implementing partners and to ensure the commitment and accountability of all staff.
- Foster good relations with children and women as they play a vital role in social mobilisation.
- Maintain an appropriate distance from the community because it helps to push the community to use and adopt new ideas relevant to their new situation.
- Ensure that the concept and process of social mobilisation in camps are understood by the IDPs and the operational agencies.
- Hold regular meetings with all actors and community groups in order to share progress, to plan and to debate issues arising.
- Respect the diversity of cultures and the practices of beneficiaries.

Nepal

Most social mobilisation programmes rely on 'transactional' approaches by focusing solely on improving access to assets and services. 'Transformational' approaches involve changes in voice and agency, and changes in the rules of the game, in addition to improved access to assets and services. A report from the Local Governance and Community Development Programme (LGCDP) which analysed social mobilisation in Nepal found that transformational, rather than transactional mobilisation processes are needed to build

peoples' capacity to actively participate in their own governance (Jha et al., 2009). Transformational approaches to citizen mobilisation are more sustainable than transactional processes and help to build individual and collective capabilities in accessing services and assets.

Key findings of analyses of a range of social mobilisation processes found that:

- Most programmes do not link citizens/groups with local body processes. Group processes are generally isolated and parallel to local structures.
- Citizen mobilisation processes will build voice and demand only if there is an appropriate response and an enabling environment to meet this demand. Efforts are therefore needed to increase capacity of local governments, to manage resources and deliver basic services in an inclusive and equitable manner, and to strengthen policy and national institutional frameworks for devolution and self-governance.
- It is important to build on past community-based development. Over the past 25 years Nepal has developed a vibrant practice of social mobilisation for group based action.
- There is a lack of a common understanding of the role and mandate of the social mobiliser. In this study many social mobilisers also acted as micro-finance providers or other forms of technical service provider. Working on empowerment and group organisational capacity building can lead to confusion between the mobilisation and technical aspects of their work.
- Citizen mobilisers must be accountable to citizens and communities, but citizen mobilisation should be separate from local government.
- Processes, guidelines, and strategies must be consistent and coherent, and based on a common understanding of citizen-centred local governance that delivers responsive services to citizens.
- A combined accountability and voice structure is needed at the national level. The operational implementation of citizen mobilisation should be carried out by a consortia of INGOs and NGOs working through local service providers.

Nigeria

The State Accountability and Voice Initiative (SAVI) is a Nigerian governance programme which takes an approach of identifying key issues of concern and then bringing together a number of actors into groups to work on the issues. This has often included service delivery issues such as:

- **Improving health training:** In Katsina State, SAVI supported and brokered relationships between civil societies, media organisations and the State House of Assembly so as to combine their voices (SAVI, 2013a). This was to request action by the state government on health training, which the state government responded to by releasing funds, equipping an independent School of Health and Midwifery, and recruiting lecturers.
- **Support for people with disabilities:** In Lagos State, the SAVI-supported Disability Partnership successfully lobbied for the Special Peoples Law on Disability to be passed by Lagos State House of Assembly (SAVI, 2013b). Since that time, the group has worked closely with the government to implement the law, and succeeded in supporting three key ministries to mainstream disability into their 2013 budgets.

The SAVI approach uses political economy analysis to identify and target key individuals for involvement. SAVI looks to influence State Government policy, planning, budgets and projects ('long route'

accountability), as opposed to facilitating direct engagement between citizens and community level service providers ('short route' accountability) (expert comments). It aims to do this in a manner in which donor funding does not monetise and consequently undermine existing citizen movements by replacing the intrinsic incentive of leadership and problem solving, with the incentive of money.

The SAVI programme works with media houses and State Houses of Assembly, as well as civil society organisations. SAVI supports partners through what is termed a 'Facilitated Partnership Approach', where in-house teams in each state, made up of a mixture of staff from government, civil society and media backgrounds, bring together partnerships around issues that are a priority both for state governments and citizens (SAVI, 2014a, 2014b). State teams spend up to a year conducting participatory political economy studies to identify issues that have traction both with the State Government and with citizens, possible entry points for citizen engagement, power relationships, blockages and challenges. As possible issues begin to emerge SAVI looks to make use of the media, particularly radio, to put such issues to the public and gauge a response. On the basis of these studies, State teams draw together groups to work on these issues, made up of individuals and representatives of organisations who are demonstrably passionate and credible about the issue in question, and committed to work together in a collective approach to action. This can include community level activists, retired civil servants, religious leaders, academics, reporters and civil society representatives.

The SAVI programmes provides support through brokering working relationships, on-the-job capacity building, mentoring and seed funding. State staff are accountable to SAVI but partners have the flexibility to determine their own priorities and activities, as well as the kind of assistance and mentoring they require. The SAVI approach aims to foster skills, knowledge, networks and working relationships that effectively engage citizens in governance (SAVI, 2014a).

São Paulo, Brazil & Mexico City, Mexico

In a study on São Paulo and Mexico City, Houtzager & Acharya (2011) identify associations and their role in empowering members to negotiate directly with state agents for access to goods and services legally mandated for public provision, such as healthcare, sanitation, and security. The authors find that in both cities, individuals who participate in associations have substantially higher levels of active citizenship than their counterparts who do not. However, associationalism in both cities appears to reinforce existing citizenship practices and does not necessarily improve the quality of citizenship practices.

The authors note that in the urban centres of these countries, types of associations include neighbourhood associations and small community groups, networks of urban movements, advocacy and urban development NGOs, and non-profit service providers, who can define their role as acting with or for a particular community or target population. The study looked at participation, and not necessarily membership of community and work associations. Community association is defined as any participation in cultural, neighbourhood, and ethnic or issue-based associations. Work associations include unions, professional associations, and associations that represent workers in informal employment. The study broadly looked to ask people if they participate regularly in neighbourhood associations, cultural/sporting groups, any type of cooperative, a women's group or ethnic, regional, minority group or association, a trade union or professional representation, and any group, movement or association not already mentioned.

Key conclusions from the study were:

- Associationalism has a greater impact on individuals from lower classes. Individuals from lower classes are less likely to engage in active citizenship. Associationalism reduces the gap in active citizenship between the well-educated and rich, and the less-educated and poor.
- Education can increase active citizenship in two ways. Reducing educational inequality has been shown to increase active citizenship through direct education effects and through increased group participation.

Indonesia

Having worked primarily in rural areas like Maluku and Aceh, Mercy Corps started projects in areas of urban Jakarta working on health issues, and nutrition in particular. They find the following key differences between the rural and urban contexts (Mercy Corps, 2009):

- **Social structure:** The roles and relationships among business, government and civil society stakeholders in a community are more complex in urban communities, like those in Jakarta. There are many more stakeholder groups and more social layers. There are more formal community structures than in rural contexts.
- **Lack of common identity:** Urban communities are often more educated and more easily able to grasp new ideas, but lack identity as a collective unit.
- **Institution-focused:** Rural communities tend to mobilise a broad range of people from diverse professions and backgrounds on a range of different issues. By contrast, urban communities initially tend to mobilise around an institution, such as a school or a water user's association. This may or may not affect as broad a range of community members.
- **Access to resources:** Urban communities can have greater access to cash, while rural communities can have greater access to materials and skilled labour. Urban populations are usually more easily able to advocate and press both business and government to release resources for particular needs. Rural communities are often better able to mobilise a greater total contribution from its members, including labour, which may be because of greater feelings of solidarity among community members.

Multiple Countries

Leach & Scoones (2007) explored what motivates citizens to mobilise, and why, based on a series of case studies, on issues ranging from genetically-modified crops, vaccines, HIV/AIDS and occupational health, to struggles around water, housing, labour rights and the environment. The authors conclude that mobilised citizens are knowledgeable actors engaged in dynamic, networked politics. They are involved in shifting forms of social solidarity and identification at local, national and global levels. Understanding mobilisation processes and the implications for citizenship requires analysis from a combination of perspectives. The authors find that mobilisation is impacted by:

- **Knowledge and power:** Diverse forms of expertise are at work in any mobilisation process (Leach & Scoones, 2007). Mobilisation draws on lay knowledge and forms of 'experiential expertise' that people have acquired in everyday life as well as access to expertise on certain issues. Related to this, Earle (2011) argues that rights education is critical and people must be able to recognise an injustice and know how to seek redress in order to mobilise.
- **Cultures, styles and practices of activism:** Social mobilisation activities often draw upon past experiences (Leach & Scoones, 2007). For example, activists involved in the Brazilian environmental movement or the health councils in the north-east of the country often had long associations with the wider democracy movement and struggles against the dictatorship. In South Africa, HIV/AIDS activists brought in the imagery, songs and dances that had been part of their earlier experiences in the struggle against apartheid.
- **Spaces in which citizens can mobilise and press their claims:** The connection between spaces is important in understanding processes of mobilisation, and the evolution of struggles over time (Leach & Scoones, 2007). Understanding mobilisation requires attention to the contingent interaction of spaces and places, people and networks, and events and moments. The uncertain, non-linear, dynamic nature of mobilisation is important to understand. In India, activist NGOs concerned with corporate accountability have engaged in multi-pronged strategies involving local awareness raising, media interventions, public interest litigation, engagement with government authorities, local village assemblies, direct dialogue with companies, and public hearings.

4. Guidance literature

Within the guidance literature it is possible to identify literature which provides relevant activity suggestions for social mobilisation for service delivery in urban contexts (Mercy Corps, 2009; OpenLearn LabSpace, n.d.; Koolwijk, 2003):

- **Map the community structure:** Identify and use those community structures that are working. Where they are not working create a plan to ensure they work and work with the group to implement those.
- **Media:** (community) radio or TV, posters, illustrated leaflets or pamphlets, local newspapers, letter writing, and community message boards.
- **Home visiting:** home visits can ensure that mobilisation messages have been delivered.
- **Drama and music:** street play or skits, folk media and folk songs.
- **Public events:** social festivals, exhibitions, sports meets.
- **Formal meetings:** public meetings, briefings, discussion forums, panel discussions, circle discussions, workshops, conferences.

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