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ARTICLE

Embracing the complexity of policy processes in sanitation: Insights from India

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Abstract

Different stakeholders tried participatory approaches to boost progress in rural sanitation in India. The policy processes around these experiences, despite shaping their outcomes, remain a knowledge gap this article addresses. Evidence shows that the interests of the actors involved resulted in the national campaign being focused on construction. Therefore, participatory approaches could only be successfully introduced through networks with political champions at their centre. Moreover, political dynamics determined the success of the different introduction strategies. A better understanding of these policy processes, using analytical frameworks such as the one we propose, will lead to smarter influencing strategies in the sanitation sector.

KEYWORDS

India, policy analysis, political economy, sanitation, Total Sanitation Campaign

1 | SANITATION IN INDIA

In 1999, after 13 years of slow progress in rural sanitation coverage under a supply-led Central Rural Sanitation Programme (CRSP), the Government of India launched the Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC). It represented a shift "towards a demand driven approach" to "increase awareness" (Government of India, 2001) and towards communities' leadership. Awareness raising to inform about consequences of poor sanitation (pamphlets, wall writing, folk media) got a 15% fund allocation (Kumar & Shukla, 2011). This demand-led character was strengthened in 2004, when household latrine subsidies

were replaced by incentives to below-poverty line (BPL) households of 1,200 Indian rupees (INR) (Government of India, 2004)—later increased to INR2,200 and INR3,500 in 2011. These were to be distributed after self-undertaken construction. The collective dimension was reinforced with the Nirmal Gram Puraskar (NGP), an award scheme that honoured and rewarded clean Gram Panchayats (a local administrative unit comprising one or several villages) that achieved open-defecation free (ODF) status (Government of India, 2011a).

The TSC guideline followed principles internationally accepted by the sanitation sector and seemed to yield impressive results; the Government reported rural sanitation coverage to be 68% in 2011, a 46-point increase since 2001 (Government of India, 2011b). However, the TSC was not implemented as per its guidelines, but in a construction-focused and subsidy-driven manner, neglecting demand generation (Hueso & Bell, 2013; WaterAid, 2008). Consequently, the real picture, revealed by the 2011 Census, was disastrous, with a decadal coverage increase of just 8.8 points, and outpaced by population growth. Some 80% of the toilets reportedly constructed during the TSC were "missing."

1.1 | Introduction of Community-Led Total Sanitation in India

Various actors, aware of these shortcomings, tried to introduce other approaches during those years. One of the most relevant, due to its scale and international recognition, was the Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) approach, promoted by the World Bank's Water and Sanitation Programme (WSP) in South Asia since 2002. CLTS uses participatory tools to enable rural communities to analyze their sanitary situation in order to inspire a collective desire to take action and create an ODF environment. The community should build as per its capacity and knowledge, without financial support or technical prescriptions (Kar & Chambers, 2008).

The introduction of the CLTS faced several obstacles. First, the widespread use of up-front subsidies in the TSC (WaterAid, 2008) clashed with the zero-subsidy perspective of the CLTS (Sanan, 2011). As a consequence, there was strong opposition at the national level. However, the decentralized character of the TSC allowed the CLTS approach to be piloted (Kumar & Shukla, 2011) and subsequently spread through a series of workshops.

In 2005–2006, WSP started a structured CLTS scaling-up strategy, based on creating an enabling environment, targeting both favourable and challenging states. Workshops and training were used as entry points in order to expose decision-makers to CLTS and create a critical mass of trainers and facilitators at the state and district level. Interested administrations were afterwards supported for its roll-out, and a benchmarking system was used to follow and encourage progress. Haryana and Himachal Pradesh were the first to show interest, but other states, including Madhya Pradesh (MP), followed soon after (Knowledge Links, 2011; Kumar & Shukla, 2011). However, due to the hostile national policy environment, CLTS relied on committed government officials, who had to balance their conviction in CLTS with the reality of its non-acceptance in policy (Kumar & Shukla, 2011). This resulted in mixed approaches when going to scale, with elements of the TSC widespread practice. In addition, there was over-reporting, while post transfers undermined initial successes (Chambers, 2009; Joshi, 2011). The WSP strategy of using extensive training as an entry point yielded average results, with remarkable achievements only in Himachal Pradesh (Sanan, Chauhan, & Rana, 2010).

In the last few years, UNICEF MP has tried a different strategy in Madhya Pradesh. As an entry point for taking CLTS to scale, instead of extensive promotion, the idea was to focus on a selected block and make it ODF. A more intense accompaniment was envisaged, to make sure CLTS was used in its true spirit and local champions got enough support. The idea was that success on the ground would attract the attention of the concerned district and state, and scale up the approach (Knowledge

Links, 2011). In 2010, UNICEF MP targeted Budhni block in collaboration with the local government. Initial results were promising, but still mixed and with emerging challenges (Shukla, 2012).

As a whole, not much is known about how these different strategies worked out. Existing studies tend to focus on challenges, looking at what worked and what did not, but paying little attention to the policy processes that surround the efforts to introduce the CLTS approach, and how these shape the intervention at the field and the subsequent outcomes. The neglect of political issues applies to studies on the TSC—with the exception of WSP studies on the enabling environment.

This article targets this gap and tries to deepen the understanding on policy processes in the sanitation sector. The aim of the article is to unpack the policy processes around the introduction of CLTS in different areas of India, and understand how they shape the resulting interventions and, consequently, their outcomes. In order to do so, we propose an analytical framework, which comprises policy narratives, agents and interests. We then look at three experiences, involving both the WSP extensive training strategy and the recent block-focused strategy. We believe that a better understanding of these processes will help devise smarter strategies to influence the Indian sanitation policies. The framework proposed may also be useful for understanding and influencing sanitation-related policy processes in other settings.

2 | THE RESEARCH: ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 | Analytical framework for understanding sanitation-related policy processes

Historically, development theory and practice have been "strangely ignorant of politics" (Duncan & Williams, 2010, p. 4). Policy was viewed from a conventional perspective: a linear, top-down process in which rational decisions are taken by those with authority over a particular policy area (McGee, 2004; Wolmer, 2006), based on "sound" knowledge provided by experts (McGee, 2004). Responsibility is then handed over to bureaucrats, whose task is to implement the policy (McGee, 2004; Wolmer, 2006). This conventional view has shaped most of the development policy analyses over the past decades.

In the 2000s, some development scholars questioned this perspective for being "patently far removed from real life" (McGee, 2004, p. 7) and having questionable underlying assumptions, such as rational behaviour of decision-makers (Keeley & Scoones, 2003) or value-free implementation (Wolmer, 2006). A new process perspective was proposed, aiming to open up the programme black-box and examine the policy process more comprehensively (Love, 2004; McGee, 2004). Policies are understood as a broad course of action and interrelated decisions that evolve over time (Keeley & Scoones, 2003), with no single optimal solution. The policy process is iterative and complex, with experts and policy-makers co-constructing policies, and where implementation involves discretion and negotiation (Wolmer, 2006).

The conventional perspective remains nevertheless prevalent in development circles (McGee, 2004). Even more so in the water and sanitation community, which is considered "very technical" (World Bank, 2011, p. 8) and started looking at policy processes in the late 2000s (Harris, Kooy, & Jones, 2011). Studies focusing on sanitation policy processes are scarce (Krause, 2007; World Bank, 2011) and predominantly take the form of political economy analysis (Harris et al., 2011), where the focus is on how power and resources are distributed between different groups and on how their underlying interests, incentives and relationships evolve over time and shape policies (DFID, 2009).

While political economy analysis is very valuable, we argue that it can be risky to view actors' interests as the only explanation for their behaviour, overlooking the role of knowledge and discourse. Moreover, it may lead to a monolithic single-solution and non-normative perspective on the policy, downplaying the relevance of contested perspectives. Finally, it can end up being a narrowly group-focused analysis that overlooks the role of individuals and their agency within the broader groups.

Therefore, we developed an analytical framework inspired by the approach of Keeley and Scoones (2003) and used for environment policy processes (Wolmer, 2006), which we believe overcomes the shortcomings mentioned and has analytical power for sanitation policy processes such as the introduction of CLTS in India. The framework has three relevant spheres: narratives, agents and interests. Narratives or policy discourses are the entry point of the framework, which then considers how policy agents coalesce around these narratives and the role played by the existing interests and politics (linked to political economy). The three spheres are described in detail below.

Policy narratives are linked to knowledge and discourse. Narratives are simple stories about change with a beginning, a middle and an end. They describe events or define problems in certain ways, elaborate its consequences and outline solutions. Narratives have strong influence on policy-makers' and others' perceptions of reality, and thus on policy decisions. Often, naïve narratives simplifying complex issues are the ones which gain authority and become dominant, shaping the policies and persisting despite the contestation of alternative narratives. However, the latter may eventually overthrow the dominant ones and put forward new ways of framing problems and solutions.

Policy agents involve policy actors that play an important role in shaping the policy process. They may be groups and institutions but also pro-active individuals, belonging to the government, opposition, private sector, donors, civil society … They tend to coalesce around shared identities or perspectives, forming alliances that spread and promote their shared policy narrative, for instance through publications, events, funding … Thus, valid knowledge is established, orthodox practice is reinforced and priorities are set. This can happen for networks around the dominant narrative, as well as for those trying to increase the profile of alternative ones.

Policy interests, even if not articulated through networks or explicit narratives, strongly shape policy processes. Actors with power and authority over the process at its different stages tend to favour the narrative that better suits their interests, potentially affecting its intended effects. These interests can be displayed during the decision-making process, or affect the implementation more subtly, and may be more or less legitimate. When the interests of several actors align with the dominant narrative, it can become perpetuated. Policy is then set out as objective and value-free and termed with technical language, hiding its political nature.

The interplay between these three overlapping spheres limits the room for effecting policy change. Generally, if networks of actors are tightly formed around the dominant narrative and this narrative preserves their interests, the policy space will be minimal; high levels of policy inertia are to be expected. However, new actors emerge, others change over the time, contexts and circumstances evolve. So, new arguments can enter the debate and networks can reshuffle, enlarging the policy space and allowing alternative narratives to be acknowledged, opening a path to policy change. This happens at different levels (from local to global) and the policy space will vary at each of them. The interplay also takes place against a background or broad context that will be determinant and has thus to be considered. Figure 1 synthesizes the proposed framework.

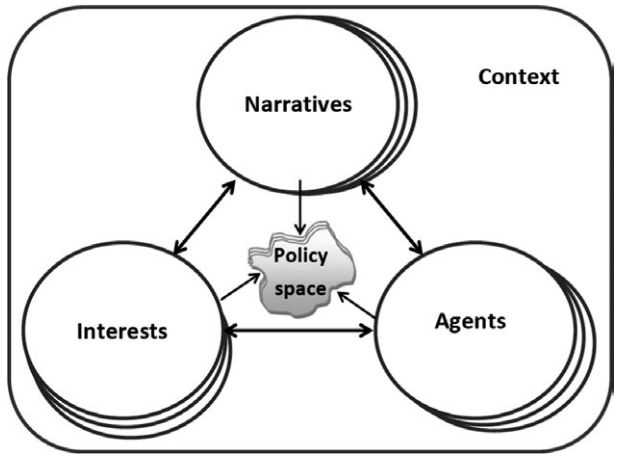

FIGURE 1 Representation of the analytical framework
Source: The authors

2.2 | Methodology

Three experiences of the introduction of CLTS—summarized in table 1—are analyzed. Two belong to WSP strategy to use extensive training as entry points: Khandwa district in MP and Mandi district in Himachal Pradesh. The districts were top performers within their state, according to existing evidence. The third is Budhni block in MP, where UNICEF pioneered the ODF-block-focus strategy.

Multiple policy documents were reviewed and 80 interviews were held with key informants at the national, state and case study levels, including politicians, government officers, supporting agency, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academics and front-line staff. To contrast this information with the ground reality and get a general picture of the outcomes, an average of 16 villages were briefly visited in each case study area, and the three best performing Gram Panchayats (GPs) were selected for in-depth studies. In these three GPs, several research tools were used (including random surveys, interviews, observation, transect walks …) in order to get a deep understanding on the intervention happening locally (the materialization of the policy) and the process of the community towards a better sanitary situation. The article focuses on policy-related aspects of a broader research that took place in 2011. The main limitations relate to the identity of the field researcher (male and Spanish) which resulted in a triple gap of culture, language and gender, and affected the field level research.

TABLE 1 Characteristics of the Case Studies

State	Case	Scaling-up entry point	Supporting agency	Initial year
Madhya Pradesh	Khandwa district	Extensive training sessions	WSP	2006
Himachal Pradesh	Mandi district	Extensive training sessions	WSP	2006
Madhya Pradesh	Budhni block	ODF-block focus	UNICEF	2010

3 | SANITATION NARRATIVES IN INDIA

Sanitation has traditionally been neglected in the development agenda (Black & Fawcett, 2008) and India is not an exception. The first country-level sanitation programme started in 1986. Known as the CRSP, it was a supply-led campaign for constructing toilets. In 1999, the Government of India—supported by UNICEF—launched the TSC, which represented a radical shift towards demand-led sanitation that was, however, not reflected in practice. Other actors such as WSP started their efforts to introduce the CLTS approach.

We see there were different perspectives on how to solve the sanitation crisis; different policy narratives. These can be grouped into three cluster narratives. First, the official narrative embodied in the TSC guideline. Second, a covert narrative, heir of the supply-led CRSP and present in the discourses of many of those involved in the TSC implementation. And third, the CLTS narrative, brought forward by actors advocating for CLTS.

All framed the problem similarly: unhygienic defecation practices result in detrimental sanitary impacts, and shared the overall policy aim: to improve the sanitary situation by eliminating open defecation. However, the narratives differed in the causes of the problem, and assigned different roles and expectations to the various actors involved. As a consequence, the pathway they proposed for solving the problem varied too.

3.1 | TSC official narrative

The official TSC narrative portrays the lack of awareness of the benefits of sanitation as the main cause of India's sanitary crisis. The lack of resources is a further obstacle, especially for poor households. Therefore, the sanitation campaign should put the "emphasis on creating awareness through intensive IEC [information, education and communication] to bring about attitudinal and behavioural changes" (Government of India, 2004, p. 3). The logic follows that once people have been exposed to IEC tools, they will understand the benefits of sanitation and consequently build and use a latrine and stop open defecation. Those below the poverty line might have financial problems that preclude access to sanitation, which can be compensated with a cash incentive. The administration has to initiate this process through IEC tools, but then the community has to lead the process and households have to build the latrines: "It is a facilitating process for a community-led campaign for demand generation of sanitation facilities" (Government of India, 2004, p. 3).

3.2 | Covert narrative

The covert narrative, generally non-explicit, is the one through which many government officers at different levels articulated their actions. According to this narrative, lack of money, along with tradition, ignorance of the benefits of sanitation and low priority of sanitation, are the main cause of poor sanitary conditions. The sanitation campaign has to focus on building subsidized toilets in order to overcome the poverty obstacle. The inherent assumption runs "that availability of sanitary latrine at the household level would entail its usage and the resultant health benefits" (WaterAid, 2008, p. 31). Once households realize these benefits, behaviour change will become entrenched. This narrative "considers subsidy to be essential for the success of TSC" (WaterAid, 2008, p. 33). Evidence points to this as the dominant narrative, both from the literature (WaterAid, 2008) and from interviews like one to a WSP member: "[government officials] did not believe the TSC no-money issue … states wanted to stick to the construction

mode." IEC is viewed as having a secondary role, as it is difficult to make people understand and change practices, due to their "backwardness." Further, a top-down implementation led by the government is needed in order to make progress, as lack of interest in sanitation does not allow communities to take an active role.

3.3 | CLTS narrative

According to the CLTS narrative, most people in the community know about the problems that inadequate sanitation entails and are able to change the situation (Kar & Chambers, 2008). However, due to the taboo surrounding faeces and the inertia of social practices, they have not reflected on it and are locked into the habit of open defecation. The sanitation campaign needs to focus on breaking this taboo. It helps "communities to understand and realize the negative effects of poor sanitation and empowers them to collectively find solutions to their sanitation situation" (World Bank, 2007, p. 6). A triggering session is the best way to do that, bringing the issue of faeces crudely into public discussion. The seriousness of the problem and its public dimensions are then recognized by the community, and powerful emotions are sparked, resulting in a firm determination to take action. The community will then lead their sanitary transformation, and outsiders should only provide support when strictly needed. People will build toilets according to their resources; external subsidies should be avoided as, in the words of a CLTS consultant interviewed, they "can create culture against participatory approach." The strong determination to change ensures it is a collective process, those better-off help those who have problems building a toilet and any challenge to sustainability will find an adequate response.

4 | THE POLICY PROCESS IN KHANDWA DISTRICT IN MADHYA PRADESH

4.1 | Madhya Pradesh

MP is a big state in central India that is among the least developed in India, ranking low on almost all human development indicators. The large number of schemes aimed at the poor generally fail to reach them partly due to alarming corruption levels (Transparency International India, 2008). Rural latrine coverage was 9% in 2001 (Government of India, 2012b).

The sanitation campaign in MP was described as "overwhelmingly supply-driven" (Robinson & Raman, 2008, p. 3) and was consistently construction-focused and subsidy-led, with households having little choice, control or involvement; the covert narrative was clearly dominant. The campaign had a strong technocratic inertia, as it was initially under the Public Health Engineering Department (PHED). However, until 2006, the main feature of the campaign was the lack of political priority, with very little involvement of the government, underutilized budgets and many vacancies among TSC officials. The popularization of the NGP awards, however, raised the political profile of sanitation, and a state sanitation strategy was drafted in 2006, inspired by the TSC official narrative. Nevertheless, the adherence to the strategy was low (Robinson & Raman, 2008), mainly because the interests of many relevant actors were converging in the covert narrative, favouring the status quo. These include contradictory professional incentives related to misdirected accountability, which resulted in government officers dedicating more efforts to meet formal requirements (disbursing incentives and providing the expected monitoring data and reports) than to actually introducing the campaign, hence favouring a top-down implementation. Further relevant interests were corruption and political patronage, both of government officials and political

leaders at lower levels. These interests are better protected with money-intense supply-driven and subsidy-centred campaigns. A flawed monitoring system—MP has high levels of "missing latrines"—and lax NGP verification completed the loop: underperformance was neither recorded nor penalized.

As was happening in most of the country (Hueso & Bell, 2013), these interests coupled with the lack of enthusiasm for the official narrative, resulted in a constrained policy space; the sanitation campaign was dominated by the covert narrative.

Similarly, the CLTS alternative narrative promoted by WSP did not get much attention from the state. However, the lack of support for the official narrative resulted in a less hostile stand towards the CLTS, which was accepted as "a further option of the IEC mix," according to an interviewee from the state government. It was thus possible for WSP to develop their extensive training strategy. Between 2007 and 2009 they organized exposure visits and CLTS training workshops in 25 districts. Half of these required further training and assistance, but a change of leadership led to short-lived adoptions of the approach in most cases. In Khandwa, which adopted CLTS in 2007 and is considered the best performing of the CLTS districts, the story seemed different.

4.2 | Khandwa district

The district commissioner (highest administrative authority) in Khandwa started supporting the CLTS narrative after being exposed to it; he felt there was a need to "involve the community and make the campaign demand driven" (personal communication, January 30, 2011). With WSP, he tried to introduce the CLTS approach to the blocks where the Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) were supportive. However, other relevant actors kept supporting the covert narrative.

For instance, there was resistance from local level bureaucracy due to the perception that the new approach implied more work and that it would be difficult to mobilize communities: "we did not have enough time for so many field visits" (personal communication, February 23, 2011). This is related to the technocratic inertia, illustrated by the fact that it was the district sub-engineers who were the ones in charge of most of the triggering and follow-up.

At the village level there were, on the one hand, local politicians interested in managing big and malleable funds, useful for corruption and patronage. On the other hand, there was distrust towards the new self-help policy narrative, which was coming from an administration that had habituated them to top-down policy disconnected from their problems, illustrated by the evictions and poor compensation that followed the construction of a reservoir nearby.

Moreover, there were targets and pressure from the state level to show results and win NGPs. This, coupled with flawed monitoring and verification, favoured rushed top-down implementation and reinforced misdirected accountability mechanisms and professional incentives; they had to "hurry to get the NGP," in the words of a block authority (personal communication, February 20, 2011).

As a whole, the network introducing the new narrative was strong, but so were those behind the covert narrative, too. The policy space was not big enough to allow a policy totally coherent with the CLTS narrative; diverging interests had to be accommodated.

The result was a hasty implementation based on a mixed approach with elements of both narratives: CLTS triggering tools were used instrumentally, community mobilization happened along with top-down subsidy—driven toilet construction. In addition, after some time various champions at the district and block level were transferred. The new officers showed less interest in sanitation, so the process decayed even more. Finally, when the NGP verification process concluded, sanitation activities ceased completely.

Initially, results looked promising: in Baledi block, base of one CEO championing CLTS, 18 out of 22 GPs received the NGP. However, the survey we conducted in 2011 in one of its best performing GPs showed toilet coverage at just 56% (±11% confidence interval and 95% confidence level). Only one of its five schools had functional toilet facilities. Other awarded GPs visited showed invariably poorer records. Census data later revealed a rural sanitation coverage of 17.4% in Khandwa, up from 10.1% in 2001 (Government of India, 2012a). This represents a modest jump of 7.3 percentage points which is, however, almost twice the average jump in the state.

5 | THE POLICY PROCESS IN MANDI DISTRICT, HIMACHAL PRADESH

5.1 | Himachal Pradesh

Himachal Pradesh is a small mountainous and rural state in northwest India, with notable economic accomplishments and good social indicator levels. Its administration is one of the most effective and least corrupt (Transparency International India, 2008). Rural latrine coverage was 28% in 2001 (Government of India, 2012b).

Himachal, unlike other states, had a community-led sanitation campaign and is generally presented as a success story of the CLTS approach. How did the introduction of CLTS come about?

Previous failed supply-driven sanitation programmes had left a legacy of disappointment and inaction towards sanitation among state decision-makers (Rosensweig, Perez, & Robinson, 2012), who consequently did not engage with the TSC. The lack of interest was such that until 2005 progress was anecdotal and none of the narratives had any substantial support (Sanan, 2011). Thus, efforts made to introduce the CLTS narrative were met by a fairly broad policy space. The lever of this change was a high-level government officer in the department responsible for TSC. After an exposure workshop, he decided to introduce the approach in his state. With the technical support of WSP, he led a long-term effort to set up a new sanitation policy inspired in the CLTS narrative, adopted in 2005. It outlined a demand-led approach, based on community involvement and ownership, rejecting subsidization of latrines and emphasizing monitoring and evaluation (Government of Himachal Pradesh, 2005).

The coalition between the officer and WSP was a powerful one; they shared the aim and the commitment to make sanitation happen, and had the power to interact with officers and politicians at every level and get more people on board. For one thing, through successful pilots they convinced the highest authorities in Himachal of the potential of CLTS and secured their political buy-in and support. This includes the state Chief Minister who, after witnessing the initial results, endorsed and supported the efforts to make sanitation happen. For another thing, workshops and exposure visits persuaded middle- to high-ranking government officers, and several champions emerged throughout the state.

An informal network of actors supporting the CLTS narrative was formed. Gradually, through appropriate institutional arrangements, they aligned the interests of other actors with the CLTS narrative. For instance, local actors were recognized for their achievements in sanitation with celebrations in ODF villages. A competitive and multi-level state award scheme was launched in 2007, with rigorous verification by inter-block committees and awards distribution in public functions. This raised the priority of sanitation among local authorities and villagers.

Massive training sessions on sanitation and CLTS were conducted and NGOs were hired to support the districts implementation capacity and the District Water and Sanitation Missions met regularly to monitor the campaign. These measures offset the misdirected accountability within the administration that was experienced elsewhere in India.

5.2 | Mandi district

Mandi was the district that pioneered the implementation of the campaign in Himachal, fuelled by the leadership of the District Deputy Commissioner (highest officer in the district). The political priority he gave to the campaign was reflected in his continuous field visits. The importance of the campaign and the need to implement it in a systematic way was transmitted "down the line," using his own words. There was also an acknowledgement of the challenge sanitation represented and, as a consequence, monitoring mechanisms were not only accountability-oriented, but also aimed at learning. Similarly, there were monthly meetings of the Mission to review progress and tackle obstacles. These measures created a learning environment where challenges were acknowledged and addressed jointly, thus doing away with contradictory professional incentives typical of target-oriented implementation, and reducing over-reporting. A further factor contributing to this was the absence of cash subsidies for household latrine construction, which prevented corrupt behaviours (although some years later the central government forced the state to disburse subsidies to BPL households).

At the village level, the new narrative initially generated some mistrust, as elected leaders felt that it would be difficult to change sanitation practices without subsidies. But continuous efforts to motivate and involve local leaders and organizations yielded results in several GPs and these celebrated successes, sparking competition among GPs.

The strong institutional structure thus quickly aligned the interests of all relevant actors with the narrative promoted and allowed an effective policy change towards the CLTS narrative.

However, Mandi also illustrates the adaptation of the CLTS narrative, which later took place throughout Himachal. The NGO engaged as a support organization for generating demand disliked the crude and explicit CLTS triggering tools and disputed their centrality in the campaign. Instead, they believed that their own traditional sensitization tools were more effective. They thus articulated a slightly modified narrative, though still in line with the CLTS principles: zero-subsidy, bottom-up and collective focused. This narrative highlights the education of local people, which makes use of more conventional street theatre and door-to-door visits by villagers more suitable for motivating the community. These tools had been used since 1992 by the NGO in literacy and educational campaigns, using an extensive network of grassroots collaborators. The administration in Mandi accepted these arguments and endorsed the modified narrative: "we did a community-led campaign, focused on behaviour change, but with other methodology," stated a district authority (personal communication, August 29, 2011).

As a result, Mandi had a well-planned intervention inspired by community-led principles, but using endogenous tools for generating behaviour change. The campaign in Mandi was very successful, with many ODF villages in the best performing blocks. The survey in one of the most award-winning GPs showed a jump from 32% to 100% use (survey, ±6% confidence interval and 95% confidence level). Census data recently revealed that Himachal Pradesh is the state with the highest decadal coverage increase in India, with almost every district showing high increases. Mandi has the highest performance, reaching 82% in 2011 (Government of India, 2012a) an impressive jump from only 28% in 2005 (Vaidya, Sharma, & Negi, n.d.).

6 | THE POLICY PROCESS IN BUDHNI BLOCK, MADHYA PRADESH

In 2010, back in MP, one CLTS champion from Khandwa was appointed as the Budhni CEO and wanted to introduce the approach there. Coincidentally, the newly post-WASH specialist in UNICEF

MP, decided to focus on the block level in order to showcase the potential of CLTS and scale up later. They thus allied around the CLTS narrative and tried to make Budhni (Sehore district) ODF.

As in Khandwa and elsewhere in MP, other actors involved in sanitation could derail these efforts, as their interests would be better protected by the covert narrative. However, and partly thanks to what had been learned from Khandwa, actions were taken to reorient interests, reduce the power of opposing actors and establish alliances with other actors.

First, instead of using government officers as facilitators, the CLTS training was open to GP Sarpanches (elected GP heads), GP secretaries and local people in general. In order to ensure the commitment of the facilitators, they had to work voluntarily for the first months. This bypassed obstacles such as technocratic inertia, contradictory professional incentives or competing priorities. The facilitators were committed to their mission, of course, along with personal interests, such as improving skills, raising their professional profile, getting recognition, that were nevertheless compatible with the CLTS narrative, as the accountability system was in keeping with the aims of the campaign. For one thing, there was an acknowledgement that the mission was a challenging one and required sustained effort. In the words of a block authority: "CLTS is analogous to raga music; you have to keep playing one note! Good results will come." Additionally, achieving ODF was identified as the aim, instead of getting NGP awards. Frequent field visits of facilitators and external people deterred to a big extent over-reporting incentives.

Moving to the villagers, at least four measures were devised in order to get them involved. First, an exit strategy was devised: facilitators would initially support the village monitoring committees created during the triggering, but slowly withdraw. Successful monitoring committees would be institutionalized and entitled to manage funds for related schemes such as liquid waste management. Second, there was mistrust towards the CLTS-empowering discourse coming from a traditionally paternalistic administration. Apart from the previously mentioned non-administration profile of facilitators, the emphasis was both on households and also on educational buildings, which were provided with adequate sanitation facilities showing that the administration would play its part. The personal involvement of a CEO with a reputation of honesty and strictness, also contributed to it. Third, recognition was given to village level actors through awards to best performing monitoring committees and regular field visits from authorities and occasionally from UNICEF in order to monitor progress and celebrate success, boosting their enthusiasm. Fourth, after some time facilitators realized that resistance to the campaign was mostly related to political, caste or personal rivalry. One facilitator explained that they consequently modified their approach and tried to identify those that would potentially obstruct the campaign and involved them in the monitoring committees.

A final group was above the block level, the district Sehore administration, which was interested in a standard implementation of the TSC, and thus aligned with the covert narrative. They were not appreciative of the changes in Budhni, especially the withholding of subsidies. Their pressure on the block CEO to disburse these funds, and their opposition to hire facilitators was neutralized by the involvement of UNICEF MP, which helped to legitimize the CEO's decisions and made funds available for mobilization.

In these ways, the alliance between block CEO and UNICEF slowly opened the policy space, creating a web of committed actors around the CLTS narrative, which became dominant.

The result was a well-planned intervention that was coherent with the CLTS narrative, in terms of both tools and principles. In one of the best performing GPs, two months after the triggering 99.5% toilet coverage had been achieved and regular use was reported by 96% of households (survey, ±6% confidence interval and 95% confidence level), while in the other 4% toilet use varied depending on family member or on external factors like water availability. Although in other GPs

progress was slower, or even stagnated, as a whole the results were very promising, as confirmed by the fact that 11 of the approximately 25 GPs triggered in the first phase were awarded the NGP in 2011.

7 | DISCUSSION

Comparing these cases, several elements are worth highlighting.

Mandi and Khandwa were both part of the extensive training strategy, but their policy processes and the coherence of the resulting interventions diverged. This divergence is explained by the strength of the leaders championing sanitation, as well as by the governance quality in the two districts and the states' sanitation policies and overall contexts.

Khandwa and Budhni, both in MP, presented very different policy processes. The main explanatory factors were the administrative level (district vs block), the governance quality, the experience of the leaders and the external support received, along with a slightly different state sanitation policy, related to the time elapsed between both interventions.

Finally, both Budhni and Mandi showed enabling policy processes and coherent interventions, despite their many differences (in scale, state policy, etc.). The common elements were the strong and committed leadership of powerful government officers and the conscious "management" of the policy process through a strategic campaign design.

So, how did these elements of the policy processes around the introduction of CLTS shape the resulting sanitation interventions?

The cases studied show that the policy process around the introduction of CLTS is indicative of the sanitation interventions taking place locally. These efforts take place within a pre-existing sanitation policy, generally with differing perspectives. The process can be understood as the contraposition of policy narratives. The available policy space will determine the extent to which the CLTS narrative becomes dominant and results in a coherent intervention. The policy space depends in turn on the strength of the agents supporting the contending narratives and on the interests of the various actors involved. The cases also show that it is difficult for a pure CLTS narrative to become dominant; some mixture or variation is to be expected as a result of the policy process. This is especially true if the introduction is taking place at scale, as more actors will be involved: Budhni, being the only sub-district experience, was where the intervention was closest to the CLTS approach. The changes and adaptations of the narrative are not always negative, however. It depends on whether they are just the outcome of the accommodation of private interests of powerful actors, or rather the result of a fair contraposition of perspectives. Khandwa, where the resulting intervention was a mixture of approaches suiting vested interests, illustrates the first situation. Mandi, in turn, exemplifies the second situation: its sanitation campaign resulted from a modification of the CLTS narrative aiming to adapt the sensitization tools to local sensitivities.

As previously mentioned, the interests of the actors involved play a key role. The most relevant is the political priority given to sanitation, which is needed at various levels in order to make any sanitation intervention work, even more so in the case of a "different" one like CLTS. This need for political priority is partly related to the various interests playing against the CLTS narrative that have to be countered. For instance, contradictory professional incentives and technocratic inertia among the government bureaucrats favour quick top-down and supply-led interventions, incompatible with CLTS. Similarly, the corruption and political patronage prevalent in many areas of rural India privilege construction-oriented and subsidy-based campaigns. Khandwa exemplifies how these interests can derail the efforts to introduce the CLTS narrative. Budhni and Mandi, in turn, show that the

interests can be circumvented in order to reduce their bearing on the intervention, or even partly re-aligned so that they favour the new sanitation strategy. For instance, corruption and patronage were countered by eliminating the subsidy and delaying the household incentive. Part of the competing interests from bureaucrats were neutralized by reducing their role in the campaign: engaging an NGO as support organization in the case of Mandi and training people coming from the grassroots as CLTS facilitators in the case of Budhni. Mandi also managed to set up an institutional framework that made the professional incentives of bureaucrats coherent with the policy.

Whether the interests opposing the CLTS narrative prevail depends mainly on the power of the agents promoting each narrative. When networks around the CLTS narrative include powerful, experienced and committed champions, it was easier to counter those interests, whereas the networks supporting other narratives were weaker. High-level administrative authorities have to be at the core of these networks. The states also play a role, either strengthening the networks or weakening them. Himachal Pradesh (Mandi) illustrates the first option, with a sanitation policy coherent with CLTS, while in MP (Khandwa and Budhni) the default mode of the campaign was contrary to CLTS. International organizations such as WSP and UNICEF are also relevant elements of the network. In Budhni, for instance, the support of UNICEF was useful to counterbalance the negative effects of the state and district sanitation policy. In the end, whatever the configuration of the network, the main issue is whether they are strong enough to steer the policy process in order to allow a sanitation intervention coherent with the narrative promoted.

But networks are not pre-existing. At the beginning, there may be just a single agent trying to introduce the CLTS narrative, generally an external organization. Advocacy work, training sessions and exposure visits are very useful at this stage, when there is a need to legitimize the new narrative, gain allies and form a network around the CLTS narrative. There is a need, however, to quickly connect with enthusiastic and powerful champions from within (administration or government), if the policy space is to be expanded. The amplitude of these networks is also important, as the over-reliance on champions involves a risk due to the frequent transfer from post to post in the Indian administration. Khandwa and Mandi, where more years had elapsed, witnessed the transfers of sanitation champions. In Mandi though, the fact that the support organization and many people in the administration had become part of the network supporting the new narrative diminished the impact of the transfers.

Obviously, the context is also important, be it facilitating or complicating the work of the agents trying to introduce the CLTS narrative. Of the many elements playing a role, the most relevant are related to the governance quality. For instance, where corruption is rampant it is more difficult to introduce the CLTS narrative, as it plays against most vested interests. Similarly, when the relationship between citizens and state is one of mistrust, a government campaign with a discourse based on empowerment and community mobilization will not be welcome at either grassroots or administrative level. On the contrary, good governance offers an environment favourable to the CLTS narrative. Himachal Pradesh illustrates this, and MP has a more challenging situation. Nevertheless, local context matters, too. In Mandi, for instance, the governance quality was exceptionally good, with a historically positive relationship between citizens and the administration. In MP, there were also differences between Budhni and Khandwa. Inadequately compensated evictions relating to the construction of a reservoir in Khandwa had left a negative political environment, with little scope for honest collaboration. In Budhni, the reputation for probity of the block CEO resulted in better governance.

8 | CONCLUSIONS

In the cases studied, the introduction of CLTS resulted in very diverse policy processes.

In Khandwa district (MP), the state policy was not enabling, with top-down pressure to achieve quick results in order to achieve as many NGP awards as possible. In addition, the champions introducing the approach did not have sufficiently powerful allies—and were soon transferred—and could thus not counter the many interests converging behind the covert narrative. The resulting policy pathway had thus to accommodate these interests, resulting in a mixed intervention, combining CLTS tools with principles from the covert narrative, and yielding poor outcomes.

In Mandi district (HP), the state policy was enabling—embracing the CLTS narrative—and there were sanitation champions in key positions of the district administration, along with an NGO with experience in rural development work. They were able to set up a campaign based on the CLTS principles—though without the CLTS facilitation tools, using their traditional sensitization tools instead—and realign the interests of the main actors involved, making a coherent intervention possible and leading to extraordinary achievements.

In Budhni block (MP), being at a lower administrative level, the strongly committed block CEO and from UNICEF in a supporting role formed a network strong enough to introduce the CLTS as the approach for the rural sanitation campaign, despite an overall contrary state policy (though less intense than at that point of time of Khandwa). The previous experience of the CEO in Khandwa allowed him to design a strategy to offset interfering interests, and the intervention was implemented coherently with the CLTS narrative, with promising results.

The research showcases the difficulties for scaling up CLTS, primarily the opposition it faces (Chambers, 2009; Deak, 2008), which is related to vested interests in subsidies, pressure to disburse, technocracy and scepticism.

But by looking at policy narratives, agents trying to change policies and the vested or legitimate interests of actors involved, the complex and contested policy process around the introduction of CLTS comes into the picture.

In fact, the CLTS narrative entered the Indian policy debate at a time when there was already a tension between the TSC official policy narrative—not that different to the CLTS one—and the covert narrative, heir of the previous top-down supply-led approach. This covert narrative, suiting the interests of many politicians and bureaucrats—political patronage, technocratic inertia, professional incentives, corruption or low priority of sanitation—remained dominant and shaped the implementation of the campaign all over the country. Even the NGP awards, which boosted the profile of sanitation nationally, were unable to change these dynamics, partly due to a flawed monitoring system and lax verification. This was the narrow policy space CLTS had to face when introduced in a specific area in India.

Understanding this policy space enables better preparation of the strategies to introduce CLTS. It is not (only) about "convincing" the actors of the excellence of CLTS, but also about addressing these competing interests, either trying to realign them (for example, the professional incentives) or offsetting them (for example, corruption). This requires the presence of champions from the administration in the centre of a network promoting the CLTS narrative. And this network must gradually grow strong enough to tackle these interests.

The framework puts more focus on the dynamism and political economy dimensions of the policy process, compared to the idea of the enabling environment (Robinson, 2012) and helps understanding this reliance on champions, and revisit the tensions they face (Kumar & Shukla, 2011), especially the pressure from other actors for an implementation-as-usual sanitation campaign. This pressure is especially effective when it comes from superiors, making the counterbalancing role of the external agencies such as WSP or UNICEF essential.

The focus on narratives also sheds new light on compromises and mixed approaches. The deviation from the CLTS orthodoxy is pointed to as problematic in the literature (Kar & Milward,

2011), and it may well be the case when these compromises are just the consequence of post transfers or private interests of powerful actors. In other cases, the changes in the approach may be an adaptation resulting from the contraposition of narratives rooted in local perspectives and the CLTS narrative, all based on legitimate incentives, and these adaptations should not be considered negative a priori.

Regarding the different strategies for introducing CLTS in India, on the one hand the extensive training strategy seems suited to states where the policy process is more favourable to CLTS. It worked in Himachal Pradesh, where there was a CLTS champion in a high position of the state administration and a state sanitation strategy following CLTS principles was adopted. But it failed in MP (and other states), mainly due to the strong interests converging behind the covert narrative and the lack of strong and stable CLTS champions. On the other hand, the block-focused strategy used later in MP, seems better suited for such cases.

The main, if somewhat obvious, lesson is that contexts matter and policy processes are not static, so there are no blueprint strategies applicable to states in a specific typology. Instead, the "best" strategy will be to acknowledge the complexity of the evolving policy process, try to understand it, choose the course of action more adequate to it and adapt throughout the process, seizing the opportunities for change that might emerge.

Regarding the issue of "understanding the policy process," this research clearly underscores the importance of taking the policy processes into account when analyzing sanitation programmes, instead of having a technical perspective, which tends to be the norm in the sanitation sector (World Bank, 2011). The analytical framework used, which differentiates this study from the other few non-technical studies in the sector (Krause, 2007; World Bank, 2011), has proved to be useful for unpacking these processes in the Indian Total Sanitation Campaign. The inclusion of a discursive sphere (policy narratives) helps to highlight the diversity of perspectives that always exist. Combining this with the interests and agents spheres allows us to look beyond groups and how "interested" alliances are forged around a legitimizing policy story. The context-aware, dynamic and multi-level perspective of the framework further ensures a comprehensive understanding of the policy process and the resulting policy space or room for change. The characterization of the policy space can help devise smarter strategies to influence sanitation policies and programmes.

The framework would be especially useful in situations in which it is clear that a change in discourse (which inspires policy) is vital. The case presented here is a good example of such a situation, where the supply-led narrative needed to be challenged, in favour of a more community/demand-led narrative. Another example could be changing the approach of the government to sanitation in slums from a market-driven narrative to a public health narrative. Going through the three spheres would aid understanding of why one narrative is dominant and what the critical agents and interests are that need to be addressed in order to change this (if at all feasible), showing a potential pathway to action.

The framework has recently been trialled in WaterAid for policy analysis to help devise influential strategies in sanitation, and has fed into the development of their Political Economy Analysis Toolkit.

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