



## South Asian Conference on Sanitation

"Sanitation for All: All for Sanitation"  
Kathmandu, Nepal 22-24 October 2013

### Side Event: Is Integrity an issue for better sanitation services?

HELVETAS Swiss Inter-cooperation Nepal, Water Integrity Network (WIN), Freshwater Action Network South Asia (FANSA) and Federation of Water and Sanitation Users Nepal (FEDWASUN) jointly organized a side event titled "**Is integrity an issue for better sanitation services?**" during the SACOSAN-V on 23rd October 2013.

**Participants:** There were about 40 participants in the side event representing government and nongovernmental agencies, both the SACOSAN V delegates and others, working in the WASH sector in South Asian countries.

**Objective of the side event:** The side event attempted to understand from various participants, from South Asian countries whether "the lack of integrity a major obstacle for achieving sanitation goals in South Asia?"

**Moderator / facilitator:** Tom Palakudiyil, the Head of South Asia Region, WaterAid.

**Process:** The event began with welcome note and introduction on the topic of integrity-definitions, examples, tools and its relation to sanitation by Binayak Das of WIN. Some of the main concerns raised in the presentation include -- funds are not accounted for and expenditures do not reflect ground situation; standards are not adhered to; there is a lack of accountability for public and school toilet maintenance; and there is no systemic urban sanitation in place; especially for marginalized groups. Pollution issues are not addressed and violation of laws and standards is common. After the brief presentation, participants in groups discussed four questions. The four questions, one for each group are:

1. Is lack of integrity a major obstacle in achieving sanitation goal in the South Asia?
2. Anecdotes and experiences: Did you come across integrity issues in sanitation?
3. What are integrity challenges in the rural and urban context?
4. How do you strengthen integrity in sanitation services?

The participants in each group discussed on their assigned questions and came out with conclusions. The summary of the discussion of each group was presented in plenary and further explained clarified by group representatives.

#### **Outcomes and Recommendations:**

Based on the four group discussions, the side event concluded that integrity is a major issue in sanitation governance and it has not been properly addressed in the South Asian context. It was observed that integrity is major obstacle in achieving sanitation goals. Decision making processes are not transparent, and there is a lack of data availability and integrity while planning processes and budget allocation are forced by vested interests; and key positions are cornered

by powerful elites. Financial accountability is poor and a very tight last minute schedule for implementing projects results in poor quality output. Budget allocation, planning strategy reflects well on paper but in reality, implementation does not adhere to the principles. It was pointed out that monitoring mechanisms are weak, while audits, both public and social are mere rituals. People are generally not aware of integrity concepts while social discrimination affects marginalized community, both in rural and urban areas. Political instability and vested politics also affects sanitation projects.

Not only concerns were pointed out, but on-going good practices in South Asia were shared and some of these include the public display of funds (transparency board) and RTI in India. Social audit and budget tracking projects have been successful and information is being shared with people and user groups. In Nepal, an ADB funded project covers integrity aspects focused on user committee, cost recovery, where a contractor–supervisor–community approval procedure is in place.

To strengthen integrity, it was suggested that:

- Budget allocation should be based on investment gap analysis
- Participatory approach should be followed in the project planning and implementation
- Joint monitoring – by all the stakeholders, should be undertaken.
- Monitoring from the beginning up to the end is necessary to make both the right holders and the duty bearers accountable
- Should have high level of professionalism and honesty
- There should be effective rewards and punishment system
- Integrity should come out as a social campaign
- There should be a strong mechanism for effective coordination. There are many actors in the sector and there is unnecessary competition among them
- Data and information in the sector vary from actor to actor creating sheer confusion for planning and policy formulation.
- Media needs to be involved in addressing integrity issues
- It was mentioned that the side event was a success to raise the stakes on integrity in sanitation and this should be a topic in the next SACOSAN in the plenary.