



**‘Good Practices’ related to  
Access to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation**

submitted by

**Ecumenical Water Network & ACT Alliance**

to the Independent Expert on the issue of human rights obligations  
related to access to safe drinking water and sanitation  
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*Malawi, Churches Action in Relief and Development (CARD)*



### **1) “Follow the money!”**

#### **Accountable governance of water services at the local level through Public Expenditure Tracking Systems (PETS)**

*Tanzania, Norwegian Church Aid (NCA)*

Norwegian Church Aid, a member of the Ecumenical Water Network and the ACT Alliance, promotes accountable governance of community water services in Tanzania. It uses Public Expenditure Tracking Systems (PETS) which track whether funds allocated for vital public services, such as water and sanitation, education, and health, are actually spent as planned and on behalf of the intended beneficiaries. PET is a tool for Civil Society Organizations creating transparency and accountability by enabling local communities to track public resources and challenge their misuse. Essentially, it is the process of tracking public resources from the source to the point of service.

The system is designed to empower right-holders at the grassroots level to demand rights-based services from relevant public bodies. For this purpose, people participating in PETS committees are trained to read and analyse public budgets and accounts, and to monitor how financial plans are implemented. If realities on site differ from the plan (budget) and the reported expenditure (accounts), the committees have been trained on how to file complaints and secure interventions against corruption by higher level government officials.

PETS is not restricted to water service delivery but can also be applied to other public services, e.g. education or health services, according to the priorities determined by each community. In Tanzania, the practice is supported by the national government and a Guideline has been passed to facilitate the work of PETS.

### **2) “Making participation count”**

#### **Participatory rural assessment and participatory wealth ranking**

*Cambodia, Church World Service*

Community-led planning and implementation is at the heart of the work of Church World Service Cambodia, a partner of the Ecumenical Water Network and member of ACT Alliance. Water and Sanitation User Groups (WSUG) are responsible for addressing their villages’ needs regarding improved water supply and sanitation facilities as well as improved health and hygiene practices. The applied methods include the selection of beneficiaries from the poor and poorest households using participatory rural assessment and participatory wealth ranking. This guarantees the interventions’ pro-poor orientation, non-discrimination, affordability, as well as ownership of the decisions by the respective community.

The continued involvement of the community in decision-making is promoted by community-led planning that is done by the WSUGs in cooperation with the Village Chiefs. Another critical element of the project is targeting advocacy efforts on water and sanitation rights towards the Commune Councils, Village Chiefs and representatives of WSUGs who participate in the regular Commune Council meetings. Accountability within the private sector is also addressed through the training of Community Based Organisations on how to monitor private constructors involved in the drilling of wells.

The programme is recognized by the Provincial government and it is the only project in the area which is implemented in cooperation with the Provincial Department of Rural Development (PDRD).

### **3) “From drops to mighty river”**

#### **Strengthening and mobilising community and civil society to assert their right to water**

*India, Church's Auxiliary for Social Action (CASA)*

A member of the Ecumenical Water Network and the ACT Alliance, the Church's Auxiliary for Social Action (CASA) in India strengthens and coordinates community and civil society campaigning for the right to water. A dam was constructed on the Mahi River of Banswara region of Rajasthan in the 1970's as part of the *Mahi Bajaj Sagar Multipurpose Hydro Project*. Consequently, the water of Mahi Dam is being taken all the way to Gujarat, the neighbouring state, while the villages of Banswara remain dry due to lack of water supply. The local community have been trying for a long time to influence the government to extend the water of Mahi River to their dry lands, before diverting the water to another state.

In the past, much of the villagers' efforts were in vain as their endeavours were splintered and uncoordinated. Seeing their struggle, CASA decided to guide and facilitate this movement more systematically. It was possible to bring together all voluntary organizations in one platform which later formed a formal body named Mahi Jal Failao Manch – Mahi Water Expansion Forum (MJFM). The Forum's members now jointly organize meetings with the concerned people, send delegates to the political and government officials in regular intervals, and implement other activities that capacitate and support the affected communities.

While the campaign is still on-going and the goal is not yet achieved, the Forum is hopeful that it will succeed in its efforts. There has been slow and steady progress and the steps taken have united groups, elicited common messaging and ensured stronger community positioning following a Rights Based Approach to water. The steps taken constitute ‘good’ practice in that they have promoted and led to improved participation, increased community empowerment and mobilization, greater human rights awareness as well as more effective civil society coordination and dialogue with responsible public authorities and decision-makers.

### **4) “Rooted advocacy for pro-poor water governance”**

#### **Enhancing environmental health by mobilizing communities**

*Bangladesh, Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service (RDRS)*

The purpose of the project (EEHCO) is to empower Community Based Organizations (CBOs) in poor rural communities and to strengthen them to achieve sustainable improvements in their hygiene behaviour and a reduced exposure to risks related to water and environmental sanitation.

RDRS recognizes that the creation of sustainable and safe access to water and sanitation has to go beyond just the installation of tube wells and latrines. The practice therefore reflects the crucial importance of ensuring lasting behaviour change and the continued maintenance and use of newly installed water and sanitation facilities through community participation and empowerment.

Besides engaging in service delivery, RDRS also highlights the importance of stimulating advocacy initiatives for improved water and sanitation services. RDRS therefore puts a strong emphasis on capacity-building of CBOs, e.g. by trainings on

rooted advocacy, as well as training of Local Government Institutions (LGIs). Training to community based organizations (CBOs) on different issue like leadership, advocacy, management and negotiation skills enhance their capacity to identify, manage and mobilize resources effectively by their own. LGIs are oriented on how to better perform their roles and receive policy orientation and support for promoting best practices. Increased investment for water and environmental sanitation for the poor is promoted by building effective coordination among LGIs and Citizens Committees.

## **5) "Drinking water - an essential need"**

### **Rehabilitating water supply in rural Armenia**

*Armenia, Armenia Inter-Church Charitable Round Table Foundation (ART)*

The Armenia Inter-Church Charitable Round Table Foundation (ART), a member of the ACT Alliance, focuses on the rehabilitation of drinking water infrastructure (pipelines) in order to ensure access to safe drinking water. The project also demonstrates the benefits of a strong working relationship with the private sector.

Drinking water is available only for a few hours a day in towns and cities. In rural areas problems are more serious, as there are communities where drinking water is brought in trucks and sold in canisters. One key challenge in many areas is that politically, economically and socially privileged people and clans take the main amount of water, be it for irrigation or drinking. These groups can install pipes with a bigger diameter and take the most of the water while few dares to speak up against out against such a practice. In other cases those living in the higher locations can easily take as much water as they like, even irrigating their orchards with drinking water.

A number of techniques are utilized by ART-ACT to ensure fair access. To ensure fair distribution of water to all and equal quantities, the project constructs daily distribution basins so that each household has a separate outlet. In this case it is not possible for one household to use all or a disproportionately large amount of water. Several reservoirs are installed down the slope servicing four to five houses. Each of these houses is connected using separate outlets and pipes. This idea is a local initiative and was first utilised in the village of Dzoravank.

Drinking water throughout Armenia is managed by a private company which has its branches in all regions and they are ultimately responsible for maintenance of the system. In this project, the private company willingly supports ART's work and provides all the needed special equipment free of charge as well as consultancy by a hydro engineer.

All ART water and sanitation projects use integrated community development (ICD) approaches, addressing the spiritual needs of the community, the promotion of human rights, and capacity building as a cross cutting issue. The most important element is community empowerment through participation, meaning that community groups take part in all stages of the project, from the development of the idea to the project's monitoring and evaluation.

**6) “Safety in troubled waters”  
Water for disaster-affected communities**

*Pakistan, Church World Service Pakistan / Afghanistan*

Church World Service Pakistan/Afghanistan, a member of the Ecumenical Water Network and the ACT Alliance, works to ensure that communities have safe minimum access to water and sanitation in the time immediately after a disaster. The main focus of their projects is the provision of safe water through the installation of hand pumps. This initiative is always complemented by hygiene education (hand washing, household water treatment) and the provision of hygiene materials such as soap, towels, and water containers.

CWS adheres to the SPHERE Standards which provide minimum standards for disaster response. Adhering to these standards ensures that core obligations of the human rights to water and sanitation are fulfilled. In the longer-term, more needs to be done to ensure the progressive realization of the right to water in the immediate response to a disaster. While water is initially provided for free in crisis situations, CWS works closely with the respective national and local government to ensure that they can assume responsibility for the services upon project completion. To date, this has gone some way towards ensuring long-term sustainability and affordability of the water supply.

**7) “Working together for water”  
Empowering communities to access safe water and improving their environmental health**

*Bangladesh, Lutheran Health Care Bangladesh*

Lutheran Health Care Bangladesh, a member of the ACT Alliance, engages in the provision of safe water and sanitation facilities such as tube wells and sanitary latrines. In doing so, LHCB gives priority to the vulnerable groups and every effort is taken to avoid any discrimination in its use.

LHCB first enables communities to establish groups from which a management team is drawn. This team is responsible for issues concerning the overall maintenance and repair of the water supply. The total community is involved in site selection, planning, designing, installation and monitoring of sanitation and water services. Beneficiaries are provided with adequate training and know-how to ensure sustainability of the project. LHCB also provides follow-up services to ensure that people continue to properly utilize the services.

The training of the community groups also includes information on the responsibilities and obligations of local authorities in order to promote accountability. At the same time, LHCB seeks to improve the cooperation with the local authorities, using education, motivation and rapport building tools. Local leaders and civil society are encouraged to take initiative on behalf of the poor in order to ensure the realization of their rights in water and sanitation services

## **8) “Making water flow” Community-based resource mobilization**

*Indonesia, CD Bethesda*

Since 2007 Community Development Bethesda (CD Bethesda), a member of the ACT Alliance, has been facilitating the provision of primary health care services and activities in the community of Batu Mekar village, Lombok Barat, in Indonesia. One of the primary health care problems faced by this community is accessing safe water and sanitation. Past decentralization processes that were supposed to lead to better governance and poverty reduction had largely failed and pro-poor budgeting and service provision by local government were far from adequate.

CD Bethesda applied a participative rights based approach, involving the community and using a strategy that included mobilising, educating, advocating, creating linkages and networking with other government and NGO actors. An initial needs assessment served to promote awareness in the community of the importance of organizing themselves in order to be able to speak out in a common voice for the rights of the community members.

The Community-Based Organization (CBO) that was created as part of the project successfully lobbied the local government and other relevant government institutions based on the needs identified in the assessment and by making the local authorities aware of the willingness and potential of the community to contribute to the improvement of their water and sanitation services.

## **9) “Springs of life” Constructing Spring Boxes for Village Water Supplies**

*Central African Republic, L'Église Evangélique Luthérienne de la République Centrafricaine*

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Central African Republic (CAR) works together with villagers in western CAR to identify water sources, construct spring boxes, chambers designed to make optimum use of a natural spring, and maintain them after they are constructed. The project, known as “Projet d'Aménagement des Sources d'Eau (PASE)”, ensures that safe physical access to the water is guaranteed in the design and construction of the water points and connecting walkways. Careful consideration is also given to the safe use of the spring for other domestic purposes such as washing clothes.

The project encourages villagers to form a committee to keep the spring box area clean and to make any minor repairs needed after construction. The spring boxes are built to a high standard and well maintained to ensure that they last for several decades.

The participation and joint work of different ethnic groups in the planning, construction and maintenance of the spring are a project prerequisite.

## **10) “Sunny times for water”**

### **A solar-powered gravity water supply scheme**

*Malawi, Churches Action in Relief and Development (CARD)*

CARD Malawi, a member of ACT Alliance, addresses both water for food security and safe drinking water in their project, using a solar-powered gravity water supply scheme. Deep boreholes are drilled and water is pumped from them into raised tanks using solar power. This practice draws attention to the fact that water is a crucial prerequisite not only for the realization of the human right to water and sanitation but also for the human right to food. The project demonstrates a successful attempt at addressing both concerns at the same time, while having the added benefit of using a renewable source of energy.

The programme employs a right based approach and emphasizes the inclusion of marginalised groups. For example, mechanisms are put in place involving the communities to come up with written bye-laws on how they will enable the elderly, orphans, chronically ill and people with disabilities to access to free water.

The project itself stands as proof of how communities can hold their own local government institutions accountable for improving water and sanitation services. The community now has four functioning and safe water system each with 25–30 water points. This has reduced time spent by women and children collecting water, reduced congestion at water points, providing more than 36 litres per person per day, and increasing access for all in the area. The taps are designed so that they can be used and accessible to children, older people and people with disabilities. The water is being tested periodically by experts from the Government Water Department.