



Water and Sanitation Program

An international partnership to help the poor gain sustained access to improved water supply and sanitation services

Fourteenth Meeting of the Urban Think Tank Willingness to Charge for Water and Sanitation Services: Outcomes from Three Workshops

Sep 29, Oct 1 and Nov 14-15, 2002 • Hyderabad, Bangalore and Kolkata, India

Nagari

South Asia Region

FOREWORD

by Shri M Shankar,
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India is part of the global trend towards increasing urbanization. Today nearly 28 percent of the population live in cities, a figure which is expected to increase to 41 percent by the year 2021. The number of cities with a population in excess of one million has increased from 23 in 1991 to 35 in 2001. Yet the infrastructure and services necessary to support these large, and growing, populations is lagging far behind the pace of urbanization, resulting, among other problems, in the proliferation of slums and a chronic shortage of safe water and sewerage systems.

There is growing evidence that consumers are willing to pay more than the prevailing rates for improved levels of water supply and sanitation, but the charges levied by providers do not match this willingness. The result is a vicious cycle of low revenues, high costs, and poor levels of services. The central government is introducing a number of fiscal incentives to support much-needed reform and restructuring; these include the Urban Reform Incentive Fund (URIF) and the City Challenge Fund (CCF). I hope that this workshop, which brings together policy-makers, service providers and consumers, will address the underlying reasons for the lack of willingness to charge on the part of some providers and will lay the foundation for follow-up analytical work which will be useful for promoting the much-needed reforms in the water and sanitation sector.



Indo-US AID FIRE D



Institute of Social Sciences, Kolkata



Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board



CALCUTTA METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY



Kolkata Municipal Corporation



Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board



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The following highlights are taken from presentations given by the different water boards and from the consumers' response in the conversations that followed.

View from the provider: Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board

Seventy-seven percent of Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWSSB) consumers have access to a piped water supply while 6,500 handpumps and 250 tankers provide water for consumers in poor areas. The Board is providing high quality water, which is checked at the point of delivery and is wholesome in 95 percent of cases. Gastro-enteritis cases are almost down to zero and a citizen's charter provides a fixed framework for dealing with consumer complaints. However, water supply is intermittent, varying from 30 minutes to four hours on alternate days, with an average delivery of 114 lpcd per capita per day. Unaccounted for water is running at around 33 percent, with pilferage from main transmission lines exacerbating the problems caused by leaking pipes.

The present demand (230 mgd) far outstrips capacity (190 mgd) and the gap continues to widen. Projections over the next 15 years show increasing demand from surrounding areas outside the charter of the Board, from multi-storeyed apartments, from industry and from unserved areas within the city.

Refurbishment projects, slum improvement schemes, rainwater harvesting and recycling/reuse opportunities are all being examined through the National River Conservation Project (NRCP). The still developing Krishna Water supply scheme will be the key to meeting the growing future demand.

Tariff is being used as an economic instrument to curb demand – the base rate was increased from Rs 4 to Rs 6 per KL in June 2002 – with progressive rates for higher consumption and penal rates for conspicuous consumption. More metering is being introduced to ensure proper billing procedures. However, financial forecasts estimate that tariff increases of between 6-15 percent per annum will be needed to improve distribution and replace damaged pipes, which at present are allowing contamination to seep into the network.

A survey undertaken in June 1996 indicated a clear willingness to pay on the part of consumers (for example, 78 percent were willing to pay between Rs 5/6 per KL, rising to 100 percent willingness to pay when the rate was Rs 5 and below) *subject to* a supply of adequate water at fixed and convenient times and with prompt attention given to customer grievances. By introducing improved billing, distribution, collection and customer care, and revising tariffs to begin the process of full cost recovery, HMWSSB has demonstrated a willingness to charge.

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Background

The 2004 World Development Report (WDR) of the World Bank focuses on the critical issue of 'Making Services Work for Poor People'. The framework adopted by the WDR looks at the outcomes of service delivery through the interaction of three key actors: clients, policy-makers, and service providers. In support of this work, the Water and Sanitation Program, in partnership with the WDR team, have focused this *Nagari* on bringing together representatives of consumers, policy-makers and providers in selected cities in India – Hyderabad, Bangalore, and Kolkata. The objective was to initiate a series of conversations about a central issue of governance in the delivery chain – the willingness to charge for water and sanitation services. Are policy-makers willing to charge for water and how will this influence the relations of accountability between consumers, policy-makers and service providers? The workshops and this *Nagari* have been financed through the Bank Netherlands Partnership Program as a follow up to the findings of the 2000-01 Good Governance study, also financed through the same Partnership Program.



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...and the consumers' response

Accountability

- "We are caught in a monopoly situation with no bargaining power, and no method of expressing grievances."
- "Who is the Water Board accountable to? They talk about customer satisfaction, but what opportunity does the common man have to challenge the system?"

Price

- "Provide the water and we will pay the price. What is preventing the Board from charging for what consumers are willing to pay?"
- "People spend freely at supermarkets, so please be willing to charge for water."
- "Air circulates freely, why not water?"
- "The question is, not how to raise tariffs, but how to reduce water losses and costs."
- "Frequent tariff increases, with reduction in supply hours, makes us very angry."
- "Industrial tariffs are already very high; we cannot afford to pay more."

Low income consumers

- "It is the lower income areas that suffer the most; we appreciate the lower tariff for low volume consumers, but connection fees are very high for us."

Quality and quantity

- "While the quality is good, the quantity is poor. Since supplies are irregular, people collect and store more than they need. This makes a bad situation worse."

View from the provider: Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board

The Cauvery River is the main water source for Bangalore, but its location, 120 km from the city, necessitates pumping water in three stages, and at great cost, up to a height of 500 m. In the foreseeable future, all water requirement will continue to be met from the Cauvery River and the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) needs to do all it can to maximize and conserve present supplies. This will be done through a concerted action plan to replace leaking and corroded pipes, regularize or disconnect illegal connections, replace faulty meters, and ensure that all new connections use the highest standards of pipe. In tandem with this proactive approach, a program of water conservation, using rainwater harvesting, ground water recharge schemes and recycling of up to 10 percent of the total water supplied, is being implemented.

Unaccounted for water is currently estimated between 34 percent to 44 percent, resulting in major revenue losses and augmenting chronic supply problems. Reducing this figure to less than 15 percent is a major priority. Staff salaries account for 16 percent of the operation and maintenance costs, but the major portion of the Board's revenues go towards power charges. Each hike in the power tariff has a knock-on effect on BWSSB's finances. Proportionate rises in water tariffs to offset these additional costs generate customer resistance.

All connections are metered and the present base of 370,000 domestic customers is expected to grow by 20,000 connections per annum. In addition to an expanding network, domestic consumption is projected to rise from present levels of 107 lpcd to 160 lpcd by 2025. The growth in non-domestic consumption is also expected to increase from 64 mld to 123 mld by 2025.



WSP-SA

Constraints in meeting this projected demand are challenging. They include the high capital costs of the associated infrastructure for new connections and replacement of corroded networks, high pumping costs, and the availability of ground water.

At present 30 percent of the population are living in unregulated settlements or slums, and receive free water through public taps. The plan is to transform the urban poor into paying consumers by introducing appropriately designed, individual connections for each family in the slum areas. There will be fixed, lower price tariffs, which will, in the long term, be financially beneficial for the Board, despite the projected cost of Rs 220 million for the estimated 100,000 connections.

The Board also has an action plan to enhance the quality of service to all consumers by introducing, among other things: reliable, regular and equitable distribution of water for an assured duration; prompt redressal of grievances; accurate billing and consumer-friendly collection systems and emergency leak services in all divisions.

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...and the consumers' response

Accountability

- "Words like supply and demand are all very well, but what about equity and access?"
- "We don't want a glossy report, we want equitable distribution."

Price

- "No question of asking industries, which are not expanding, to continue subsidizing growing domestic demand. Production costs have to be recovered from domestic users."
- "Price is already high. We are not willing to pay more, even at the margins."

Low income consumers

- "We need better policies for the urban poor who don't get any water, clean or otherwise."
- "Why should one family have 25 taps yet elsewhere 250 people share one tap? Let us hope this workshop results in a strong budgetary allocation for them."

Quality and quantity

- "There are health issues in pumping water from so far away with leaks and seepages into the system. Storm water drains are full of sewage leaking into sumps and manholes are overflowing. The solution is clear, yet nothing is done."
- "There is a finite quantity of water available; we need conservation and environmental awareness programs to educate the people of Bangalore."

View from the provider: Kolkata Metropolitan Area

Kolkata Metropolitan Development Authority (KMDA) comprises 3 municipal corporations, 38 municipalities and 33 panchayat samitis. KMDA must provide the physical and social infrastructure for about 15 million people, which includes transportation, water supply, sanitation and sewerage, solid waste disposal and housing. The objective of the water supply development plan is to provide a high quality, affordable service to all sections of society. Since arsenic is now contaminating some ground water sources, in a pattern similar to the one emerging in Bangladesh, an urgent shift from ground water to surface water (which does not have arsenic) sources is required. Unaccounted for water (UFW) is running at unacceptable levels and action is required to reduce losses to a maximum of 20 percent.

Eighty-five percent of the population are served by a piped water supply. The daily demand is for 505 mgd of water, leaving a shortfall of some 16 mgd from the available supply of 489 mgd (which includes 108 mgd of ground water, some of which is contaminated with arsenic). Production and primary distribution is a complex matter, organized at present through the KMDA, the Kolkata Municipal Water and Sanitation Agency (KMW&SA), the agency responsible for water supply, sewerage and drainage, and the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC); public distribution is the responsibility of various corporations and municipalities. With the population expected to reach 22 million by 2025, the demand for water will rise to 722 mgd, necessitating a capacity enhancement of 341 mgd.

Financing the infrastructure necessary to bridge this gap will need capital finance from state and central budgetary support. User charges, currently chronically under-utilized, need to be increased to provide a reliable source of revenue. Borrowing from the capital markets, grants from bilateral and multilateral sources, and public/private opportunities all need to be explored. The Kolkata Metropolitan Area (KMA) will also introduce cost-effective technology and make cost recovery a key issue.

KMDA and KMW&SA charge municipalities Rs 3 per KL for domestic or bulk supply and Rs 15 per KL for industrial users. KMC levies different charges and a few municipalities collect water rates from



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domestic consumers. KMW&SA charges Rs 30 per month per house connection. So clearly there is a multiplicity of rates in the metropolitan area. Present prices are subsidized from the public purse. Operating inefficiencies account for some of the high costs and KMDA is attempting to reduce these by building capacity. While consumers do seem ready to pay more for a good service, full cost recovery will not be possible in one fell swoop. It needs to be phased in gradually and in a manner which engages the consumers rather than alienates them. People's participation is the key to the process of charging more.

Kolkata Municipal Corporation serves a population of almost 4.5 million people of whom roughly 38 percent live in single dwellings, 27 percent in multi-storeyed apartments and 35 percent in slums. Water is supplied through private and bulk connections, and through public standposts. Charges are complex, varying from volumetric rates, flat quarterly rates based on unit hours or per individual connection; no charge is levied from public taps. Domestic charges have stagnated over the last 15 years and the increase this year has been marginal. Figures for 2001/02 indicate that operating expenditure

(Rs.1,293.4 million) exceeded operating revenue (Rs 183.1 million) by Rs 1,110.3 million. But since records indicate that only 10 percent of consumers are being charged for water and KMC is recovering only 10 to 15 percent of its operational costs, and since it is patently clear that the remaining 90 percent of the population has access to water, one way of bridging this gap is to clamp down on illegal connection and non-notified changes in ferrule size. Just by charging existing consumers at existing rates, operating revenues would increase by Rs 80 million. Another strategy to equalize the colossal deficit would be a huge tariff hike, raising the unit price per KL from Rs 0.50 to Rs 3.33. Such an increase cannot be introduced overnight, but a program of tariff revision is being proposed on a yearly basis with immediate effect.

With demand for water expected to soar from its current level of 211 mgd to 415 mgd by 2011, KMC is undertaking many projects to increase capacity, improve existing networks, install high quality pipelines and extend the hours of supply. In addition, it has reviewed the efficiency of its functioning, consciously cut electricity costs, reduced manpower and improved billing procedures.

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Municipal Commissioner, KMC

...and the consumers' response

Accountability

- "There has been a lot of talk about price as a tool for conserving water; but there is also the issue of affordability (the poor must be able to pay) and accountability. When providers are charging high rates they have to be accountable to their customers, not to their political masters."

Price

- "Why should standposts be completely free? They are the source of widespread water losses and some charge should be levied."
- "There are gross discrepancies in water charges and service levels; costs are often higher in rural areas than for urban flats. And there are sharp differences in areas north of Kolkata."
- "The bulk of new building is going on in low rated zones because water is cheap there; there has to be uniform zoning to abolish this price differential."
- "Up to three million daily incomers put severe strain on all city services including water, solid waste and sanitation. Perhaps there should be a commuter tax."
- "People are not willing to pay any more without getting some new service, or better quality of water."

Quality and quantity

- "The arsenic problem is likely to increase in gravity and must be tackled. But who will bear the cost of moving to other sources?"
- "Water-borne diseases are a source of great concern for people in Kolkata, but nothing is done about this health issue."

Bidhannagar Municipality and Kalyani Municipality were important contributors to the rich discussions in Kolkata. They both emphasized the need for strong political support to enable them to press ahead with capital-intensive renovation plans, the cost of which will need to be met by consumers. As in Kolkata, the quantity of water available is not an issue, which led some consumers to press for a 24-hour pressured supply. Cost recovery was not adequate even to meet O&M charges but both municipalities are considering charging more. They would like to move from a water tax to meter charging. Both municipalities were concerned to protect the interests of retired people on declining incomes, and slum dwellers on very low wages.

Kolkata Agencies

- **Kolkata Metropolitan Development Authority (KMDA):** provides the physical and social infrastructure for about 15 million people
- **Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC):** supplies water to private and bulk connections, and through public standposts
- **Kolkata Municipal Water and Sanitation Agency (KMW&SA):** responsible for water supply, sewerage and drainage

Key Messages from Three Cities

Three cities, all with different ways of charging, different tariff revision history and varying levels of cost recovery, as well as different quality of service, provided some interesting differences as well as some striking similarities. In broad terms, quantity and quality of service in terms of hours of supply was the main issue of concern for consumers in both Bangalore and Hyderabad. In Kolkata, where supply is not a problem for most, consumers had real issues with the quality of the water supply and concerns about possible arsenic contamination of some ground water. As far as charging for water is concerned, Bangalore, with 100 percent metering and 95 percent cost recovery, and Kolkata, with very low metering and only 15 percent cost recovery, are at opposite ends of the spectrum with Hyderabad sitting somewhere in the upper/middle range. Some points of common concern in all three cities were:

- There is a huge, unmet demand for water, and immense dissatisfaction with the current level of service.
- Many are already paying a very high price, in terms of health and coping costs, for not having it.
- Solving the critical problem of water losses (UFW) is a major priority for suppliers and consumers alike.
- Connection costs are very high and many people cannot meet them. Subsidies at the connection level, rather than in user charges, is now a more accepted method of targeting subsidies at the people who need them most.

- There is inequality of tariff between different municipalities served by one metropolitan provider. Political equity demands a tariff equalization program based on a *one metro-one price* approach.

- Accountability is critical. Water Boards are frequently accountable upwards, but there is a critical need to make accountability downwards, to the consumers who are using the water.

- There is often considerable WTC by Water Boards but this is circumscribed by political decisions outside their control, but by which they have to abide (Bangalore seems to be an exception, where they have more autonomy from political interference in revising tariffs).

- Consumer groups around the world are linking the debate over supply, quality and the price of water to human rights. While free water as a basic right is a slogan for some campaigners, most consumers who have to cope with the daily reality of inadequate, and poor quality, water are willing to pay for a better service.

- Industry cannot be a sustainable source of cost recovery. Non-domestic tariffs which cross-subsidize domestic consumers are often too high, and cannot be increased further. Cost recovery has to come directly from domestic consumers, with some subsidies for the poor.

- Subsidies generally benefit the non-poor. They need to be better designed and targeted towards poor consumers.

Salient Water Supply Indicators in Selected Cities, 2002-03

Indicators	Hyderabad	Bangalore	Kolkata
Supply			
Average supply (lpcd)	114	107	190
Duration of supply	0.50-4.00 hrs alternate day	4.00 hrs per day	Average 6.00-7.00 hrs per day 1.50-20.00 hrs per day, in some areas
Access to piped water (%)	77	85	80
Tariff			
Water tariff	Rs 6.00-25.00 per KL (for consumption <500 KL) Rs 25.00 per KL (for consumption >500 KL)	Rs 6.00-36.00 per KL (domestic) Rs 60.00 per KL (industrial)	Rs 50.00-250.00 per quarter (domestic-flat rate) Rs 10.00 per KL (I,C,I) Rs 2,000.00 per quarter (average I,C,I flat rate)
Sewerage cess/charge on water (%)	35	10	No charge for domestic 80 for I,C,I connections
Performance			
UFW (%) (including revenue loss from free public standposts)	33	34-44	30-40
Staff per 1,000 connections	13	8	14
Cost recovery as % to total operating cost (2001-02)	66	95	15

Note: I,C,I stands for industrial, commercial and institutional connections.

A Politician's Perspective

Subrata Mukherjee
Mayor of Kolkata

We have to realize that a time has come when users must pay for the civic services provided to them, but is it not reasonable that they should expect, in return for such charges, an efficient and reliable service? Supplying safe water to all its citizens is surely a primary duty for any municipality, and in Kolkata we are endeavoring to balance that growing demand with the available supply of bulk water. To meet the projected demand of 388 mgd by the year 2025, we have initiated several capital-intensive schemes, including the conversion of the Mullick Ghat pumping station from unfiltered to filtered supply, the addition of seven booster stations, and a new treatment plant, on a joint enterprise basis, at Dhapa.

But these are all expensive undertakings and we have a duty not only to supply water to our citizens

but also to ensure the financial health of this huge water supply system, and that is a difficult challenge. At the moment 80 percent of the total water supply goes to domestic consumers, but only 10 percent of these consumers are billed. This situation is unsustainable and while it may not be possible, at the present time and with the present tariff levels, to seek to recoup the entire cost of supply, nevertheless alternate methods of revenue generation must be considered. Several schemes are under scrutiny, including charging a flat rate to all apartment owners, installing meters for bulk supply to housing complexes, and introducing a flat fee to cover capital fund investments in all new housing developments.

I hope the deliberations of this workshop will find some solution to the problems of cost recovery. It is certain that no municipal body can sustain such a huge resource gap and at the same time fulfil the demands of its citizens for a high quality, reliable water supply.

The Heart of the Matter: A Relevant Topic at a Relevant Time

Politicians, service providers and consumers need to take on board the fact that the situation in India's fragile WSS sector is not going to get any better without radical change which will involve psychological, as well as structural, shifts from all sides. The theme of the workshop was 'willingness to charge', not 'willingness to pay'; both complement each other, but each have important and interesting differences. Officials from three very different cities, all with different ways of charging for water services, described their current supply levels, future plans, present tariffs and cost recovery methods. Consumers representing high, middle, and low-income groups, and some industrial users, were able to voice their concerns about the current supply situation and indicate what they would be prepared to pay for improved levels of services. Political factors clearly influence some policy-makers against increasing charges that could adversely affect their election prospects. There was also a belief that high operational costs are often due to inefficiencies in the system, and that it is unfair to pass these inefficiencies on to consumers who may be struggling on very low incomes. But there was also recognition among most policy-makers that expectations are rising and it might be politically counter-productive to wait any longer to improve the system. Dissatisfied consumers may make their discontent felt at the ballot box.

The aim of this tripartite structure was to stimulate conversations and exchanges, to establish who is prepared to pay for what in the search for reliable water and sanitation services, and to inject a consumer voice into the thinking processes of both politicians and service providers. Officials were able

to explain the constraints under which they have to operate and which limit the services they can provide; consumers were able to ask service providers why they price water the way they do, and how they propose to meet the needs and expectations of their consumers.

Viable economic policies and politics have not always been easy bedfellows, but the need for strong political will to translate plans into reality was one of the critical issues to emerge from discussions. Political leaders are clearly concerned about equity as well as efficiency and they recognize the need to create service networks that will reach out to the poor as well as the rich, by having utilities that are sustainable and operate with equity, efficiency and accountability. The political atmosphere at the moment, in all three cities, is encouraging and there was a strong encouragement for utilities to charge for a better level of service; consumers were clear that they can and will pay for a reliable, high quality water supply. They were equally clear that the present miserable situation is unsustainable.



The discussions at the workshops indicated that WSS agencies are making some efforts to improve service delivery efficiency and accountability in the three cities. It was also clear that the WSS agencies were willing to engage in an open dialogue with the consumers. However, for these efforts to translate into sustainable changes in the quality of service, it is necessary to link these initiatives with broader policy and institutional reforms such as rationalizing water tariffs and subsidy to the poor consumers. Also, using the WDR framework, taking note of the consumers' voice and involving them in the decision-making and service delivery mechanism is a powerful tool to further enhance the accountability of policy-makers and service providers to the consumers. Ultimately, without the consumers' voice, institutional change for improved services is neither possible nor sustainable.

Demand Side Snapshots: Rapid Assessment Tool

Households in Hyderabad and Bangalore are dissatisfied with the quantity of water they are getting and the frequency of supply. This problem is relatively non-existent for households in Kolkata (except for some very low pressure areas). Kolkata fares better than Bangalore, which in turn fares better than Hyderabad with respect to quantity of water supplied. However, with respect to water quality, there is not much difference among the three cities. Although most middle and higher income representatives said they were satisfied with the quality of water supplied, they all use filters or boil water for drinking. In Kolkata, there are concerns about arsenic contamination from ground water sources. The sewerage/drainage services are considered poor in all the three cities.

The Rapid Assessment Tool (RAT) produced the following indicators about acceptable tariff levels in the three cities:

Slum area representatives: In Bangalore, a monthly tariff of Rs 50 per month would be generally acceptable if services improve and slum dwellers are able to get enough tap water. In Hyderabad, the corresponding figure is Rs 75 per month. Even in Kolkata, where the Municipal Corporation is providing water as a free service to most households, a tariff of Rs 20 per month was considered acceptable for an improved supply in terms of water pressure and duration of supply.

Multi-storied and independent house representatives: The current level of payment for multi-storied apartments and independent houses in Bangalore and Hyderabad is Rs 6 per KL. If services improved, people would be willing to increase this rate to about Rs 10 per KL. In Kolkata, the current

rate is about Rs 1.3 per KL; people would be willing to increase this to Rs 3.5 per KL for better services.

Industry representatives: The industry representative in Hyderabad expressed reluctance to pay more than the current rate of Rs 25 per KL. In Bangalore, the current rate of Rs 60 per KL is already too high; a rate of Rs 40 per KL would be more reasonable and increases would be unacceptable. In Kolkata, where industry is typically paying significantly higher rates than other consumer groups, there would be resistance to paying any more than the (approximate) Rs 10 per KL.

Rapid Assessment Tool

A specially designed Rapid Assessment Tool was developed for use in these workshops to structure the conversation and to analyze the current level of services provided; the extent to which these services met the requirements of the consumers; the level of satisfaction; and, the cost of bridging the gap between expectations and actual service provision. The aim was to establish how much, and for what level of service, consumers were willing to pay and whether the provider was likely to be able to satisfy demands without significant restructuring. While none of the sessions had a sufficiently representative sample to provide statistically valid evidence of WTP, the conversations did provide some useful consumer reflections and indications about consumers' satisfaction with the quality of water and sewerage services. Representation from industry was especially thin and comments here are based on a single individual at each workshop.

Partnerships

This Think Tank was organized by the Water and Sanitation Program-South Asia (WSP-SA) in partnership with the South Asia Environment and Social Unit (SASES) of the World Bank, Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWSSB), Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB), Kolkata Metropolitan Development Authority (KMDA), Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC), Administrative Staff College of India (ASCI), Hyderabad, and Institute of Social Sciences, Kolkata. The Think Tank was supported by funding from the Bank-Netherlands Partnership Program (BNPP).

The Urban Think Tank

The Urban Think Tank is a participatory forum which enables experts and practitioners to address issues related to the service delivery of water supply and sanitation services to the poorest sectors of the community. The Think Tank is also intended to spark policy-level debate and provide a forum where the issues and concerns of municipal managers can be brought forward. Regular meetings have been hosted by the Water and Sanitation Program-South Asia (WSP-SA) since December 1994.

The 14th Urban Think Tank adopted a different format from previous meetings. Workshops took place in three different cities over a period of 6 weeks; in Hyderabad (September 29), Bangalore (October 1) and Kolkata (November 14-15). The objective of the workshops, which were consultative in nature, was to improve the understanding of the factors leading to willingness

to charge for better services, along with the institutional restructuring necessary for improving the quality of services.

Through the publication of *Nagari*, the proceedings and key issues of each meeting are disseminated to municipalities all over India. The purpose of this information note is to share lessons learnt, highlight emerging issues, illustrate examples of best practice and provide a link between municipalities and other stakeholders to foster a better operating environment in the sector of water supply and sanitation services. We would welcome your ideas on any of the issues discussed and feedback forms are enclosed for this purpose. Please also write to us with any comments and suggestions on topics that you feel are important for managers of local urban bodies.

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