

South Asia Regional Workshop on
Transparency and Integrity in the Water Sector
3-5 November 2007, Dhaka, Bangladesh

DHAKA DECLARATION

The South Asia Regional Workshop on Transparency and Integrity in the Water Sector was held in Dhaka, Bangladesh during November 3-5, 2007. It was organized by Transparency International Bangladesh with the support of the Water Integrity Network (WIN) and the Royal Netherlands Embassy. The support of the Bangladesh Water Partnership, the IRC - International Water and Sanitation Centre - of Delft, the Netherlands, UNICEF, the national chapters/organizations of Transparency International in India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka as well as the Secretariats of TI and the WIN in Berlin were also critical to the success of the Workshop. 68 participants included representations from South Asian countries -Bangladesh, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka - and also Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom in this first ever initiative in South Asia on this subject. Dr. Huguette Labelle, Chair of the Board of Directors of TI inaugurated the Workshop on November 3. Mr. Md. Anwarul Iqbal, Honorable Adviser, Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives, Government of Bangladesh graced the Closing Session on November 5 as Chief Guest and H.E. Ms Bea M. ten Tusscher, Ambassador of the Netherlands in Dhaka attended as Special Guest.

The Declaration:

The Participants:

Underscore that access to safe water is a fundamental human right, which should be ensured and safeguarded;

Note that the water sector is prominently prone to corruption because of its monopoly structure and lack of accountable decision-making and because it involves the implementation of large projects undertaken by the construction sector, which according to TI is perceived to be the sector most prone to corruption. A nexus of corrupt politicians, public officials, consultants, civil works contractors and suppliers exacerbates this;

Further note that corruption involving activities such as illegal connections, false meter readings and inaccurate billing juxtaposed with unsatisfactory collection levels could severely damages the financial viability of water utilities and hampers their efforts in providing adequate water and sanitation services and coverage to consumers;

Note with concern that corruption undermines efficient management of water resources, degenerates public institutions, results in unsustainable development, reduces economic growth, increases poverty and affect the quality of life;

Note with concern that women, the poor and the disadvantaged are the major victims of corruption. Moreover, corruption is a major impediment to meeting the targets of development and poverty reduction, including the Millennium Development Goals in water and sanitation;

Share the conviction that political will is the preeminent factor for fighting corruption and that this needs to be supported by appropriate legislation and regulation to promote transparency and accountability. In this regard, the constructive tripartite engagement of the public and private sectors as well as citizens is vitally important; and

Note the importance of access to information as a key to combat corruption in water and other sectors.

Recommendations

The Participants:

1. *Recommend* that the policy and institutional framework, especially the judiciary and law enforcement institutions conform to practices pertaining to the rule of law. This will ensure effective control of corruption;
2. *Recommend* that a sectoral integrity study be undertaken to guide sectoral policy for the water sector in each country, based on known good practice;
3. *Recommend* that a corruption risk assessment as well as a monitorable and accountable anticorruption plan (both of which should be updated, as required) be undertaken as part of all projects supported by Governments and development partners. In particular, this should address forms of corruption that prevent equal access to water services. In addition, each project should include an integrity component to enable citizens' participation in monitoring;
4. *Recommend* a strict procurement regime based on transparency and accountability. This would include the use of standardized procurement documentation, public disclosure of all major procurement-related decisions (including evaluation criteria and reports) as well as the active involvement of civil society organizations in monitoring the procurement process to meet the highest standard of transparency and accountability and recommend applying Integrity Pacts, or similar tools, in all major water infrastructure projects;
5. *Recommend* effective involvement of local communities in all aspects of project identification, preparation, implementation and operations and maintenance to assure accountability and sustainability. Appropriate measures should be taken to ensure the effective involvement of the poor and disadvantaged groups within the community including women and minority groups;
6. *Reiterated* the importance of citizens' access to information and recommended that appropriate legislation be enacted in countries, which have not yet done so, and steps taken for effective enforcement of the same;
7. *Stress* the importance of promoting transparency and integrity, of mutual learning and sharing of experiences of best practice in the water sector among the countries of South Asia; and
8. *Recommend* widespread support for WIN's efforts, regarding awareness raising, deepening of the knowledge base on sectoral corruption, development of anticorruption tools, capacity development and in particular for its small grant program for 'on the ground' activities to fight corruption. *It was also recommended* that the WIN take advantage of existing platforms within South Asia.

Dhaka, Bangladesh, November 5, 2007