Whose Public Action?
Analysing Inter-sectoral Collaboration for Service Delivery

Shelter Associates and Sangli-Miraj-Kupwad Municipal Corporation: An evolving relationship

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ACRONYMS

CBO	Community Based Organization
FoSA	Friends of Shelter Associate
GIS	Geographical Information Systems
HUDCO	Housing and Urban Development Corporation
NSP	Non-State Providers
PMC	Pune Municipal Corporation
SHG	Self Help Group
SMKMC	Sangli Miraj-Kupwad Municipal Corporation
SPARC	Society for Promotion of Area Resource Centers
ULB	Urban local Bodies
USAID-FIRE (D)	USAID Financial Institutions Reforms and Expansions project (Debt Market Component)
VAMBAY	Valmiki Ambedkar Awas Yojana(Housing project for the poor)

SHELTER ASSOCIATES AND THE SANGLI-MIRAJ-KUPWAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION: AN EVOLVING RELATIONSHIP

Summary

This case study attempts to capture the relationship of Shelter Associates with two municipal corporations. Shelter is an NGO that started its work in the urban housing and sanitation sector within the jurisdiction of Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) and achieved progressive levels of maturity in its subsequent engagement with Sangli-Miraj-Kupwad Municipal Corporation (SMKMC). The primary focus of the paper is on Shelter Associate's interface with SMKMC, in terms of understanding the dynamics of the relationship between an NGO and an agency of the state. However, the paper also looks at the NGO's interaction with the PMC as a step in the trajectory of the former's growth. It identifies the relational milestones that emerged from a reflective strategy and the incorporation of lessons.

1. INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 RESEARCH AGENDA[1]

The case study is part of a larger study on non-government public action and the relationship between the state and non-state providers (NSP). The core argument of the research is that the government and NSPs involved in the delivery of specific services are conditioned by their respective organizational and institutional structure and policies. This in turn may lead to tensions over the very purpose and process of 'public action.' Further, the research hypothesizes that the manner in which the relationship is formally and informally organized also affects the capacity of partners to influence and control the service delivery agenda and process. Three service delivery sectors were identified for the research: sanitation, education and health.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

The research was undertaken in stages over a period of two and a half years and included (i) a scoping study to trace the evolution of the sector and identify the key policies and programmes; (ii) selection of a specific programme within each sector through which the core research issues were to be studied; and (iii) finally identifying cases to analyse relationships in more depth.

The urban sanitation sector was identified as one of the programmes through which the state NSP relationship was to be explored - because of its low coverage and the complexity of providing sanitation services to poor urban settlements. A rapid, largely desk based, review of a range of experiences in urban sanitation, was undertaken and critical issues were identified. The information base was further strengthened by a closer examination of the well known and documented case of urban sanitation in Mumbai being implemented by SPARC. Finally Shelter Associates, and more specifically its project in Sangli, was identified for the case study. Shelter's journey from a partnership with SPARC in Pune to independent work in the much talked about Pune sanitation

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[1] Details of the research agenda, research framework and outputs of the initial stages of the study are available on the project web-site - http://www.idd.bham.ac.uk/research/Service_Providers.shtml

programme, and then to an innovative multi stakeholder partnership in Sangli was the reason for its selection as a case study. It was visualized that the trajectory of development would facilitate an understanding the dynamics of an evolving relationship.

The case study itself was undertaken over a period of 10 months. It involved three rounds of visits to the project sites in Pune and Sangli and discussions with a range of stakeholders at various levels in government, among NGOs and beyond. Although Sangli was the focus of the study, Shelter's experience in Pune was also documented to provide a historical perspective and understand the influential factors. Therefore, detailed interviews were held with the Pune Municipal Corporation, its past and present commissioners and staff involved in the implementation of the Pune sanitation project, prior to undertaking field work in Sangli. In both the project cities, visits were also made to the project sites in the slums and intensive discussions held with the community and the local councillors.

2. THE ORGANIZATIONS IN THE RELATIONSHIPS

This section outlines the value systems, goals and activities of Shelter Associates and its state partner, SMKMC, in the sanitation programme of Sangli. It also looks at the functional structure that the two organizations have adopted in order to achieve their goals, and it attempts to identify points of commonality and difference in purpose and approach.

2.1. SHELTER ASSOCIATES

2.1.1. Origin

Shelter Associates (henceforth 'Shelter') was set up in 1993 in Pune, a city in the western Indian State of Maharashtra by a team of three architects and planners to provide technical support to community managed housing and sanitation schemes in the slums of the city. In the initial years, Shelter worked in close collaboration with SPARC, a Mumbai based NGO, and then moved away to be a fully independent organization with its activities spreading beyond Pune to other cities in the state including Sangli-Miraj-Kupwad, the site for this study.

The founders of Shelter were not looking to establish a separate dedicated organization to actualize their vision of better housing for the urban poor. In fact they only wanted to engage - as consultants or employees - with an existing organization that worked with slum dwellers and their right to housing and services, as well as to provide technical inputs for the improvement of facilities. The search led them to SPARC and Mahila Milan - its community based delivery mechanism. However, SPARC persuaded them to set up a separate organization in Pune, with assurance of its support. For six years Shelter not only worked closely with SPARC but was also helped to access external and donor resources, as the former did not have the necessary certification. During the process they also absorbed and innovated on SPARC's housing technologies and its relations with community organizations. But subsequently, Shelter and SPARC parted ways, reportedly because of differences related to the process of community participation.

2.1.2. Roles and values: commitment to the housing rights of the poor[2]

A set of inter-related beliefs and principles appear to under-pin all Shelter's activities. Though not stated as such in any comprehensive vision or mission documents, these principles and values have emerged in the course of various interviews and discussions with this researcher and others.

a. Right based: *Firstly, Shelter believes that the poor in the urban areas need better housing and sanitation conditions:*

> 'If you cannot give basic dignity to your fellow human beings, what kind of progress can you talk about?....We need to push for equitable distribution of resources. You cannot have homes that lack the most basic things.' (Joshi, director of Shelter in an interview with the BBC in 2005).

Shelter believes that adequate housing is critical to bring about a positive transformation in the lives of the poor in urban areas (Dhavse, 2007). Improving sanitation facilities and services in the slums will not only improve health conditions and reduce stress levels, but will also be an entry point for other interventions that will lead to an overall enhancement in the quality of life.

b. The poor are the best judge of their own needs: Shelter's second fundamental belief is that, *in spite of conditions of extreme deprivation, poor people themselves can find the most appropriate and effective solutions to their problems.* Shelter believes that effective planning of a housing or sanitation project for the poor requires a great degree of sensitivity to their specific needs and a willingness to make them a part of the provision process. This 'is the crux of the matter, otherwise it is not a sustainable process' (Joshi, interview, July 2007). Besides, Shelter also realised that the poor continuously work to find survival solutions to their basic service needs and that the so called 'development experts' would be able to make a difference only if they supported this process. In fact, Shelter is convinced that not only are the slum dwellers the best judges of what most suits their needs but are also the most effective channel for reaching out to the other poor, thereby initiating a process of replication of interventions. The community, thus, has to be a visible stakeholder with a 'voice', and interventions have to be community led.

c. NGO-CBO partnership is critical: *To set the community involvement in motion, however, Shelter believes that an NGO–CBO partnership is imperative because each has its own set of complementary skills* (Interview with the researcher; and Dhavse, 2007)) Thus when, with the support of NGOs, the communities organize themselves into empowered groups, it gives them additional strength to assert their rights. The NGO on the other hand is able to build on the communities' own needs and inherent skills. Though not novel or pioneering as a concept, this belief has significantly influenced Shelter's housing and service delivery approach and strategies.

d. Construction of facilities is secondary to process: *Related to this, however, is Shelter's belief that an NGO cannot be an effective 'implementer' and a community mobilizer at the same time. In fact, during discussions with the researcher, the director*

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2 Shelter does not have any elaborate 'vision and mission' documents and its simple brochure and website state the bare facts of its work. Therefore, an understanding of its basic value system has been derived through interviews and discussions of the researcher with the director as well as previous documented interviews.

indicated that for the Shelter construction of infrastructure is secondary to the 'processes'. In principle, therefore Shelter consciously attempts to distance itself from actual 'provisioning' or direct construction activities, and adopts strategies that will make for better facilities by, on one hand mobilizing and empowering community groups and on the other advocating with SMKMC to buy in on its concept of improved technologies and management techniques through 'demonstration' projects.

e. CBO-NGO-State partnership leads to a transfer of ideas: Finally, and most importantly, Shelter believes that the state itself needs to be facilitated to provide structures and services in the way that the <u>community</u> wants them and not in the way the state perceives they want. To achieve this, Shelter works on the conviction that *when an NGO works in partnership with urban local government and the community then a process of '…transfer of ideas take place that creates well-grounded solutions …' to community problems.* (Dhavse, 2007). Shelter concluded that, although the state had formulated several laws and Acts to address the needs off the poor, the way it currently works has several lacunas: lack of foresight, incapacity to work with the community and lack of a systematic approach to addressing the infrastructure requirements of the poor are seen as the major blocks. Operationalizing laws into action plans requires innovative approaches to tenure and to raising fiscal resources. Innovations in turn can be brought about if a partnership is established between local communities and local governments, with NGO's playing an intermediary role.

2.1.3. Motive: commitments, professional interests and capacities

Thus, the stated purpose of Shelter's interventions is to ensure that poor communities are empowered to demand, plan and manage their housing and basic service needs. 'Shelter Associates aim to prevent the poor from being marginalized by working to incorporate them into urban planning and formal housing systems.' (brochure of Shelter). Co-existent with this motive is the need to mobilize and facilitate the state to bring community participation prominently and functionally onto its agenda while discharging its mandated function of providing adequate housing to the poor. In fact, the director indicated that in the initial years, Shelter's interactions with the municipal corporations had been largely to negotiate for issues related to housing and services and to obtain routine but necessary clearance to itself undertake infrastructure provision. Subsequently, however, while the objective of their interventions remained the same - i.e. to build capacities of the poor as a basis for community led projects - Shelter took a decision also to participate in government-led initiatives as this would contribute towards its mandate as well as having potential for community building.

At the same time it is also evident that, while ideological commitments to relieving housing needs are the foundation of Shelter's organizational mandate, the fact that all the founder members, by interest and training, have technical expertise in the areas of urban planning and architecture, has clearly shaped the operational strategies and interventions. The chief functionary of Shelter is in fact specialized in building designs for developing countries. Thus, the need innovatively to use technical skill appears to be an implicit motivation and Shelter chooses to play a multiple but intertwined role - that of a technical innovator, community mobilizer and advocator to the urban municipal bodies for better housing and services for the poor, and, in the way that the poor want them.

2.1.4. Activities: integrating technical inputs with community participation

Shelter's activities have 'support and facilitation' and 'community led, planned and managed' approach as underlying themes and a community level collective of self-help housing groups (Baandhani) as an integral strategy. In line with this, its activities fall into the following four sub-sectors (Shelter's web-site):
  · Promoting community led housing projects for the urban poor;
  · Promoting community led settlement improvement projects, especially sanitation in the urban slums;
  · Pioneered poverty mapping using GIS in 1999-2000 to create a data base of the poor settlements;
  · Promoting community participation and organizations; and
  · Research and documentation that aims to impact government policies.

a. Resettlement projects in Pune: Shelter has so far implemented two housing resettlement projects in Pune in partnership with the PMC (with support from SPARC and Mahila Milan). The first of these was a project in a slum settlement in Datawadi, Pune. In 1996 when the slum (Rajendranagar) was demolished to widen a road, Shelter together with community federations successfully negotiated with the PMC for alternative land (at a reduced cost) and with the Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO) for a loan. It then constructed a two storied structure with shared toilets housing 56 families (Suryodaya Cooperative Housing Society). Shelter also experimented in the use of building materials that were low on cost and high on durability. Community involvement has been one way of reducing the cost of construction.[3]

Shelter's second housing project was Kamgar Putla, again in Pune. The settlement was prone to periodic flooding and hence PMC took the decision to resettle the families elsewhere. However, vested interests, lack of political will and frequent changes of municipal commissioners resulted in almost six years of turmoil and negotiations before construction could be started in 2003. Baandhani, the community based federation and the women from the community, were key partners with Shelter in the process both of negotiating for space and in designing and constructing the houses. Funds were generated by the Valmiki Ambedkar Awas Yojana (VAMBAY), a central government supported housing programme. Shelter's specific inputs into both these projects have been the organization of communities; upgrading their inherent skills and mobilizing them to be involved in the actual construction activities thereby also reducing construction costs as well as ensuring better supervision; developing technical designs keeping in mind the articulated needs of the community[4] and also available resources; and negotiating for funds from the state as well as banking institutions.

b. Urban sanitation project in Pune: Shelter has also undertaken sanitation projects in Pune and Sangli. The first project was the Pune Slum Sanitation project, a pioneering city wide programme initiated in 1999 by the then municipal commissioner, who strongly

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3 The pre-fabricated 'Laadi' beams used in the rehabilitation colony in Hadapsar in Pune is one such example.

4 Shelter was able to demonstrate that low rise and high density houses were the best suited to the slum communities as their homes often obviously double up as space for income generating activities. They were also easier to service. They evolved designs that offered better access, privacy, ventilation and more space. Shelter was able to raise the ceiling in one of the bays of the house to a height that allowed the household the use of an additional 100 sq. ft. without greatly upsetting the government specifications or resources.

supported NGO participation and in a short span of three years constructed over 400 community toilet blocks with their collaboration. The project has been widely acknowledged as being one of the first of its kind in the country where not only the partnership between corporation and NGO was reportedly effective, but where transparency and accountability were key elements of implementation. Shelter was one of the eight NGOs involved in the first phase of the project.

The municipal commissioner had decided to launch a new initiative with NGOs involved in a construction as well as a maintenance contract primarily because the existing sanitation schemes of PMC had had several gaps. Although the PMC had been constructing community toilet blocks for the previous 30 years, the results had been far from satisfactory. Not only was the number of toilets small in comparison to the need, but in the absence of any kind of community involvement, the condition of maintenance and upkeep was poor and most of them had fallen into disrepair. Besides, the costs of construction by contractors were high. (Interviews with the then municipal commissioner of Pune and director of Shelter)

Shelter was involved in the first phase of the new project, in the course of which it constructed 13 community toilets. The capital cost of construction and the provision of land, water and electricity were the responsibility of the corporation, while Shelter, like the other NGOs in the project, was responsible for design, construction and maintenance of the blocks for 30 years. Shelter, as part of the contract also had the difficult task of demolishing existing toilets. The project went on to see a second, third and a fourth phase with several changes in municipal commissioners as well as partnerships. Although, subsequently it faced some major hurdles, the project is acknowledged as having set a trend in the urban sanitation sector in the country. Shelter, however, opted out after the first phase because it could not reconcile itself to the urgent targets that were adopted which did not leave much scope for community participation. Besides, as the director indicated, 'community participation cannot happen after the toilets have been constructed'. Moreover, Shelter's aim was to facilitate technical improvements and not undertake actual construction.

c. Community led sanitation project in Sangli: In 2001 Shelter shifted the focus of its activities to Sangli and since then has undertaken an exhaustive settlement and service survey, constructed four community toilet blocks and over 300 individual toilets. These activities in Sangli have been undertaken in phases and, while each phase has been supported by different funding agencies, continuity in the strategies and interventions and a growing relationship with SMKMC are clearly visible. Currently the project is towards the end of its fourth phase.

In the first phase in 2001, Shelter was commissioned by the Indo-USAID FIRE (D) Project to review the access of the poor to basic services, more specifically sanitation facilities in the city. Shelter's role was to undertake a survey of the slums and map the existing service facilities, in the course of which it was found that 77 out of 99 slums in the city and about 90 percent of the slum population did not have access to toilets. In the second Phase, therefore, with the support of the Canadian based Institute of Governance (IOG), Shelter constructed its first two toilet blocks in SMKMC[5]. A key feature of the second phase was an overarching Forum, consisting of representatives

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[5] So far most of the construction activities under the project have taken place in slums located in the Miraj area of SMKMC.

from the government, media, communities and NGOs and created as a mechanism for participation, transparency and accountability. Impressed with the results of the phase, SMKMC decided to scale up the interventions to cover all the slums in the city. Thus, in the third phase (2004-06), again with support from the Indo-US FIRE (D) project, Shelter was commissioned to undertake a detailed mapping of slums, at the end of which it short-listed the 12 most deprived ones together with SMKMC.

The fourth and current phase is being supported by USAID and Cities Alliance through their Community Water and Sanitation Facility, wherein Shelter is facilitating SMKMC to create conditions for 'city wide slum up gradation through community mobilization, public-private cooperation, and expanded micro-credit savings plan'. 3600 households located in 12 slums are being assisted to gain access to toilet facilities. Shelter's role is to build community federations through savings groups, assess service and facility requirements and design them, co-ordinate, and assist the local administration in implementing the projects. Shelter is also expected to assist the local government to access funds for construction of toilets from the central and state governments.'

d. Poverty mapping in Pune, Sangli, and other cities in Maharashtra: A critical integrated activity is that of Poverty Mapping. This is being used to build up a comprehensive and dynamic database in a Geographical Information System (GIS) format and as a tool to mainstream low-income settlements into urban planning and development. Shelter has conducted such exercises primarily in Pune and Sangli but in a few other municipalities of the State 'poverty mapping' has evolved as a critical and integral part of Shelter's activities. It is what Shelter terms as an 'attempt to validate the rightful existence of the poor'. As architects, the founder members of Shelter were well aware of the need for spatial analysis for infrastructure and service planning. They also realised that a fundamental roadblock to inclusive urban planning and development was the lack of socio-economic and other relevant data. Whatever data were available was either inadequate, outdated or spread across different urban agencies with almost no coordination between them. Shelter wondered 'How was good governance and equitable urban planning possible without any idea (about) where half of the city was living?' (interview with the researcher) Therefore, they evolved a process of data collection with the help of the community and integrated it into a Geographical Information System (GIS) platform.

In Sangli over a period of time Shelter has started to outsource - sometimes even to trained members of the community - the data collection and the preparation of the 'Plain Table' maps under its supervision. The validation of the data, which is a tedious task, is carried out by Shelter as is the integration with GIS.

e. Community institution building in Pune and Sangli: As Shelter's approach is based on the concept of community led interventions, organizing and empowering communities is critical to the process of provision and management of facilities. 'Baandhani' (which means 'building together') has thus evolved as the platform for community participation. According to Shelter, Baandhani works on the basis of three key principles: the power of numbers, the power of money and the power of information. In operational terms 'power of numbers' assumes that the community as a whole would be able to deal with a problems which an individual cannot tackle 'Power of money' is based on the assumption that when the poor demand basic services as a right they also accept the responsibility to pay for it in cash, labour or for upkeep and management. The 'power of information' ensures that the community can confidently ask for its rights

backed by knowledge and information. Baandhani has thus been groomed to partner Shelter in all its activities and is specifically responsible for crisis savings, planning for re-settlement and settlement improvement, toilet maintenance, facilitating slum surveys and engaging in informed negotiations with the municipal agencies for better services. Baandhini also works closely with Shelter during the construction phase and so far has motivated households to provide building material and unskilled labour while also supervising the work.

Key features of the programme in Sangli have been documented as: Improving access to sanitation facilities with emphasis on individual toilets, where feasible, or community managed toilets otherwise; spatial mapping and use of GIS as a planning tool; multi stakeholder partnerships between donors, government and private sector; micro-credit savings programme and household contributions; health and hygiene education; and community-led planning and labour contributions. (FIRE (D), 2007). Shelter's sanitation programme in Sangli is the focus of this case study.

2.1.5. Structure: flat, informal and team based

Shelter is registered as a society under the Societies Registration Act of 1860 (Section 21) and a Charitable Trust in Maharashtra and is headquartered in Pune. It also has the requisite clearance to access external aid and donations and, as a non-profit organization, is exempt from paying income tax. While a Board of Trustees (ten members) provides policy level guidance, the operational activities are managed by a team of about 15 professionals comprising architects, social workers, GIS experts and community workers based in Pune and Sangli.

Women are predominant in number on the staff and a significant feature of the staff profile is the long tenure of a number of them, perhaps signifying satisfaction with both the job and the organization. More importantly, it apparently ensures relative continuity of inputs and freedom from constantly orienting new staff. Individual job profiles are not rigid and tasks and responsibilities vary with the projects in hand. Typical of a relatively recent trend in the NGO sector in India, Shelter also plays mentor to students training in as varied a range of fields as architecture, engineering, social work, etc., from institutions both in the country as well as outside. While this offers a live platform for the students, Shelter benefits from their newly gained expertise at low or no cost.

The NGO also operates a field office with a small team of three staff and three resource persons from Baandhini in Sangli, where most of its activities are currently concentrated. The Sangli team has considerable freedom to run the programme, with oversight from the Pune office. Over the years, because the local team has established a good working relationship with SMKMC and effectively manages the operational activities independently, the director's role in Sangli appears to be confined to critical policy decisions and directions and resolving crises.

Shelter perceives Baandhini to be its community based partner and has gone to the extent of including some of the latter's members - on an individual basis - on its payroll. While this does provide an income to some of the members of Baandhini, it does not appear to be the overriding factor as the amount is not very substantial. For many of them the motivating factor appears to be the status they have gained as leaders in their own community. For Shelter, on the other hand, it is an extended channel for closer links with the community. The integration of Baandhini into Shelter's structure is in fact in line

with its concept of community participation and attempts to bring the communities into the forefront as stakeholders.

Shelter apparently follows a relatively informal structure of planning and decision making, although 'Monday morning meetings' lend a semblance of formality to the process. The staff works as a team, motivated by the director's philosophy that 'if one person in the team does not work then the organization would collapse'. The director believes that the team functions well because they have the 'freedom to do something new'. Thus, a horizontal structure exists and according to the director, there is 'no policing' of the team.

At the same time, the researcher observed that there was no visible development of a second line of leadership, and larger issues of perusing new projects, negotiations at state and donor levels and fundraising were solely the responsibility of the director. However, the director countered this observation and stated that recently the senior level staff and community coordinators had been taking the initiative in interacting with various levels of government officials. The directors therefore reiterated that a second line of 'ownership' was gradually emerging. Legally Shelter is accountable to its Board of Trustees. Although initially policy level decision-making powers appear to have been shared between its three founding members, over the past few years this has come to be more concentrated in the hands of the present director. The other two founding members have moved out of the organization apparently for personal reasons.

Although the process of fund disbursement is centralized, the leadership has trust in the team and the financial management systems are uncomplicated. Shelter is accountable for the use of funds to its donors, be it the government or external agencies. Financial accountability at one level is built into each individual project mandate and procedures, and at another level to its mandatory requirements as a registered NGO with the government.

The present director of Shelter, an architect by profession, follows an informal management structure. She believes in Shelter's 'work speaking for itself' and, though she has recently been awarded a prestigious international fellowship (the Ashoka Fellowship), maintains a relatively low profile. Shelter is reticent to spread its activities too thinly and instead prefers to concentrate on geographically closer and manageable regions. Apparently open to partnering with other organizations - as indicated by its collaboration with Shiv Sadan, according to the director in reality opportunities for networking are limited, because of a lack of such organizations. Recently, however, again following a trend, Shelter has developed ties with the Holleran Centre in Connecticut College, New London (USA). A professor in the college, originally hailing from Pune, is helping to develop a partnership to include internship placements for Connecticut College students, research opportunities for the faculty as well as the students, and fundraising for Shelter. This does appear to have provided some valuable resources for the project and is acknowledged by SMKMC. Though Shelter's work is gradually coming to be known in the urban sector in Maharashtra and elsewhere, it is still considered to be a 'small NGO'.

Shelter operates from a modest rent-free office in Pune (donated by the present director's father) and a project office in Sangli run out of a small rented apartment. A typically low cost organization, Shelter is largely dependent on project funds (USAID-FIRE (D) project and Cities Alliance), some funds from the government and to some

extent, family support in the form of cost free office space, vehicle, etc. A relatively small NGO, its average annual budget over the last few years has reportedly been around Rs. 3,000,000.

2.2. THE SANGLI-MIRAJ-KUPWAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION (SMKMC)

2.2.1. Establishment of the Municipal Corporation

Sangli-Miraj-Kupwad Municipal Corporation was formed in 1998 by the merger of the three small municipal councils of Sangli, Miraj and Kupwad. Located in the south-eastern part of Maharashtra and bordering the State of Karnataka, SMKMC is now the largest municipal corporation in South Maharashtra and serves a population of 0.65 million, with 15 percent of the population estimated to be living in the slums. It is sub-divided into 68 municipal wards and is a major business and educational centre and has grown rapidly over the last few years.

2.2.2. Public action: based on constitutional mandate

SMKMC is established and governed by the provisions of the *Bombay Provincial Municipal Corporation Act,* 1949.[6] It forms the third tier of the governance structure in the country (the first two being the Federal and State governments) and as such its roles and responsibilities stem from the Act and the constitutional mandates. Accordingly, in the domain of public action, it has a set of 'obligatory' and 'discretionary' functions to perform, the scope of which has been extended in the process of decentralization launched in the early 1990s to cover urban planning, regulation and development aspects, and more significantly to also include slum improvement and up gradation as well as urban poverty alleviation (under the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act).

As an urban local body (ULB), SMKMC is constituted on the principles of self-governance and to reflect the people's wishes and strengths. Thus, it is expected to provide an environment for people's participation and its structure and systems are conceptually designed to involve them in the decision-making processes. This includes bottom-up planning and effective implementation through improved coordination with various sub-units. However, the ULBs in general are unable to perform well because of general lack of resources and capacities. Moreover, the State Government, by virtue of its constitutional jurisdiction and failure to delegate powers or devolve funds, has *de facto* legal powers over the ULBs. But SMKMC at least has the distinction of having attempted to take some radical steps and has a history of reform from the early days of its inception. Open to new initiatives like public-private partnerships, Sangli is credited to be one of the first ULBs to have attempted a partnership with the private sector to enhance the efficiency of its almost redundant water supply system, although the project itself eventually failed to take off. Its evolving partnership with Shelter in urban sanitation is another instance of the willingness to take initiatives. In interviews with the researcher, the current municipal commissioner as well as the mayor and some of his team were clear that communities needed to be involved in these projects but, as SMKMC had neither resources nor the capacity to do so, it had to look at alternative institutional arrangements.

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6 In Maharashtra, unlike other States, ULBs are governed by four different acts .

2.2.3. Functions and activities

As stated earlier, SMKMC is expected to perform all the state mandated obligatory and discretionary public service delivery functions. Obligatory functions include a range of activities including from the provision of drinking water supply, solid waste management, management of drainage and sewerage systems, street lighting, public health, primary schools, care of the destitute, disposal of dead bodies, managing roads, markets, slaughter houses, removing encroachments, registration of births and deaths, and undertaking relief work during times of disaster. Discretionary functions on the other hand include treatment of solid waste and sewerage, managing public transportation, running theatres, stadiums, etc. Interestingly, the 74th Amendment saw fit to include slum up gradation and poverty alleviation under the discretionary list making it highly dependent on the motives and commitment of the individual ULBs. SMKMC's other critical activity is to raise taxes and user fees for the various services that it renders to its citizens.

Welfare of the poor and slum rehabilitation schemes has become integral to SMKMC's objectives, not only because these are now part of its constitutional responsibilities but also because it has adopted the target of being a slum-less city by 2010. Currently, the Slum Rehabilitation Scheme (which is State specific)[7] and the national Integrated Housing and Slum Development Programme, constitute a major part of SMKMC's public action in the poor settlements and it strives to provide facilities and services within the framework and provisions of these projects. These schemes call for innovativeness in approach, institutional structures and in raising resources.

2.2.4. Structure, decision-making, accountability and leadership: conceptualized to facilitate people's participation

SMKMC consists of an elected mayor and his council and an 'executive' wing that includes administrators and technical specialists headed by a municipal commissioner. The mayor and council members - each representing a ward – have a normal tenure of five years. The municipal commissioner, belonging to the All India or state civil service, is the chief executive officer in whom all the executive powers are vested. While the legislative or elected wing technically frames the policies for government, the commissioner is responsible for the execution of the policies. The commissioner's powers are in turn provided by statute or delegated by the corporation or the standing committee. The commissioner's post is politically sensitive and is subject to frequent transfers. For instance in Sangili, in the short span of five years since Shelter initiated its work, there have reportedly been four changes of commissioner.

For operational purposes the corporation is divided into several units or cells responsible for such services as drinking water and sanitation, solid waste management, public health, education, upkeep of streets, street lights, issuing licenses to vendors, etc. The slum department within the SMKMC is responsible for the slums, including service delivery in these settlements. The urban sanitation work is looked after by a small and over-worked team of one engineer and a couple of administrative staff, who are also responsible for other projects like slum housing, etc. The engineer is over-burdened and

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7 Slum development across the country in general has gone through several conceptual changes and gradually moved closer to the concept of community participation (which itself has seen several interpretations). However, by the time the SMKMC was established the present form of slum development had more or less evolved.

located in a position where all actions converge. He is responsible for all the technical aspects of planning and executing the project and has to work in the typical fashion of the government where every decision has to be scrutinized and approved several times and by several layers of officials. His engagement with the project appears to be purely professional: he needs to complete his responsibilities and meet the annual physical and financial targets. He is the single most important and frequent point of interaction with the NGO. Significantly, there are very few women in the staff of the corporation as a whole and none in the sanitation unit. However, in the elected council, according to requirements, one third of the elected members are women. Although SMKMC has about 2250 staff on its payroll, it is still too short-staffed efficiently to carry out all its duties.

The decision-making process is typically hierarchical. However, all plans and budgets have to be approved by a 'standing committee' headed by an elected representative, a process that can be either productive and transparent or disruptive. While the role of the elected representative has been envisaged as crucial to the functioning of the corporation, the commissioner's agenda is most often the determining factor. Although technically accountable to the mayor and his council, the commissioner in reality is more inclined to report upwards to the secretary of the urban development department. There are several layers of oversight with crucial decisions on staffing, technical and administrative sanctions, etc., continuing to vest in the State Government. This somewhat restricts the council's ability to hold the executive accountable and in turn limits the community's ability to hold the council members accountable. The frequent change at the level of the commissioner also limits the accountability as well as continuity of development processes. In fact, SMKMC, like other municipal corporations, is influenced on the one hand by the mandate of the State Government and its urban development policies and the priorities of the commissioner and, on the other, by the varying – often political - agenda, commitment and clout of the corporators [councillors]. The relationship between these two wings of the corporation - 'executive' and 'elected'- in itself is at times contentious, although they seemingly having the same public agenda of improving civic services and facilities.

SMKMC, like other ULBs, generates funds through allowable taxes and fees on octroi, property, water, drainage, vehicle running, etc. However, the realisation of these dues is very poor and hence they have to rely on grants from the State or borrowings, which they are often not in a position to return. But here again the open mindedness of SMKMC has led it to be the first in the State to attempt to access the novel Incentive Grant Fund scheme of the government and in 2002 to enter into a public-private partnership to improve the water supply situation.

2.3 HOW THE ORGANSIATIONS ARE POSITIONED RELATIVE TO EACH OTHER

2.3.1. Wider accountability vs. accountability to the poor

Both Shelter and SMKMC have been created to facilitate the participation of citizens in the delivery of basic services. Technically, SMKMC is accountable to the 'people' by its constitution (and to taxpayers) and Shelter by its commitment. It is interesting to note that Shelter does not have any legal but only a self-imposed or funder imposed accountability to the poor while the corporation is in principle accountable to them as citizens and taxpayers. Both also assert that communities, including of the poor, need to

be more involved. However, the similarities end there: while Shelter focuses exclusively on the poor and marginalized communities, SMKMC, by virtue of its larger mandate, conceptually caters to all citizens with the interests of the poor as a discretionary responsibility. Hence, not only is the scope of SMKMC's activities much larger, its constituency is also more heterogeneous in terms of both social groups and economic class, thereby making people's participation and focus on the poor more challenging.

2.3.2. Perceptions of the poor: ideological differences

The difference is also visible in the ideological perceptions of the poor. Shelter reportedly bases its strategies on facilitating the provision of facilities and services in the form the poor themselves want them. SMKMC has a narrower vision of community participation, perhaps because, as a state agency, it is bound by conditions set by the State Government, the political agenda of the elected members of the ULB and its multiple responsibilities. Paradoxically (because the ULB concept is based on local government with and for the people), SMKMC has little time or human resources to engage in prolonged consultations with the community and tends to follow a one-size-fits-all strategy in provision of facilities. In practice, predictably, it interprets community participation as dumping responsibility for operation and maintenance of structures on the community, who, however, have had no hand in their creation. This is evident from the design and implementation of various government programmes, which now have an almost mandatory community participation component.

2.3.3. Differing structures for community involvement

Although, both SMKMC and Shelter have been structured to facilitate the participation of the community, there is great difference in both their legal constitution and their organizational forms. SMKMC, with its representative council and its constitutional authority to take decisions, has a conceptually well-structured mechanism for participation. As stated earlier, its functions and authority have been provided for under a State Act. Besides, being equipped with the capacity to raise its own resources as well as to access state and central government funds, SMKMC is definitely better positioned to reach its goal than Shelter. The reality, however, is that the functioning of this mechanism, bogged down by bureaucracy and politics, is far from effective and hence participation is marginal and token. This bureaucracy and vested interest is also often reflected in the targeting of resources. On the other hand, Shelter's institutional framework for community involvement is based on the strengths of the CBO (Baandhini) with which it is associated. This appears to be more functionally efficient, although, Baandhini does not have a legal form; it functions as an informal collective of men and women, and its sustainability is still to be tested. Also unlike SMKMC, Shelter is not bound by political and party considerations, which make decision making more grounded in actual needs.

3. CONDITIONING FACTORS

The sanitation programme in Sangli has been conditioned by a combination of factors. On one hand, there are some wider policies and institutional drivers like national and state policies on urban development in general and slums in particular; and on the other there are more proximate factors largely stemming from Shelter's own experiences in Pune.

3.1. URBAN SANITATION POLICIES

SMKMC came into existence at a time when urban sanitation was beginning to be recognized in the country, particularly in relatively progressive states like Maharashtra, as an issue that needed to be urgently addressed.[8] National level policies were advocating community and NGO participation and programmes were being designed to make this possible.

3.1.1. National policies

In fact if we look back at the history of urban sanitation in the country, it appears that tentative project based activities were initiated even in the early 1980s and thereafter continued intermittently into the 1990s. However, most of them were just part of periodically revisited integrated slum improvement programmes like the Environmental Improvement of Urban Slums, Urban Basic Services for the Poor, National Slum Development Programme and the more recent VAMBAY of which Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan (see 3.1.2) is a component. The Urban Low Cost Sanitation programme was the only stand-alone sanitation project of any significance. Even state generated data reflect the fact that none of these efforts made much of a dent on the appallingly low base coverage and usage patterns. Although cultural and behavioural attributes of communities were often cited as reasons for this alarming situation, it became increasingly evident that, in the urban areas of the country, much of the challenge lay in diluting what Chaplin has called the 'politics of urban sanitation' (Chaplin, 1999). In urban India this meant a situation where an unorganized and unempowered poor community was unable to mobilize a poorly endowed municipal body to perform with vision and accountability, and a third party, perhaps a non-government agent, was needed to bring about an effective interface between the two (Nair, 2007).

The full involvement of the community was indeed recommended as far back as 1983 by a high powered Task Force set up to review and propose improvements in the urban water and sanitation sector (Planning Commission, 1983). From the mid nineties the municipal bodies, which are the statutory institutional mechanism for involvement of citizens, were being slowly forced to assume larger and more unconventional roles by a constitutional amendment of 1992 which decentralized and devolved service delivery responsibilities to them. Further, as part of this process, they were also being increasingly compelled to raise their own resources and ensure operation and maintenance costs from the immediate users of the services. As a result of these combined factors, some evidence of increased interface between the municipal bodies and the slum communities began to emerge from the late 1990s and, in almost all cases, NGOs have played a critical role.

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8 In India historically sanitation has received only sporadic and inadequate attention. In fact until recently sanitation has played second fiddle to drinking water supply. Within the sector itself, while rural sanitation was accorded the status of a nation wide campaign from 1999, urban sanitation has only recently come into serious focus, warranting the setting up of a National Urban Sanitation Task Force (in 2005) to facilitate the development of a long awaited urban sanitation policy document. The policy is expected to be "outcome focused" and will have frameworks that would enable States to develop "outcome oriented strategies" for sustainable services (WSP, South Asia, 2007).

3.1.2. Policies in the State of Maharashtra

In this respect the State of Maharashtra has been a trendsetter, especially in its engagement with NGOs and in introducing innovative incentive schemes and campaigns to promote sanitation. Although slum clearance and improvement programmes were first initiated in the State in the late 1970s, the Dalit Vasti Sudhar Yojana (Dalit Slum Improvement Project) was one of the first major programmes in more recent years. It was launched by the State Government in the mid-1990s on a 100 percent grant basis to improve the conditions of the slum settlements, especially where dalits (untouchable castes) predominated. Maharashtra claims to have successfully eradicated the practice of scavenging by the end of 1990s. Then, beginning in early 2000, the government of Maharashtra began to work towards universal sanitation coverage in the urban areas, undertaking programmes to promote community and individual toilets and launching projects like the Sant Gadge Baba Clean City Campaign. Although, reportedly, most of these initiatives did not make a significant dent, two programmes in Pune and Mumbai, implemented by the respective municipal corporations were rated as relatively successful models, and widely advocated. Significantly, in both the programmes, according to the State Government:

> 'ULBs have successfully roped in the NGOs to elicit the community participation to own and operate the community toilets, once built. The NGOs and other agencies have been successful in encouraging community participation at the construction stage and also at the crucial O&M phase.' [9]

When SMKMC was established as a municipal corporation towards the end of the last decade, it responded to this general policy environment in the State. Water supply and sanitation services in Sangli, which had not seen any improvements or additions for several years, were brought into focus, and community participation with NGOs was considered as a possibility.

Subsequently, with the launching of the national low-income housing project, VAMBAY, and its community toilet component, Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan, towards the end of 2001, SMKMC was also in a position to access funds. Under VAMBAY, 20 percent of allocated funds was earmarked for construction of community toilet blocks with the central government contributing 50 percent as subsidy and the remaining 50 percent coming as a loan from HUDCO, a fully owned techno-financial enterprise of the GoI dedicated to housing and urban development. The State Government or ULBs are free to supplement this amount with their own resources. The average cost of a toilet seat was estimated to be Rs. 40,000 and hence a 10 or 20 seat block with separate arrangements for men and women with some additional features was expected to cost around Rs. 400,000 to 800,000. The funds, however, were meant only for the construction of community blocks. Besides, VAMBAY also specifically advocated the involvement of NGOs and that the toilets were to be maintained by the community with each household making a monthly contribution of Rs. 20 per family. These provisions now provide the broad guidelines for SMKMC's sanitation programme.

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9 Encouraged by these and similar successes, the new Housing Policy of Maharashtra (Housing Department, 2007) has made provisions for slum dwellers，cooperative societies to raise finance for housing (of which sanitation is an integral part) provided they entered into a partnership with accredited NGOs.

3.2 REFORM ENVIRONMENT AND CHAMPIONS IN SMKMC

The other critical conditioning factor was that SMKMC became one of the first smaller corporations in the State to adopt the agenda of decentralization and reforms. Early in its existence, SMKMC ventured to undertake measures to improve the functioning of services in the newly created local body. A primary contributing factor was that the key officials and decision makers in SMKMC during 2000-02 were themselves keen to initiate overall reforms. The then municipal commissioner believed that reforms could not be brought about in a piece meal fashion, but needed to be launched across sectors. The mayor and some of the councillors at that time were of a similar mind. In the words of the municipal commissioner: 'At that point of time the right kind of people had come together in SMKMC…who together made the right kind of proactive team' and championed the cause of reforms, including improvements in the urban sanitation sector. Public-private partnership was one of the major institutional innovations that the commissioner-councillor team supported as a critical trigger to reforms and improved services, and the NGOs appeared to fit well into this framework.

3.3 SHELTER'S LEARNING FROM PUNE

Shelter, for its part entered Sangli with significant learning from its Pune experience that influenced both the programme as well as the institutional strategies.

3.3.1. Ineffective implementation of policies and the need for active collaboration with the state

The Government of Maharashtra had brought in a policy whereby all slum dwellers that have been living in urban areas prior to 1995 were given the right to *in situ* up-gradation or re-settlement on alternative developed land. However, Shelter found that the process had been painfully 'slow as most government policies and programmes do not address ground realties.' This had led to a huge backlog in provision of housing and services to the poor, which was further compounded by migration. Besides, according to interviews with Shelter, the poor are never included in 'mainstream planning' and 'major urban development projects tend to ignore the existence of slums' (Joshi et al, 2002). The reason for this was the ambiguous and confusing way that the slums were defined and services provided under various government laws. Shelter, therefore, thought that it was necessary to intervene in a planned way and push the government to act, thus combining advocacy with service delivery roles.

Hence, in the early years Shelter's strategy in Pune was based on 'community-led' interventions, wherein it negotiated with Pune Municipal Corporation on behalf of communities, and often with them, for projects which they themselves (the community and Shelter) had initiated. When Shelter agreed to participate in the 'PMC led and managed' sanitation project in Pune (see next paragraph), it was a planned decision taken in order to push its own agenda of bringing the communities into the forefront of service provision and using the project as a process for community building. At the same time, Shelter also began to appreciate the fact that the municipal corporation itself was not always 'un-cooperative' and that '…combining the practicalities of a municipal project with the ideology which underlies their work as an NGO…' was an effective way to reach their goal. Thus, the relationship changed to one where Shelter and the community were together participating in a State (in this case the municipal corporation) run and

managed project. By the time it launched its work in Sangli, working in collaboration with the ULBs had become a part of the strategy.

3.3.2. Priority to community participation

Shelter had achieved considerable inroads in housing and resettlement, when in 1999 it approached the Sangli municipal commissioner to construct toilets in two slums. The commissioner, who was in the process of launching the pioneering citywide sanitation project, instead persuaded Shelter to collaborate with him on this venture. Shelter agreed, realising the advantages of being part of such a large pro-poor programme. However, the project, with its tight work cycle and the enormous task of demolition of old toilets and construction of new ones, apparently left little time for community participation.

Shelter also found that, in spite of the commissioner's personal involvement and efforts to minimize bureaucratic procedures it was difficult and time consuming to deal with the middle ranking officials in PMC, even on routine matters like procurement of sewage disposal vans, water and electricity connections, release of payments, etc. Shelter realised that, in Sangli, it needed to spend more time organizing communities and ensuring that the toilets were properly designed and constructed, rather than actually undertaking the work of construction as contractors. It, therefore, pressed SMKMC to adopt a strategy of out-sourcing construction activities to a third party, an NGO focusing on introduction of low cost and appropriate technology in the rural and urban areas. This has apparently given Shelter more scope to engage itself in 'processes' that it considers to be necessary both to sustainability and to its core competency.

> 'I feel that getting into construction in the long run is counter-productive - it spoils the relationship with the community. If the government is paying for the technical inputs then we are contractors... But if NGOs become contractors to do the mobilization then it is not good. I have facilitated the community through mobilization, design of houses, toilets and then left the actual construction to others - never become a contractor.' (Director, Shelter)

At the same time in Pune Shelter was able to introduce several innovations to the design specifications provided by PMC and to demonstrate the potential for participation of communities in the maintenance of toilets. As a result, PMC introduced an additional clause in the NGO contract stating that 'toilets could be maintained involving the local slum community' (Shelter Associates, 2001). Shelter believes that it was the combination of the NGO's commitment, on the one hand, and the resources and power of the corporation, on the other, that enabled the implementation of such a large-scale sanitation project in Pune. Learning lessons from this for Sangli, low cost toilet designs became a norm and the communities were active partners from the initial stage of the project cycle, unlike in Pune where it was difficult to engage them in the operation and maintenance of the structures.

3.3.3. Poverty mapping and GIS as a tool for improved targeting

Slum and poverty mapping was a critical tool used to further Shelter's objective of inclusive planning in Pune. Poverty mapping included carrying out a slum census that brought slum dwellers together, interact with others in the community and gather information about the settlement that they lived in. The power of information gave the

community considerable leverage in subsequent negotiations with the municipal corporation. Subsequent integration of data into a GIS format allowed the NGO and the corporation to understand that the slums 'need to be considered spatially, both internally and in relation to the rest of the city,' in order to achieve inclusive planning (Joshi, et al, 2002). Through GIS, Shelter was also able to indicate the service conditions in the city in such a way that it also became a powerful tool for local councillors to negotiate and lobby for improved services in their respective wards. In fact, Shelter reports that the visual impact of GIS was such that it was able to attract the attention of the community as well as the corporation and other urban planning agencies.

Between 1997 and 2000, Shelter together with Baandhini carried out several such surveys, funded from its own sources (interview with director). Subsequently, the then municipal commissioner (the same person who had also initiated the sanitation programme in collaboration with NGOs), commissioned Shelter to undertake surveys of all the slums in Pune. This was made possible because Shelter had by then established a 'good working relationship' with the commissioner. The commissioner had visited Shelter's office and seen its work and was impressed with the innovative inputs. Convinced that the data generated would improve planning, the commissioner persuaded the PMC to fund Shelter for a citywide survey.

However, although substantial work was carried out by Shelter and the survey itself was promoted as one of the innovations in PMC, the project met with major roadblocks when the commissioner was transferred. Shelter reports (interview with director) that the previous commissioner himself appreciated the nuances of the project, but as it was time bound and achieving the targets was important, many of the processes had to be cut short. Hence, the staff in the PMC did not get sufficient opportunity to understand and internalize the process, which was in any case complex and time consuming. Besides, there was a general lack of trust of the poor prevailing across the departments of the PMC and apparently also a problem in accepting an all-women, technically qualified non-government team. In the words of the founder of Shelter: 'The combination was both formidable and unpalatable' (interview). After the commissioner was transferred, the PMC was, thus, reluctant to accept the process, did not comply with its contractual obligation of procuring GIS software, and consequently could not validate the data generated. It eventually lost interest in the project and stopped the funding. The relationship between Shelter and PMC became strained and the project was abandoned for all practical purpose.

In Pune, because the project had been initiated by Shelter and not the PMC, it could not capture the interest of officials other than the Municipal Commissioner. Moreover, PMC was an old corporation and many of the officials had been working on the same job for several years and hence tended to resist change of any kind; moreover, GIS as a project appeared to be complicated and daunting. In fact, in retrospect, Shelter realised that it should have made concerted efforts to build up the 'interest and capacity of officials at all levels to increase their understanding of the project and its uses' (Joshi et al, 2002). Shelter also became aware of the political dynamics within the Corporation and the need to strike a balance between politics and administration.

Shelter, however, learnt some valuable lessons from its Pune experience, based on which it built up its agenda in Sangli where Shelter was able to demonstrate the utility of poverty mapping. Since then poverty mapping has become an integral tool for both mobilization as well as more effective targeting of services. In Sangli, Shelter was more

conscious about establishing a proactive relationship with all concerned officials as well as the elected representatives in SMKMC and keeping them regularly informed and involved in the processes (UN Habitat, 2006).

3.3.4. Greater involvement of elected representatives

Pune also underscored the necessity of greater involvement of the elected representatives, to ensure acceptance and accountability. Thus, in Sangli, Shelter ensured that they were part of the stakeholder institutional set up (MAGNET[10]) and subsequently were able to use their powers to lobby for participatory and community based interventions. In fact, the standing committee of the corporation became an important platform for negotiations and lobbying.

3.3.5. Role of donors and focus on smaller cities

In the end Shelter's decision to initiate work in Sangli itself was motivated by the offer made by USAID-FIRE project to undertake a service level survey of the slums. This not only exposed the appalling conditions in the city but also allowed Shelter to appreciate the need to work in smaller urban local bodies. Subsequently, they agreed to a greater involvement because they realised that no other NGOs were working in this area. The corporation's slum department was short staffed and hence they were more then willing to collaborate with Shelter.

SUMMING UP

Thus, while state level policies about service provision, alternative institutional mechanisms and the overarching process of decentralization provided the policy environment and justification for SMKMC's sanitation agenda, Shelter's experience in Pune conditioned its strategy for Sangli. However, the influence of national policies perhaps needs to be looked at with a certain amount of caution.

Some experts (such as Meera Bapat) interviewed in the course of the study were of the opinion that national policies do not make any difference to NGO involvement. It was observed that housing as well as water and sanitation come under the jurisdiction of the state governments; hence, national policies only influence NGO-state relationships at a superficial level. In fact it was pointed out that while NGOs work because of self-interest or commitment, money or name and fame, corporations on the other hand foster a client patron relationship because they want clients to be dependent on them (Bapat in interview). One of the municipal commissioner's interviewed in the course of the research explained the influencing factors in a similar but more positive way. He stated that the State of Maharashtra's sanitation policy was also applicable to the urban local bodies and the latter could adapt it to suit their own priorities and needs. However, he added that the municipal commissioner was not as powerful as commonly thought because of the existence of the standing committee of elected councillors. The commissioner added that as yet there was no well-defined state policy on working with NGOs - except for statements of intention. Policies and strategies therefore evolved in practice during a project and there were ways and means of doing this.

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[10] South Asia Media and Governance Network (MAGNET), is managed by the Institute on Governance, Canada . See para 4.1.2 for details.

4: THE SHAPING OF THE RELATIONSHIP

The association between Shelter and SMKMC has evolved. In tracing Shelter's activities on a timeline which begins before Sangli with Shelter's initial engagement with the PMC, clear milestones in the relationship are visible. While each partner perceives the purpose of the relationship through its own development lens, certain mutually agreed rules and structures - sometimes formal and at others informal - govern and manage it.

4.1 EVOLUTION OF THE RELATIONSHIP

4.1.1. Shelter's introduction to Sangli through the USAID-FIRE (D) project

Shelter's first point of contact with SMKMC was through a USAID FIRE (Financial Institutions Reforms and Expansion) project in early 2001. The overall policy environment in the State and SMKMC's proactive stance on fundamental reforms invited external and donor attention helping to give an impetus to sanitation activities. For SMKMC the FIRE project provided an opportunity to translate at least part of its vision for reforms into a potential project and in the process also brought sanitation more actively onto its agenda. USAID went on to provide support to Shelter through various phases of its activities in Sangli between 2001 and to 2007.

The Indo USAID-FIRE (D) project has been working in collaboration with the Government of India since 1994 and comes to a close in 2007. It has existed to '…institutionalize the delivery of commercially viable urban environmental infrastructure and services at the local, state and national levels…' (Indo-USAID-FIRE, 2007) including the poor, in several urban areas in the country. It also supports the greater involvement of the private sector as well as NGOs and CBOs in the delivery and operation and maintenance of infrastructure. In 2000, when SMKMC was looking for options to improve the drinking water supply system in the city, it entered into a dialogue with the USAID-FIRE project (henceforth referred to as FIRE), which already had a presence in Maharashtra. FIRE proposed to develop SMKMC as a model medium-sized city with improved service delivery through private sector participation. SMKMC and FIRE engaged in an elaborate design phase and a comprehensive programme of technical and management support was developed to improve the infrastructure of water supply, with the participation of the private sector. With the support of FIRE, SMKMC also negotiated for an incentive grant from the central government under a pilot programme.[11]

As part of the wider programme, FIRE commissioned Shelter in 2001 to undertake a citywide slum survey to assess the service levels under the jurisdiction of SMKMC. Shelter was chosen to carry out the survey because FIRE was familiar with its poverty mapping in Pune. The specific tasks of the project were to identify all slum settlements, survey them for service levels, and digitize the data on a map while ensuring that the poor were an integral part of the project. An underlying aim was to introduce spatial and socio-economic information as a tool for urban planning. Using GIS, the project was expected to demonstrate to SMKMC how the slum database could be integrated with

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11 The PPP water supply project did not take off because SMKMC could not raise its share of the estimated cost. It also met with strong opposition from local politicians and finally when the Municipal Commissioner who had initiated the process was transferred, his successor chose to abandon it altogether.

other data for planning and implementation. The project was also expected to be a training ground for the officials of the SMKMC. It also had to be developed in such a way as to enable replication in other cities and to lead to a pilot intervention. Shelter saw this again as an opportunity to ensure that the poor were included in the process of planning from the start and entered into a contract with FIRE. FIRE acted as an initial facilitator between Shelter and SMKMC, negotiated with the state and central governments over key decisions, and also provided technical and financial assistance to Shelter to undertake the survey and procure GIS software for planning. The survey was launched in September 2001 and completed by December of the same year.

The survey was conducted by Shelter with the help of Baandhini. Thereafter ward, zone and city level maps were prepared by Shelter and subsequently cross-checked at random by the engineers from SMKMC. Shelter, by virtue of its skills as well as because of full technical and financial support from FIRE, was the dominant partner at this time. However, having realised the need to engage the municipal corporation officials and elected representatives from the start of the project, Shelter kept them informed and presented the final data before the corporation's standing committee, which by and large endorsed the findings. In the course of its survey Shelter established rapport with a few progressive and forward looking councillors who, together with the mayor and the municipal commissioner, supported the survey findings and the future course of action proposed by Shelter.

A document by Shelter (Joshi et al, 2002) comparing the mapping process in Pune and Sangli observes that in Sangli, as the project was funded from external sources, it was 'less vulnerable' to changes in the leadership of SMKMC and the consequent changes in priority. Besides, it provided more flexibility to the municipal commissioner who did not have to always '…justify to councillors the spending of public money.' It is interesting to note, however, that in subsequent phases of the project the councillors were deliberately incorporated into the decision making process so as to enhance community participation as well as accountability.

The survey revealed the appalling conditions of sanitation in Sangli: 78 of a total of 99 slums did not have access to toilets and serious gaps also existed in overall environmental sanitation. 20 of these had no access to water supply while a majority of families lived in '*kutcha*' (built of mud, tin sheets, etc) houses. Besides, only 29 of the slums had the status of a 'declared' slum, which was probably one of the reasons for the poor condition of services. Hence, sanitation needed to be addressed and SMKMC was keen to launch a project on a pilot basis.

4.1.2. Shelter and SMKMC launch a pilot urban sanitation project under the IOG-MAGNET Forum

An opportunity was soon provided by the South Asia Media and Governance Network Programme (MAGNET), which gave an operational shape to the sanitation agenda and steered it into a community based and participatory project with Shelter as a key partner.

a. Project MAGNET: MAGNET was an action-research project that was exploring the role of the media in a multi-stakeholder approach to governance in three developing countries. The platform for research was the media-government-civil society Forum created in the project cities, including Sangli. The project was managed by the Institute On Governance (IOG, Canada) and jointly funded by the Canadian International

Development Agency and the Ford Foundation. The core activity of the Forum was to identify the service delivery gaps in slums and implement a pilot project addressing one of the service issues; this was similar to what the Shelter-SMKMC-Fire collaboration had been trying to do in Sangli.

b. MAGNET in Pune: The Forum was initially set up in Pune in early 2001 as an exercise to demonstrate equal partnership between the media, local government and civil society. The members were the PMC, represented by the municipal commissioner, the local newspapers, Shelter representing the slum dwellers, and a local action researcher. Technical support was provided by IOG. The resettlement of a slum, Kamgar Putla, was taken up as the issue by the Forum in line with its objective of focusing on the service delivery needs of the poor. However, after making substantial progress the project came to a standstill with the transfer of the municipal commissioner as well as the deputy commissioner in mid 2001. The new commissioner had other priorities and the project was abandoned, in spite of the best efforts of the Forum. MAGNET attributes this collapse primarily to a change in the leadership of the PMC and lack of a legally binding agreement to ensure the continuity of PMC's commitment but also to other factors: lack of trust between the members of the Forum (while the PMC suspected the motives of the media, civil society was suspicious of the agenda of the PMC), and the failure to include the elected members of PMC (Pandit, 2003).

c. Move to Sangli: Towards the end of 2001, the Forum shifted its activities to Sangli, which was selected as an alternative site primarily because Shelter, which was a key stakeholder in the Pune project, already had a presence in Sangli. However, the fact that SMKMC itself was keen on starting such a project was also probably a deciding factor. The Forum was, thus, re-launched in Sangli with a modified team that included Shelter, the research associate and some media members from Pune as well as Sangli. PMC was replaced by SMKMC and, based on the Pune experience, some other changes were also effected. Representatives from Baandhini were included in the discussions of the Forum. In order to safeguard the Forum from possible changes in leadership as well as to encourage greater participation of the elected members, a senior member of the standing committee of SMKMC was elected as co-chairperson. Subsequently the deputy commissioner was also encouraged to take a more active part in the activities of the Forum.

A steering committee, consisting of representatives from all partner organizations including SMKMC and Shelter, was set up with responsibility for oversight and management of the Forum. Although the role of the media was initially crucial to the project, as its purpose was that the media would ensure accountability of service delivery, eventually it was Shelter and SMKMC which played the key roles.

Based on the earlier experience of Shelter, the Forum decided to focus on the urgent need for sanitation facilities in many of the slums, and identified Sangalwad, a settlement with 59 households and Tasgaon Ves with 93 hutments for a pilot project. Criteria for selection were the need for toilets, the size of the community, the willingness of the community to participate as well as take the responsibility for maintenance, and the availability of land. The then municipal commissioner had advised that the slums should be selected on the basis of some objective criteria so that Shelter would not be harassed by the councillors to select settlements under their jurisdiction. SMKMC also proposed that Shelter should undertake the responsibility of actually constructing and maintaining the toilets as was done in Pune. Shelter, instead, persuaded the local government to try

out a new model in which the construction would be carried out by a local contractor and the communities would undertake the responsibility of maintenance. Eventually construction was undertaken by a local organization - Shiv Sadan - under the supervision of SMKMC and Shelter. The toilets were inaugurated in October 2002 at a cost of Rs. 425,000 and Rs. 341,000 respectively. The completed blocks included separate toilets for men and women, a children's toilet - an innovative contribution of Shelter - a caretaker's room and a biogas plant connected to the caretaker's room (for cooking purposes).

d. Power dynamics within the Forum: MAGNET and the Forum became the means for further cementing the relationship between Shelter and SMKMC. The Forum, headed by the commissioner, with various stakeholders providing their specific inputs, took all decisions. However, a document (Pandit, 2003)about the Forum's activities indicates that, although it had been established on the principles of equality of all stakeholders, the officials from SMKMC were authoritative and tended to dominate the meetings. Though there were no serious conflicts or confrontations, the municipal commissioner, who chaired the meetings in the initial days, in a typically official way would often dismiss the views of other members in order to arrive at quick decisions. The situation improved when, after the transfer of the commissioner, the new incumbent delegated the responsibility of representing SMKMC to the deputy commissioner. The deputy commissioner, besides being familiar with the activities of the Forum, was also less formidable by virtue of his position, and also perhaps by nature. Hence discussions within the Forum apparently became more 'democratic and inclusive' (Pandit, 2003). The inclusion of other officials and the elected members of SMKMC, besides the municipal commissioner, ensured continuity and sustainability, even after the commissioner who had launched the project was transferred.

e. Role of Shelter: Both Shelter and SMKMC had critical and complementary roles in the Forum. Mobilizing the community was the initial task and Shelter used site visits and peer group meetings as a key tool. As a result, self help groups were formed in Sangli and they were not only convinced about the need to be involved but were also confident about contributing to the design and maintenance of the facilities. In fact, the community, and especially Baandhini, became so aware and empowered that they were in a position to confront the SMKMC officials demanding their right for various services. Shelter was also foremost in facilitating the Forum and the communities to arrive at an acceptable monthly user fee, which pays for the caretakers' services as well as the cost of cleaning and other material. While, Shelter was primarily responsible for subsequently integrating Baandhini into the discussions of the Forum and sustaining the role of the community, it also introduced other elements into the project.

Shelter not only identified a local cooperative society, Shiv Sadan, to undertake the construction of the toilet blocks, but also convinced the Forum, including SMKMC, to contract out the task to them. Shiv Sadan was known and respected as a credible, honest and committed organization, with technical capacities that included research and development on renewable energy, and hence was easily acceptable to SMKMC. Located in Sangli, Shiv Sadan had been engaged in several extension works for more than three decades. It has been constructing toilets and bathrooms, apart from other rural structures, using pre-fabricated RCC and spun pipes. Shelter successfully advocated that the Forum use these pre-fabricated materials for the two proposed community toilets. It was also the channel through which IOG routed a 'local action fund'

amounting to $ 50,000 (Canadian) for the activities of the Forum as well as the pilot initiatives.

f. Role of SMKMC: SMKMC was an active participant through the municipal commissioner, his deputy and other officials. The primary contribution of SMKMC and its elected standing committee was in identifying the slums and granting the required permission for construction of the toilets. SMKMC was instrumental in sorting out land disputes, removing encroachments, allotting alternative land and issuing 'No-Objection Certificates' (NOC) for electricity connections. The funds were dispersed by Shelter but on the basis of a 'NOC' and approval by SMKMC. As part of the project, SMKMC committed itself to providing additional financial, technical and human resources and went on to improve the drainage and internal road conditions and provide electricity and water connections to both the slums.

The architectural drawings were prepared by Shelter and the structural plans for the toilets were prepared by Shiv Sadan according to the specifications of the site, and placed before SMKMC and Shelter, with approval being given by SMKMC. On the other hand, while the estimates were approved by SMKMC and a 'NOC' issued, the payment itself was made by Shelter. While technically SMKMC was supposed to supervise the work together with Shelter, in practice supervision was minimal, because SMKMC had confidence in the ability and commitment of both Shiv Sadan and Shelter. Besides, with poor staffing conditions SMKMC was happy to leave much of this responsibility to Shelter.

g. The outcome and realigned relationships: The community and its collective – Baandhini was involved in designing, constructing (labour) and subsequently maintaining the toilet blocks and emerged as a relatively more aware and empowered group by the end of the project. Baandhini had also become a close partner of Shelter. The media, on the other hand, made a limited contribution and apparently confined their role to reporting the activities.

Shelter emerged as a credible and influential partner, by virtue of its links with the community, its technical oversight and decision making role regarding the construction of the structures and as the 'principal' in the contractual relationship with Shiv Sadan. The concept of the 'Forum' was considered to be successful and a decision was taken to continue with a similar set up when the project was scaled up to city level. Although the Forum no longer exists, the process of consultation and involvement of the primary stakeholders - the community and the councillors – have been sustained.

The project, for the first time, appears to have brought about changes in the way that SMKMC and the community view each other. It is also reported that the project, based on the centrality of the Forum, accountability and transparency and strong partnerships, convinced SMKMC to replicate the model in other slums:

> 'One outcome of the pilot project has been to increase trust and confidence in the municipal administration among residents of the target communities, an outcome warmly welcomed by officials of SMKMC. Another is that, as news of the Forum has spread, other communities have begun to demand similar initiatives in their areas and expressed their willingness to co-operate with municipal officials.' (Pandit, 2003)

4.1.3. Scaling up of the pilot initiatives and consolidation of the SMKMC–Shelter relationship

The success of the two community blocks in Sangalwadi and Tesgaon Ves prompted SMKMC to plan to extend the project to city level, using the Nirmal Bharat funds and additional help from USAID. However, as no base information was available, Shelter advocated that first an in-depth survey should be undertaken.

a. Survey and mapping for efficient targeting of resources: Thus, in 2004 Shelter and SMKMC entered into their third phase of joint activities when the NGO assisted the municipal corporation to short-list 12 slums that had almost no sanitation facilities. While the short-listing itself was based on the first round of surveys conducted in 2001, the survey this time was more elaborate. Data were collected at both the settlement and household level. In the first case detailed maps of the settlement were prepared using plane table methods and in the second case socio-economic data of every household were generated. The socio-economic data included such variables as social groups, size of family, income level, etc. as this information is required not only for targeting but also for access to some of the government programmes which are designed for specific social and economic groups. Thus, a two level profile of the slum was generated facilitating the analysis of households in reference to the settlement. The analysis also opened up the possibilities of constructing individual toilets in some of the slums, where sewer lines had already been provided.

Shelter was primarily responsible for all activities related to the survey as well simultaneously forming community groups in the selected slums. The survey work included framing the data collection questionnaires in consultation with SMKMC, training the field staff for the survey, processing and analyzing the data and subsequently generating settlement reports. The survey itself was carried out by a team of field investigators that included specially trained members from Baandhini as well as Shelter's own staff, under the supervision of social workers from Shelter.

Shelter formed the Self Help Groups (SHGs) together with Baandhini and the activities included small group meetings 'to create a better rapport and bonding with people' and forming savings groups (Shelter Associates, 2006). In some of the slums Shelter met with some resistance in forming the groups as the communities apparently did not have a good experience with SHGs in the past. However, the presence of Baandhini and officials from SMKMC as and when required, laid to rest much of their doubts and fears. This phase was again supported by FIRE, which provided financial and technical support for spatial mapping and the socio-economic survey as well as for the GIS soft ware. Funds were directly disbursed to Shelter.

SMKMC's role at this stage was limited to providing access to all the information already available with them, identifying the slums, approving the survey format and above all lending its institutional credibility in difficult slums.

b. Planning for interventions
In 2004 Shelter entered into its fourth and current phase of collaboration with SMKMC, this time supported by USAID's Community Water and Sanitation Facilities and Cities Alliance (a World Bank administered multi-lateral donor agency) with a budget of

US$182,000.[12]   A percentage of the Cities Alliance fund is in the form of technical assistance to cover the costs of formation of SHGs, for community processes, designing the sanitation facilities, and co-ordination activities with the local government. Shelter is also expected to use these funds to facilitate local government's access to additional resources from the state and central government for the project. Of the cost of toilet construction, 20 percent comes from the Cities Alliance, 40 percent from SMKMC, and the remaining 40 percent from the state and central governments as well as households. SMKMC is in fact expected to contribute Rs. 40,000 per community according to the norms of Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan, with Shelter meeting all expenses over and above this amount.

In the course of the survey in Phase III, and the mapping exercises as well the process of forming the SHGs, Shelter had realised that the intervention strategy needs to be slum specific as the conditions were varied across slums. Alternative approaches needed to be considered and at a planning meeting with the municipal commissioner in December 2005, Shelter indicated that it could help by:
  · Supervising the construction of individual toilets in three slums
  · Providing technical support to the two communities that had registered as a trust (mandatory for some state support) to implement their own community programme
  · Framing the contract and rules for the NGOs that might be contracted to implement and maintain the sanitation structures and facilities
  · Coordinating between the selected NGO and the community to establish a common understanding for the need to maintain the facilities.

Overall around 3500 households across 12 identified slums have been targeted to benefit from the interventions. The survey revealed that in some of the slums like Jatkar Vasti, Bhouddha Vasahat, Kaman Ves and Khaja Vasti it was more feasible to construct individual toilets. These slums not only had underground sewer lines but many in the community too were willing to contribute a percentage of the cost. Shelter proposed constructing 300 individual toilets in these three slums with Cities Alliance funds. The proposal for individual toilets, however, met with several administrative and bureaucratic hurdles and it took almost a year for Shelter to resolve the issues and successfully advocate for individual toilets.[13]

Shelter played a key role in negotiating and lobbying with SMKMC, the state government and the Government of India to resolve the issue. It used a multi-point strategy which included presenting the case to the 'Mahasabha' or general body of SMKMC while at the same time lobbying with individual councillors who seemed more interested, until the Mahasabha gave its approval. It also approached the state government and the committee of ministers who had been appointed to monitor the Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan at the central level. Simultaneously representatives from the community were also mobilized to meet the municipal commissioner and submit a petition signed by a large

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12 In May 2004 a meeting was organized in Pune of representatives from the ULBs, NGOs, and the community from 20 cities across the country together with the Ministry of Urban Development GoI. The meeting endorsed a declaration for 'universal sanitation' in the urban areas of the country. Cities Alliance together with SIDA supports some of these cities including Sangli.

13 The technical difficulties faced by the SMKMC and MHADA regarding spending funds allocated for community toilets on individual toilets led to SA covering 80% of the cost in 3 slums while the communities provided the remaining 20. This was done on an internal understanding with SMKMC that SA would not contribute any funds where community toilets were built as these 3 projects would utitilize that contribution.

majority of the slum dwellers. As a result of these efforts approval from the state and central government was finally obtained in November 2005, in principle, to construct individual toilets. The success of the individual projects eventually led SMKMC to work out a cost sharing formula in the subsequent projects where they committed 40% of the cost while SA shared 40 and the communities 20. The SMKMC agreed to increase their contribution as SA's funding gradually decreased.

c. Implementation: The first lot of construction was started in early 2006, as there were delays primarily related to approval for the construction of individual toilets, change of leadership, etc. However, since then around 600 individual toilets and 6 community toilet blocks have been constructed so far in stages in which Shelter has played various roles.

The first 300 individual toilets were constructed by Shelter from the Cities Alliance budget. Shelter's aim was to demonstrate the process and hence 80 percent of the funds came from Shelter/Cities Alliance and 20 percent from the households, with no cost to the municipal corporation. The unit cost of the individual toilet blocks was estimated to be Rs. 5500, of which around Rs, 1200-1400 was paid by the household and the rest by Shelter. Shelter followed some basic specifications and then adjusted the design of the toilet according to the availability of space and the specific needs of the household within the allocated budget. The construction work was carried out by a team of local masons who had been trained by Shiv Sadan while labour was provided by the concerned household and supervised by Shelter. This reduced the cost of construction. Shelter organized the material and supervised the work on a daily basis. Prior to the launch of the work Shelter had ensured that representatives of the community had visited Shiv Sadan and informed themselves of the design and cost details and that its own project staff had been trained by Shiv Sadan to understand the technicalities of construction.
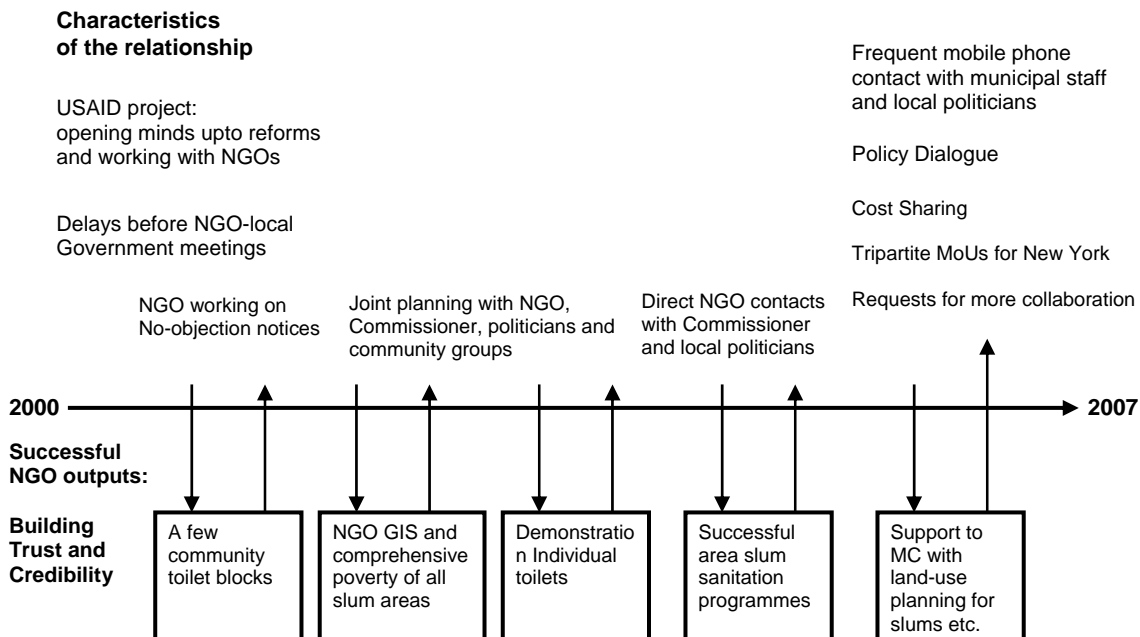
The work in these slums set off an increasing demand from the other selected slums and in the next stage, convinced about the viability and sustainability of individual toilets, SMKMC decided to provide support on a 40:40:20 cost sharing basis. Thus, the municipal corporation and the NGO were to share 80 percent of the cost on an equal basis and the community was to contribute only 20 percent. In the words of an engineer from SMKMC, a critical reason for its contribution was that 'we thought that the Corporation could monitor better if the money was its own'. However, since SMKMC funds were late in coming and the communities were impatient, Shelter also contributed the corporation's share on the condition of reimbursement. By mid 2007, 144 toilets were constructed in Pandarpur Chawl, UttamNagar and Gosavivasti. During the same period Shelter managed to raise additional private funds amounting to US$ 30,000 from 'Friends of Shelter Associates' (FoSA) based in Connecticut College, USA and utilized a part of this to construct 50 fully subsidized toilets in a community of sex workers.

Meanwhile two of the identified settlements (Sanjay Nagar and Indra Nagar) had registered themselves as trusts and demanded the construction of community toilet blocks. According to a Government Order of 2001, registration as a trust was necessary for a community to access state or central government project benefits. The same Order also stated that CBO/NGOs should be involved in the implementation of any slum sanitation project. As both the slums had established SHGs and were willing to take the responsibility of maintenance, SMKMC decided to initiate the construction of community blocks in these slums. In accordance with government orders SMKMC issued a notice in

the local newspapers inviting NGOs to participate. However, only one NGO (Jan Kalyan) responded and went on to construct two toilet blocks. The design for these blocks was finalized with the help of Shelter which also helped SMKMC to prepare the terms of the contract for the NGO. Shelter also managed to influence SMKMC to insist on Jan Kalyan issuing monthly passes to the users rather than charging on a 'per use ' basis since this was felt likely to discourage users.

The most recent collaborative venture is again a community toilet block to be constructed in Kolhapur Chawl (Miraj), for which 60 percent of the total cost of Rs. 675,000 is to be given by SMKMC and the remainder by Shelter. Again, although the approval process was lengthy, a tripartite contractual agreement between SMKMC, Shelter and Shiv Sadan was signed in August 2007 with Baandhini as a witness to the agreement. A significant feature is the fact that Shelter assisted Shiv Sadan to negotiate for full payment from the corporation before starting construction. The fact that SMKMC agreed to this stipulation was due to the credibility of Shiv Sadan and the trust vested in Shelter.

Sangili Sanitation Case : An Evolving NGO - Municipal Government*

**Characteristics
of the relationship**

USAID project:
opening minds upto reforms
and working with NGOs

Delays before NGO-local
Government meetings

NGO working on
No-objection notices

Joint planning with NGO,
Commissioner, politicians and
community groups

Direct NGO contacts
with Commissioner
and local politicians

Frequent mobile phone
contact with municipal staff
and local politicians

Policy Dialogue

Cost Sharing

Tripartite MoUs for New York

Requests for more collaboration

2000 ──────────────────────────────────► 2007

**Successful
NGO outputs:**

**Building
Trust and
Credibility**

| A few community toilet blocks | NGO GIS and comprehensive poverty of all slum areas | Demonstration Individual toilets | Successful area slum sanitation programmes | Support to MC with land-use planning for slums etc. |

* Prepared by Kevin Sansom

SUMMING UP

Throughout the fourth phase Shelter appears to have maintained its position and considerably influenced the sanitation project in Sangli, especially by introducing the concept of individual toilets and a third party to undertake construction activities. Its technical skills as well as the continuity of financial and technical support from the FIRE project appears to have given it considerable leverage to bring its own agenda into the forefront. Concrete and tangible interventions immediately following surveys that provided a visual picture of the situation, helped in taking the projects and the relationship forward. A significant factor appears to have been Shelter's approach of demonstrating its concepts and walking SMKMC through processes. With the SMKMC

gradually increasing its share in the project cost, besides its non- monetary support, and apparently also willing to pay the full cost of construction (interview with the Commissioner) a process of transfer of ideas is clearly visible. In fact, SMKMC's role became more pronounced over the fourth phase: besides granting the necessary clearance and approvals, resolving disputes at the community level, sanctioning electricity and water connections and providing overall oversight, its budgetary contribution has increased its stake in the project. The relationship has clearly evolved at every stage and in away it has grown from event to event, the 'event' in this case being the various phases or projects.

4.2 PURPOSE OF THE RELATIONSHIP: PERCEPTIONS

It is clear that the relationship between Shelter and SMKMC was not only initiated but also subsequently facilitated by an externally funded project and donor agencies.

4.2.1. Shelter: to operationalize its agenda of community participation

For Shelter the need to work with SMKMC, as stated earlier in this report, was simple and stemmed from the realization that this was an effective way of promoting its own agenda of community-led housing and sanitation, while helping to build up the capacities of the corporation. This meant working with all levels in the municipal corporation and addressing their needs and interests. Establishing a point of contact and conceptual understanding with the municipal commissioner was the start of the relationship, but establishing a rapport with some of the influential councillors enabled this relationship to continue and strengthen. Shelter was willing to concede the credit of providing facilities and services to the councillors as long as the latter facilitated the NGO in taking its agenda forward. For instance, when a dispute arose in Sangli because the space that was earmarked for the toilet block belonged to a housing society it was not Shelter but the councillors and the officials of the corporation who negotiated with the society and got the land released. Again it was one of the councillors, once convinced of its viability, who lobbied to introduce the individual toilet model in Sangli. Hence, for Shelter, collaboration with the councillors reportedly (interview with director project staff of Sangli) led to a 'win-win situation'.

It is at the operational level that management decisions get translated into actions and Shelter finds it imperative to build a close relationship with the municipal engineer who is responsible for implementation in order to enhance efficiency. The project staff of Shelter is of the view that in Sangli, unlike in Pune, initially financial support played a part in SMKMC's readiness to accept the NGO. However, subsequently, the day-to-day and routine support that Shelter has been providing and the quality of its work are practical motivating factors which have strengthened the relationship. For instance, the director of Shelter pointed out that, even though the corporation may not as yet have the capacity to use a GIS data base, the engineer found the information very useful: 'To me that is also a degree of success'. Besides, through interactions at this level, Shelter is able to influence the engineer to accept the design and cost specifications that would eventually provide for better facilities and services.

4.2.2. SMKMC: to support community participation and additional resources

For SMKMC, on the other hand, the purpose of the relationship appears to get Shelter's help in the area of data generation and community participation. The fact that Shelter

could bring in financial resources also appears to have been a compelling reason for the collaboration. Interviews with the various stakeholders within SMKMC showed very similar perceptions about the purpose of the relationship. The perceptions of the different groups in the organization, indicates the different perceived reasons to collaborate with Shelter.

a. Operational level: For the engineer who is most closely related to all the activities from planning to implementation and who interacts with Shelter the most on a day-to-day basis, the reasons were practical:

- Shelter helps SMKMC in undertaking the survey. The staff of the municipal corporation does not have either the time or the capacity to undertake poverty and resource mapping and Shelter helps in fulfilling this basic and crucial data requirement.
- Although, Shelter does take the corporation's support in implementing the work, Shelter also contributes a substantial amount of funds to the project, besides facilitating the corporation to negotiate with the state and the central governments for funds for sanitation projects.
- Communication between SMKMC and the community is never easy and Shelter helps in bridging this gap and improving the situation to a great extent.

At the same time, he also acknowledged that no other NGO had worked in Sangli in the way that Shelter has, bringing in both ideas and resources. Describing the Phandarpur project where SMKMC is also contributing funds, he said that: 'we only had to pay 40 percent of the cost and the rest is being given by Shelter and the community. So why should we not be interested?' He believed that the relationship was based on mutual trust and support and that it had strengthened over the years. He was keen that Shelter support the corporation in the housing projects that they were proposing. He added that so far no other NGO had come forward with the offer of money and services and neither had the corporation searched for one because it as satisfied with Shelter.

b. Executive level: Secondly, the municipal commissioner who was in charge at the time that Shelter started work in Sangli in 2001 agreed to collaborate because SMKMC itself was apparently planning to prepare a GIS based mapping of facilities, and Shelter's proposal tied in well with its requirements. Moreover, he realized that the IOG-MAGNET project, through which the collaboration was initiated, had elements of accountability and transparency that were in line with the reform agenda that the corporation had launched - namely a decision making forum that included the media and the community. He appreciated Shelter's contribution in bringing all the various constituents of the Forum together. He saw several advantages in the NGO-ULB collaborative strategy, especially in terms of involving the community, a task which he felt could not be entrusted to the officials of the corporation. According to the commissioner, secure in their jobs, these officials did not have the time or patience to invest in community outreach.

The collaboration had also resulted in entrusting the job of toilet maintenance to the community facilitated by the NGO, which in turn had relieved the corporation of the need to maintain and supervise a network of caretakers who might eventually have become a liability. Finally the collaboration and the Forum had brought the councillors into active participation and they had effectively handled the difficult issue of dealing with the 'slum lords' in the negotiations for land.

However, the commissioner argued in interview that, although an NGO could be effective in piloting a project, it could not be scaled up without the support of the state, especially in a large country like India. The state has a huge infrastructure, which must be involved if interventions were to be replicable. Besides, local leadership cannot be taken over by NGOs. It needs to be in the hands of the local community, and this was what Shelter was attempting to establish through Baandhini. Shelter was in fact primarily a facilitator and developed a 'handholding' strategy through which it could not only build capacity and empower the community but also provide constant support. The commissioner saw these as roles that government, with its hierarchical authority, elaborate procedures and rule-orientation could not do. He concluded that, although he himself had an 'idea' about community participation, it was the NGO that helped in giving it a shape.

The new municipal commissioner had a similar opinion about collaborating with Shelter. He said that Shelter helped SMKMC with the generation of required data and also in communicating with the community. Thus, while it provided the 'software', helped in cost-saving cost, and in general 'makes our work easy'. Collaboration with Shelter also helped the corporation to achieve its annual targets. He added that the urban local body was a mix of people with different, and often conflicting, interests, and who were not always easy to deal with. The municipal corporation's standing committee might facilitate or prevent a decision; and an NGO was better placed than he to handle this group and communicate the 'value of sanitation' to them. Shelter had managed to convince the councillors through the poverty mapping, through which each councillor could identify the resource and service gap in their respective wards.

The commissioner admitted that the staff of the corporation could not spend a long time with the community and hence could not mobilize them. The government's way of communicating messages to the community was also different, and not always conducive to establishing an effective response. In the corporation's collaboration with Shelter, the latter was able to address these issues. Besides, on a more operational side, the slum cell in SMKMC was short staffed and an engineer working on other projects has been given the additional charge of sanitation. Therefore, support from the NGO could help by ensuring that communities were involved and work was efficiently undertaken. Besides, the commissioner, had decided to make Sangli an 'open defecation free' city and had an understanding with the councillors to reach this goal, for which Shelter's support was necessary.

The commissioner, however, observed that NGOs needed to be selected very carefully because some of them were not transparent in the use of funds while others were indiscriminate in spending. However, SMKMC was satisfied with the way that Shelter worked and hence supported it.

c. Deliberative level: Although not all councillors support the kind of work that Shelter has been doing, some have understood the benefits and have been staunch supporters of Shelter, as indicated in interviews with some of the councillors. They feel that the NGO is a necessary means to mobilize both the community and the elected office bearers of the corporation in a situation where councillors often only relate to the community at the time of elections. Besides, for fear of losing votes, the councillors also do not put pressure on the community to contribute to toilet construction or service provision. But, with the NGO bringing in funds and ideas, an informed councillor could help put pressure on the community as well as the executive (administrators) to perform,

while at the same time using their influence to source additional funds and influence policy.

One of the councillors interviewed believed that the executive of the corporation were often casual about their work because they were salaried government employees and the government had no system of control or regulation of poor performance. He also felt that officials of SMKMC needed to change their attitude to interact more with communities, and that an NGO could help bring in these changes. He pointed out that the toilet construction programme had been more productive when it had been entirely funded by Shelter than when it was shared with SMKMC.

The council mayor said that it was easier to work with NGOs than the State Government which was bound by procedures and funding rules. He claimed that the corporation had collaborated willingly with Shelter in processing documents and the contract, besides sorting out differences in the community. He explained that the relationship with Shelter had been built gradually through the IOG-Magnet project in which a MoU was signed between SMKMC, the Forum and Shelter.

4.3 FORMAL RULES THAT GOVERN THE RELATIONSHIP

4.3.1. Formal agreements[14]

So far Shelter has not entered into a formal contract with SMKMC. In fact its engagements with the municipal corporation have been on the basis of its contracts with external donor agencies, i.e. USAID-FIRE, IOG-MAGNET and Cities Alliance. Within the framework of these projects, however, there are instances where Shelter and SMKMC have formally come together as co-signatories on agreements, all of which deal with construction activities. Other than these, the only other type of legal/official instrument that formalize the relationship are official sanctioning and approval letters. While the FIRE contracts were managed by the FIRE office in Delhi, the Cities Alliance contract is managed by the Alliance project manager based in Chennai.

a. Contracts for survey and GIS mapping with USAID-FIRE: Shelter's contracts with FIRE in phase I and III of the project have been simple documents based on formal proposals submitted by it and preceded by discussions between Shelter, USAID-FIRE and SMKMC. The simplicity of the contracts is not surprising, considering that the only activities under the first contract was the city-wide survey and, in the case of the second contract, the detailed survey and mapping of 12 slums together with the formation of CBOs.

While the proposals primarily identified the objective, methodology and outcome of the project with an estimated budget, indicating the way in which SMKMC would benefit from it, the contract indicated the nature and amount of technical and financial support that would be provided to Shelter, the expected outputs from Shelter and the role of SMKMC in sharing available data and monitoring the work. Although, SMKMC was not a signatory to either of the documents[15], it was committed to providing necessary support to Shelter, by virtue of USAID's overall support to the reform agenda of the corporation.

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[14] The analysis in this section has limitations because the contracts between Shelter and its donors have not yet been obtained. Hence most of the information is based on discussions.
15 This is based on discussions with Shelter as the documents could not be obtained.

FIRE provided Shelter the financial and technical support for spatial mapping with GIS as a tool for planning; facilitating multi-stakeholder partnerships; launching community led planning; contributing money and labour for the infrastructure; and supporting health and hygiene education (FIRE (D) Project Note, 2007). Both the contracts with FIRE were of relatively short duration ranging from 6 to 12 months.

Under both contracts, funds for the survey were provided direct to Shelter by FIRE. The budget also included the cost of the human resource and some overheads for Shelter. SMKMC had no funding commitments either with Shelter or the donor in either of these phases.

b. Embedded and multiple agreements under IOG-MAGNET: The formal arrangements in phase III under the IOG-MAGNET project were a little different, in that Shelter had an agreement at three levels: an overall contract with IOG-MAGNET to implement the project, an MoU between all the members of the Forum of which Shelter was also a part, and a separate agreement with Shiv Sadan, the cooperative society responsible for the construction of the toilet complex. Thus, in a way the MoU and the agreement with Shiv Sadan were embedded in the contract with IOG-MAGNET.

The contract letter from IOG-MAGNET defined the objective of the project, the expected outcome, Shelter's role and the budgetary provision within a given time frame, and the fact that the project funds were to flow through Shelter. The MoU, on the other hand, set down the agreed structure of the project, the roles of the media, SMKMC, Shelter and the municipal corporation's steering committee. Expectations of SMKMC, in terms of its monitoring and supporting roles, were defined in the MoU and included supplementing the IOG-MAGNET funds to improve the overall environmental conditions. The project's concept of equality in decision-making, accountability and transparency were reflected in the MoU, with decision making expected to be a collaborative process.

The third level of formal engagement came into effect when Shelter signed an agreement with Shiv Sadan Cooperative Society for the construction of the two toilet complexes. No tenders were invited for the contract and Shiv Sadan was selected on the basis of 'sole sourcing'. Signed in April 2002, it had Shelter as 'party number 1' and Shiv Sadan as 'party number 2' to the contract. Although, SMKMC was not formally a party to the contract, an attempt was made to ensure its involvement by bringing it in as a witness to the contract and including specific responsibilities under the 'payment and supervision clause'. The contract was also drawn up by SMKMC but since the fund for construction was being given by Shelter, the latter signed the contract as 'Party no. 1.

This was a relatively more elaborate but purely contractual document[16] in three parts describing the services to be rendered, the mode of payment and the supervision of the quality of work. The sub-section describing the work for which the contract was being executed indicated the nature of work (construction of two toilets and a bio-gas structure in one of the complexes), the estimated cost of construction, and the construction technology to be used. A normal penalty clause in case of delays in completion of construction was included as was a clause vesting the responsibility for payment of all stipulated taxes on the contractor. The mode of payment indicated that the contractor was to provide a bank guarantee in return for which an advance of 50 percent would be

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16 executed on a Government of India non-judicial stamp paper worth Rs. 1120

paid at the time of signing the contract. The remaining amount was to be paid in instalments at various stages of the project.

The role of SMKMC was limited to undertaking the:
> '…responsibility of supplying water necessary to the purpose of construction and electricity supply of 1 KW free of cost as decided in the meeting of the MAGNET Steering Committee…'

The contract also safeguards the interests of the contractor by the insertion of specific clauses. Firstly, it states that Shiv Sadan would start the work only after SMKMC has ensured the supply of electricity. Secondly any delay in the completion of work because of payments not being made according to the contract or delays due to natural disasters would not attract the penalty clause, thus placing the onus of ensuring efficiency on SMKMC and Shelter. Disputes were to be settled by an arbitrator 'appointed collectively' with the agreement of both the contracting parties as well as the chairperson of SMKMC's steering committee. The contract also bound Shiv Sadan to refrain from taking any disputes that may arise to a civil court. The only indication of supervision in the contract was a monthly report to be submitted by Shiv Sadan.

Thus, simple and uncomplicated, these clauses set the boundaries for the work to be executed while ensuring that neither of the contracting parties was at a disadvantage. The simplicity indicates the trust that had already developed between Shelter and Shiv Sadan and the fact that the funds were to be released by an NGO, thereby avoiding the delays generally associated with the government. It could also be attributed to the confidence imposed by the structure of the Forum.

c. Increasing formalization of the relationship with budgetary commitment under Cities Alliance

In phase IV, Shelter entered into a contract with Cities Alliance, which was endorsed, by USAID and SIDA as members of the Alliance - a process that is mandatory for contracts with Cities Alliance[17]. The contract was to cover a period of two years (2004-06) but was subsequently extended, with no budgetary implication, to 2007.

This is the most defined contract so far, probably because of the nature of work and the size of the budget. One of its key features is that, while it indicates that Cities Alliance, through Shelter, would contribute 20 percent of the cost of construction, it also documents SMKMC commitment to contribute the remaining cost together with potential funds from the state government (Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan) and the community. Again SMKMC is not a signatory to the contract but is expected to provide all support and supervise construction.

Within this contractual framework, however, a process of official approval and sanction by SMKMC of the various construction works being managed by Shelter has evolved. Such sanction letters are mandatory even if SMKMC is not making any budgetary contribution as construction of toilets needs to go through an approval process that involves the corporation's standing committee. Thereafter, the approval letter is issued by the municipal commissioner or the chief engineer. In the case where Shelter had constructed individual toilets, the process was lengthy because sanction also had to be obtained from MHADA at the state level.(*See section 4: 'The Relationship in Practice',*

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17 USAID and SIDA are two funders of Cities Alliance

for details). However, the sanction letters are short and only state that Shelter's proposal has been

> '…approved in the Standing Committee meeting number…Resolution No…
> dated….. The xerox copy of the Resolution is attached. You are requested to do
> the needful in this respect….'

As Shelter's proposals cover all aspects related to the cost, design, number of toilets to be constructed and the time frame, along with support expected from SMKMC, the reference in the sanction letter to the proposal appears to be adequate. Again, in the case of the individual toilets, the approval letter also includes the approval received from MHADA. Similarly, approval of SMKMC's contribution of 40 percent of the cost of construction also had to be formally obtained and 'passed' in the standing committee meeting.

As has been indicated earlier in this paper, while the individual toilets were constructed by Shelter, another community block - a 'pay and use' toilet in Kholapur Chawl, Mira - was being contracted out to Shiv Sadan. This time there is more than a marginal difference from the contract executed[18] under the IOG-MAGNET programme. The most notable difference is that in the new contract SMKMC is party to the contract (Party No.1) together with Shelter and Shiv Sadan, and Baandhini has been co-opted as a witness to the contract. SMKMC's contributions are more explicitly defined as paying Rs. 400,000 out of the total estimated construction cost of Rs. 675,000; and having to 'supply water free of cost necessary for the construction work as per the terms and conditions of the quotation.' Shelter, as 'Party No 2' is required to pay the remaining cost of Rs. 275,000 to Shiv Sadan as well as to take 'suitable steps' to ensure that the maintenance and routine repairs of the toilet blocks are carried out by the contracted company. Apart from this the contract does not assign any other role to Shelter. The shift in the balance of roles, as reflected in the contract, can be attributed largely to the increase in SMKMC's financial stake and hence accountability of the corporation.

At the same time, there is evidence of marginally greater checks and controls by SMKMC and for the first time the contract clearly says that the concerned engineer of the corporation will supervise the construction. The contract also states that SMKMC has the right to ask for changes in the original specifications, drawings and designs even after the work has started and Shiv Sadan is bound to comply. If the modifications have not been mentioned in the original rate list then the rates will be decided by the municipal commissioner as per government norms. It also incorporates a work place safety and accidental insurance clause, putting the onus of ensuring compensation on the contractor. However, Shiv Sadan has been able to successfully negotiate for a full payment of SMKMC's share on signing the contract. The contract binds Shelter to pay the rest of the cost of construction to Shiv Sadan and also to ensure that technical maintenance and repairs of the structure would be carried out by Shiv Sadan.

SUMMING UP

The contractual clauses, thus, appear to be minimal, non-threatening and non-intrusive, respecting the interests of all the parties concerned. In fact the latest contract for

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18 The analysis is based on the draft contract made available in July. But since then the contract has been finalized and signed, with minor differences.

construction of the toilet block in Kolhapur Chawal, although initially drafted by SMKMC, was also reviewed and modified by Shelter.[19] In tangible terms, the Shelter-SMKMC relationship brought in donor funds for the surveys, GIS mapping, community mobilization and the full cost of constructing around 600 individual toilets and 6 community blocks, besides the partial cost of additional community blocks. Additionally, it also enabled SMKMC to access funds under the Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan. While Shelter was accountable to its funders by virtue of its various contracts with them, its accountability to SMKMC has not been explicitly mentioned anywhere, except obliquely in the contract with Shiv Sadan. According to interviewees, the only reason why Shelter was a party to the construction contract was the fact that the funds for construction were channelled through it.

5. THE RELATIONSHIP IN PRACTICE

Although there are no direct contracts between Shelter and SMKMC, other than in the case of construction, in reality the relationship is dynamic and engaged. The evolving association emerges when we look at some of the critical points in the project cycle, at how activities have been operationalized and at the interactions between different levels of functionaries from the two organizations.

5.1 THE RELATIONSHIP ON THE OPERATIONAL FRONT

At the start of the project, during the initial days of the survey, SMKMC officials at all levels coordinated closely with Shelter. They were informed of the activities and helped Shelter get acquainted with the city. While the corporation's responsibility was primarily to provide available information and generally assist the NGO, SMKMC officials, including senior ones like the engineer and the deputy municipal commissioner, actually accompanied the teams into the slums as and when needed. There was constant interaction and information sharing between the NGO and the corporation at this stage. Hence, when the findings were finally presented, all concerned officials were interested enough to participate in the event. Similarly, while Shelter was almost exclusively responsible for mobilizing the communities and building community federations, SMKMC gave its institutional weight and credibility in the case of difficult communities with senior officials again accompanying the team into the field. Subsequently, however, when Shelter had established a relationship with the councillors, especially the more amenable ones, most of the community problems were resolved together with them. Other then this, however, SMKMC rarely engaged with the communities on a routine basis, leaving the entire process of community mobilization to Shelter.

Shelter itself observes that the '…relationship between Shelter Associates/ Baandhini and SMKMC officials during the surveys was more reciprocal…' (Joshi, et al, 2002). As a case in point it states that while SMKMC endorsed Shelter's selection of slums for interventions, indicating the former's faith in the judgment of the field staff, Shelter in turn agreed to include the *guntewari* areas (a local term for unauthorized residential areas occupied by relatively better off people than slum dwellers) in the survey, even though they were not within the mandate of its mission. However, the term 'reciprocal', which has an element of 'give and take', tends to indicate that, although both partners have a commitment to the poor and underprivileged, their definition of the poor is somewhat

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19 A draft of the contract was actually being typed out in the office of Shiv Sadan at the time of the interviews for the study

different. At the same time, the willingness to adjust to each other's needs suggests a 'flexible' relationship, informed and responsive to each other's agenda.

The significance of involvement at this initial stage becomes more relevant when it is contrasted with the case of Pune where, because of a lack of understanding and commitment, there was little interest or participation in the survey by PMC officials, excepting the municipal commissioner. Hence, the relationship between the PMC and Shelter became so tense over the verification of the data collected by the latter that PMC threatened to file a civil case for incomplete work. A committee of the PMC charged with the responsibility of verifying the data claimed that the work had not been done according to the contract. Shelter, however, argued that the verification itself was not possible without using the GIS package and, since PMC had not acquired one, their verification was not acceptable.

According to interviews, Shelter's view is that the PMC project would not have turned sour if it had been able to establish a rapport with the officials at the junior and operational level. Shelter attributes this state of affairs to the highly sensitive political scenario in Pune which makes it difficult to strike a balance between development oriented and politically motivated interventions. It was difficult to establish sustainable links with the slum department of the PMC due to frequent changes in administrative staff. On the other hand in Sangli it had dealt with the same slum officer for the last seven years. Their efforts to train the PMC staff had always met with roadblocks due to the frequently changing personnel. Within this system, it was also more difficult to strike a rapport with individual councillors who might be potential champions. In contrast, Sangli was apparently politically less sensitive and the intensity of local politics was low enough to be managed. Hence Shelter had achieved some success in co-opting the councillors into the partnership. Besides, being a much smaller ULB with a very tight manpower position, officials at all level in Sangli had relatively more freedom and flexibility to implement projects.

Another dimension of the relationship is visible in Shelter's support at the implementation level and in undertaking routine tasks. As SMKMC has a small team, Shelter had effectively to extend its boundaries of activity to support the engineer in order to accomplish tasks with efficiency. Thus, in the finalization of the design and costing of the toilet blocks, Shelter and SMKMC apparently worked together on a simple technology in the engineer's office, under his supervision, although much of the groundwork was done by Shelter. This collaboration was in the interest of both SMKMC and Shelter: while the former got helping hands, the latter was able to influence the design and ensure that the work was accomplished on time.

However, although the construction contracts indicate that SMKMC is responsible for monitoring the progress and quality of work, in reality most of the routine supervision is carried out by Shelter. The SMKMC engineer does not have the time to make visits and in fact only does so if a problem arises. Besides, the engineer also does not feel the need to monitor because, in his own words, 'Shiv Sadan worked like an NGO', implying that NGOs worked with more commitment and transparency and hence could be trusted to fulfill the terms of the contract. With SMKMC now beginning to contribute towards the cost of construction, it would be expected that the intensity of monitoring and supervision would increase. But, in practice, both Shelter (field team) and Shiv Sadan agree that monitoring remained more or less at the same level because of the lack of human resources in SMKMC and the trust established.

Besides, Shelter, according to its agreement with the donor, has also been facilitating SMKMC to access funds from the state government and private donors like FoSA. Support of this kind is valued by SMKMC and has prompted the commissioner and others to express SMKMC's keenness to continue its relationship with Shelter, even if the latter does not provide funds. It would appear that, while Shelter's funding role has been a critical basis for the relationship, subsequently support from routine to policy level issues has become an important factor.

A further dimension of the relationship emerges when we look at the rapport between different levels of personnel in the two organizations. The association between SMKMC and Shelter is cordial and supportive. When the project was initiated, interaction with SMKMC officials at all levels was largely by the senior management of Shelter. However, once Shelter's field team was established, much of the routine management as well as decision-making at the operational level have been handled by them. The director is required to intervene only for critical policy level decisions or when issues are difficult to resolve. Hence, her visits to the field have declined over the years. The team, for its part, relates well with the engineer, with whom they are in contact on a daily basis and also has easy access to the commissioner[20]. The mayor and the councillors also respond to them and are easily accessible in and out of office. The establishment of a comfortable working relationship and trust at all levels has resulted in both the officials and elected representative stating that they did not feel the need to seek the services of another NGO as long as Shelter was willing to participate. The extent of the relationship is reflected in the municipal commissioner's statement that 'Whatever they (Shelter) do we support'. (Interview with the Commissioner)

At the same time, although the frequency of the director's visits to Sangli had reduced, the interactions and cordial relationship with the various levels of officials had been sustained. During the course of the research, it became obvious that informal discussions and negotiations took place between the director and the mayor and selected councillors, the commissioner and the engineer on issues as wide ranging as the release by SMKMC of pending funds with SMKMC and a request for support by Shelter in a proposed housing project for slum dwellers. Shelter's director believed that when it succeeded in involving the commissioner and the mayor in an idea or project and in gaining their commitment, then an endorsement subsequently from the standing committee became relatively easy. For instance, Shelter initially worked out the basis of cost-sharing for the toilets together with the mayor, the commissioner and one of the councillors. It placed this before the standing committee, where the advocacy and negotiations were done by the commissioner, the mayor and the councillor.

Shelter has at the same time built up a strategic relationship with the elected representatives to push its own agenda, both at the SMKMC level and within the community. Initially, Shelter met the councillors collectively at a meeting called by the commissioner at the request of Shelter, when they presented the survey findings together with the visual situation on a map. This, Shelter claimed in an interview with the researcher, was such a transparent process that it was difficult for the councillors not to respond. Subsequently, Shelter began to interact with individual councillors who showed more interest and who Shelter felt was more influential. This has apparently resulted in one of the most influential councillors, who was initially against Shelter's activities,

20 so much so that the team leader in Sangli is instinctively referred to 'as our man Sambhaji' by the Commissioner

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subsequently becoming one of its most staunch allies. He uses his long experience and strength as the leader of the opposition within the local body to promote the project and at times even coerce both the deliberative and executive wings to perform. Thus, 'when the state government is against us the councillors support us.' (Director, Shelter). This rapport with the officials and elected representatives at the highest level in the ULB is perhaps the reason why Shelter rarely ever interacts with any other department within SMKMC.

Yet another emerging relationship is visible between SMKMC and Shelter's community based partner-Baandhini. As stated earlier in this report, Baandhini (though not registered) was given full recognition as a representative of the community when it was co-opted as a witness to the most recent tripartite contract between Shelter, SMKMC and Shiv Sadan. It is now increasingly being sought by SMKMC to assist it in other activities. For instance the commissioner called a meeting of the SHG and Baandhini members and asked them to take up the responsibility for environmental sanitation in their respective slums. He suggested that they should employ cleaners, raise money from the community for expenses and also retain some for the functioning of their federations. SMKMC also wants Baandhini to facilitate it in mobilizing households in one of one the slums that is slated for removal to shift to a resettlement colony and also help with all the documentation formalities. However, Baandhini members are reluctant to do so because the new colony has not been provided with water and electricity as yet. Moreover, Baandhini also does not approve of the small size of the houses constructed. SMKMC assured them that the services would be provided three months later but was silent on the size of the house. The Baandhini members met the commissioner to discuss these issues. While Shelter does not directly involve itself in these negotiations, it has been informally advocating for improvements in the quality of houses.

Serious conflicts between Shelter and SMKMC were observed to be almost absent. However, an emerging tension has been the reimbursement of SMKMC's share of the construction cost. According to an agreement (confirmed in a letter) between Shelter and SMKMC, the latter is expected to periodically reimburse 40 percent of the cost of construction of individual toilets. Although the corporation had approved the funding and budget in March 2007, it was not until end of May before the funds were released. The NGO submitted written reminders to the commissioner and also had informal meetings with him. Although the commissioner verbally instructed the concerned staff to release at least an advance (Rs. 20, 000), they did not immediately comply. Shelter attributes these delays to the fact that the concerned engineer himself is slow in processing documents and hence record files remain with the junior officials for long periods of time.[21]

Subsequently, Shelter enlisted the help of one of the councillors, who put pressure on the staff. Finally even when the money was released, one of Shelter's own staff had personally to be present in SMKMC to ensure that the final procedures for dispatching the amount were quickly carried out. However, Shelter is quick to add that, unlike in many other government offices, they do not have to resort to bribing the staff in SMKMC. Although there are delays, financial transactions with SMKMC have reportedly been above board.

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[21] Shelter narrated an instance when a file was kept pending because the concerned official had gone on extended leave for about a month and a half.

5.2 MEANS AND ENDS OF SERVICE DELIVERY

Shelter has been trying to further its community led sanitation agenda, largely through dialogue and negotiations at various levels within SMKMC and in some cases at the level of the State and the Government of India. During this process serious conflicts have been few, though at times prolonged discussions at various levels and some amount of lobbying were necessary.

A decision that had policy implications was Shelter's proposal to construct individual toilets. SMKMC was reluctant to provide individual toilets, apparently because the VAMBAY/Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan programme provided for only community toilets (although, it does not specifically disallow individual toilets). SMKMC gave as a reason to disagree an ongoing dispute in one of the proposed slums (Jatkar Basti) where there was a legal complication since it was located on private land and the owner had filed a case in the civil court. Reluctant to take a decision, SMKMC forwarded Shelter's proposal to MHADA for advice and approval. MHADA in turn asked the Pune Housing and Regional Development Authority to look into the issue and the latter went back to SMKMC for its detailed comments! Meanwhile, one of the councillors convinced SMKMC that, according to the State Slum Improvement Act, there was no need to obtain permission from the landowner for the provision of services, especially if it was a declared slum. Shelter also mobilized the communities to meet the commissioner and submit a petition demanding that the construction should be started immediately as they had organized their share of the contribution.

These negotiations finally led SMKMC to draft a reply to MHADA stating that the legal threats were manageable and that individual toilets would be more cost effective in terms of maintenance and would also be sustainable. At the same time Shelter lobbied both the vice president of MHADA and the district committee of VAMBAY to allow the project to be implemented until VAMBAY gave conditional approval, leaving SMKMC responsible in case of legal complications. The project was a success as indicated by an increasing demand from other communities for similar provision and SMKMC's decision to share 40 percent of the cost for subsequent projects. Shelter, thus, managed to legitimize individual toilets within the policy of SMKMC, through a process of lobbying at various levels.

However, Shelter was not always successful in pushing its agenda with SMKMC. Bound by its habit of simply adopting State and GoI guidelines and norms verbatim, SMKMC had advertised for NGOs to facilitate the construction of community blocks under the Nirmal Gram Abhiyan programme. However, as they were unwilling to spend beyond the prescribed norms of Rs. 40,000 per toilet seat and also wanted the NGO to take up the responsibility of maintenance, Shelter refused to participate. The work was then completed by another NGO (Jan Kalyan) from a neighbouring district. However, Shelter succeeded in convincing SMKMC to ensure that Jan Kalyan would issue monthly passes to the users instead of charging on a pay-and-use basis which, they thought, would discourage poor families. Shelter also helped in drafting the contract with the NGO.

Thus, the relationship in some ways has gone beyond what was envisaged at the time that the project was developed. Although, a significant basis is the person-to-person interactions, institutional continuity has been maintained through the engineer and councillors. As a result, the transfer of commissioners (four since Shelter started its work in Sangli), although leading to some delays, has not so far stalled the project. On the

other hand, when looked at within the framework of the project cycle, the relationship exhibits elements of being horizontal and collaborative with an increasing element of co-production, wherein the state government is gradually increasing its share of funding. At the same time, however, it also indicate a possibility of SMKMC becoming dependent on Shelter to some extent, especially in relation to interactions with the community and supervision of work.

Some forms of new relationship have also emerged in the course of the project: the first is the tripartite partnership between Shelter, Shiv Sadan and SMKMC, which has enabled Shelter to focus on the processes rather than construction. Transparency and accountability have been increased by separating the construction activity from Shelter, which was also the route for part of the construction funds. The second is the partnership with the councillors which has not only enabled Shelter to negotiate with SMKMC and resolve issues with the community, but has also helped to strengthen urban local government. The third is the increasing relationship of Baandhini with SMKMC. Shelter also suggests that another relationship – between NGO, CBO and councillors has been 'strong in pushing individual toilets.' (Shelter, 2006)

6. THE EFFECTS OF THE RELATIONSHIP ON THE ORGANIZATIONS

6.1 Effect of the relationship on the partner organizations

From the above description it is clear that the relationship has so far not seriously challenged either partner's goals, ideologies or identities. Shelter has been able to avoid compromising its belief in the primacy of the community for two reasons: firstly, because it has retained its strength as a funding channel, and secondly because of its demonstrated commitment to the project mandate. A case in point is that of two slums where Shelter refused to compromise on the construction of individual toilets and preferred to opt out and leave the task of construction and community mobilization to another NGO (Jan Kalyan). At the same time, however, Shelter was compelled to take up the responsibility for the construction of the individual toilets in Jatkar Samaj, Boudh Vasahat and Khaja Vasti, because Shiv Sadan would not construct individual toilets. This also meant that Shelter's field team had to get build its capacities to plan and supervise construction.

The relationship with SMKMC has convinced Shelter of the need to work with the smaller ULBs, because 'they require more support and sanitation inputs' (Director, Shelter) and lack both resources and capacities. Shelter has also been able to justify its view in favour of separating the function of a contractor from that of an NGO focused on communities.

The municipal corporation, on the other hand, bound by the traditional practices of bureaucracy and the need to follow government guidelines on project frameworks and norms, had to struggle more to respond to the objectives of the relationship, even though these were similar to its own goals and ideologies. On the other hand, because the relationship involved the highest decision making levels in SMKMC, it may be assumed that some form of institutional learning has occurred. Further, a change in SMKMC's approach towards more community involvement is illustrated by the fact that it is now

mobilizing the support of Baandhini to make its resettlement project as well as the environmental sanitation inputs effective, and is keen to continue its relationship with Shelter. However, with the existing institutional structure, the financial capacities and the tendency to rigidly follow state and central government guidelines, the question that arises is whether SMKMC can sustain the approach without NGO support. As observed by one of the previous commissioners of Sangli:

> 'The State Government …is interested to know how much of the sanctioned funds we have spent. What they need to ask instead is what we have done with the money? What is the quality of work done? What is the outcome/the logical end?' (the ex-municipal commissioner of SMKMC in an interview with the researcher)

6.2 Effect on NGPA

Not many NGOs are however aware of Shelter's work because, while there are relatively few NGOs working in the urban sanitation sector, Shelter keeps a low profile as an organization. However, the some of the smaller corporations have now started to seek assistance from Shelter. Officials of the state government consider it to be a 'good' but small organization in terms of coverage and activities. Others within the NGO sector who have been associated with Shelter in some capacity during its course of existence are critical of its community approach. In interview, one of them questioned the extent to which Shelter was transparent in sharing with the community the information collected through surveys; another was critical of Shelter promoting the concept of individual toilets. The latter was based on the other NGO's own perception that '…individual toilets divide the community while the community toilets conserve resources. It also brings the community together and strengthens them for security of tenure.'

Both SMKMC and Shelter are convinced that the partnership between them is workable and has been effective, in spite of occasional roadblocks. SMKMC attributes this to both the resources and ideas that Shelter brings and to the NGO's commitment and honesty. Shelter adds that it is also due to the transparent processes and the tripartite relationship that they have been able to establish with the councillors and the community. This was seconded by one of the first commissioners of Sangli who argued in interview that the ULBs and NGOs have to work together because, while NGOs could innovate and pilot approaches, it was only the state that could scale them up. Besides, the greater involvement of the local community ensured that it was they and not the NGO who eventually took the lead in interactions with the state. While some of the councillors were of the opinion that the elected members and officials of the corporation had to be above self-interest in order to further an NGO-ULB relationship, the commissioner stated that the state and central governments too had to change the way that they assessed the success of a project - from 'how much' of the funds have been spent to 'how' it has been spent, in order to encourage effective partnerships.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The relationship between Shelter and SMKMC has generally been cordial and has strengthened over the years into a form of horizontal co-production. It has moved from a position where no financial contribution was being made by the corporation to one of cost sharing. While formal agreements and processes exist in the relationship, the informal interactions that take place between the corporation and the NGO have made

an important contribution to strengthening and advancing it. A key characteristic is that the relationship has been established at multiple levels within the corporation. It has responded to the specific needs of each level and on the other 'exploited' the position and powers of the various functionaries to evolve an internal process of negotiation and advocacy. Within this some of the elected representatives have played a critical role in facilitating and sustaining the relationship, perhaps because their stakes are higher than that of the officials within the ULB and also because the constitution of the corporation allows them to do so. A key factor has been the strong functional relationship at the operational level, which has led to tangible outputs. Establishing the relationship at multiple levels has also ensured continuity even after periodic transfers of municipal commissioners and changes in leadership. Finally, as specifically acknowledged by both the corporation and the NGO in interviews, the relationship is transparent in all aspects, especially in terms of financial transactions.

At the field level the NGO and municipal corporation work as a virtual team. However, because of the strength of its relationship with the community as well as the resources that it brings, the NGO is able advance its own agenda. In fact, a critical factor that allows the NGO to negotiate on a level with the corporation is its financial independence and the fact that it is technically accountable to its donors. Another factor that has allowed the NGO to advance its agenda is that SMKMC is a small corporation, with limited resources and politically less sensitive. Hence, while in Pune the sanitation project was more corporation-led and NGO-centred[22], in Sangli it is more collaborative and has become closer to being community-centred. Overall SMKMC identifies closely with Shelter and appears to have established such a level of comfort that it does not feel any urgent need to collaborate with other NGOs.

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[22] The project was conceived and promoted by the Corporation; however not only were the activities carried out by the NGOs, but the Commissioner ensured that they were well supported by the Corporation to deliver within the project time frame.

List of Interviewees

1. Pratima Joshi, Director Shelter Associate, Pune
2. Sambaji , Project Co-ordinator, Shelter Associates, SMKMC
3. Noorjehan, Resource Persons, Shelter Associates, SMKMC
4. Shakuntala Kalekar, Resource Persons, Shelter Associates, SMKMC
5. Rajini Gikwad, Resource Persons, Shelter Associates, SMKMC
6. Dilip, Field Coordinator, of Shelter Associates, SMKMC
7. Pradeep Singh Pratap Singh Paradesi, Municipal Commissioner , PMC
8. Anil Gaikwad, Deputy Municipal Commissioner (Social Welfare), PMC.
9. Prasoon Joshi, Junior Engineer, UCD, PMC
10. AV. Kalamakar and Corporators, Pune
11. Deepak Ramakrishna Gowde, Ward-Parvati, PMC
12. Mangala Maitri, Ward - Vikas Nagar, PMC
13. Ratnakar Gaikwad, Director , YESHDA, Pune and previously Municipal Commissioner, PMC
14. Ashwin Kumar, Additional Director, YESHDA
15. Bajirao Jadav, Municipal Commissioner, SMKMC
16. C.J. Sonawane, Engineer, SMKMC
17. Mayor, SMKMC
18. Idris Naikwad, Corporator, SMKMC
19. Joglekar, Shiv Sadan
20. A. Jokin, , NSDF/SPARC, Mumbai
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