# DIFFERENTIATING THE RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH FROM OTHER DEVELOPMENT APPROACHES IN THEORY AND IN PRACTICE

By

Anna Catherine Carella

Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of the

Graduate School of Vanderbilt University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Political Science

August 11, 2023

Nashville, Tennessee

Approved:

Brooke A. Ackerly, Ph.D.

Jonathan Hiskey, Ph.D.

Ashley Carse, Ph.D.

Yolanda McDonald, Ph.D.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to my dissertation committee and especially to my chair, Dr. Brooke Ackerly. Without her mentorship I would never have come this far. Thank you to all my Bangladeshi colleagues, especially Dr. Bishawjit Mallick and Dr. Mujibul Labib Anam who shared their beautiful country and culture with me, were excellent thought partners, and made this dissertation possible. Thank you to Dr. Kazi Matin Uddin Ahmed at Dhaka University for allowing me to do research in the MAR sites. Thank you to Vanderbilt University's Department of Political Science for investing in me and allowing me to see this project through after multiple extended hiatuses. Thank you to the Office of Naval Research for funding my research through a Multidisciplinary University Initiative (MURI) grant #5 Award Number: N00014-11-1-0683. Thank you to all my friends and family who cheered me to the finish line. And finally, thank you to all the freedom fighters in Bangladesh, Tennessee, and around the world who fight to make sure our human rights are protected and enjoyed. Above all, this dissertation is for you. I love you. Keep going.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**LIST OF TABLES** ........ **vi**

**LIST OF FIGURES** ........ **vii**

**1 Investigating the rights-based approach** ........ **1**

1.1 Subject of Inquiry ........ 4

1.2 Case Study: Bangladesh ........ 6
1.2.1 Background on the MAR ........ 7

1.3 Conclusion ........ 11

**2 Literature Review** ........ **12**

2.1 Note: why “approach”? ........ 14

2.2 Gross Domestic Product (GDP) Growth Approach ........ 15

2.3 Basic Needs Approach ........ 20
2.3.1 A note about Peter Singer ........ 23
2.3.2 A note about John Rawls ........ 25

2.4 Capabilities Approach ........ 28
2.4.1 A note about Thomas Pogge ........ 32

2.5 Rights-Based Approach ........ 36
2.5.1 What the rights-based approach is not ........ 42

2.6 Conclusion ........ 43

**3 Methodology** ........ **45**

3.1 Development of Research Interest ........ 45

3.2 Sequential Mixed Methods ........ 46
3.2.1 Triangulation: Types of Data Collected ........ 50
3.2.2 Preliminary data gathering 2013 ........ 53
3.2.3 Survey data 2014 ........ 57
3.2.4 Qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) 2015 ........ 59
3.2.5 Data collection ........ 62

3.3 Intention: RBA Methodology ........ 66

3.4 My own accountability ........ 68

3.5 Conclusion ........ 69

**4 Findings ........ 71**

4.1 Inclusion ........ 72
4.1.1 Site selection ........ 72
4.1.2 Exclusion from the MAR pond ........ 77
4.2 Cross-Issue Awareness ........ 79
4.2.1 Drinking water norms ........ 80
4.2.2 Gender norms ........ 81
4.3 Capacity Building ........ 83
4.4 Situational Analysis ........ 87
4.5 Learning ........ 92
4.5.1 The Blanchet report ........ 93
4.5.2 Failed PSFs ........ 94
4.5.3 What does the research say about community managed resources ........ 96
4.6 Accountability ........ 97
4.6.1 Construction failures ........ 98
4.6.2 Knowledge of the accountability process ........ 101
4.7 Conclusion ........ 104

**5 Discussion and Implications ........ 106**

5.1 The 5 Elements of the Rights-based Approach ........ 109
5.1.1 Inclusion ........ 109
5.1.2 Cross Issue Awareness ........ 111
5.1.3 Capacity Building ........ 112
5.1.4 Situational Analysis ........ 113
5.1.5 Learning ........ 115
5.2 Accountability and Democracy ........ 118
5.3 Refining the Rubric ........ 120
5.4 Conclusion ........ 122

**6 Conclusion ........ 124**

6.1 Limitations and Future Research ........ 125

**Works Cited ........ 127**

Appendix A: 2013 Semi Structured Interview Protocol ........ 138
Appendix B: 2014 Household survey questions pertaining to my research ........ 139

Appendix C: Work Plan and Site Visit Timeline ........ 141
Appendix D: Report rubric ........ 142
Appendix E: Modified Logic Model Guide ........ 146
Appendix F: Data Log ........ 149

## LIST OF TABLES

Table Page

Table 1: Scholarship on the five elements of the rights-based approach ........ 5
Table 2: List of approaches and their component parts ........ 13
Table 3: MAR pilot sites ........ 54
Table 4: Twelve sample sites by NGO partners ........ 60
Table 5: List of MAR sites and each community's total population ........ 77

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure | Page

Figure 1: Representation of how earlier trips to the field informed later research ........................ 47
Figure 2: MAR stakeholders ........................................................................................... 46
Figure 3: Satellite image of 20 pilot MAR sites .............................................................. 55
Figure 4: Trust for national and local government, NGOs by site and NGO ............................... 71
Figure 5: MAR Accountability Process ............................................................................ 97

## 1 Investigating the rights-based approach

The rights-based approach (RBA) to development has been around for decades, yet there is not a common understanding in scholarship or in practice (H. Miller 2010; P. J. Nelson and Dorsey 2018). Because of this (Harris-Curtis, Marleyn, and Bakewell 2005, 40) explain that there is a "danger that the notion of rights-based approaches could come to mean all things to all people: a loose and ill-defined idea, which everyone can adopt as they can interpret it to fit their own interests." Indeed, it is exactly this practice that Batiwala (2013), Uvin (2004), and Nyamu-Musembi and Cornwall (2004) identify. They worry that international development organizations often adopt a rights rhetoric, but do not have practices that line up with their understanding of the RBA. As (Batiwala 2013, 287) explains, "[old] approaches are often rebottled in the rights rhetoric" and that the rights-based "rhetoric has assumed greater importance than the practice." (Uvin 2004, 51) calls this "rhetorical repackaging." (Nyamu-Musembi and Cornwall 2004, 5) explain "agencies can proclaim their commitment to human rights, yet the bulk of their practice remains entirely unaffected by nice-sounding policies as it is framed by older or competing development models that remain hegemonic in practice." Likewise, scholarship on the rights-based approach (RBA) describes some of its elements, but misunderstands what the approach fully entails (Gauri and Gloppen 2012; Hamm 2001), or dismisses it for being too broad, overly legalistic, or too focused on rhetoric rather than practice (Batiwala 2013; Tsikata 2004). These criticisms of the RBA set up a straw man argument for why the approach does not work.

Without a common understanding of the RBA by scholars or practitioners, the approach continues to be misunderstood and misapplied (P. J. Nelson and Dorsey 2018). Clear and accurate articulations of the rights-based approach exist in scholarship by researchers based at

the Institute for Development Studies in Brighton, UK (Blackburn et al. 2005; Clark, Reilly, and Wheeler 2005; Cornwall and Nyamu-Musembi 2005; H. Miller 2010; V. Miller, VeneKlasen, and Clark 2005; Nyamu-Musembi 2005; Nyamu-Musembi and Cornwall 2004) as well as others (Ackerly 2011; Filmer-Wilson 2005; Offenheiser and Holcombe 2003; Uvin 2004). Perhaps because articulations of the RBA are spread out over many publications, perhaps because this scholarship is overlooked, or perhaps over confusion between approaches that include human rights rhetoric versus the rights-based approach (Piron 2005), many scholars still misunderstand the RBA (Hamm 2001). Development organizations adopt human rights rhetoric, but fail to implement the RBA fully in practice (P. J. Nelson and Dorsey 2018). These problems demonstrate a need for more clarity for both practitioners and in the scholarship.

There are five things that clarity provides. *First*, clarity can help provide organizations and groups with a goalpost of what the rights-based approach entails and how they can know if they are implementing it. *Second*, for organizations, scholars, the public, donors, and anybody else who is interested in the success or failure of international development, clarity can help us to develop better evaluation that can measure whether the rights-based approach was implemented properly, and then can test the outcomes of the implementation for its effectiveness in achieving the stated goals. *Third*, clarity provides a source of accountability. If we do not have a clear idea of what a rights-based approach is, then we cannot hold organizations accountable for whether they are using it, and how they are using it, when they say they are committed to the approach. In other words, it helps us hold organizations accountable to their own stated approach and goals. *Fourth*, clarity around the rights-based approach can help put to bed straw man arguments in the scholarship. Of course, scholars should continue to be critical of the rights-based approach, but that criticism should engage with the rights-based approach as it is being used by activists and

developed through practice by social movements, not as some scholars have misunderstood it to be. *Fifth*, finally, clarity can help us as an international society help to take responsibility for international development success or failure. Often when foreign aid fails to deliver promised outcomes, regardless of the development approach used, a common reaction donors and pundits have is to blame aid dependency, corruption, or other forms of bad behavior in recipient countries (Gerhardt 2010; Roberts 2014).[1] Blaming the people experiencing poverty is troublesome because it is a kind of abnegation of responsibility that shifts blame to vulnerable people with less power to determine how a project is implemented, rather than finding fault with the process of implementation itself. Clarity can help us understand who is responsible for international development and how we are responsible, so that we can focus on taking up that responsibility in a meaningful way.

In this dissertation I provide this needed clarity regarding the RBA. First, I tease out how the RBA is theoretically different from three other approaches – the GDP growth approach, the basic needs approach, and the capabilities approach – engaging predominantly with the arguments made by scholars of global justice theory. I then use a case study of a drinking water project in Bangladesh to study whether the RBA is being utilized. To do this, I employ Ackerly's (2012) rubric that she developed when she analyzed the activities of social movement organizations as articulated in their grant proposals; she collected data on their activities and developed an account of the RBA from these activists' work. I use qualitative methods and specifically ethnographic data organized using the five elements of the RBA that Ackerly (2012)

---

[1] Even those who acknowledge the challenges in how donors deliver aid use the term "aid dependency" to describe the problem. Though it may seem pedantic to get caught up on language, language matters. Aid dependency is a way of describing the problem that focuses on problems with the recipient country. We could call it a problem of donor corruption, but it is rarely referred to this way. This rhetoric is yet another way that responsibility is shifted away from donors to recipients for failures in foreign aid.

developed. Then I analyze this data to determine which of the approaches to development were being used in practice and find that this project design did not advance the RBA. I found some instances of practices that could have been part of an RBA, but where these practices did exist, they were ad hoc, not part of the project design. I conclude that this project was not using the RBA, but rather the basic needs or capabilities approach. This is a surprising finding since UNICEF, who led this project, is fully committed to the RBA both as part of their obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW adopted in 1979, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) adopted in 1989 (Destrooper 2016), and as part of more formal commitment formalized via Executive Directive 1998-004, “Guidelines for Human Rights-Based Programming Approach” issued in April 1998 (Frankovits 2006). I then make a normative claim that the goal of development should be a more democratic society where people’s human rights are most protected sustainably in the long term, with democratic accountability being a key mechanism. The RBA, I argue, is the only approach that builds towards this goal. Finally, I suggest two modifications to Ackerly’s rubric, and conclude with the limitations of my study and areas for further research.

### 1.1 Subject of Inquiry

To develop this framework, I turned to Ackerly’s (2011, 2012) accounts of the RBA at the implementation level. Ackerly analyzed the activities of social movement organizations as articulated in their grant proposals. She collected data on their activities and developed an account of the RBA from these activists’ grassroots work. This is important because activists and organizers play a key role in alerting us to the suppression of rights and articulating new claims as rights-bearers (Ackerly 2008). My motivation for using this rubric is that it is, as far as I

know, the most detailed account of the RBA at the implementation level.[2] According to Ackerly (2011, 2012) the elements of the RBA include 1) intersectional awareness sometimes referred to as nondiscrimination, which is an awareness of how social and political hierarchies create conditions of exclusion, and a commitment to inclusion of marginalized groups and/or a commitment to challenge their marginalization through redistribution of power; 2) cross-issue awareness, or being attentive to the ways that other beliefs, practices, or oppressions may impact an intervention, and the creation of a strategy for addressing these intersections—sometimes this concept is referred to in the human rights literature as the indivisibility of human rights; 3) capacity building for self-advocacy at the individual level, community or group level, and network or coalition level; in other words, building grassroots, networked people power to challenge existing power structures through political activism and advocacy 4) situational analysis, or an awareness of the people, groups, or conditions that create injustice or pose a challenge to human rights, and a strategy for transforming these conditions; and 5) individual, organization, and movement level learning and reflection, designed to improve processes and outcomes, and increase accountability so that project stakeholders do not replicate the power structures they are working to dismantle and transform. For other RBA scholars who have outlined these same elements elsewhere in the literature, see the table below.

Table 1: Scholarship on the five elements of the rights-based approach

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. Intersectional awareness, nondiscrimination, inclusion of the most marginalized | (Blackburn et al. 2005; Destrooper 2016; Eyben 2003; Filmer-Wilson 2005; Kindornay, Ron, and Carpenter 2012; V. Miller, VeneKlasen, and Clark 2005; Nyamu-Musembi 2005; Piron 2005) |

[2] Other programmatic accounts of the RBA include Destrooper (2016) and Filmer-Wilson (2005).

| 2. Cross-issue awareness | (Clark, Reilly, and Wheeler 2005; Filmer-Wilson 2005; Nyamu-Musembi and Cornwall 2004; Piron 2005) |
|---|---|
| 3. Capacity building for self-advocacy and network/coalition building/advocacy | (Blackburn et al. 2005; Destrooper 2016; Eyben 2003; Filmer-Wilson 2005; Hughes, Wheeler, and Eyben 2005; Kindornay, Ron, and Carpenter 2012; V. Miller, VeneKlasen, and Clark 2005; Nyamu-Musembi and Cornwall 2004) |
| 4. Situational analysis | (Blackburn et al. 2005; V. Miller, VeneKlasen, and Clark 2005; Nyamu-Musembi and Cornwall 2004) |
| 5. Individual, organizational, movement reflection and learning | (Filmer-Wilson 2005; Hughes, Wheeler, and Eyben 2005; V. Miller, VeneKlasen, and Clark 2005; Offenheiser and Holcombe 2003) |

### 1.2 Case Study: Bangladesh

My interest was in being able to operationalize these concepts by looking for processes or practices in the field. At Vanderbilt University (VU), I have been fortunate to be able to work under my dissertation advisor on a grant that funded my research in Bangladesh from the U.S. Office of Naval Research (ONR).[3] This grant was part of the Multidisciplinary University Research Initiative (MURI), a program established by the U.S. Department of Defense to provide grants for university-based, multidisciplinary research on areas of strategic importance to U.S. national security policy. Our research team was studying the intersections of environmental stress, human migration, and engineering in the context of Bangladesh's southwestern coast. Incidentally, this is an area that has received high levels of development aid in recent years due to the confluence of extreme weather, low-lying vulnerable coastal land, high population density, extreme poverty, and the geopolitical impacts of migration to India and Pakistan. In particular,

[3] Office of Naval Research MURI #5 Award Number: N00014-11-1-0683 Vanderbilt IRB 120454. Oral consent was obtained for all interviews and meeting recordings.

after cyclone Aila hit Bangladesh's coast in 2009, there were large influxes of development and humanitarian aid that affected its coastal communities in complex ways, not all positive (Tenhunen, Uddin, and Roy 2023).

I was brought onto the project in 2012 as a research assistant, in the second year of the team's research. At that time, we learned that one of our Bangladeshi research partners, Dr. Kazi Matin Uddin Ahmed ("Dr. Matin") from the Department of Geology at DU (DU), a public research university, had received funding to pilot a drinking water project in an area of geographic overlap with the existing team-led research. Dr. Matin was confident about DU's engineering and technical research, but was interested in collaborating with the VU social science team to produce findings in relation to the social aspects of project design. This became an opportunity for me to both provide data and findings useful to Dr. Matin, and to collect data to aid me in addressing my dissertation research question.

### 1.2.1 Background on the MAR

Managed Aquifer Recharge (MAR) is a tool to increase shallow underground aquifer capacity to ensure water is available even during dry periods. In low-lying regions of Bangladesh, sea level rise, increasingly severe hurricanes, and shrimp farming can lead to saline surface water (Mahmuduzzaman et al. 2014). Other drinking water solutions that tap into underground aquifers like tube wells are often affected by arsenic (M. Hossain et al. 2015). In Bangladesh, the MAR is recharged during the rainy season by pond water that must be manually pumped into the shallow aquifer and rainwater harvested from a nearby rooftop. The fresh water pumped in displaces arsenic or salinity in the aquifer and replace it with clean water, which can then be pumped out during dry periods.

The MAR is a community managed resource. This means that the project leads United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Government of Bangladesh's Department of Health and Engineering (DPHE) would oversee the installation of the MAR and provide technical assistance and funding in the short term (in this case, two years), but in the long term the communities are expected to operate and manage the MAR on their own. A community managed resource is a hybrid between a public and private good because it is a shared resource but it is also scarce and exclusive, and subject to the challenges of common pool resources in that they can be overharvested if there are not commitments put in place to avoid everyone pursuing their individual interests – other examples include fisheries, forests, and irrigation systems (Ostrom 1990).

The idea and funding for the MAR project in Bangladesh was provided by the Dutch. The Netherlands and Bangladesh share a climate change-related challenge, which is to say that both countries have a significant percentage of their land below sea level and both are facing the threat of rising sea levels due to climate change (Ali 1999; Oude Essink, Van Baaren, and De Louw 2010). Given its geography, The Netherlands has developed expertise in water management, including clean drinking water technologies, which they share with other countries, UN agencies, and financial institutions like the World Bank.[4] As Dr. Matin explained, at one point the head of UNICEF in Bangladesh was Dutch and had a hydrology background, the head of the UNICEF Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) program was Dutch, and the WASH specialist in the WASH section was Dutch – so there happened to be, at that particular time, a strong Dutch presence in Bangladesh. As Dr. Matin explained, "one day [the head of UNICEF]

[4] They claim that their "knowledge and experience brings innovative technology and effective good governance together to create integrated policies that incorporate sustainability and inclusivity" (Government of the Netherlands 2023a). This is particularly interesting given I find evidence of exclusivity and lack of sustainability, which I discuss in chapter 4.

invited me to his office and he asked me, ‘there is so much rainfall in the country, why are you not using that systematically?’ I told him ‘there are ideas, give us money and we can do that.’ Then the head of UNICEF said to the head of WASH, ‘why don’t we initiate something in that area?’ A good friend was working on a World Bank consultancy in Dhaka at the time. UNICEF called a meeting and myself, head of WASH section, and [our friend with the World Bank] sat together and he said, ‘our head wants to do this, let’s start.’ So that was the beginning [of MAR].”[5] The Netherlands funded the project through a grant to UNICEF in 2012.[6] UNICEF directed the DU team to focus on the southeastern coastal areas specifically, because UNICEF had assessed there was poor access to safe drinking water compared to other parts of the country.[7] The southwestern coastal area of Bangladesh was prioritized because cyclones Aila and Sidr, shrimp cultivation, and various other factors have created conditions of poor shallow ground drinking water and surface drinking water quality, particularly a high presence of arsenic and salinity. This region was also chosen because the area overlapped with other Dutch-funded projects (United Nations Children’s Fund UNICEF 2017).

Notably, the project was not initiated by the communities where the MAR was installed, or the result of political activism from these areas demanding better access to drinking water, though UNICEF is one of a handful of international institutions that has officially adopted the rights-based approach (Frankovits 2006). Indeed, as (Destrooper 2016, 792) explains “UNICEF was one of the first UN bodies to conceptualize, adopt, and promote a [human rights-based approach] HRBA as a programming principle, and it is still seen as one of the front-runners of the HRBA.” The Netherlands, as well, holds a strong commitment to human rights. On their

[5] Dr. Kazi Matin Uddin Ahmed. Meeting transcript. Dhaka. 26 Apr 2016.
[6] The total grant from the Netherlands to UNICEF was for U.S. $7 million for five projects: MAR, Arsenic Safe Schools, WASH in Schools, WASH in Health Clinics, and WASH in Refugee Camps.
[7] Dr. Kazi Matin Uddin Ahmed. Meeting transcript. Dhaka. 26 Apr 2016.

government's website they say that "[p]romoting and protecting human rights worldwide is a priority in the foreign policy of the Netherlands" (Government of the Netherlands 2023b)
DU started with 20 pilot sites, in collaboration with the Dutch consulting firm Acacia Water, to test the MAR technology. While the MAR had been implemented successfully in other parts of the world, it had never been introduced in Bangladesh, so there were questions about the transferability of the technology, and a need to adapt and improve the technical design to their particular geology. There are three design aspects of the MAR: 1) the technical engineering design 2) the project management or implementation design i.e., how the locations for the MAR would be chosen and who would implement different aspects of the project and 3) the community management design i.e., how the communities would manage the MAR once installation was completed.

The focus during the pilot was on the technical and engineering aspects of the project – in other words, ensuring that the MAR could deliver clean and safe drinking water. To manage expectations, the communities were told that DU was engaging in a scientific experiment. At this stage, there was not much thinking about the other design elements of the MAR – for example, they did not communicate with the communities about the benefits of the MAR, and they sometimes located the MAR on ponds that were considered by the communities to be unclean because of the activity that goes on within them (e.g., fish farming, dumping of garbage, bathing) and therefore considered unsuitable for drinking water even when filtered Blanchet (2014). This was done intentionally to test the limits of the MAR technology. DU was the only implementing stakeholder at this point; they chose the pilot sites. Since these were pilot sites, there was not yet much thoughtfulness around community management of the MAR, either.

Once the research phase was complete and DU was satisfied with the adapted technology, DU invited Bangladesh's Department of Public Health and Engineering (DPHE) to join the management of the project during implementation in 75 more sites. It was in a sample of 12 of these 75 sites where the bulk of my data for this project was collected.

## 1.3 Conclusion

In this dissertation, I will take what other RBA scholars have done and build on it. My project is to provide conceptual clarity on how the RBA differs from other approaches, what it fully entails, and to develop a deeper understanding and rigorous framework for assessing what it looks like when the RBA is being used in practice. I utilize southwestern coastal Bangladesh as my case study, where UNICEF led the implementation of MAR. This provides an opportunity to attempt to observe whether a rights-based approach, or some other approach, was utilized during the implementation process. In this chapter, I have laid out the outline for this dissertation and provided context about the research environment. In the next chapter, I will examine three theoretical approaches to development, and how the RBA is different from these.

## 2 Literature Review

I am interested in how I can learn from previous scholarship to develop a more rigorous theoretical understanding of the rights-based approach vis-à-vis other approaches. In this chapter, I compare the RBA to other development approaches in order to show how specifically it differs from older models, engaging with literature from global justice theory and international development. For comparison with the RBA, I introduce what I call 1) the GDP growth approach 2) the basic needs approach, and 3) the capabilities approach. These comparisons come with a caveat: none of these approaches are perfectly delineated in practice, or in the literature. Approaches do not have a single author and are often not practiced in isolation from other approaches. Not only that, but *within* each approach, scholars and practitioners often disagree on how to achieve their goals. However, I believe that the effort to demarcate where one approach ends and another begins is critical to understanding how the rights-based approach is different from existing approaches, and how existing approaches are different from each other. If there are inadequacies in my typology, it is because many of concepts I am using to define the rights-based approach have not always been adequately theoretically considered by scholars and practitioners of other approaches (e.g., responsibility for development).

In many ways we might consider my typology a continuum. Indeed, some elements are very similar across approaches. For example, the rights-based approach and the capabilities approach both acknowledge the political root cause of poverty, but they differ in who is responsible for transforming political conditions and how to achieve that change. The capabilities approach and basic needs approach might both suggest wealth redistribution as the way of achieving development, but they identify different root causes of poverty. Or the basic needs and GDP approach both may define development in the same way, but prioritize different

buckets of spending. I am not arguing that these approaches are perfectly different; rather, I am offering a way to begin to differentiate them from each other. Below is a table that lays out the differences. In the following pages, I go into more depth.

Table 2: List of approaches and their component parts

| | GDP Growth Approach | Basic Needs Approach | Capabilities Approach | Rights-based approach |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Root cause of poverty** | • Lack of GDP growth due to lack of capital, resources, and/or beneficial economic policies. | • Lack of GDP growth due to lack of capital, resources, and/or beneficial economic policies.<br>• And, GDP growth that did not trickle down to the poorest. | • Political disenfranchisement.<br>• Structural power inequalities, oppression, and exploitation. | • Political disenfranchisement.<br>• Structural power inequalities, oppression, and exploitation. |
| **Definition/ aim of development** | • GDP growth. | • Reducing absolute poverty i.e., meeting some minimum threshold of wellbeing e.g., Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) or raising all incomes to more than $2.15/day. | • Expansion of freedoms or capabilities; human flourishing. | • The struggle for social justice.<br>• Democratic, inclusive decision-making processes.<br>• Non-exploitative institutional structures.<br>• Increased human rights enjoyment for the many, not just the few. |
| **Who is responsible for poverty** | • Poor country governments. | • Poor country governments.<br>• Rich country governments should redistribute some small percentage of their wealth. | • Poor country governments.<br>• Rich country governments should redistribute some small percentage of their wealth. | • Everyone, but not to the same degree (common but differentiated responsibility). |
| **Primary solution or method** | • Adoption of better economic policies to encourage growth. | • Adoption of better economic policies to encourage growth.<br>• Redistribution of wealth. | • Redistribution of wealth. | • Funding, supporting, joining, or doing community organizing to build power and capacity to enact structural change to end exploitation and redistribute power and resources equitably. |

### 2.1 Note: why "approach"?

What I am calling a development *approach* is a way of understanding development that is put into action. It could also be called a method or model, but for consistency, and because the RBA is most often referred to as the rights-based *approach* to development, I use approach. To be clear, an approach is not the same as a theory of development;[8] rather, it is a way of understanding what development is, how development can or should be achieved in practice, and who is or should be responsible for doing it. Approaches do have a theory of how development happens, sometimes referred to as a theory of change (A. A. Anderson 2005). Approaches also have clearly articulated strategies including, for example, a plan for which sectors or combinations of sectors to focus on (e.g., health, the economy, infrastructure, and government institutions) and/or how the programs/projects in those sectors should be run. In my analysis, a development approach contains the following:

1. An analysis of the root cause of poverty and/or a definition of poverty, i.e., the problem that development (however it is defined) is addressing;
2. A belief about who is responsible for development;
3. A clear objective (economic growth, expansion of freedoms, political empowerment, etc.) or, in other words, a definition of development; and
4. A theory of change which explains the causal linkages of how development happens (i.e., these inputs will lead to these outcomes); processes or practices; an attempt to achieve the

[8] What we currently understand as theories of development are often actually only engaging with one approach: GDP growth. Some of these theories include modernization theory, dependency theory, and world systems theory. All of these theories work from the premise that "development" is industrialization through international trade and GDP growth resulting in a higher GDP or GDP per capita which characterizes a "developed" country. In this way, these theories work from a shared understanding of development, which is GDP growth, but they have differing theories of what positive or negative outcomes are produced by the pursuit of that goal. For an overview of development theories, and various ways of classifying these, see Knippers Black (1999), Nederveen Pieterse (2001), and Peet and Hartwick (2009).

objective in some concrete way including projects, strategies, and programs in the target/recipient country.

If the development approaches that I outline here have unclear or unstated definitions of development and/or underdeveloped theories of change, I use dominant concepts and practices to infer what these might be and try to make them explicit where they may have been only implicit. I draw on a variety of scholarship. I have had to make choices about which scholars to engage with, and these choices were made in a way that helps my own project to be clearer about what the rights-based approach is, and how it differs from other approaches.

## 2.2 Gross Domestic Product (GDP) Growth Approach

What I am calling the GDP growth[9] approach first developed in the 1950s and 60s concurrent with the creation of development economics as a discipline of study and newly formed state agencies[10] in the "developed" world to address "underdevelopment" in the third world/nonaligned states during the Cold War. It experienced a resurgence in the 1980s and 90s with neoclassical economics or neoliberalism and persists today (Herrera 2006).

Early architects of the GDP development approach in the 1950s and 60s, sometimes referred to as post-Keynesian classical economists, for example Walt W. Rostow, Roy F. Harrod, and Evsey Domar, believed that state savings as a percentage of GDP—either from domestic or foreign investment—was needed to create conditions for growth, and that aid could fill the gap when domestic savings lagged behind necessary levels. These economists had witnessed the

[9] I use "GDP growth" "economic growth" and "GDP" and "GDP per capita" interchangeably. I recognize that they do not represent identical concepts, however the emphasis for all is on the overall size of the economy, not on individual wellbeing. Even GDP per capita is a measure of the economy as a whole divided by the number of people, but it does not try to capture nor is it effective at capturing individual wellbeing.
[10] United States Agency for International Development (USAID) was formed in 1961.

success of the Marshall Plan, with large amounts of US aid helping to jump-start the economies of Europe, and hoped something similar could be replicated in poor countries. Later in the 1980s and 1990s, neoclassical or neoliberal schools of thought argued that free markets and privatization of industry were needed to spur state-level economic growth. The World Bank and IMF's "Washington Consensus" and structural adjustment program offered conditional loans to poor country governments which pressured them to adopt market liberalization, privatize public industries, and roll back labor rights (Petras and Veltmeyer 2002). Both conceptualizations of the approach focused on the problem—poverty—and the solution—GDP growth—at the state level, ignoring global injustices such as, for example, the $2.2 trillion per year drained from the global south to the global north via unequal exchange (Hickel, Sullivan, and Zoomkawala 2021).

Though alternative approaches to development now exist, when lay people refer to international development, even today, most take for granted that development is synonymous with GDP growth. It has retained a hegemonic dominance in development scholarship and practice. For example, consider the UN designated "Least Developed Countries." A country cannot graduate from this low category of development until it passes a threshold of $1,190 per capital income based on a three-year average estimate of gross national income (GNI) (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development UNCTAD 2014). There are other non-GDP measures of development, but a country's inclusion in this category hinges on its per capita GNI, not on those other measures.

Prominent development economists also tend to view economic growth as the primary aim of development. Paul Collier (2007, 191) in a popular book explains, the "central problem" of the poorest countries is that they have not grown: "[t]he countries of the bottom billion are not there to pioneer experiments in socialism; they need to be helped along the already trodden path

of building market economies." Dambisa Moyo argues in her book Dead Aid (2009, 42) that "[i]n a perfect world, what poor countries at the lowest rungs of economic development need is not a multi-party democracy, but in fact a decisive benevolent dictator to push through the reforms required to get the economy moving…" William Easterly (2001, 8) argues that "growth frees the poor from hunger and disease. Economy-wide GDP growth per capita translates into rising incomes for the poorest of the poor, lifting them out of poverty."

Donors seem to agree. The United States and United Kingdom are the two largest donors of official development assistance by volume.[11] The U.S. Agency for International Development's Strategic Plan FY 2014-2017 (United States Agency for International Development USAID 2014, 8) explains: "[i]ncreasingly, foreign policy is economic policy… Peace, prosperity, sustainable development, stability, and security are inexorably linked to economic growth and development." The United Kingdom's Department for International Development (2015) in a policy paper entitled "2010 to 2015 Government Policy: Economic Growth in Developing Countries" states unequivocally that "[e]conomic growth is the most important means of raising people's incomes and reducing poverty in the developing world." These views are not anomalies, but rather are the norm among development scholars, donors, and practitioners.[12]

In the GDP approach, the root cause of poverty is the failure of the nation's economy to grow, though the reasons for the failure are varied. Collier (2007) argues there are traps that can keep a country from developing: 1) the conflict trap 2) the natural resources trap 3) the trap of being landlocked with bad neighbors 4) and the trap of bad governance in a small country.

[11] In total amount donated, not dollars per capita (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development 2014).

[12] Even when uplifting the intrinsic importance of alternative measures of development like life expectancy, education rates, or employment, these measures are described as being instrumentally important for economic growth.

Conflict, natural resources, and geography are all random—a case of bad luck or an act of God. Bad governance implicitly lays the blame with the governments of poor countries. In Collier's assessment, and in the GDP approach more generally, there is no root cause located in unjust international political institutions or systems.

Since the GDP approach contends that economic growth is the best way to address poverty, and poor country governments are the key actors who can influence growth through policy making, then poor country governments can be inferred to be responsible for this growth. Collier (2007, xi) is explicit in saying that better policies and leadership must come from within; "we cannot impose it on them." He explains that Western donors should be concerned with global poverty "because an impoverished ghetto of one billion people will be increasingly impossible for a comfortable world to tolerate" (2007, xi) and he does not want his son to be "exposed to the risk of being blown apart in London or shot in Bradford by some exile from a failing state" (2007, 126). This is an argument for self-interest, not responsibility or justice. In this approach, responsibility of rich country governments or citizens is undefined. Their involvement is not required for, or inherent to, development as conceptualized as GDP growth.

In this approach, higher GDP is the goal of development—or in other words the definition of development.[13] Development is economic growth; adopting policies that lead to GNI or GDP growth is the strategy, though there has always been disagreement about what policies these might be. They could include increasing the national savings rate, as classical economists might suggest, or adopting neoliberal economic policies, as neoclassical economists

---

[13] In a textbook on economic development, Todaro and Smith (2006, 15) explain that "*development* has traditionally meant the capacity of a national economy…to generate and sustain an annual increase in its gross national income (GNI) at rates of 5% to 7% or more. A common alternative economic index of development has been the use of rates of growth of income per capita to take into account the ability of a nation to expand its output at a rate faster than the growth rate of its population." Using either GNI or GDP per capita as the metric, the focus is state-level growth.

might promote. What all these strategies have in common within this approach is they prioritize the state over individuals within the state, and they do not require transformations in power that would create more democratic accountability.

The programs or projects for this approach are diverse and may resemble some of the strategies of other approaches. The GDP growth approach is rarely used in isolation. Often donors will use some combination of GDP, basic needs, and perhaps even elements of the capability or rights-based approaches. However, one way to differentiate this approach from other approaches is its indifference to political or power inequalities. In this approach, political change is not necessary for growth, and in fact, as Easterly (2010) argues, many believe that institutional incentives matter more than democracy. For example, Bill Gates of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation – which made $7 billion in total grants in 2022, more than the Official Development Assistance from the countries of Japan, Sweden, Canada, and the U.K. (Gates Foundation 2022; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development 2023) – does not advocate for political change. In Gates' view economic growth is "strongly correlated with embracing capitalistic economics—independent of the political system" (Gates 2013).

The limitations of this approach are that, in fact, GDP growth alone does not eliminate poverty. GDP growth in the 1950s and 1960s "failed to reduce income inequalities and improve noticeably the condition of the poor" (Afxentiou 1990, 241). Even mainstream development economists admit the failures of the GDP approach: "the reality of the institutional and political structure of many developing-world economies—not to mention their differing value systems and ideologies—often makes the attainment of appropriate economic policies based on either markets or on enlightened public intervention an exceedingly difficult endeavor" (Todaro and Smith 2006, 124). More recent scholarship in development economics is on the importance of

growth with equity or pro-poor growth (Kakwani and Pernia 2000; Ravallion 2004) a concept that is similar to the basic needs approach, which we will look at in the next section. However, a more equitable redistribution of the benefits of growth depends on people having enough power to hold their governments accountable for economic policies. I argue that the GDP approach does not recognize politics or power inequalities as the root cause of poverty, and does not challenge unjust political structures. Therefore, it is not able to transform the power disparities that create and sustain poverty, and as a result, cannot end it.

### 2.3 Basic Needs Approach

The basic needs approach[14] first evolved in the 1970s out of the rising awareness that the GDP approach which was dominant in the 1960s and 70s had failed to produce the promised "trickle down" benefits to end poverty. Positive global economic growth rates during this period were not accompanied by commensurate poverty reduction, and in some parts of the world poverty and inequality were worsening despite economic growth (Afxentiou 1990; Samater 1984; Streeten 1979, 1981).

This approach is generally considered a kind of evolution, or extension of the GDP approach. As Paul Streeten (1981, 348) one of the foremost scholars of the basic needs approach explains, the basic needs approach is a "supplement" or "an adjunct" to the GDP growth approach, but that they are not equivalent: "[b]asic needs and growth are not strictly comparable objectives. Growth emphasizes annual increments of production and income. Basic needs emphasizes the need to mobilize particular resources for particular groups…" Meeting the basic

[14] The basic needs approach is not equivalent to a basic income. The argument for basic needs to be met is based on charity or self-interest, whereas the argument for a basic income is rooted in a political responsibility to ensure democratic equality (Pateman 2004; Van Parijs 2004).

needs of the poor does not reduce social inequality, but rather aims to eliminate absolute poverty by providing a minimum level of wellbeing for everyone.

The basic needs approach is motivated by altruism and self-interest. “Based on altruism and concern for the poor, this movement projects long term benefits and higher levels of welfare for the entire world by implicitly viewing basic needs as a buffer against future social upheavals, which poverty is likely to foment” (Afxentiou 1990, 254).

In this approach, the definition of poverty is living below some kind of threshold of wellbeing; in other words, “the inability to meet certain basic human needs” characterized by “hunger and malnutrition, by ill health, and by lack of education, safe water, sanitation, and decent shelter” (Streeten 1981, 130). As with the GDP approach, the root cause of poverty is failure of the country’s economy to grow. Like the GDP approach, this deficiency may be due to, for example, an accident of history, conflict, or bad governance. However, in addition to this is the failure to prioritize the meeting of basic needs for the poor, in other words, a lack of orientation towards pro-poor policies.

Theorizing about responsibility in this approach is thin. Meeting basic needs is most often considered an act of charity or self-interest. The wealthy give to the poor because they may be moved by their suffering or concerned about global terrorism, not because they are implicated in upholding conditions that creates poverty or politically responsible for fighting against injustice in the global system; it is a moral outrage or an act of self-interest, not a political responsibility.[15] Poverty in this approach is not an injustice, it is simply an accident of history, so there is no

[15] As Hannah Arendt explains, political responsibility differs from moral responsibility in that “the reason for my responsibility must be my membership in a group (a collective) which no voluntary act of mine can dissolve…” such as when “when a whole community takes it upon itself to be responsible for whatever one of its members has done, or [when] a community is being held responsible for what has been done in its name” (Arendt 1987, 149).

injustice to address. No one is responsible and no one is to blame. (Though in practice, poor people often get blamed for their own poverty.)

The definition of development in this approach is moving people beyond the threshold of poverty, however that may be defined.[16] Development could be an increase in wellbeing as measured by lower maternal mortality rates, higher primary school enrollments, or higher life expectancy. Or it could be economic measures, such as higher household incomes or higher employment rates. These are measures that approximate the individual's level of development, not the state. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Human Development Index (HDI) are ways that basic needs have been operationalized.

According to (Samater 1984, 5) the International Labor Organization (ILO), which was a proponent of the approach, envisioned the basic needs approach as having "a large role for governments" and comprising "(1) wealth redistribution…; (2) reorientation of production to meet mass needs…; and (3) equitable access to expanded and reformed public services." In other words, rather than assuming the benefits of GDP growth would trickle down, basic needs "put the poor at the center of development" (Afxentiou 1990, 242) and updated the understanding of development to mean a basic level of wellbeing accessible to all, particularly the poorest. This has people experiencing absolute poverty as the target of development, but not its agent; in this approach people who are poor are passively receiving and accepting charity if it is offered but are not expected or encouraged to demand it. Policies that advance a basic needs approach "need not hurt the interests of the rich in the way that redistribution does and may even aid them, such as health measures that eradicate infectious diseases" (Streeten 1984, 975). In other words, this approach works to keep people out of extreme poverty without demanding that those who are

[16] The World Bank, for example, currently defines it as an income below $2.15/day (The World Bank 2022).

rich give up anything – i.e., power, privilege, luxury – nor is the approach concerned with lowering economic or social inequality.

The understanding of what constitutes basic needs can vary, but in my typology what remains consistent is that 1) the definition of what constitutes a basic need is not decided upon or open to being contested by those who are experiencing extreme material or political deprivation; the metrics are pre-defined by those who have considerably more resources and power;[17] 2) changes in power structures or global or national political or economic systems is not necessary to fulfill basic needs. Participation by people who are poor in setting basic needs priorities and in how the programs are implemented is mentioned to "increase the efficiency" (Streeten 1980, 134) of basic needs programs, but it is considered "secondary to the main benefits derived from the satisfaction of basic needs" (Afxentiou 1990, 249). In other words, political participation and inclusion of people who are poor can be instrumental to achieving basic needs but is not inherent to or required as part of the approach. Participation of people who are poor can also often serve to legitimize the act of charity, if the directly impacted people seem to be "participating" though they do not in fact have any decision-making power. It is this mostly apolitical stance towards the root cause of or solution to poverty, and the orientation toward poor people as passive recipients of charity, rather than protagonists or agents of social or political change, that characterizes this approach and differentiates it from the capabilities and rights-based approaches.

### 2.3.1 A note about Peter Singer

[17] According to Robinson and Tormey (2009) this imposition of an outsider's – Western, white, Eurocentric elite – definition of what constitutes need reproduces a colonial epistemology.

Philosopher and ethicist Peter Singer is not a tidy fit as an advocate of basic needs. He makes a utilitarian argument for ending poverty, asserting that there is a moral imperative for wealthy people to donate their excess wealth poor people to avoid starvation, famine, death due to lack of basic medical care, etc. “If it is within our power to prevent something bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we ought, morally, to do it” (Singer 1972, 231). This is in line with the basic utilitarian moral call to maximize the good (pleasure and happiness) in the world and minimize the bad (suffering and pain). Singer makes a distinction between duty and charity and is clear that he is arguing that individuals have a moral duty. He also lays out a “strong version” and “moderate version” of his principle. The strong version would require wealthy people to continue giving to “the level of marginal utility” – in other words, until their level of wealth was about the same as those who are poor. The moderate version is to give just until extreme poverty is avoided, not until the level of marginal utility is reached. Singer is clear that he supports the stronger version, which means he supports a redistribution of resources beyond simply meeting basic needs (Singer 1972, 241).

However, Singer is not an advocate for structural change nor an analyst of the root causes of the divergent marginal utilities that cause poverty. He does not make an argument for addressing global injustice as part of our moral duty to act. He argues that if the wealthy donated a significant amount of money to poor people – either enough such that extreme poverty was eradicated, or until the rich and poor were on mostly equal footing with regards to wealth – that necessarily the economic system would change as a result. “Even if we accepted the principle only in its moderate form, however, it should be clear that we would have to give away enough to ensure that the consumer society, dependent as it is on people spending on trivia rather than giving to famine relief, would slow down and perhaps disappear entirely” (Singer 1972, 241).

However, explicitly working to change the institutions that uphold his “consumer society” is not part of the moral imperative he outlines.

In another work, Singer argues for “effective altruism.” Effective altruism calls for wealthy people who have met their basic needs and “still have money or time to spare” should use “a substantial part of our spare resources to make the world a better place” by helping people “escape extreme poverty” (Singer 2015, 3). This is in essence a call for a redistribution of resources to the extreme poor. For Singer, poverty is an ethical issue. Like other proponents of the basic needs approach, Singer argues that this is in the donor’s own self-interest because altruists find fulfillment in helping others.

Though Singer’s position diverges from proponents of the basic needs approach in that he believes redistribution of resources is a moral responsibility, not charity, and that we should go beyond redistribution that simply meets basic needs, he does not address the root causes of poverty, nor does he believe political change is necessary. His solution to global poverty, effective altruism, is in line with the only solution that the basic needs approach provides, which is the voluntary redistribution of wealth from rich to poor. He also does not address inequality in wealth itself as an inherent problem that must be solved, or the threats to democratic equality that it presents, i.e., inequalities in the distribution of freedoms (Anderson 1999, 312). When detailing the harms of poverty, he only describes the markers of extreme material poverty i.e., famine, starvation, and death. For these reasons, I would characterize him as most closely aligned with the basic needs approach.

### 2.3.2 A note about John Rawls

Philosopher John Rawls occupies a space somewhere between the capabilities approach and the basic needs approach. I put him more firmly in the basic needs camp because Rawls' theory of global justice or "law of peoples" explains that "burdened societies" (poor countries) are poor because they are lacking in resources. He explains that they "lack the political and cultural traditions, the human capital and know-how, and, often, the material and technological resources needed" (Rawls 1999, 106). He does not acknowledge a root cause of poverty as political or economic disenfranchisement.

Pogge (2002) and Martha Nussbaum (2011) have categorized John Rawl's theory of global justice as simply a basic needs or resource-based approach focused primarily on wealth and income, but I would not characterize Rawls so narrowly. For example, Rawls' list of "primary goods" also includes things like freedom of thought and equal basic rights (Rawls 2003), and the social bases of self-respect (Rawls 1971), which are political achievements. However, Rawls is advocating for some threshold of development, and that threshold is decided based on Western liberal values and security interests, not by those most impacted by poverty. His approach would include limited political change, but it would be top-down political change, not a bottom-up demand for greater economic and political enfranchisement.

Similar to the basic needs approach, Rawls does not locate responsibility for ending poverty with people who are poor, but rather thinks it is the duty of wealthier liberal states to assist burdened societies. This involves the "advice" of expert liberals, who will teach the benefits of liberal political institutions to burdened states so that they will eventually adopt them and then the duty of assistance will end, and these newly instated liberal institutions will inherently mean the end of poverty (he cites Amartya Sen's example of famines only in occurring in nondemocracies as evidence that extreme poverty cannot coexist with liberal

institutions). Rawls is ultimately advocating for a distributive theory of justice, not structural change. Though he would like a structure that does not create vast inequalities in wealth, he does not have a strategy to change these structures except for relying on our being morally convinced to do so.

The limitation of the basic needs approach is, like the GDP approach, that it ignores that poverty is caused by global and local power inequalities that are structurally upheld, a history of exploitation and resource theft through colonialism, continued exploitation through imperialist coercion to enable profiteering by the global elite, and political exclusion and disenfranchisement. If, as is argued by proponents of the basic needs approach, that the GDP approach fails to end poverty because there is not an adequate focus on pro-poor policies, then the basic needs approach fails for the same reason: the poor are mere recipients of charity; they have no way to hold their governments or international institutions accountable if the pro-poor policies do not meet their basic needs. There is no threat or pressure to meet these needs; the motivation is the benevolence of the rich. When this benevolence falls short, the poor have no recourse. In the words of Assata Shakur: "Nobody in the world, nobody in history, has ever gotten their freedom by appealing to the moral sense of the people who were oppressing them" (Shakur 1987, 139). Poverty is created by economic exploitation that political disenfranchisement enables. In the next section, we will see that spelled out more clearly by the authors of the capabilities approach.

## 2.4 Capabilities Approach

Martha Nussbaum (2011) and Amartya Sen (1999) are considered the main architects of the capabilities approach, but they disagree in many fundamental ways.[18] Sen has refrained from offering specificity about what the capabilities should be or the processes of development needed to achieve them. Nussbaum, in contrast, has outlined what the approach would look like in practice. I am drawing on both, to define my typology of the capabilities approach that I use here, but am introducing my own analysis as to what I believe distinguishes this approach from the rights-based approach and the basic needs approach.

In Sen's 1999 book, *Development as Freedom*, Sen explains that capabilities which are the freedom "of persons to lead the kind of lives they value – and have reason to value" (1999, 18). He does not definitively define or prioritize unfreedoms, but he mentions a few that are commonly understood to impair capabilities: famine, undernutrition, lack of access to health care, sanitation, or clean water, premature mortality, gender inequality, denial of basic civil rights and political liberties. Sen does not believe that capabilities can be defined or prioritized in any particular way by him, or by any single person, because there should be a debate and members of a political community should decide for themselves, as an act of free agency. "[I]t is the people directly involved who must have the opportunity to participate in deciding what [freedoms] should be chosen" (1999, 31). For Sen, capabilities are different from basic needs in that it is not simply the access to material goods, but also people's ability to make use of them in

[18] Amartya Sen could be considered an architect of the rights-based approach as well, in that his view of development as freedom is in many ways aligned closely with a rights-based approach. However, he never articulated a fully operational theory of either the rights-based approach or the capabilities approach. In the absence of guidance on capabilities from Sen, Nussbaum has developed the approach in her own way. Sen could also be associated with the resource distribution or basic needs approach, which is considered a watering down of his version of capabilities (Alkire 2005).

ways that are meaningful and valuable to them.[19] He adds a structural analysis of political disenfranchisement, and he advocates for the agency of poor people in defining their own needs; both characteristics that the basic needs approach lacked.

Sen (1999, 20) defines poverty as “deprivation of basic capabilities” rather than the state of having low income. Sen argues that famines do not occur in democracies, since famines are caused by the defenselessness of the poor in nondemocratic societies. He explains that political asymmetry and cultural alienation cause people to be neglected. Though he does not use these words, I take Sen to mean that poverty is caused by political and social exclusion. Sen (1999) recognizes the root cause of poverty as political disenfranchisement and not an accident of history or merely a failure to adopt free market economic policies (though he does indeed endorse the value of these in their own right).

Sen (1999) touches on who has responsibility for poverty. He explains that there is individual responsibility and social responsibility for the harms created by poverty. “Responsibility *requires* freedom…Without the substantive freedom and capability to do something, a person cannot be responsible for doing it. But actually, having the freedom and capability to do something does impose on the person the duty to consider whether to do it or not, and this does involve individual responsibility.” (1999, 284, emphasis his). In other words, poor people cannot be held responsible for ensuring their freedom when they are lacking capabilities. I interpret this to mean that, according to Sen, under an authoritarian regime, for example, the poor are not responsible for their poverty.

---

[19] For this reason, capabilities as a measure of wellbeing have been labeled “unworkable” (Rawls 1999, 13) or unmeasurable in that they can’t “produce a public criterion of social justice” that would be different from measuring simply basic needs (Pogge 2002, 167). Alkire (2005) disagrees.

Development, for Sen, “requires the removal of major sources of unfreedom: poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or overactivity of repressive states” (1999, 3). “Expansion of freedom is viewed, in this approach, both as the primary end and as the principal means of development” (1999, xii) or in other words, it is synonymous with development. Sen is vague about the way to address poverty. He explains “there is a need to develop and support a plurality of institutions, including democratic systems, legal mechanisms, market structures, educational and health provisions, media, and other communication facilities and so on. The institutions can incorporate private initiatives as well as public arrangements and also more mixed structures, such as nongovernmental organizations and cooperative entities” (1999, 53). He does not give us *how* these institutions should be developed or supported, or *who* should develop or support them, which leaves the prescription for how his version of development could be implemented open to interpretation. But he is clear that simply the redistribution of resources is not adequate or the goal. He explains, even if capability were measured in income, it would “not follow that transferring income would be the best way to counteract the observed inequality” (1999, 84). Because, going back to his example of the famine, you can move food to the poor, but it won’t address the underlying problem of the poverty that caused the famine (1999, 173). In other words, redistribution does not address the structural inequality that creates poverty, so it’s not a lasting solution. In sum, while we understand Sen’s solution to poverty includes political and structural change, he does not give us a clear roadmap to get there.

Nussbaum’s understanding of poverty is likewise the notion of capability failure. She finds fault with the way that rich nations have set up international institutions. She explains

(Nussbaum 2004, 7), "the international system creates severe, disproportionate burdens for poorer nations, who cannot solve their problems by wise internal policies alone."

Unlike Sen, Nussbaum gives us a specific list of capabilities. Her ten capabilities are 1) life 2) bodily health 3) bodily integrity 4) sense, imagination, and thought including freedom of expression 5) emotions, being able to love others 6) practical reason, or the planning of one's life 7) affiliation, nondiscrimination and belonging 8) other species, protection of animals 9) play, or leisure 10) control over one's environment, including one's political environment and property. She highlights two capabilities which she says are architectonic to the others: affiliation and practical reason, because of the centrality of choice. Nussbaum calls choosing which capability to address first a "tragic choice" meaning that a tradeoff is involved. Sen says we should not order capabilities, or make that tragic choice *for* anyone, because people should decide for themselves through deliberation. For this, Nussbaum criticizes Sen, explaining that he has provided us with too vague a roadmap – simply the maximization of freedom – which she feels is an incoherent political project (2011, 70).

Though Nussbaum (2004) implicates corporations and individual consumers in creating poverty, she believes only states have responsibility for global poverty. She believes responsibility lies with the public policies of the governments of poor countries and the governments of rich countries. Despite her statement that "a focus on human dignity will dictate policy choices that protect and support agency, rather than choices that infantilize people and treat them as passive recipients of benefit" (2011, 30) she ascribes no responsibility to individuals in rich or poor countries; her solution doesn't require their participation. She states that the way to address global poverty is for rich countries to give 2% of their GDP as foreign aid to developing countries (2011, 117).

Nussbaum's (2011, 24) capabilities approach has as its goal "for all human beings in a nation...to get above a certain threshold level of combined capability,[20] in the sense not of coerced functioning[21] but of substantial freedom to choose and act." (2011, 24). This, we can infer, is her theory of development though she does not herself call it that. Nussbaum does not define what the "certain threshold" should be. Though not a strong supporter of deliberation as a way to define capabilities, Nussbaum would support deliberation in their implementation, and she supports the idea that people may specify her list of capabilities in their own way, presumably as long as they don't stray too far from her original intent (2011, 74). Drawing on these two versions of the capability approach, I develop my own interpretation here. For me, in both Sen and Nussbaum's accounts what distinguishes the capability approach from the GDP growth and basic needs approaches is that it acknowledges that the root cause of capability failure, or poverty, is political exclusion. The definition of development as the expansion of capabilities or freedoms is different from the GDP or basic needs approaches in that it requires political change and power redistribution to achieve freedom in both Sen's and Nussbaum's accounts, particularly freedom from tyranny and the capability to control one's political environment.

### 2.4.1 A note about Thomas Pogge

Pogge is very clear that he is not a proponent of the capabilities approach and, like Rawls, does not think it is workable as a measure of justice because it can't be observed or measured

[20] Nussbaum (2011, 21) defines 1) combined capabilities which are "the totality of the opportunities [one] has for choice and action in [one's] specific political, social, and economic situation" including internal capabilities and the environment in which they are acted on; 2) internal capabilities which are "to be distinguished from innate equipment: they are trained or developed traits and abilities;" and 3) basic capabilities which are innate, but are still affected by environment, like your mother's nutrition during pregnancy.

[21] "Functionings are beings and doings that are the outgrowths or realizations of capabilities" (Nussbaum 2011, 25).

(Pogge 2002). (I disagree and think that anything can be measured, but perhaps it would be using different data or types of collection than what currently exist. Moreover, theory should drive data collection, not the other way around.) For me, Pogge occupies a space somewhere between the capabilities approach and the basic needs approach. He argues that "the citizens and governments of the affluent countries – whether intentionally or not – are imposing a global institutional order that foreseeably and avoidably reproduces severe and widespread poverty" (Pogge 2002, 201). For whatever reason Pogge shies away from explicitly saying political or power arrangements, though I doubt anyone would disagree that international institutions impose a political global order which includes power distribution and political rules or laws such as terms of trade. For me, this means Pogge believes that political disenfranchisement is the root of poverty, though he himself does not articulate it exactly that way.

Pogge defines the goal of development as "human flourishing" (Pogge 2002, 27) which is quite similar to fulfillment of capabilities, though he expends a great deal of energy detailing how his theory is different from the capabilities approach. He resists Sen and Nussbaum's understanding of capabilities primarily because they cannot be measured, yet he operationalizes human flourishing as universal human rights, which he specifies that he does not equate with legal rights (2002, 46) then contradicts himself by saying they can be measured as "legal (constitutional) rights" which means that his understanding of human flourishing or universal human rights are, in practice, indistinguishable from Rawls's primary goods.

For Pogge, "advantaged and influential participants in the present international order" have a "shared responsibility for its [global poverty's] injustice" (Pogge 2002). He does not specify who they share this responsibility with. He elsewhere says that "the people…bear the ultimate responsibility for what happens on their society's territory" (Pogge 2002, 62) so

presumably he thinks the global rich share the responsibility directly with the poor themselves, though he does not explain who has the greater responsibility or how it is differentiated.

His solution for global poverty is a 1% redistribution of wealth from rich to poor countries, which he calls the Global Resources Dividend. This is his manifestation of the idea that "those who make more extensive use of our planet's resources should compensate those who, involuntarily, use very little" (2002, 204). "Make use of" is a curiously euphemistic way to phrase the systematic exploitation and extraction of the resources in the global south by the global north (Hickel, Sullivan, and Zoomkawala 2021) and ignores his own point about the injustice of the global system. Accordingly, his solution does not address the underlying problem as he himself has defined it, and essentially mirrors Nussbaum's call for 2% redistribution. Like Rawls, Pogge is advocating for a distributive theory of justice, not structural change.

In practice, the political implications of the capabilities approach are indistinguishable from those of the basic needs approach, because it is calling for simply a minor redistribution of wealth from the richest to the poorest, in an amount that is quite arbitrary, and not even demanded by the poor but rather decided top-down by philosophers, technocrats, or the wealthy and does not address the structural problems that Pogge outlined as the root cause of poverty.

In my typology, Pogge's theory of global justice is probably closest to the basic needs approach except in his understanding of the root cause of poverty as political disenfranchisement, caused and maintained by the global institutional order. Because of the weight I attach to this difference, I place his theory of global justice in the category of the capabilities approach, though others might choose otherwise, and I am sure he himself would

contest my decision since he wrote an article titled "*Can the capability approach be justified*" (Pogge 2002) and concluded that the answer was no.[22]

The limitations of the capabilities approach is that it denies agency to the poor in changing their political condition; the responsibility for ending poverty lies only with the rich or with their governments. Responsibility for poverty is different for Sen and Nussbaum, but for Nussbaum it lies mostly with rich country governments and institutions. With Sen it is unclear, but it does not lie with the poor in nondemocracies. It is unfathomable how a people can move from not having political freedoms to having those freedoms if they do not take any action (take up a responsibility) to change their political environment to become more democratic; democracy is not a top-down bureaucratic process or an endeavor bestowed by benevolent leaders; it is a political system fought for and demanded by the politically disenfranchised, and is maintained by sustained fights against the those who would consolidate their power to increase their ability to control economic resources and exploit the poor for profit and personal gain. For Nussbaum, the primary method of addressing poverty is redistribution from rich countries to poor countries. Sen disagrees, but does not provide an alternative solution. In its analysis of root causes and conditions it stands apart from the GDP and basic needs approaches, but in practice the capabilities approach offers no solution beyond redistribution of wealth from the rich to the poor, which is no different from the solution offered by the basic needs approach. Redistribution of wealth alone, however, does not transform power hierarchies, and so the root cause of poverty and the systems that maintain it are left unchallenged.

---

[22] (Oosterlaken 2012) published an article titled "*Is Pogge a Capability Theorist in Disguise*?" so it seems I am not the only one who has come to this conclusion.

## 2.5 Rights-Based Approach

*"The common struggle for human rights and social justice would at last bring the end of the era of development. We could begin to talk a proper moral and political language of equality, fairness, social justice, right, and responsibility. This would be an equal discourse that has no notion of some people being whole (developed) and other people being inadequate (under-developed). Rather, everyone would be sharing responsibility and working towards common goals."(Slim 2002)*

The clearest articulations of the rights-based approach (RBA) comes from research at the Institute for Development Studies in Brighton, U.K. (Eyben 2003; V. Miller, VeneKlasen, and Clark 2005; Nyamu-Musembi 2005), from Ackerly's (2012) research on activist organizations using the rights-based approach, and Filmer-Wilson's (2005) attempt to clarify elements of RBA in development programming. What is notable about much of this work is the authors' learning from and direct connection to activists on the ground. It is activists more than anyone else who have helped to develop and articulate where injustice is happening and the need for a rights-based approach, so it makes sense that academics who listen and learn from activists who are engaged in the fight for political enfranchisement would have a clearer understanding of the approach than those who are disconnected from its actual practice.

In my reading of this scholarship, there are four main ways that the RBA separates itself from other approaches to development in theory: 1) a belief in political disenfranchisement as the root cause of poverty 2) a collective responsibility for poverty 3) development defined as redistribution of power to achieve democratic accountability also framed as the struggle for social justice and 4) a call for transformation of power inequalities that create injustice as inherent to or required by the approach.

Within the RBA framework, poverty is caused by political and social exclusion, not by an accident of history, nor by a lack of resources, although that is a byproduct of exclusion. Political and social exclusion is a process that includes both 1) actors or institutions who are doing the

excluding and 2) those who are being excluded. This creates an element of responsibility or accountability for the existence of poverty shared diffusely by many (Young 2011), generating a duty to address it, though shared by actors differently depending on their role in contributing to the exclusion – known as common but differentiated responsibility (Eckersley 2015). For example, an individual in a wealthy country who leads a multinational corporation that pays poverty wages or creates toxic waste that harms the global poor has more responsibility than an individual in a wealthy country who is employed locally by a family-owned company that only does business domestically, but no one is exempt from responsibility because we all—rich or poor, working in global development or some other industry—intentionally or unintentionally take part in processes that create or enable the conditions of political exclusion because of the interconnectedness of the global system (Young 2011).[23]

Moreover, as Nyamu-Musembi (2005, 42) explains, the RBA "demands a shift from viewing poverty eradication as a development goal to viewing it as a matter of social justice; as the realization of a right and the fulfillment of a duty." V. Miller, VeneKlasen, and Clark (2005) and Eyben (2003) elaborates, an RBA moves us beyond charity to justice, from donors and beneficiaries of aid to citizens; rights are presented as an approach for solving the moral hazard of poverty by expanding citizenship and the enjoyment of human rights for all – the responsibility of everyone, even those who are most marginalized by the system. As Assata Shakur instructs, "It is our duty to fight for our freedom." (Shakur 1987, 52). Shakur recognizes the role of agency, self-determination, and responsibility in the fight for one's freedom. Though

[23] Though those who do more direct harm have greater responsibility, in practice we see those who are most marginalized and therefore responsible to a lesser degree take up the responsibility for changing structural and political conditions more often because the most marginalized have more to gain from challenging and transforming the political status quo and those who have more responsibility have more to lose. This is why any approach that does not require that the poor take up a responsibility for their freedom will not be effective.

many RBA scholars do explicitly lay out who is responsible, it is implicit in who are put forward as the primary agents of change and the emphasis on accountability of donors and supporters. There is explicit agreement about the prominence of 1) unjust global processes, which implicate us all and 2) the struggle for social justice, which moves us toward an understanding of collective responsibility for justice in this approach.

As a result, RBA represents a clear break with earlier approaches to development in that it theorizes development differently. It is worth quoting Offenheiser and Holcombe's (2003, 271) understanding of RBA's definition of poverty at length:

> "The rights-based approach envisions the poor as actors with the potential to shape their own destiny and defines poverty as social exclusion that prevents such action. Instead of focusing on creating an inventory of public goods or services for distribution and then seeking to fill any deficit via foreign aid, the rights-based approach seeks to identify the key systemic obstacles that keep people from accessing opportunity and improving their own lives…From the very outset, the focus is on structural barriers that impede communities from exercising rights, building capabilities, and having the capacity to choose."

Development in this conception becomes synonymous with the struggle for social justice and the achievement of increased human rights enjoyment for all. It is not simply a redistribution of resources, or an increase in GDP, but a change in the decision-making process and institutional structures that determine how and to whom resources should be distributed. In other words, it's the path to greater equality in interpersonal, local, national, and international social and political power structures. The RBA theory of change states that, as people struggle for and achieve greater social justice, including greater democratic equality (E. S. Anderson 1999) both within countries and between countries, poverty will be alleviated as people demand more democratic political reorganization at the local, national, and international level and then use democratic mechanisms to change the rules for how wealth is generated, extracted, and/or

redistributed to result in reduced or no exploitation and a more equal distribution of resources overall.

The RBA's definition of human rights is also a break with dominant understandings of human rights. Uvin (2004) provides an overview of current dominant understandings in the human rights and development communities about what constitute human rights and from where their legitimacy is derived. He describes six dominant[24] understandings of human rights 1) the positive law approach, i.e., whatever is inscribed in law is what we have a right to, 2) Western-centric, i.e., human rights originated in the West and are universal, 3) weak relativism, i.e., human rights may have originated in the West but allow for local, culturally-appropriate variation in implementation and are universal 4) empiricist, i.e., the argument that elements of human rights exist in other cultures where Islam, Buddhism, etc. are practiced and this is evidence that they are universal 5) philosophical, i.e., philosophical truths can be derived from human reasoning, and 6) incremental or "unforced consensus," i.e., agreeing on a set of universal human rights but disagreeing on the universality of their justification. He argues that the most dominant understanding of rights in the human rights community, including scholars who work on human rights, is the legalistic one. For development practitioners, he argues, it is the Western-centric view that is dominant. This background is important context for why many people misunderstand the RBA. Not only does the RBA represent a break with other development approaches, but it also represents a break from dominant understandings of human rights.

In the RBA framework, human rights are not simply legalistic or the laws enshrined in international treaties, though they can be reinforced and protected by these mechanisms. More importantly they are the needs articulated during struggles for social justice (Ackerly 2008;

[24] Dominant understandings, not the only understandings. Ackerly (2008) provides another understanding of human rights as rooted in struggle that is aligned with the RBA.

Nyamu-Musembi 2005; Sen 2004). They are defined and redefined by people who claim entitlement to elements of human dignity using the language of social justice; rights are not the contents of laws, but are themselves a political process to advance and expand the boundaries of formal legality when this is necessary for justice (V. Miller, VeneKlasen, and Clark 2005; Nyamu-Musembi 2005). An RBA privileges the experiences of poor and marginalized groups; these grassroots struggles for social justice, rather than international treaties or divine religious laws, to form the starting point for RBA practitioners (Nyamu-Musembi 2005). Using this definition, rights are constantly evolving as more groups, such as women, indigenous communities, immigrants, and disabled people, claim their right to participate in the discussions about what constitutes a right, the right that structures all other rights. "The dynamic view of rights helpfully emphasizes the centrality of process" (Clark, Reilly, and Wheeler 2005, 79), particularly meaningful participation and power in the decision-making process that shapes what constitutes a right and who is entitled to rights.

In the RBA framework, the root causes of poverty are structural and require structural and political change (Blackburn et al. 2005; V. Miller, VeneKlasen, and Clark 2005; Musyoki and Nyamu-Musembi 2005; Offenheiser and Holcombe 2003; Slim 2002; Uvin 2004). As Iris Marion Young (Young 2006, 211) explains, structures are "the confluence of institutional rules and interactive routines, mobilization of resources, as well as physical structures such as buildings and road" that "constitute the historical givens in relation to which individuals act." It is "misleading…to think of social structures as entities independent of social actors, lying passively around or inhibiting their movement…a social structure exists only in the action and interaction of persons; it exists not as a state, but as a process" (Young 2006, 112). Since all humans are part of the processes of global political and social structures, however slight our

impact or power within them may be, we all share a responsibility for their outcomes (Young 2011). When these processes create injustices, we all are responsible for addressing those injustices. In a rights-based framework, rights can be violated by global institutions, corporations, governments, and social processes, so the responsibility for development is diffuse and shared collectively by individuals, communities, governments, and international institutions. It is not necessary to identify the duty holder in order to claim a right (Sen 2004). As Tsikata (2004) points out, the RBA evolved out of the legacy of the "right to development" (Sengupta 2001) which was set up to hold northern governments and institutions accountable for rights fulfillment, but in practice, the focus has been on the responsibility of southern governments. Placing the blame on governments – either northern or southern – absolves international political and social systems and individuals of responsibility and takes away their agency, and does not effectively address many root causes of systemic injustice. The RBA acknowledges and draws attention to the many ways that social and political institutions and structures – local, national, and international – can violate human rights, including the very humanitarian aid organizations who claim to be working for the poor's wellbeing.

In sum, as outlined in the literature referenced above, the RBA defines poverty as political disenfranchisement requiring structural and political change to overcome; development is the struggle for social justice; human rights emerge from struggles for human dignity; and the responsibility for justice rests with everyone, although not necessarily to the same degree. This is often understood as common but differentiated responsibility (Eckersley 2015). In this approach, the poor may not be left out of decision-making around resource redistribution or engaged only passively because it is understood that they not only share responsibility for making political

systems more equitable, but should be centered in the efforts to address the injustice of poverty, since they are most directly impacted by it.

### 2.5.1 What the rights-based approach is ***not***

As I mentioned, some scholarship on the rights-based approach (RBA) correctly describes elements of the RBA, but misunderstands what the approach fully entails (Hamm 2001), or dismisses it for being too broad, overly legalistic, or too focused on rhetoric rather than practice (Batiwala 2013; Tsikata 2004).

Where there is misunderstanding of the rights-based approach, it is usually due to a misunderstanding of human rights and who is responsible. Some scholars argue the rights-based approach is an approach that centers the international conventions and treaties that enshrine human rights in international law (Hamm 2001). This is the legalistic version of rights. This is not how the rights-based approach conceives of rights and a focus on existing law is not a feature of the rights-based approach. Piron (2005, 25) helpfully draws a distinction between a human rights-based approach which is “based on the international human rights system” and the rights-based approach which “does not depend on international or legal systems to codify or enforce rights.” The rights-based approach is focused on local interpretations of injustice, and sometimes these are not rights that are (yet) recognized by national or international law. Rather, these rights are defined by activists at the local level, through struggle against injustice (Ackerly 2008; Musyoki and Nyamu-Musembi 2005; Sen 2004). Moreover, the RBA is not simply delivering a rights-related service such as housing or health care. Access to housing and equitable health care are human rights, yes, but unless there is an effort to change the structural inequalities and

injustices that led to certain groups lacking access to these, then it is a basic needs approach or charity, not a rights-based approach.

Finally, there is a difference between 1) an approach that is only rhetoric, devoid of practice, and 2) actors who, in using the approach, implement it incorrectly resulting in a misalignment between their rhetoric and practices. It seems misplaced to blame the approach itself (as Batiwala 2013 and Tsikata 2004 do) for its misuse. Any approach may be misused in practice, particularly without clear guideposts for processes that should align or a rubric for assessing whether those practices were present, which is the gap I hope to fill with this dissertation.

In the next chapter, I provide context for a particular drinking water intervention in Bangladesh. In studying this case study, I hope to observe how the project engages with elements of the rights-based approach as way to both test whether this can be observed as well as assess whether existing understandings and rubrics are sufficient for this purpose.

## 2.6 Conclusion

The goal for this chapter was to provide conceptual clarity around the rights-based approach vis-à-vis other approaches at a theoretical level. I compared the RBA to other development approaches in order to show how specifically it differs from other strategies. Though it has some aspects in common with other approaches, what sets the RBA apart is its focus on structural and political change and its collective responsibility for justice. In later chapters, I attempt to provide clarity at the level of implementation in order to have a clearer picture of what the RBA would look like in the field. In particular, I am interested in developing a more rigorous framework for assessing the RBA in practice and for showing how it differs

from other approaches in implementation. The next chapter will focus on my methodology for gathering data for this task.

## 3 Methodology

International development is complex. It is unlikely that any development approach would be observable in a homogenized, methodical way due to the unpredictability and dynamism of social, economic, political, cultural, and religious pre-existing conditions with which project funders and implementers interact. However, complexity should not stop the inquiry. We can observe patterns in how development actors interact with pre-existing conditions and try to transform those conditions (or don't). Without extending the solutions for poverty all the way down to their practical implementation on the ground, we cannot truly be able to delineate clearly between approaches or hold actors accountable for rhetorically supporting one approach but using another in practice, and to create the possibility for that is one of the goals of this research.

### 3.1 Development of Research Interest

This research question and interest in rights-based development has been driven by my own uneasiness about global inequality and poverty and a curiosity about its root causes and its solutions. Three main experiences have largely shaped how I view international development. First, I was a U.S. Peace Corps volunteer in Senegal, West Africa from 2003 to 2004. At the time, I was a recent college graduate and served as a health volunteer in a small village of about 100 people twenty miles south of Vélingara. There were many health challenges that I was ill-equipped to address as a young, white person with a passion for learning about other cultures and problem-solving, but few practical skills. Experiencing village life – rampant water-born illnesses, no electricity, no telephones, food scarcity – I was motivated to learn how to address these disparities. Second, I interned for U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in

Kigali, Rwanda in the summer of 2006. This trip gave me an understanding of how wealthy Western countries work to stimulate development and alleviate poverty in poor countries. What I observed was that their focus was driven by grant requirements, Western priorities, and top-down assessments of need rather than needs articulated by the communities the aid was serving. The international agencies seemed to be part of the problem in that they imposed their own priorities and technocratic solutions that did not challenge existing power inequalities as much as they reinforced them. Third, I worked for the U.S. Army in Khost, Afghanistan during the phase of post-conflict reconstruction in 2011 to 2012. In Afghanistan, the U.S. seemed to be more concerned with stability than democracy and I observed funding and resources funneled to corrupt leaders in order to keep pro-U.S. politicians, and strongmen who could keep the warlords at bay, in power. The Afghan people had little recourse to change their living conditions or challenge powerful Afghan leaders or the United States to redistribute resources downwards toward the people. These three experiences observing global poverty and development in very different environments led me to want to investigate and better understand how international development functions and how it could be improved to better serve the poor.

### 3.2 Sequential Mixed Methods

Each data collection effort collected data on the above five aspects of the rights-based approach that I was interested in observing in the field. I visited Bangladesh three times with our research team in 2013, 2014, and 2016 and a Bangladeshi research team went in my place once in 2015, for a total of four trips to the field for data collection during the course of this research project. Each data collection effort built on, triangulated, or broadened the sample of data collected on a prior visit. I have a combination of qualitative and quantitative data: interview

data, observational data, focus group data, debrief data, large-N household survey data, field notes, memos, reports, and secondary source data. Triangulation increases inferential leverage (Brady and Collier 2010). I also benefited from being able to reflect on the data over four years, building on my knowledge of the MAR implementation processes over time and filling in gaps in knowledge by asking and answering new questions each trip. Earlier trips to the field provided not only useful quantitative and qualitative data, but also an opportunity to refine my research question, my research instruments, and my most important data collection plan, in 2015.

Figure 1: Representation of how earlier trips to the field informed later research

The above figure shows each of the four data collection efforts and the type of data collected. The direction of the arrows represents how earlier data influenced later data collection.

The research design for this project worked around existing timelines for MAR construction and travel and constraints of research partners. In 2013, the MAR was being piloted in 20 test sites. In 2014, construction had started on a portion of the 75 additional MAR sites and so our team chose to begin research where construction had started first among these 75 sites.

The stakeholders in this development project included the Dutch Government, who was the funder,[25] UNICEF, who was the main project lead, who partnered with the Bangladesh

[25] The grant was $7 million U.S. and included some funding for WASH projects in schools, health clinics, and refugee camps (United Nations Children's Fund UNICEF 2017).

Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE), and DU (DU), and Acacia Water, a Dutch consulting firm. In 2013, DU engaged Acacia to provide technical support. In December 2013, DU signed Memoranda of Understanding with seven NGOs to engage in community mobilization, provide support to DPHE during the construction of the MAR facilities and to develop effective operation and maintenance (O&M) mechanisms at the community level. DPHE put out bids and tendered agreements with contractors to construct the MAR. 11 contractors were hired. The figure below depicts these organizational relationships.

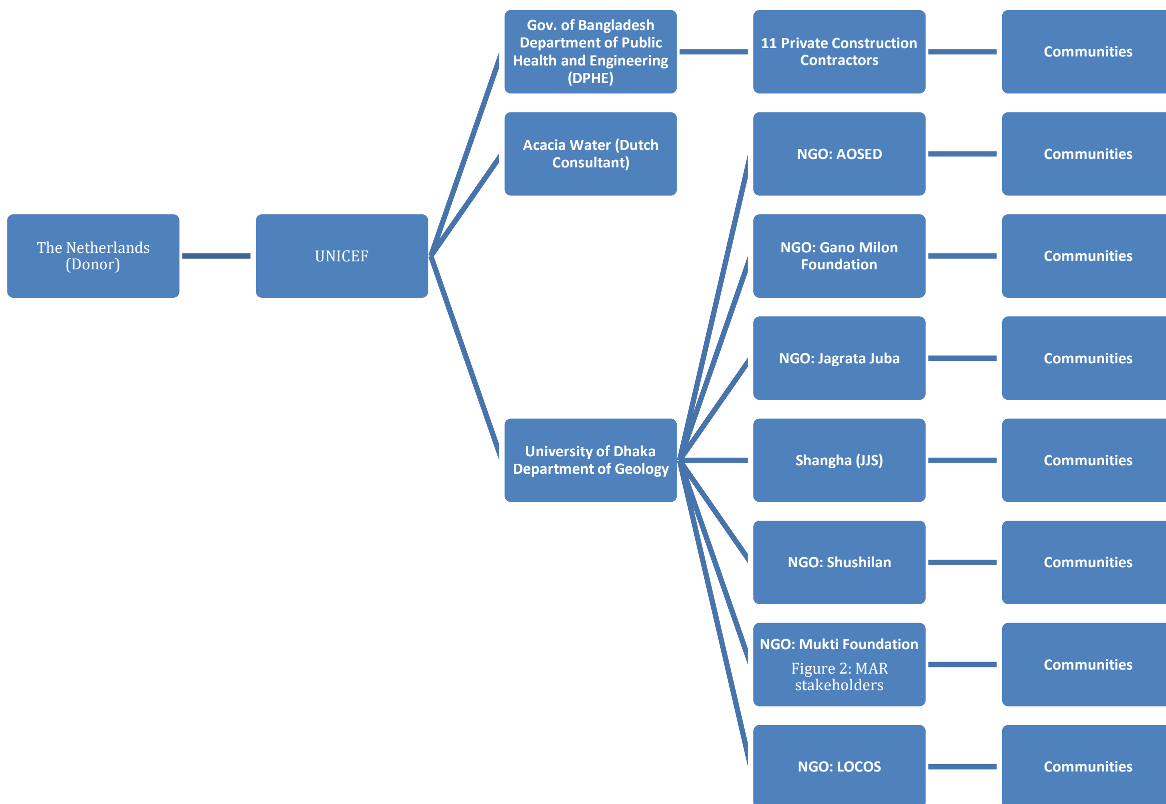


Figure 2: MAR stakeholders

One of the seven NGO partners opted not to cooperate with our research, so our team only chose to conduct research in sites where the other six NGOs were located. We do not know why Practical Action opted out so it is difficult to extrapolate how the data might have been

different had they been included. The 2014 trip was longer (two months) than the trips in other years (roughly two to three weeks) since we were there to train a Bangladeshi field team of 40+ Khulna University students and conduct a respondent household survey (N=962). As a result, I was able to fit in more interviews with the project's NGO partners. In 2015, the subsection of sites I chose were places where construction of the MAR should have been completed by that time (but in fact, we learned, had not been completed yet; I will discuss this more in chapter 4 "Findings"). Incidentally, each of my trips to the field were in April or May of 2013, 2014, and 2016 coinciding with the end of the VU academic year. We chose this window of time because teaching responsibilities were over for the semester for us, and April and May fall at the end of the dry season in Bangladesh, so Bangladeshis in the areas where we traveled to were not quite as busy with planting or harvesting as during other times of the year.

Data for this research was collected on four different occasions: first in 2013, to visit some test sites for the MAR and speak with local NGO representatives and Dr. Matin; second, in 2014 to collect quantitative survey data in 23 initial MAR communities (out of a total 75 – as I mentioned above, they were not all constructed at the same time); third in 2015, to collect ethnographic data in a representative sample of 12 MAR communities; and fourth in 2016, to present initial findings to Dr. Matin, the Bangladeshi government i.e., DPHE, and UNICEF and collect data on how they describe their approach. I was present for the first two and final trips to the field, but not the 2015 data collection effort, which was led by our colleague and team member Dr. Mujibul Anam.

Except for Dr. Anam's third trip to the field on my behalf in 2015, none of the other data collection trips were designed primarily for my research. Even during the 2015 trip, though he mostly focused on collecting data directly related to my research, he also collected data for the

rest of the team. Indeed, each time I traveled to Bangladesh it was part of collaboration with a team of multidisciplinary researchers – both American and Bangladeshi – who were there to study their own research questions. This collaborative context allowed for deeper understanding and interpretation of data for all of us.

### 3.2.1 Triangulation: Types of Data Collected

Over the course of my research from 2013 to 2016, I and others on my team were able to observe, read, discuss, and document a combination of the following representations of stakeholders' (from Figure 2) knowledge and practices (where available) to triangulate and assess the development approach preferred and utilized by the funders, implementing partners, and communities:

- A written record of stakeholders' approaches to development in general (in written statements, reports, websites, etc.)
- A written record of stakeholders' approaches for the MAR project specifically (in meeting minutes, presentations, etc.)
- How stakeholders describe their approach in interviews or meetings with our team (interview transcripts, meeting notes, meeting transcripts, etc.)
- How stakeholders describe their approach to their partners (in meeting minutes, etc.)
- How stakeholders execute their approach in practice
    - As described by them (in meetings, interviews, presentations, etc.)
    - As revealed in our quantitative survey by community members
    - As observed by our quantitative survey team in debriefs

    - As observed and documented in ethnographic data collected from community members, NGO staff, and DPHE government officials compiled into site reports

I have access to the following data to inform my analysis (in rough chronological order):

- Written materials (online and offline) of funders and implementers describing their work in development, which may include their approach to and understanding of "development"
    - *Their written record of their approach to development in general*
- Semi-structured interviews with NGO site managers and community members for 17 (out of 20 total) MAR test sites in 2013
    - *How describe their approach in interviews*
    - *How they execute their approach in practice as described by community members*
- Communication about the project with Dr. Matin in 2013
    - *How a stakeholder describes his approach informally*
- Meeting notes from a meeting on September 1, 2013 with Dr. Matin and the NGO partners regarding the MAR
    - *How funders and implementing partners describe their approach to their NGO partners and vice versa*
- Survey data from 2014 (N=962) from 23 MAR water sites implemented by VU (me and a colleague, Dr. Bishawjit Mallick, in the field plus a team of over 40 enumerators) with social questions about the communities (e.g., governance, gender,

livelihoods, and demographics) and about their knowledge of and interactions with NGOs and the MAR project specifically.

  - *How stakeholders execute their approach in practice as revealed in our quantitative survey by community members*

- Survey team debriefs with Bangladeshi survey team in 2014 for 23 sites that I conducted, asking about impressions of sites and relationship with MAR NGOs
  - *How stakeholders execute their approach in practice as described by our survey team in debriefs, which was sometimes different from the survey data or how they described their approach in interviews*
  - *Stakeholders' written record of their approach for the MAR specifically*
- A 71-page report by undergraduate students from Delft University of Technology (Netherlands) entitled "A field study on the social aspects of the MAR system" (2014) commissioned by the Government of The Netherlands; as well as a 68-page report by Drishti Research Centre anthropologist Thérèse Blanchet (2014) entitled "Up-scaling MAR for Providing Community Water Supplies in Saline Areas" which provide insight into funder and implementer priorities and processes and demonstrate intent around learning
- Interviews with 6 NGO Executive Directors about the drinking project that I conducted in the field in 2014
  - *How stakeholders describe their approach in interviews*
- Qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) as summarized in reports from a subset of 12 of the 23 MAR sites from 2015

    - *How stakeholders execute their approach in practice as described in interviews and via observation*
- Transcript of a meeting April 26, 2016, where VU presented initial findings to Dr. Matin, the Bangladeshi government i.e., DPHE, and UNICEF, and heard from them their challenges and how they overcame them
    - *How stakeholders describe their approach in interviews*
- A final report from VU written by me, Dr. Brooke Ackerly, Dr. Mujibul Anam, and Dr. Bishawjit Mallick presented to Dr. Matin August 26, 2017
    - *How stakeholders execute their approach in practice*

### 3.2.2 Preliminary data gathering 2013

My first trip to the field was in April-May 2013. This was a preliminary data-gathering trip which helped me design later research instruments. The team had planned to visit just a few MAR sites near a polder[26] where the team was doing a large data collection effort, but due to a turn of events (our boat ran out of storage water for showers and washing, so we relocated to a hotel in Khulna) we decided to visit more sites. Two VU colleagues and I visited 17 of the 20 pilot MAR test sites in Khulna, Bagerhat, and Satkhira Districts. Dr. Matin, our guide in the field, chose the 17 sites because they were the easiest to reach by boat or by car, and because my colleagues and I were time limited as we had to get back to Dhaka for a conference and our scheduled flights home. This was a convenience sample, not purposive, and so was not necessarily representative of the 75 sites. We conducted semi-structured interviews with

[26] A polder is a Dutch word to designate a piece of silted-up land protected and reclaimed from flooding for agricultural use.

community members, the water committee members, and the six local NGO directors overseeing the MAR management in 17 sites with the help of a Bengali translators. Community members were not chosen randomly; my colleague Dr. Bishawjit Mallick, opportunistically spoke to whoever was near the MAR site, but far enough away from the convoy of the research team, NGO representatives, and Dr. Matin to be able to speak (presumably—at least, that was the intent) a little more freely about the realities of the project.[27]

Table 3: MAR pilot sites

| 20 Pilot MAR sites visited 3-7 May 2013 | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| No. | Date Visited | Village | Upazila | District | MAR Construction Status |
| 1 | 3-May-2013 | Sripur | Dacope | Khulna | Not yet constructed |
| 2 | 3-May-2013 | Baruikhali | Dacope | Khulna | Not yet constructed |
| 3 | 3-May-2013 | Mohammad Nagar | Chalna Pourasava | Khulna | Not yet constructed |
| 4 | 3-May-2013 | Baranpara | Batiaghata | Khulna | Not yet constructed |
| 5 | 3-May-2013 | Gangarampur | Batiaghata | Khulna | Constructed |
| 6 | 3-May-2013 | Dakhin Kallyansree | Batiaghata | Khulna | Constructed |
| 7 | 4-May-2013 | Laskar | Paikgachha | Khulna | Constructed |
| 8 | 4-May-2013 | Assassuni | Assassuni | Satkhira | Constructed |
| 9 | 5-May-2013 | South Chilla | Mongla | Bagerhat | Not yet constructed |
| 10 | 5-May-2013 | Bashtala | Mongla | Bagerhat | Not yet constructed |
| 11 | 5-May-2013 | Borhoripur | Morrelganj | Bagerhat | Not yet constructed |
| 12 | 5-May-2013 | Daibagnyahati | Morrelganj | Bagerhat | Not yet constructed |
| 13 | 6-May-2013 | Nakipur | Shyamnagar | Satkhira | Not yet constructed |
| 14 | 6-May-2013 | Gandhulia | Kaligonj | Satkhira | Constructed |
| 15 | 6-May-2013 | Kaligonj Sadar | Kaligonj | Satkhira | Constructed |
| 16 | 6-May-2013 | Munshiganj | Shyamnagar | Satkhira | Constructed |
| 17 | 6-May-2013 | Chandipur | Shyamnagar | Satkhira | Constructed |
| 18 | N/A | Amragachia | Sarankhola | Bagerhat | Not yet constructed |
| 19 | N/A | Rajoyr | Sarankhola | Bagerhat | Not yet constructed |
| 20 | N/A | Sriula | Assasuni | Satkhira | Not yet constructed |

The NGO Directors were instructed by Dr. Matin to form water committees in each site to oversee the management of the MAR and ensure community participation. In a meeting

[27] This would have introduced a bias into the sample of those who were present in the community at the time of our visit. The sample would exclude, for example, those who work outside the community and those who lived further from the MAR site.

among NGO partners and Dr. Matin in September 2013, they decided on five committee members including at least one woman.[28] The NGOs chose the members of the water committees.

My research proposal had not yet crystalized at this stage, but I knew I was interested in processes of development implementation, and so I was able to gather data regarding the following aspects of the RBA: #1 intersectional awareness/inclusion and #3 capacity building for self and community advocacy. I asked how many families used the MAR, how the MAR sites were chosen within the communities, and what kind of information individuals or the community had been given about the project from the NGOs. These questions were intended to determine if anyone in the community was excluded from the list of MAR beneficiaries and to assess if the NGO was intentionally building the capacity of the communities to manage the MAR. These proved to be useful lines of questioning that I would return to again. For the semi-structured survey instrument, see Appendix A.

[28] Islam, Shahidul. Meeting Minutes. "Action Research on Ground Water Buffering in Bangladesh: Workshop on Finalization of Sites and NGO Partners for Construction of 75 MAR System in Khulna, Satkhira and Bagerhat Districts." 1 Sept 2013. City Inn Hotel Khulna.

Figure 3: Satellite image of 20 pilot MAR sites

Findings from these interviews with members of the test communities suggested that they were not familiar with the technical aspects of the MAR and were not well prepared to manage the MAR after construction. We also observed other types of drinking water projects such as Pond Sand Filters or PSFs[29] that had been constructed in the same communities after cyclone Aila in 2009, which had already fallen into disrepair and were no longer functional. Finally, we observed that certain communities had MARs constructed on private property or had plans to exclude parts of the community from using the MAR. However, Dr. Matin explained to us that

[29] Pond Sand Filters are the most widely used water filtration system in southwestern coastal Bangladesh (Md. R. Hossain et al. 2022).

because these were test sites, not all sites were expected to be fully functional,[30] and so the effort to educate the communities on the MAR was curtailed in the event that it would not be feasible due to the geology of the site. Nonetheless, we learned from our initial trip that there were issues of social/political power that affected who would be a potential user of the MAR, who had information about the MAR, and who would manage the MAR. This was helpful information that informed my line of questioning in the non-pilot sites.

### 3.2.3 Survey data 2014

In 2014, my colleague Dr. Bishawjit Mallick and I conducted a household survey in 962 households in 23 MAR sites. Twenty-three of these sites were the first half of the 75 MAR sites chosen by Dr. Matin. This sample of 23 was chosen in order to conduct a randomized control trial (which was not part of my research design, but was important for the team's research), with approximately half of the MAR sites receiving messaging that was hypothesized to affect whether the MAR would be well managed by the communities, and the other half not receiving the messaging. These sites were chosen to provide variation across six NGO partners, variation in levels of known water salinity (which would affect the technical success of the MAR), and geographic variation.

Dr. Mallick and I hired and trained a Bangladeshi research team of enumerators. The household survey mostly contained questions from other members of the research team, but I was able to include some questions for my own research. These questions were similar to the questions I had posed in 2013, but designed for a larger selection of non-pilot sites and

---

[30] For example, they were testing the level of salinity in the groundwater above which the rainwater could not displace it. There was one site where the salinity was too high, and so the MAR did not function, but it had nothing to do with social or political factors it was merely due to the science.

respondents within each site. The survey respondents were chosen randomly from each community.

Based on earlier data from 2013 and my evolving research questions around development processes, I was interested in asking about problems identified by the community (#2 cross issue awareness), what people knew about the MAR (#1 exclusion/intersectionality and #3 capacity building), and how much people were included/involved in planning for the MAR (#1 exclusion/intersectionality). For a list of the survey questions, see Appendix B.

During this trip to the field in 2014 I also had the opportunity to interview six of the seven NGOs who were working with Dr. Matin to implement the MAR project in our survey sites. Dr. Matin graciously arranged these meetings and most of the NGOs gave generously of their time. As I mentioned, Practical Action opted out of collaborating with our researchers. The six remaining were all Bangladeshi NGOs that had offices in southwestern coastal Bangladesh. The six NGOs were: An Organization for Socio-Economic Development (AOSED), Gano Milon Foundation, Jagrata Juba Shangha (JJS), Shushilan, LOCOS, and Mukti Foundation. For each interview I spoke either with the Executive Director or the next higher up. Often there was a younger person from the organization present who helped answer questions or with translation, since their English was more advanced.[31]

There were indications from this round of data collection that there was variation in whether elements of the rights-based approach were used during the MAR implementation. Based on my interviews, the only NGO that had even a discourse that supported the rights-based approach was AOSED, whose Executive Director touched on capacity building, activism,

[31] According to my Bangladeshi research team, sometimes the Executive Directors, particularly of the smaller NGOs, have not received formal education and it is not uncommon for them to struggle to answer basic questions about the organization—hence the need for a junior staff member to help. The Executive Director role can be a figurehead appointed of respect for their social position, rather than a role requiring expertise.

empowerment, and community organizing. JJS described drinking water as a human right. These findings led me to hypothesize that I might see variation in how the MAR was implemented based on which NGO was the implementing partner. I hypothesized that I would observe the rights-based approach, or elements of the rights-based approach, in those communities where the NGO had a clear understanding and rhetoric of human rights as they related to this project.[32]

### 3.2.4 Qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) 2015

For 2015, I wanted to collect community-level qualitative data on a selection of the 23 MAR sites. It was important for this phase of the research that the MAR be constructed and already in use (pumping water into the underground aquifer). In 2014, the MAR construction had not been finished and lack of completion was often offered as justification for lack of transparency toward the community. I did not want the data to be affected in the same way in 2015. Dr. Matin reported in a tracking spreadsheet that he shared with our research team that five of the 23 sites had not started construction as of September 2014. These unfinished sites were eliminated from the 2015 fieldwork sample.

Of the six remaining NGO partners, I chose two sites for each NGO to provide variability on the NGO partner because I had hypothesized that I would observe variation across NGOs, while leaving open the possibility that NGOs might manage the MAR very differently in two different sites due to different preexisting socio-political conditions or challenges. The chosen sites included the following, in the table below.

[32] Ultimately this was not borne out in the data, but AOSED and JJS did make attempts at elements of an RBA. AOSED started the only "water rights committee" in the sample and JJS targeted marginalized Hindu community members for the MAR. I will discuss these findings more in the next two chapters.

Table 4: Twelve sample sites by NGO partners

| NGO | Site | Community Name |
| --- | --- | --- |
| LOCOS | Site 2 | Bhagabatipur-Raipur, Botiaghata, Khulna |
| | Site 11 | Tildanga Kacharibar Dacope Khulna |
| Mukti Foundation | Site 20 | Narayanpur, Bagali, Koyra, Khulna |
| | Site 25 | Bainbari, Goraykhali, Paikgacha, Khulna |
| AOSED | Site 27 | North and South Chandpai, Chandpai, Mongla, Bagerhat |
| | Site 75 | Golbuniya, Sundarban, Mongla, Bagerhat |
| Shushilan | Site 34 | Toardanga, Khajra, Ashashuni, Satkhira |
| | Site 35 | Cheutiya, Khajra, Ashashuni, Satkhira |
| | Site 39 | Thekra, Kusaliya, Kaliganj, Satkhira |
| JJS | Site 56 | Sonatola Adarsha Gram, Sauthkhali, Sharankhola, Bagerhat |
| | Site 58 | Uttar Sutalori, Baraikhali, Morelganj, Bagerhat |
| Gano Milon Foundation | Site 63 | Gajalia, Gajalia, Kochua, Bagerhat |

The variability of the NGOs was important because I considered that the different NGOs might use elements of a rights-based approach to varying degrees. Eliminating one or two NGOs would have severely restricted my sample. Accordingly, the goal was to choose at least one site from each of the six NGO partners. Of the 75 sites, Shushilan had 26 total sites, Gano Milon had four, AOSED had nine, JJS had ten, LOCOS had seventeen and Mukti Foundation had nine. Since Shushilan has the most sites and Gano Milon has the fewest, Shushilan is oversampled with three sites and Gano Milon is under sampled with only one site. For the rest of the NGOs, I selected two sites.

Given the large number of sites, and time constraints due to weather-related and MAR construction-related windows of opportunity, I knew I could not complete full ethnographies in each site. Instead, I chose qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) as my method for my sample (N=12) that included a case study of each site. I collaborated with a Bangladeshi ethnographer, Dr. Mujibul Anam, then a graduate student at Queensland University of Technology in Brisbane, Australia (now a Ph.D. and professor in the Department of Anthropology at Jahangirnagar

University), who had worked on other parts of the project. Dr. Anam then trained two field staff in rapid ethnographic and qualitative methods. The two-field staff conducted the field work under Dr. Anam's supervision. They spent multiple days in each site and conducted targeted interviews with key informants.

I chose to work with a Bangladeshi researcher instead of going to the field myself for a number of reasons. First, I had not been rigorously trained in ethnographic data collection and research. My training at VU was largely quantitative, following the trends of the discipline of political science more generally. Dr. Anam at the time was an anthropology graduate student with extensive training and experience in this coastal area of Bangladesh. Indeed, he had already done ethnographic work for other members of VU's Integrated Social, Environmental, and Engineering (ISEE) team. Second, it would have taken more time for me to establish trust with members of the communities given my more visible outsider status (I am a blue-eyed white woman) and language barrier (I do not speak Bangla), and would have needed more time in the field, to gather the same data that Dr. Anam was able to gather in only a few weeks' time. Time was a constraint for this project because the funding from ONR was set to expire in 2017, and following the field work we were anticipating months of translation and proofing of the field documents, which needed to be translated from Bangla into English. And, given that we had promised timely findings to Dr. Matin to assist him in improving the project for later implantation phases, we could not spend a year or more in the field doing full ethnographies. I also think my presence would have been disruptive; people would assume that I have a role in influencing whether projects come to these communities, and would be less likely to speak freely with me. I might arouse unnecessary concern, poking around and asking pointed questions, so I thought it better to let a Bangladeshi lead the fieldwork. I was not present in Bangladesh at all for

the 2015 fieldwork. This method of collaborating with community-based representatives is common for research, particularly in public health, where the researcher does not have cultural competency in the community where the research is conducted (Pérez and Martinez 2008).

### 3.2.5 Data collection

Prior to the start of the 2015 fieldwork, Dr. Anam flew to Nashville and we spent a week together in December 2014 going over the elements of the rights-based approach and what I hoped to gain from the field work. Since international development was not his area of research and he was unfamiliar with the RBA, I wanted to make sure he understood the concept and its elements. I proposed that he and his two Bangladeshi research assistants use multiple methods including village transect walks (VTW), focus groups, and semi-structured interviews. They would spend approximately two weeks in each site. For the work plan and site visit timeline, see Appendix C.

The goal of the VTW is for the researcher to introduce herself to the community to give the researcher a sense of the geography, people, and patterns of daily activities. Ideally this begins to build some nascent trust, and some familiarity with the researcher, so that people will see the researcher as a benign presence, even if they may still attempt to guess at ulterior motives and/or the impact of our research on their community. It also provides the researcher an opportunity to observe what is happening in the community without the filter of what people *tell* the researcher is happening. For example, how people are observed to be using the MAR pond.

I also recommended that Dr. Anam's team try to do focus groups with homogenous groups of people (e.g., all women, all Muslim, etc.) since in mixed groups, sometimes young

people, women, or minority religious members may be less likely to speak up due to hierarchy/seniority.

And I recommended that the field researchers should talk to the Community Mobilizer (CM), the on-site representative from the NGO who is the liaison with the community. Dr. Anam's team was directed to shadow and observe the CM in the community with the goal of understanding the CM's role, daily activities, and relationship to the community. The field team was asked to make notes about what tasks the CM performed throughout the day, how he interacted with the community, etc. This would add observational data to the interview data. I also asked Dr. Anam to conduct interviews with DPHE engineers who were responsible for construction of the MAR, either at their sub-district offices, or opportunistically if they happened to visit the communities. I asked Dr. Anam to inquire about the process of MAR construction, opinions of other stakeholders including the community members, Professor Matin, UNICEF, and the local NGOs. I also asked him to observe how DPHE interacted with the communities.

Dr. Anam collected data in a pilot site that was excluded from the final 12 sites. We used this site to refine the data collection effort together. Dr. Anam and I communicated virtually during his research trip, to check in about whether the timeframe was working, what they were finding, how the data was being compiled, and any issues that came up in the field.

Since communities have pre-existing power hierarchies, inequalities, and barriers to development, when we observe these in the field, it is not necessarily indicative of the preferences or values of the development actors. Accordingly, as part of my research design I developed an interview guide to get at how aid actors interacted with the challenges they faced in the field, and whether their choices and actions were in line with their stated approach. When possible, NGO staff were encouraged to in interviews identify the challenges they faced, how

they chose to overcome them, and with what values or principles they use to justify their choices. This method was intended to reveal their preferences for certain development approaches and/or development goals, even as they might fall short in practice due to what they may have perceived to be, or what were actually, very difficult or even insurmountable barriers.

For the interviews with the CM and DPHE I asked Dr. Anam to have his researchers try and walk them through something like a logic model. A logic model is an understanding of the shared relationships among the inputs, activities, and outputs to the short and long-term outcomes and impact of an intervention or project (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2018). I was interested in whether they could explain the processes that led to the MAR being implemented, challenges that occurred in implementation, how the challenges were addressed and possibly overcome, and the benefits to the community that taking such actions were intended to have. Since development is complex and projects rarely go exactly as planned, I wanted to create space for people to talk about a non-ideal version of the project (e.g., where the benefit of the MAR goes to only a few and excludes many) without missing the *intention* that may not have been successful in practice despite earnest attempts (e.g., to distribute the benefits more equitably). See Appendix E for the modified logic model guide I provided to Dr. Anam.

I was particularly interested in the intent of the stakeholders, and whether the NGO workers on the ground understood the intent of those above them – NGO Executive Directors, Professor Matin, UNICEF, etc. I wanted to understand how actors communicated their intent to their partners to ensure that their vision for development is communicated down the chain of command, so to speak, to the level of implementation.

Finally, I created a report rubric for Dr. Anam and his team to guide them in producing what was the main data output from this fieldwork effort, which is a roughly 30-page report of

what they observed and what they were told for each of the 12 research sites. Rather than have each interview translated for me to use as original data, in the interest of time and cost, I asked Dr. Anam to work with his assistants to create these reports in Bangla that would synthesize their interviews and organize the data as it relates to the five elements of the RBA. These reports did include some direct quotes from interviews. I then hired Bangladeshi translators to translate these reports into English, rather than translating each interview transcript, which was not feasible given my time and resource constraints. I hired a Bangladeshi proofreader who was a student at VU who proofread and edited 10 of the 13 reports in 2016 (three of the reports were clear enough in their first translation that they did not need to be proofread). The final version of these reports served as a source of qualitative data, and are the most important and primary data source for my dissertation. Developing this report rubric for Dr. Anam and his team for data collection was my first attempt at creating a field-based rubric for the rights-based approach. I used Ackerly's (2012) five elements of the RBA to create this rubric. For the full report rubric see Appendix D.

The ethnographic fieldwork took place over four months from January to April 2015 and included a sample of 12 communities out of a total of 75 (plus one pilot site that I did not ultimately include in my analysis) where DPHE had listed the MAR's construction start date between March and August 2014. Across the 12 communities, 12 village transect walks VTWs were performed, 323 people were interviewed including 150 individual interviews and 185 people who were part of 27 focus groups of either all women, all men, or mixed gender groups. For a summary table of interviews by community, see Appendix F.[33] Additionally, in April 2016

[33] There is data missing on the numbers of people who participated in the FGDs in sites 2, 20, 24, and 39 plus the pilot site 17, so more than 185 people participated in the FGDs but I am not sure how many more.

Dr. Anam conducted eight interviews with DPHE engineers. Among those eight engineers, five were sub assistant engineers, two were assistant engineers, and one was an executive engineer.

### 3.3 Intention: RBA Methodology

I attempted to employ elements of the rights-based approach while conducting this research. In other words, I tried to be aware of power inequalities, my relative position of privilege, and ways I could build capacity of others and challenge power inequalities through the course of this research.

Academia is intimately connected to the hierarchy of the international system: degrees from Western schools are more highly valued than degrees from the global south; prestigious conferences are more often held in the global north; most departments – especially political science – in Western universities are dominated by white men; and the epistemology of the global north is privileged over the global south (Spivak 1988). This project is, likewise, intimately connected to the hierarchy of the international system. The research was funded by the U.S. military because of their interest in coastal Bangladesh as an area of strategic importance to U.S. national security policy; the U.S. Navy has a humanitarian function and finds value in anticipating where it may need to be deployed. Operating with these power structures as a given, I tried to think about how my research could build capacity and avoid reinforcing existing power structures.

One way to do this was to build the capacity of Bangladeshi researchers. Because I did not collect the 2015 qualitative data myself, it provided an opportunity to train junior Bangladeshi researchers in qualitative research methods. I hired a senior research assistant who had worked with the ISEE research team and was pursuing his own Ph.D. We worked together in

person to develop a field guide. I taught him about my understanding of the rights-based approach, which was, according to him, a new and exciting way to approach international development. Though development was not his area of study, his friends and family live in Bangladesh and so are, to put it bluntly, objects of the development industry, so it is an issue that touches him personally. He then traveled to Bangladesh where he trained two Bangladeshi anthropology students to work as field researchers (of his choosing) to collect the data. These field researchers received training in data collection and were taught about the rights-based approach to development.

Another way I attempted to challenge existing institutional power structures was to shine a light on the lack of accountability by more powerful development stakeholders (Offenheiser and Holcombe 2003). Our team produced a report for Dr. Matin with recommendations that focused on improving the governance of the MAR management such that the community would be empowered to hold more powerful development actors accountable for problems with MAR construction (Ackerly et al. 2017). Ideally, Dr. Matin was able to use this report to push powerful stakeholders like UNICEF and the Dutch to change their processes. At the very least, we outlined the problem of accountability such that stakeholders cannot claim they did not understand there was a problem.

Finally, in the communities I visited during my trips to Bangladesh in 2013 and 2014, there was a clear bias in the answers people provided to me about my questions about the MAR. It was well known on both research trips that when I visited the communities, and even when the Bangladeshi survey enumerators visited, we were there on behalf of Western donors and a drinking water project. For the most part, community members emphasized that clean drinking water was a priority for their community, and said very positive things about the MAR project.

According to our Bangladeshi staff, people were mostly unwilling to speak honestly about their perceptions of the challenges of the MAR because openly criticizing a project could risk the project being withdrawn or risk their community not being selected as a future site for other projects. Consequently, I take seriously the responsibility that I have to use my data in a way that does not negatively impact these communities. My goal is to use the data to improve the processes of more powerful development actors, not to emphasize or belabor the issues of inequality or elitism that exist in Bangladeshi communities and the challenges to development these pose, which are conditions that are sometimes used to blame Bangladeshis and other poor people around the world for their own poverty. My argument is that these inequalities exist everywhere around the world, even in developed countries, and that it is how development actors interact with these conditions that is important for development, because that is how the conditions are either reinforced or transformed. The hope is that my work can improve how development is conducted and increase the political power and ultimately improve outcomes for the most marginalized.

It's important to note, however, that there was no way for me to eliminate the harm, disruption, or reinforcement of global hierarchies that my presence and role as researcher caused. My self-reflection around my identity and social location and how to navigate the privilege of my role as researcher with more intentionality were, at best, harm reduction strategies.

### 3.4 My own accountability

The issue of accountability and the rights-based approach show up in my findings in chapter 4. I want to make a note about my own accountability to the Bangladeshis who were interviewed for this research. This dissertation will not be translated in Bangla and will not be

given to those who were interviewed. The findings of this dissertation will likely not have an immediate direct positive impact on these communities. In the long term, I hope my findings add to the chorus of those calling for greater support for human rights advocacy within foreign aid.

In my journey to this project, which as I mentioned included a few years of working in international development myself, I came to see that an important way that I can support Bangladeshis is by fighting for human rights where I live and connecting it to global struggles. The rights of communities in Bangladesh and Tennessee are interconnected and interdependent. Though it may seem like a stretch, I would argue my human rights advocacy in my home community did more for global justice than my years as part of the foreign aid bureaucracy. We are most familiar with our local contexts; struggles for social justice should be led by those experiencing its harms. For the past eight years, I have worked to dismantle U.S. empire at home, in my local community, using the strategies of the rights-based approach. This was the way that I took up my responsibility to contribute to and work in solidarity with those around the globe struggling for human rights.

### 3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I outlined my methodology and explained my data sources. I chose as my primary data collection method qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) with a sample that included a case study of twelve MAR sites. I collaborated with Bangladeshi researchers trained in ethnographic research to gather ethnographic data in these sites. Become of my personal commitment to challenge power hierarchies, I attempted to incorporate the RBA into my methodology. I also discussed how there were indications, based on preliminary data gathered, that the rights-based approach might be used during the MAR implementation. In particular, in

interviews, AOSED and JJS representatives talked about capacity building, activism, community organizing, and drinking water as a human right. Though I thought this meant I might see an RBA used in these two NGOs' sites, ultimately this was not borne out in the ethnographic data. AOSED and JJS did make attempts at elements of an RBA. AOSED started the only "water rights committee" in the sample and JJS targeted marginalized Hindu community members for the MAR. However, these attempts were ad hoc, not fully developed, and were not observed consistently across their sites. I will discuss these findings more in the next chapter.

## 4 Findings

Using qualitative research methods allowed me to observe and document how the MAR project was designed and whether there were elements of the rights-based approach included in the design. I analyzed the qualitative data using thematic analysis for each of the five elements of the RBA. In this chapter, I will elaborate on how the project addressed intersectionality, cross-issue awareness, capacity building, situational analysis, and learning. I will also discuss the issue of accountability that came up in our study when many of the MARs were found to be improperly constructed.

Throughout I have been referring to "project leads" but I want to be more specific and make a note about the various project stakeholders and their respective responsibility for the project design elements. As mentioned, The Netherlands was the funder for the MAR who gave the funds to UNICEF. The Dutch did not seem to have been involved in much decision-making or direct oversight of the project; they entrusted the project to UNICEF. UNICEF partnered with DU, DPHE, and Acacia Water, a Dutch consultancy firm.

There were three parts to the project design: the 1) engineering design, 2) implementation design, and 3) community management design. The engineering design was focused on the question of whether the MAR could be adapted to deliver clean drinking water in Bangladesh given the particular geology of the region such as soil composition and water quality. DU's Department of Geology and Acacia Water were the key partners in the project to provide the expertise needed to test and answer this question. Dr. Matin said many times, "we are physical scientists. We don't understand social behavior."[34] He was clear that he and others in the

[34] Dr. Kazi Matin Uddin Ahmed. Meeting transcript. Dhaka. 26 Apr 2016.

Department of Geology did not have the expertise needed to design the other aspects of this project.

The other two pieces of the project design included more social and political components. For the implementation design, there was the question of which stakeholders would be involved with the project and in which communities the MAR should be located. For the community managed resource design, there were issues of how to prepare the communities and MAR users to manage the MAR in the long term. These were all aspects of the project that were designed by UNICEF, in consultation with DPHE and DU. Where there are questions about these decisions or weaknesses in these areas of the project design, UNICEF is the main project lead who held that responsibility.

### 4.1 Inclusion

Inclusion requires attention to political or power hierarchies that create conditions of exclusion, and a commitment to the inclusion of marginalized groups and/or a commitment to challenge their marginalization through redistribution of resources or decision-making power. Rather than inclusion, there is evidence that exclusion was created by the MAR project in the way that the MAR sites were selected, as well as by the design of the MAR itself, in transforming a public resource into a resource that served only 60 people in each community.

#### 4.1.1 Site selection

Communities that already had relationships with the partner NGOs were selected to receive a MAR. Which is not to say that these well-connected communities were not experiencing a drinking water shortage – all of the communities in this area of Bangladesh had a

need for safer drinking water. However, the presence of an existing NGO relationship as a precondition to receive new resources puts some communities at a systematic disadvantage.

Further, as (Nadiruzzaman and Wrathall 2015, 201) explain, in Bangladesh “NGOs recruit local volunteers to help implement projects, for instance in the selection of beneficiaries....These volunteers predominantly come from the affluent section of the community…NGOs do not actively exclude volunteers from marginal groups but…NGOs have limited opportunity to work independently and the upper strata of the beneficiary community consume a proportion of their service deliveries… [Moreover,] NGOs are strategically forced to compromise their objectivity because of both informal political pressure and formal obligations to the upazila administration. Thus, the local political dynamic is often reflected in NGO operations even though, strictly speaking, relief operations are outside the administrative jurisdiction of local authorities.”

This dynamic was reflected in the data. As even Dr. Matin admitted in frustration during an interview with me on May 3, 2013, “projects go to projects.” In site 2, a respondent told us “Poor people don’t get any money from NGOs. There are middlemen in the NGOs’ work processes who always try to involve their relatives in NGO works.”[35] The community mobilizer in this community reported that nepotism played a role in site selection; she believed that the NGO chose the site 2 pond because it belonged to the LOCOS Executive Director’s brother’s father-in-law, revealing that nepotism. In site 20, a respondent said “many people do not think villagers are consulted in the selection of beneficiaries of NGOs who are doing developmental

[35] Interview with Pradeep Sarkar by Md. Newazul Maula 14 Jan 2015. Site 2 Report.

work. NGOs decide the list of beneficiaries in discussion with the members. Those who are selected by the people of the villages are not accepted."[36]

When the VU ISEE team surveyed the communities receiving the MAR, most of these communities reported being more distrustful of private NGOs than their local government officials, perhaps because of these dynamics.

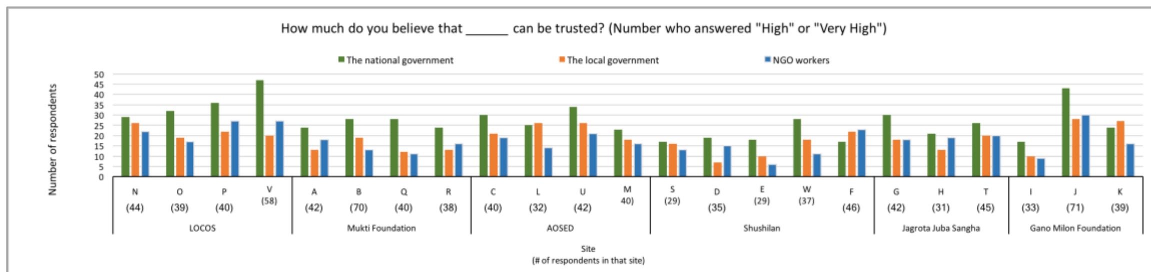

Figure 4: Trust for national and local government, NGOs by site and NGO

NGOs were not the only stakeholders reported to rely on established elite power networks when selecting sites for drinking water projects. In site 34, a key informant reported that DPHE has a history of clientelism[37] related to drinking water development projects. There are 20 pond sand filters (PSFs) in site 34, which is high for a community of this size (767 households). Nasir Uddin Sordar said "The employees of this department are very corrupt. After Aila in 2007, they used to allot PSFs in exchange for 3000 taka as a bribe. From this idea, many people contacted the DPHE out of their own interest and bought the allocation of PSFs."[38] A DPHE official who lives in the village, Shahidul Islam, denied this in an interview and said that in fact he pushed for many PSFs to be allotted here because he wanted them to go to his home

[36] Idris Ali, participant in a male focus group conducted by Md. Newazul Maula 25 Jan 2015. Site 20 Report.
[37] Clientelism is a social order that depends upon relations of patronage. It is a method of contingent exchange that thrives in both autocracies and democracies in a variety of cultural contexts (Hicken 2011).
[38] Interview with Nasir Uddin Sordar by Md. Newazul Maula. 10 Feb 2015. Site 34 Report.

village, not because he was paid."[39] While denying clientelism, he is admitting to nepotism, since his role requires that he serve the whole department, not give preferential treatment to his own village.

It is possible the decision to work with NGOs and DPHE on site selection instead of the local elected officials was an attempt to work around clientelism. A Human Rights Watch (2016, 10) report on the international and government response to arsenic mitigation in Bangladesh between 2006 and 2012 cited that 50% of tube well sites were influenced by government officials. UNICEF never said in our meetings that they did not include upazila officials as stakeholders in the MAR project because of this practice, but we know they are aware of it because they are one of two major donors to support major drinking water projects in Bangladesh (the World Bank being the other) and had financially supported the installation of more than 125,000 drinking water sites in Bangladesh from 2006-2012 where clientelism was found to play a major role in project failure (Human Rights Watch 2016, 8).

Moreover, if there was a decision to bypass upazila officials and work with NGOs and DPHE in order to avoid influence by government officials this design was not, in fact, always effective at achieving that outcome. NGOs sometimes consulted local government officials to identify sites for the MAR or sought the "approval" of local government officials during site selection – for example, in sites 27 and 63. In two out of the twelve MAR sites we studied, local politicians influenced the location of the MAR. That is a sixth of our sample sites. Though the decision to bypass upazila officials may have been made to avoid the problem of clientelism, we can see that it did not always work, and even when it did, there is still a problem of nepotism among the NGOs and DPHE.

---

[39] Interview with Shahidul Islam Sordar by Md. Newazul Maula. 12 Feb 2015. Site 34 Report.

As an employee of JJS, Abdul Malek, said in an interview: "When NGOs work at the grassroots level they have to face various obstacles from local influential people or political leaders. For this reason, good relations must be maintained with all political parties."[40] He cited an example where a local politician demanded a bribe, and he used his connections with other local political leaders and influential people to "solve this problem" for him. This demonstrates both that political influence on NGOs is widespread, and that NGOs are not immune from this influence or fully independent actors outside of political dynamics and power hierarchies.

There were engineering and geological limitations regarding where the MAR could ultimately be built,[41] which meant that NGOs did not have the final say on exactly which of the sites they selected would receive the MAR. These were decided by DU based on these engineering requirements. However, the final list of 75 was a subset of the larger sites that the NGOs and DPHE identified, so there were no sites outside of these organizations' spheres of influence that ended up on the final list.

Existing relationships with the NGOs and DPHE gave an advantage to certain communities and put other communities at a disadvantage when it came to MAR site selection. The process of selecting which sites would receive the MAR relied on existing elite relationships that were widely perceived by people in our research communities to favor individuals and communities with kinship and other affiliations within prevailing power networks. The project leads UNICEF and DPHE did not have a process or practice in place to address the exclusion created by nepotism in site selection.

---

[40] Interview with Abdul Malek by Rakib Uddin Juwel. 12 March 2015. Site 56 Report.

[41] The MAR required a source of rainwater runoff to pump fresh water underground, so a large roof next to a large fresh pond. The underground aquifer required a certain subsurface environment, i.e., larger sand grain size and a higher quality of underground or ambient groundwater, which is to say lower in salinity, arsenic, and iron (iron mostly for taste). For the initial list of nominated sites, NGOs were told to choose locations with a roof and a pond. But only soil testing could determine if the grain size and ambient water conditions were suitable.

### 4.1.2 Exclusion from the MAR pond

There were also technical engineering limitations on the amount of water the MAR could produce throughout the year, and thus limitations inherent to the technology on how many people could benefit from the MAR in each community that excluded some people from drinking from the MAR pond. Dutch and Bangladeshi drinking water experts reported that the MAR could serve "250-300 people with 15 litres of safe drinking water for 200-240 days" of the year (Tolk et al. 2014, 12). This translates to 60-75 households per community for two-thirds of the year, assuming four to five family members per household. Understanding this, the NGOs made a list of approximately 60-80 households who were to benefit from the MAR in each site. The MAR was not intended to supply entire communities.

Table 5: List of MAR sites and each community's total population

| Site | Community | Total Population[42] |
|---|---|---|
| Site 2 | Bhagabatipur-Raipur, Botiaghata, Khulna | Bhagabatipur 190 households 775 people Raipur 300 households 1200 people |
| Site 11 | Tildanga Kacharibar Dacope Khulna | 1200 people |
| Site 20 | Narayanpur, Bagali, Koyra, Khulna | 700 households 5000 people |
| Site 25 | Bainbari, Goraykhali, Paikgacha, Khulna | 1700 voters |
| Site 27 | North and South Chandpai, Chandpai, Mongla, Bagerhat | 3000 people 600 households |
| Site 34 | Toardanga, Khajra, Ashashuni, Satkhira | 3282 people 767 households |
| Site 35 | Cheutiya, Khajra, Ashashuni, Satkhira | 3500 people |
| Site 39 | Thekra, Kusaliya, Kaliganj, Satkhira | 2500 people |
| Site 56 | Sonatola Adarsha Gram, Sauthkhali, Sharankhola, Bagerhat | 160 households (estimated 770 people based on 4 per household) |
| Site 58 | Uttar Sutalori, Baraikhali, Morelganj, Bagerhat | 1200 voters |
| Site 63 | Gajalia, Gajalia, Kochua, Bagerhat | 2000 voters |
| Site 75 | Golbuniya, Sundarban, Mongla, Bagerhat | 320 voters 150 families |

[42] Documentation of the population size was not consistent across site reports. The number of voters is a subset of the total population.

If the pond is located on a public pond or a pond that everyone had access to before the MAR, but the MAR can only serve 60-80 households, then what was considered a public resource open to all has been transformed by the MAR into a private resource benefiting only a few. For example, in site 11, the MAR was built on a government pond that all 1200 community members rely on for drinking water in the dry season. LOCOS the NGO selected 60 families living near the pond to be the official beneficiaries of the MAR drinking water. A former ward member said in an interview that "discrimination took place at the beginning when MAR project selected these 60 families excluding the other villagers as users. It's not fair that some will get filtered water and some will get pond water from the same source and villagers are not going to agree with this."[43] In site 63, the MAR was installed on a public pond that no one in the village uses for drinking, but they all use for washing clothes and dishes, bathing, and cooking. The field researchers observed a sign next to the pond that said "forbidden to bathe with soap in the pond water" yet there were people observed bathing in the pond. A male focus group participant told the research team that once the MAR starts supplying water, he understands that no one will be allowed to get into the pond anymore.[44] Additionally, the CM in this site was concerned that only 60 users would have access to the MAR water and believed that a problem would arise with the villagers if some were excluded.[45] In site 11, similarly, the MAR is located on a public pond that no one uses for drinking but all use for household chores and bathing. The LOCOS community mobilizer told our research team that once the MAR starts producing water, the community can no longer use the pond for these tasks. Only the MAR maintenance committee was informed of

---

[43] Interview with Komolesh Chandra Bachar by Rakib Uddin Juwel. 11 Jan 2015. Site 11 Report.
[44] Focus group conducted by Rakib Uddin Juwel. 27 Feb 2015. Site 63 Report.
[45] Interview with Md. Ruhul Amin, Gano Milon CM, by Rakib Uddin Juwel. 26 Feb 2015, Site 63 Report.

this new policy; the community members were not aware this would be the rule. In these cases, the MAR project will have the effect of cutting most of the community off from their primary washing and bathing pond without providing any alternatives.

In effect, the MAR was a source of exclusion by design. Its 60-80 household user limitation meant that it could only benefit a small number of people in each community. Its installation effectively privatized ponds that in most communities were considered open to all. In most of these cases, groups of people within these communities who were already marginalized were, for the most part, excluded again by the introduction of the MAR because they were not included on the user lists.[46] This did not seem to be something that project leads UNICEF and DPHE had considered, and they did not have a process or practice in place to address the exclusion created by the limitations of the MAR's design.

### 4.2 Cross-Issue Awareness

Having or practicing cross-issue awareness is being attentive to the ways that social norms, customs, or prevailing injustices may intersect with and impact an issue, in this case access to clean drinking water, and the creation of a strategy for addressing these. In other words, paying attention to and planning for the ways in which the issue that is the focus – in the case of the MAR, clean drinking water – is interactive with other norms that are present in the community that could impact whether or how the drinking water is utilized. Two cross-cutting issues reflected in the data were norms around drinking water and gender.

[46] Exceptions include site 58 where the marginalized Hindu groups were chosen for the MAR and user list and site 63 where a few Rishi families were included. In these sites, the NGO intentionally targeted poor and marginalized groups for the user lists.

### 4.2.1 Drinking water norms

Norms about water impacted this project because, for example, community members sometimes held spiritual beliefs about water purity that don't align with what science teaches us about it. These kinds of beliefs present a challenge for the MAR because people do not believe the MAR will deliver better water than what they already have access to; however, some NGOs used creative ways of working with these beliefs, but others did not engage with prevalent beliefs about water at all.

In two sites there was evidence that the community held spiritual beliefs about their drinking water sources that could present a challenge to the MAR. In site 25, community members believe that the Kalibari pond is blessed by the Hindu mother Kali and that no matter how contaminated it becomes, it will never harm them. A participant in a women's focus group discussion said, "There is no disease among us even after drinking the water directly from this pond because there is blessing of Kali goddess in Kali Bari pond." [47] The Community Mobilizer in site 25, Subrata Mandal, said "The villagers do not think that MAR will have an impact on the quality of water. That's why we do not even tell them anything in this regard during the monthly meeting. In the monthly meeting we discuss only the prescribed issues from MAR."[48]

In site 20 which is another site managed by the Mukti Foundation, residents believe that whether any new source of drinking water is safe depends on divine power. In this village, the Mukti Foundation took this belief seriously and the NGO representatives were present at the prayer meeting organized by the villagers regarding the MAR.[49]

---

[47] Kabita Mandal, participant in a women's focus group conducted by Rakib Uddin Juwel 28 Jan 2015. Site 25 Report.

[48] CM Subrata Mandal interviewed by Rakib Uddin Juwel 28 Jan 2015. Site 25 Report.

[49] Mukti Foundation, the organization that worked in these two sites, was founded in honor of Begum Monsura Mohiuddin, a former politician and member of the Jatiya party, which has an Islamic ideology. It may be that the Multi Foundation engaged with a community's Islamic spiritual beliefs but not another community's Hindu spiritual

In sites 34, 35, and 58 people reported that they tend to prefer surface water to the taste of ground water sources like the MAR.[50] Neither of the NGOs working in these sites were addressing the issue of the taste of MAR's water head on. In site 34, the community mobilizer had attempted to do education around clean water. In site 35 no education on clean water was reported or observed, and Shushilan's technical supervisor Shariful Islam said in an interview that he believes villagers would just get used to the taste over time. In site 58, the NGO JJS reported raising awareness about safe water and health in the community.

Though many NGOs seemed to be doing education on water safety in general, few reported teaching about the specific benefits of the MAR over other sources. None of the NGOs seemed to be engaging with the issues of taste or smell of the water as possible challenges to usage. The project leads UNICEF and DPHE did not seem to have clear guidance about processes or practices NGOs should use to address beliefs about water that would challenge the MARs success.

### 4.2.2 Gender norms

There were two main ways that gender norms were found to intersect with this project. One, there was a report that women in one community did not feel comfortable gathering water from the MAR location because of where it was located. Since women are primarily responsible for gathering water in this region, this presents a barrier to the MAR's use and sustainability. Two, there was guidance that the MAR water management committees should be gender-mixed,

---

beliefs due to the employees' own spiritual tradition and bias. Regardless, it is clear from the data that in one site there was no engagement with local spiritual beliefs, and in another there was.

[50] Another groundwater source common in the region is tube wells.

but not much effort was made to meaningfully follow this guidance, presumably due to existing gender norms around decision-making.

In site 63, due to concerns about modesty the women reported that they usually gather water from tube wells in the morning or afternoon when men's presence on the road is low; it is a cultural norm in this community that women should not be seen by anyone other than their husbands. However, the MAR's site was selected next to the union council and the market, so men are present consistently throughout the day. It's not possible for women to collect the water under these circumstances and so they send their young children instead. Members of a female focus group reported feeling concerned about the physical stress of carrying heavy water on their small bodies. This presents a challenge that may affect the sustainability of the MAR, but it did not seem that this issue was seriously considered during the selection of this site. The NGO in this site did not have a plan to overcome this barrier to women collecting water. It did not seem this was a key concern during site selection, either.

Blanchett's (2014) report found that the majority of the people serving the MAR water management committees in the 20 pilot sites were men. For the scale up to the 75 sites, Dr. Matin told the NGOs that the committees should be gender mixed. We found that each committee had at least one woman, but none of them had more than one. It is unclear whether more women were selected for the committees for the scale up than were selected for the 20 pilot sites, since it remained the case that men were the vast majority of the committee members. The single women members of the MAR management committee were not observed to exercise meaningful decision-making power vis-à-vis their male counterparts in most of the communities, and seemed to be tokenized by the appointment more than anything. There was some evidence they were selected because of their proximity to the men on the committee. For example, in site

63, the woman selected was the wife of a male committee member, Ruhul Amin, who was also Gano Milon's CM.[51] These findings support existing research that finds that though the burden of drinking water management disproportionately falls on women, they often have less decision-making authority responsibilities related to it (De Guzman et al. 2023). The project leads UNICEF and DPHE did not seem to have a process or practice in place to address the lack of decision-making power by women on the management committee.

### 4.3 Capacity Building

The heart of capacity building is building people's capacity to organize and advocate politically. In the rights-based approach, NGOs would work together to spread resources wider and reach more people, rather than act in their own self-interest and duplicate efforts to check the box for funders. NGOs would be more concerned with the development of the community as a whole (contribution) rather than getting credit or accolades for their particular efforts (attribution).

We did not find evidence of much capacity building in our research. What we found instead is that many of the NGOs focused on their particular role in bringing the MAR to the communities and boasted about how the MAR was superior to all other drinking water projects implemented by other NGOs, particularly in sites 2 and 11.

In site 63, Gano Milon's coordinator Pankaj Sarker admitted that collaboration between NGOs working on the same issues should be happening, but isn't. When asked to elaborate, he said: "Sometimes several NGOs operate similar programs. NGOs should implement these

[51] According to Ruhul Amin, the women in the village were not willing to attend regular MAR committee meetings with men due to concerns about modesty, and this is why he selected his wife to serve on the committee. Interview with Ruhul Amin by Rakib Uddin Juwel. 26 Feb 2015. Site 63 Report.

projects in consultation with each other. If they did, then it would be possible to deliver more benefits to the grassroots level poor. But NGOs do not do such type of coordination among themselves." He gave an example of what he meant. He said Gano Milon had installed 500 new latrines and repaired 800 old latrines in site 63. It was his assessment that after their effort, the need for more latrines had been met. However, the World Bank, DPHE, and another NGO have funding to build latrines, and so they are going to duplicate Gano Milon's efforts in this community even though they are not needed, rather than provide other resources that the community actually needs with their funding.[52]

The only evidence that we found of any of the NGOs educating on the right to water was in site 27. In addition to the MAR management committee, AOSED formed a "water rights committee" as part of a Khulna-wide initiative they are part of to organize people in the region against the privatization of water and to establish water as a human right. According to our ethnographer, no one in the village seemed to know anything about this movement when he spoke with them, so it does not seem there was an additional effort to build the community's understanding of their rights beyond the creation of the committee.

In site 20, there was a youth group doing awareness raising on WASH activities. It was not political activism, but it was a preexisting grassroots group providing education about clean drinking water, and Mukti Foundation did not work with them.

In site 2 and 58, community members reported that in their communities, the NGOs create groups or associations around projects, but when the NGO leaves and the project is done, people don't continue to work together. In site 2, LOCUS is the NGO working on the MAR. There are at least six other NGOs working on health and clean water. Among all these NGOs,

[52] Interview with Pankaj Sarker by Rakib Uddin Juwel. 28 Feb 2015. Site 63 Report.

only one was found to be doing any leadership development with community members, and it was not LOCOS. The community mobilizer for LOCUS, Dulali, said that she did not coordinate with the other NGOs because she did not get any such instructions from her office to do so.[53]

In site 11, community members had created a youth club, established in 1995, to help poor villagers and to mobilize the youth in social welfare activities. This was a community-based initiative that was not installed by an NGO or other outside agency. The youth club performed both charitable and activist activities. An example of their activism includes stopping all shrimp cultivation in the village.[54] The elites and landlords who owned and made considerable profits from the shrimp farms there were strongly opposed to stopping shrimping and held considerable power. The youth club organized with the poor members of the community against these elites to stop shrimp cultivation, and were able to win a legal battle to officially ban it. LOCOS did not coordinate with this group. In fact, when LOCOS formed the MAR water management committee, two out of five of the members they selected did not even live in the village. It seems they did not utilize or build upon local capacity to address the drinking water problem, and to some extent by bringing in outsiders to the management committee, bypassed it.

In site 56, when asked if JJS, the MAR NGO, coordinates with other NGOs in the community, the JJS employee Abdul Malek explained that "If different NGOs work on the same project of the same donor, then the NGOs work together. Otherwise, usually no project is implemented together with the NGOs [in the same community]." He mentioned that JJS started

[53] CM Dulali Sarder interviewed by Md. Newazul Maula 12 Jan 2015. Site 2 Report.

[54] Shrimp cultivation is done mainly for export and profit, rather than to provide a food source for local people. It is Bangladesh's third largest export after garments and jute products. Shrimp farming pollutes the groundwater with shrimp feed and fertilizer. Salt from the shrimp ponds can seep into the groundwater and the soil, affecting drinking water and making the land unsuitable for rice cultivation or livestock grazing, contributing to local food insecurity. Construction of canals and dikes for shrimp farming cause flooding and waterlogging, and the increase in sedimentation reduces existing river flow capacity. Shrimp farming in Bangladesh is often unregulated, with water from shrimp farms often discharged into common water sources untreated (Matin et al. 2016).

as a more grassroots organization working in very remote areas, but now is a national NGO that works all over the country. They are part of a national collaboration called "NGO Forum" at the national level. Though he could not articulate how JJS was working to develop the community's ability to network or build power for political change, it seems he did have a narrative about how JJS was working to build their own network and political power.

In site 58, the NGO's technical supervisor was interviewed, and he could not provide any information about how JJS increases the capacity of the villagers. However, he provided an example of increasing the capacity of the staff at JJS. He said they provide different types of training to develop their workers' skills. He said he had attended many of these trainings himself.[55] From this we can see that he understands what leadership development and capacity building can look like, even though they are not doing any such activities in the community. He said that JJS, nor any of the other NGOs working on drinking water in the community, collaborate in any way. He explained this is because there is no technological similarity between the MAR and the other drinking water projects. "Though different NGOs are working on similar projects, due to their project designs they cannot work with other NGOs." This of course is not true. Moreover, the success of community managed drinking water interventions in this region like the MAR depend on social factors, not simply technological innovation.

For the most part, the only capacity attempted to be built in these communities was the capacity of the MAR management committee members to understand the technical aspects of the MAR and to meet regularly. This is not equivalent to building the community's capacity to advocate for themselves. The members of the water management committee were not always even members of the community (sites 11 and 27), they didn't receive much information about

[55] JJS TS Moshiur Rahman interviewed by Rakib Uddin Juwel 28 Mar 2015. Site 58 Report.

the MAR, and in most cases the 60 beneficiaries of the MAR were not engaged at all. It does not seem that capacity building was part of the project design. Rather, the creation of the management committee here seemed to be designed to increase the efficiency of the project (Streeten 1980), or to create an illusion of community participation, though it was only the participation of the elites . These are elements of a basic needs approach. The project leads UNICEF and DPHE did not have a process or practices in place to build the capacity of the communities or to encourage the NGOs to work together rather than to duplicate efforts.

### 4.4 Situational Analysis

Exhibiting a situational analysis means demonstrating an analysis of the context in terms of people and conditions and the threats that exist from stakeholders, either in or outside of the community with influence in the community, who may not share their values or may create obstacles to the project's goals (Ackerly 2012). In addition to an analysis, we would expect a plan for how to overcome these challenges.

Overall, some of the biggest challenges for this project were contractors not building the MAR properly, overcoming elite capture or exclusive control over decision-making, and minimizing nepotism and clientelism. I will discuss the problem of accountability for construction failures in another section. I have already discussed political influence and nepotism in a previous section. Here, I will focus on the problem of elite capture and elite decision-making about the MAR.

One way that elites captured the benefits of the MAR was when the MAR was located on their private pond. Not every instance of this was a case of elite capture, however. Dasgupta and Beard (2007) and Fritzen (2007) distinguish "elite control" of project decision-making from

"elite capture" of project benefits. This distinction is important because there are differences in terms of the nature of the act (i.e., benevolent or malevolent), as well as differences in distributional outcomes for the poor.

For example, in site 2, the MAR pond is located on the private land of a former union council member Rabindra Nath Sarker. He is related to the Executive Director at LOCOS, the implementing NGO. These conditions would indicate that nepotism could lead to elite capture and threaten the project. However, community members did not seem unhappy with the location of the MAR. Most of the wealthy people in the community use tube wells for drinking water, so they likely wouldn't need or use the MAR. The poor use the pond for drinking water, and this individual's pond is the biggest and deepest pond in the village; it doesn't dry up during the dry season. It is also located in the middle of the village. In this case, even though the MAR was located on an elite's private land, the poorest who need this water were targeted to be the main beneficiaries. Similarly in site 20, the pond is located on the private land of an elite, Rhamat Ali. Though other elites in the village weren't happy with his land being chosen for site selection because of perceived personal gain (they thought he was receiving money; he wasn't), the rest of the villagers generally consider it one of the best sources of drinking water in the village and many already collect water here. In site 35, the MAR is located on what is technically a public pond, but it was donated to the government years ago by a member of the Sarder clan who still have special rights and access to it mandated by the government. The Sarder believe the pond is a symbol of their ancestral power in the community. Locating the MAR on this pond was found to upset other powerful clans, but this pond is the only source of drinking water for the villagers in this community. While in these three sites there is clearly recognition and public honor bestowed upon existing elites and enriching the most powerful elite families' reputations, there is

also a clear material benefit to those who have the greatest need for the drinking water. These three cases are elite control, where the MAR is located on the land controlled by the elite, but the distributional outcome is that the MAR will mostly benefit everyday water users rather than the elites in these sites (though there are reputational gains for the elites who contribute their land for this purpose).

In other sites, however, it was clear that the MAR would be vulnerable to elite capture. For example, in site 56, a local elite Dulal Chaprashi has taken over the communal fishponds in the area for his personal gain. People are afraid to speak out against him because they fear (based on past experience) that he will force them to leave the village. Dulal Chaprashi was also chosen to serve on the MAR management committee. If he has taken over other public resources and intimidated villagers in the past, it is likely he would do it again with the MAR. In site 63, a hotel owner on the MAR management committee said he plans to use the MAR water to sell in his hotel, which was not the intended use of the MAR. In site 27, the MAR committee members are all members of the ruling political party, Awami League. Villagers expressed concern that they might deny opposition party members access to the MAR water. "Partisanship is very high in Chandpai. In 2007 when BNP ruled, they denied Awami League supporters' access to resources and projects. When Awami League took power in 2009 they did the same to BNP supporters." In site 39, the MAR is located on a public pond but built on adjacent land privately owned by members of the Paar clan, one of the more well-off clans in the community. A staff member of the NGO is a member of this clan and claimed he brought the MAR to his house. In another case of nepotism, it seems the MAR will only benefit members of his clan.

There were also cases where the MAR seemed to genuinely target the poor. For example, in site 58 the MAR pond is located on land owned by a public Hindu temple. There are three

ponds in the village, two of which belong to wealthy individuals. Neither of these two ponds was selected for the MAR's location. In this village, Hindus are the minority and there is violence and assaults on Hindu people so much so that many from this village have fled to India. JJS located the MAR on the pond where the Hindu people collect water. The Technical Supervisor (TS) said "we did not select the rich people's pond for the MAR project. Hindu and poor people will be the beneficiaries."[56] In sites 25 and 75, likewise the MAR is located on public ponds that are the only source of drinking water for the community. In site 34, the MAR is located on a public pond next to a school and is intended to provide clean drinking water for the students. In site 11 the MAR is located on a public pond and there was no indication that elites would use or control the MAR.

Whether an NGO targeted the poorest community members for MAR usage rather than elites seemed to be rather ad hoc. There did not seem to be any guidance, processes, or practices from the project leads UNICEF or DPHE to avoid elite capture of the MAR resource.

Even when elite control was not at play or elite capture was not a clear threat, in all cases the most marginalized members of the community were not involved in decision-making around the MAR, and this had implications for the MAR's success. The water management committees were made up of local elites rather than the poorest and those most impacted by drinking water scarcity, and in some sites the members were not even members of the community. It is clear that being appointed to the MAR management committee is an appointment that confers status, public recognition, and privilege. So much so that in one community, the conflict between those who had been selected for the MAR management committee and those who had not led to one community member killing another community member (Lincoln 2016). This elevation in social

[56] JJS TS Md. Moshiur Rahman interviewed by Rakib Uddin Juwel 28 Mar 2015. Site 58 Report.

status accrued to existing elites rather than uplifting the voices of everyday users and building their capacity for decision-making.

In many cases, everyday water users were not even informed of the committee's decisions. For example, in site 11 people use the MAR pond for bathing and washing. The community mobilizer and the committee decided that no one can use the pond for that once the MAR is started, but no one in the village had been informed about this plan. Moreover, because the MAR committee is made up of elites with no need for the MAR water, community members in this village reported that they did not believe the committee would benevolently carry out its responsibilities since they didn't need the MAR and wouldn't perform labor for the poor with no personal benefit. In site 75, The site was selected after speaking to elite individuals in the village, not in consultation with the villagers. AOSED didn't discuss the technical features of the MAR with the community. The community stopped recharging the MAR (pumping water into the underground aquifer) because they were afraid the pond would dry up.[57] In site 58, because a promised wall that was supposed to be constructed next to the MAR to protect the Hindu temple from destruction by users of the MAR was never constructed, the Hindu community "thinks that this filter has been imposed upon them"[58] and are convinced they won't get any benefit from the MAR. In these sites, it seems that excluding everyday water uses in favor of elites on the management committees and in decision-making had consequences that would negatively impact the MAR's value and usage.

When asked why only members of well-off families were invited to join the MAR management committee in site 2, the LOCOS staff said that the local people were responsible for

---

[57] There is no roof at this location to contribute to recharging, increasing the reliance on the pond as the sole source of MAR aquifer water.
[58] Talukder Moajjem Hossain, the president of the MAR management committee and the local ward member interviewed by Rakib Uddin Juwel 28 Mar 2015. Site 58 Report.

choosing the water committee members, so it was completely out of their hands. Of course, we know that is not true since they were able to exert their influence to require at least one woman to serve on the committee. Likewise, when Gano Milon was asked why Rishi were included in the beneficiaries but not on the water management committee, they said "qualified individuals are chosen for the committee, those who are able to manage the MAR effectively in the future. If we included the Rishi then no one would listen to them because they are considered low caste in society."[59]

It did not seem that the project leads UNICEF and DPHE had a process or practice in place to uplift the decision-making power of everyday water users, nor had they provided guidance to the NGOs that this was an important goal when forming the water management committees.

**4.5 Learning**

To prioritize learning means to purposefully build in time and space for self-reflection and evaluation, and to meaningfully incorporate what is learned into future efforts. The project partners - UNICEF, DHPH, DU, and the NGOs - have all been involved in the implementation of drinking water projects in Bangladesh prior to the MAR. There is much to be learned from prior efforts, and from the failed PSFs and other drinking water projects in the region, as well as the successes and failures of community managed drinking water projects more generally, and what the research teaches us about this. Further, the MAR was piloted in 20 sites and researched commissioned to study the uptake of the MAR in these sites and make recommendations for

[59] Pankaj Sarker, Coordinator at Gano Milon, interviewed by Rakib Uddin Juwel 28 Feb 2015. Site 63 Report.

design improvements. It seems that the MAR project design included only limited learning from these findings.

### 4.5.1 The Blanchet report

A report was commissioned by UNICEF on the 20 pilot sites to study the MAR's success in these sites. This report by Thérèse Blanchet and a team of anthropologists in April 2014 before construction began on the 75 sites (May-September 2014) made recommendations for social issues to be considered more thoughtfully when the project was scaled up to the 75 sites. She noted that the lack of attention to the social determinants in the pilot, particularly water norms and gender norms, would have a detrimental impact on the success of future MAR installations if they were not addressed.

Blanchet (2014, 29) found "women who collect water near a madrassah felt intimidated after being criticized for not sufficiently covering their bodies with their sari. Accessibility is important. In deciding the location of MAR water points, public sentiments may not have been sufficiently taken into account. It should not be forgotten that women, and mostly young women, collect water." Though this same problem was only observed in one of the twelve sample sites as part of my study, it does seem to suggest that the process of site selection lacked thoughtfulness around accessibility for women, despite this being the recommendation from the UNICEF-commissioned report.

Blanchet (2014, 21) also recommended that "recognizing the various ideas and beliefs held about 'good' water is a prerequisite to build relevant messages well attuned to local beliefs and perceptions." Blanchet's study found that one of the main reasons why people reported not drinking the MAR water was due to either a reported bad taste, smell, or a perception that the

MAR was no better than other water sources. In other words, taste and beliefs about the MAR water were a major impediment to the project's success. Her assessment was that those who didn't perceive the MAR as offering any advantages over their other water sources could be convinced otherwise if education was done around the specific advantages of the MAR, rather than teaching about water safety in general. In our research, we found that most NGOs seemed to be educating the communities about safe water, health, and sanitation, but it was unclear that they were educating the communities about the benefits of the MAR specifically. It is possible these benefits were being discussed with the MAR management committee, but there was little evidence that the NGOs were discussing the MAR benefits with the communities. For example, in site 34, the community mobilizer was told by the schoolteachers that his lessons on clear water and sanitation were duplicative since they already teach about that in school, so he discontinued his awareness raising and left the education of the students to the teachers, implying that he wasn't teaching them anything specific about the MAR. As mentioned previously, in site 25 where the community believed that the gods have blessed their water and will never harm them no matter how dirty it is, the community mobilizer was not found to be discussing these beliefs with the community or teaching about the safety of MAR water. It seems that the NGOs were not directed to incorporate the learning from the Blanchet report by the project leads UNICEF and DPHE, because we did not observe major differences between her findings and ours; the challenges she observed had not been addressed in the scale up to the 75 sites.

#### 4.5.2 Failed PSFs

Many communities where the MAR was implemented had a large number of inactive or failed drinking water projects, especially pond sand filters (PSFs). The PSF is similar to the

MAR in many ways. They are both considered community-managed resources, meaning by design they rely on regular maintenance and monitoring by the communities to be sustainable (Hasan, Driessen, Majumder, et al. 2020). PSFs and the MAR both utilize surface water from ponds. The PSF is actually a lower-tech solution than the MAR, and easier and less intensive to operate. Yet in all but one site, at least one PSF was present, but no longer functioning, and in one site there were 14 abandoned PSFs. Most were reported to have failed for reasons other than engineering or construction weaknesses. Nationally, the failure rate for PSFs is 87% (M. Hossain et al. 2015).

In site 34, the site with 14 failed PSFs, villagers reported that it was the responsibility of the NGOs to repair and maintain these since these villagers claimed they lacked the skills. Similarly in site 56, the community members reported that they could not repair the broken PSFs because they lack the money or ability. There are functioning PSFs in the village next to them, but they are privately managed; the owners locked them up so the public would not have access. Though the community did not say this, we can infer that perhaps there was a fear that if they collectively paid to repair the PSF, that something similar would happen in their community and a private actor would block access to the PSF. This could have acted as a disincentive to repair their PSF.

In site 75, there was a broken PSF observed on the same pond where the MAR was built. A businessman whose store is next to the MAR said "the MAR is much more technical [than a PSF]. When the NGO leaves and hands it over to the villagers, I doubt that it will be possible for us to contribute to repair it. When the PSF's washer became damaged and needed to be replaced, the villagers did not repair it. It's inexpensive to install a new washer, but they did not spend

even that little amount of money to fix it."[60] The villagers reported here as well that they believe the NGO should do the repairs on PSFs and MAR.

Where communities do not take responsibility for the maintenance of PSFs, there is no reason to believe they will do so for the MAR. Especially since the PSF is easier to manage and maintain. It did not seem that project leads UNICEF and DPHE engaged with the reasons why PSFs located in MAR communities had failed, and did not have a process or practices in place to ensure that the MAR would not end up similarly abandoned.

### 4.5.3 What does the research say about community managed resources

Finally, it is important to remember that the project leads were conceptualizing the MAR as a community managed drinking water resource. There is extensive research from the 1990s and 2000s on what kind of governance arrangements make these kinds of projects successful (Hutchings et al. 2015). Indeed, this literature was extensively summarized in a paper testing the implementation of this learning in the design of the MAR published by three Dutch authors and one Bangladeshi author (Hasan, Driessen, Zoomers, et al. 2020). They studied whether the MAR implementing NGOs incorporated aspects of project design found by the literature to be necessary for ensuring both day-to-day and long-term collective action to maintain a shared drinking water resource. The authors found that some NGOs did incorporate these in an ad hoc way, but many did not, and that in particular preparing the community for day-to-day management tended to be overlooked in their project design.

Moreover, after more than thirty years of research on this topic, there is widespread acknowledgement that in addition these governance elements, long term external support from

[60] Md. Anwar Sheikh, a businessman whose store is next to the MAR, interviewed by Rakib Uddin Juwel 15 Apr 2015. Site 75 Report.

an overseeing institution is required to provide planning, capacity building, and technical assistance (Harvey and Reed 2007; Hutchings et al. 2015). However, this support was not built into the MAR design; the project leads planned to pass responsibility to the communities two years post-construction with no continued support. In effect, the project leads did not seem to have incorporated either the governance arrangements or long-term institutional support that research has found to be important for such a resource like the MAR to be a success into their project design.

### 4.6 Accountability

In addition to the five elements of the rights-based approach, accountability emerged as another key element important for not only ensuring that the MAR would be built properly and functional, but also enabling community members an avenue to address breakdowns and problems that arose during the project's implementation.

As of September 22, 2014 all of the MARs in our sample of 12 communities had started construction. Construction start dates ranged from March to August 2014. MAR construction should take six months and should have been completed or very close to completion in the study sites when we commenced our fieldwork in January 2015. Indeed, this is in part why these particular sites were chosen for the fieldwork portion of the data collection which took place from January to April 2015. However, some were not yet completed and others were found to have faulty or defective construction. When Dr. Anam interviewed eight DPHE engineers in April 2016, two years after the official construction start dates, local DPHE officials reported continued delays and defects in construction (Anam 2016).[61]

[61] The interviews included eight interviews with DPHE engineers assigned to the twelve sample sites. Among those eight engineers, five were sub assistant engineers, two were assistant engineers, and one was an executive engineer.

The senior project team members at UNICEF and DU had a clear understanding of a very complex chain of command through which to report problems with construction, but had not trained their lower level staff who would actually encounter these problems in the field on that process.[62] The complex stakeholder structure meant that there was diffuse responsibility for the project; it seemed there was no one single entity that could be held accountable for this project's success. The main project lead, UNICEF, claimed to have a "zero tolerance"[63] policy for improper construction, but did not have a clear strategy to enforce this policy. At least one community was able to notify the NGO, and that NGO followed up with the construction firm to try and get them to fix their construction errors (site 2), but this was in spite of a lack of training or clear understanding of what to do in such instances. Another community submitted a complaint with their local government office against the contractor for poor quality construction, even though their local government office was not involved in the project (site 58). Ultimately, there was not a clearly communicated process for accountability and no tangible mechanisms put in place to ensure it was followed properly.

### 4.6.1 Construction failures

Local DPHE officials reported the many problems that led to the delayed or faulty construction of the MAR. They said the NGOs and DU selected the sites; they had not been involved in site selection and some sites chosen were not adequate, for example the ponds were too small to provide enough water for recharging. They reported that the high level of salinity in the area's water meant that the locally made bricks were not sturdy, and believed the water tank should be constructed with reinforced cement concrete. They said the timeframe for the project

[62] Nargis Akter, UNICEF WASH Project Officer. Meeting transcript. Dhaka. 26 Apr 2016.
[63] Nargis Akter, UNICEF WASH Project Officer. Meeting transcript. Dhaka. 26 Apr 2016.

was not long enough. They said the budget for the contractors was insufficient – that it did not consider the necessary profit for private contractors nor the market price of the construction materials. One of the engineers said that since DU ran the pilot, they did not have to be concerned with profit; therefore, their costs were lower.[64] Local DPHE officials complained about a "syndicate" of contractors; due to their high level of political clout, they were usually more powerful than the DPHE engineers and therefore it was difficult for the agency to hold them accountable. The DPHE officials cited inadequate remuneration and felt they should have received extra payment for supervising the MAR sites. And that DPHE lacked the organizational capacity to supervise multiple sites. The contractors reported that they were unfamiliar with the MAR construction requirements, and that led to some issues.

In a meeting in April 2016 with the MAR project lead from UNICEF, Dr. Matin and others from the DU team, and Saifur Rahman, the Executive Engineer of R&D Division of DPHE (a national position located in Dhaka, not a local DPHE official), the VU research team presented what the local DPHE officials had reported to us about why the construction failures had happened. Dr. Matin and Saifur Rahman took issue with some of their claims. For example, Dr. Matin and Mr. Rahman insisted that local DPHE officials were, in fact, consulted on site selection. Mr. Rahman suggested that individuals who our team interviewed may have been new to the local DPHE office so the site selection happened before they arrived. We did not ask the local DPHE officials how long they had been at their specific post, so our data cannot confirm or deny this possibility. Dr. Matin said that some sites were even chosen by local DPHE officials. Dr. Matin said: "all the sites were submitted in consultation with DPHE. In the initial process in

[64] Interview with S. M. Kayes by Dr. Mujibul Anam (2016).

some cases maybe they were not that involved, but the final decision was taken in consultation with DPHE."[65]

As far as the claims about an insufficient budget, Mr. Rahman surmised that the contractors mistakenly underbid on the contracts. Dr. Matin and Mr. Rahman said they did four training sessions with the contractors in order to help them understand the task of building the MAR and the costs of doing so, so in their opinion, the contractors should have been adequately prepared for the costs. In response to the complaints about construction materials, Dr. Matin said it was due to contractors "using poor quality materials to increase their profit margin"[66] rather than a problem with the MAR project design.

Dr. Matin and Dr. Rahman admitted that the technical design of the MAR was not perfected when they scaled up to 75 sites from the 20 pilots - "the materials used, the quantity of materials…we came out with a better design, but that was [too] late for implementing for the 75 sites." In particular they cited the problem of the leaking tank, which was a design flaw that they had since corrected for. But aside from this acknowledgement about the design, for the most part, Dr. Matin and Mr. Rahman seemed to suggest that most of the problems were the fault of the contractors, rather than the information, training, or budget that DU and Mr. Rahman had provided to the local DPHE officials or to the contractors. Notably, though Dr. Matin and Dr. Rahman seemed to have reflected about the weaknesses of their technical design, there was not the same reflection from UNICEF around implementation and community management designs.

[65] Dr. Kazi Matin Uddin Ahmed. Meeting transcript. Dhaka. 26 Apr 2016.
[66] Dr. Kazi Matin Uddin Ahmed. Meeting transcript. Dhaka. 26 Apr 2016.

### 4.6.2 Knowledge of the accountability process

In this same meeting in April 2016, the MAR project team - representatives from UNICEF, DU, and DPHE - explained the accountability process they were using to ensure that the MARs were constructed properly in the 75 sites. They explained that if the community observed a problem with the MAR, they should contact their community mobilizer (CM) who would let the NGO know. The NGO would inform DU. If it was a

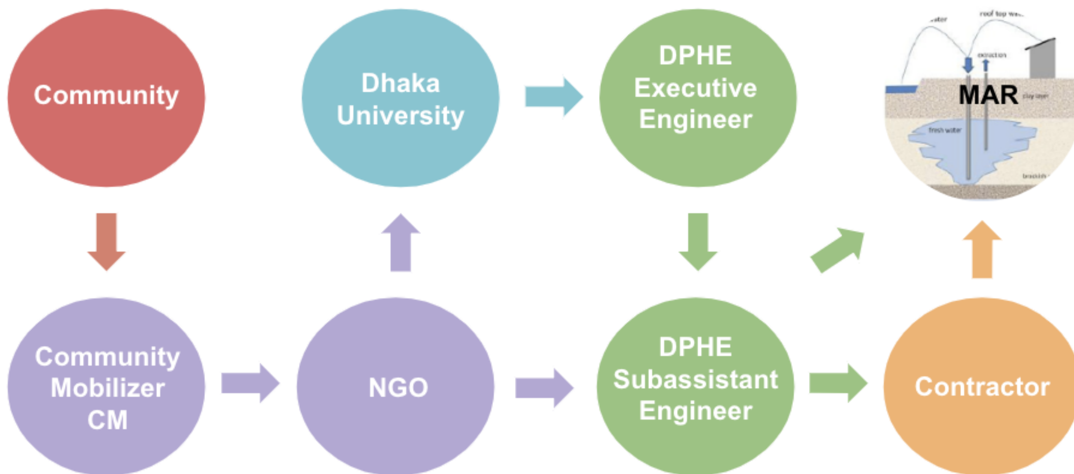


Figure 5: MAR Accountability Process

problem with construction, then DU would contact DPHE. If it was something else (problems with construction seemed to be the main issue as of our fieldwork in 2015), then DU would contact their representatives in Khulna to take care of it.

However, when we asked NGO representatives about their responsibility for construction and role in accountability, many did not seem to be aware of this process. A Shushilan representative said “the responsibility of Shushilan is to mobilize the community and to observe a few technical aspects of water from the MAR filter after construction. We do not have more

than this responsibility and power…DU and donors do not want us to have any authority over construction work. Due to lack of authority we cannot speak on errors of construction work."[67] However, in this site 39 Shushilan's community mobilizer did work with a few villagers and the MAR management committee to inform the contractor about the poor construction. This did not follow the chain of accountability as described by the project team, but it did demonstrate an effort by the NGO to address the construction problems. According to the Shushilan CM, the contractor told the villagers that they didn't know as much as he did about construction and dismissed their concerns.[68] Coincidentally, this contractor was also an engineer at DPHE, and the DPHE official who was responsible for overseeing the construction quality. This presents a clear conflict of interest and impacts the integrity of the chain of accountability, since the person responsible for holding the contractor accountable was the contractor himself in this case.

In site 75, the contractor who was building the MAR died and construction stopped for three months. The contractor's younger brother took responsibility for building the MAR, but he didn't know anything about construction work. The AOSED TS stepped in and assisted in the construction. There are a few cracks in this MAR's tanks, which the villagers believe happened due to not mixing sand and cement correctly. It seems here that the NGO did not know that DPHE was responsible for ensuring proper construction because the NGO did not involve DPHE when the contractor died. Moreover, if the NGO is responsible for building the faulty tanks, then again this is a conflict of interest. The NGO would not notify DU of their own faulty construction. Conflicts of interest cause a breakdown in the accountability process.

---

[67] Shushilan Deputy Director Mostafa Aktheruzzaman interviewed by Md. Newazul Maula 1 Mar 2015. Site 39 Report.
[68] Shushilan CM Aminur Rohman interviewed by Md. Newazul Maula 26 Feb 2015. Site 39 Report.

In site 56, the community mobilizer recognized that the contractor was using low quality materials to construct the MAR and tried to work with the MAR management committee to raise concerns with the contractor, but the contractor dismissed their concerns.[69] Again, the NGO notified the contractor, but not DU or DPHE according to the accountability process outlined by UNICEF and DU. In this community, the community members reported that they believed the NGO was responsible for construction failures. JJS believed that responsibility belonged to the contractor and DPHE. Therefore, it seems that neither the community members nor the NGO were aware that they had a role to play in ensuring proper construction.

In site 58, the TS of JJS Md. Moshiur Rahman said "DPHE has been given all the responsibility of MAR construction. To monitor how the construction work is being carried out is also their responsibility, but they do not properly supervise it. It is not possible for our NGO to do so because we were not given this responsibility. If it had been, I think the construction problems would not have happened." This NGO did not seem to be aware that they were supposed to alert DU of any construction problems.

In site 34, the TS said that no one from Shushilan got the design of the MAR or details about the construction materials so that they could properly monitor construction. He lamented this, because he felt that if there were errors, then the responsibility of failure would be on Shushilan. He said, "the villagers always point the finger at Shushilan for low quality work."[70] This suggests that the communities did not know DPHE was the agency responsible for overseeing construction, and were not aware of the chain of accountability more broadly.

UNICEF claimed that communities did not understand the value of the MAR water. "There is a lack of people's knowledge and understanding and why we should use MAR, why

[69] Interview with JJS CM Belal Hossain by Rakib Uddin Juwel. 14 Mar 2015. Site 56 Report.
[70] Interview with Shariful Islam by Md. Newazul Maula. 12 Feb 2015. Site 34 Report.

MAR water is good. And how to…actually make operate this MAR properly, what is needed. So all these information is not clear with the community people."[71]

However, we observed that the communities did not lack understanding about the importance of the MAR, as UNICEF described. In fact, many communities were distressed by the construction failures and deeply invested in the MAR's success. Dr. Matin said: "The communities were very enthusiastic…They were expecting to get some good option for water supply. So they were very vigilant about what kind of materials the contractors were going to use. This was also something the contractors did not anticipate much that they would feel so much resistance from the community about using poor quality materials to increase their profit margin."[72] UNICEF's narrative that the communities were not invested or did not value the MAR enough was not born out by our observations.

Community members did not report being aware of an accountability process and mostly expressed frustration with the project's lack of accountability. UNICEF and DU did not seem to have trained the community mobilizers on the accountability process. None of the NGO staff seemed to be aware of it. When questioned about CM training, UNICEF identified the CM training gap as how to make the community understand they are responsible for the MAR and that it is important they maintain it, rather than the training gap being an accountability process for faulty construction. It does not seem that the project leads UNICEF and DPHE had put in place processes or practices that were clear to those bearing the responsibility to act that would address accountability as part of this project's design.

### 4.7 Conclusion

[71] Nargis Akter, UNICEF WASH Project Officer. Meeting transcript. Dhaka. 26 Apr 2016.
[72] Dr. Kazi Matin Uddin Ahmed. Meeting transcript. Dhaka. 26 Apr 2016.

Overall, it seems that the MAR project leads and designers incorporated some processes and practices to mitigate anticipated challenges to the MAR's success, but many of these efforts did not go far enough. When NGOs implemented these practices, it was ad hoc and not because of specific guidance from the project leads UNICEF and DPHE. From site selection to the selection of the water management committee, there were not policies or practices in place to address nepotism or the favoring of elites over everyday water users in decision-making. For the most part, there was a lack of acknowledgement of responsibility from the project leads for when things did go wrong, demonstrating a lack of self-reflection or willingness to admit there were problems or weaknesses in aspects of their project design. The lack of access to clean drinking water was, for the most part, not presented to the communities as a human rights failure, but rather as a technical problem to be solved by innovations in drinking water engineering. Given these findings, it seems that the project leads were not using a rights-based approach.

In the next chapter, I will discuss why this project design reflects more of a basic needs approach. As I outlined chapter 2, this approach treats people experiencing poverty as the target of development, rather than its agent. It is an apolitical approach that ultimately does not address the root causes of poverty. I discuss why it is important for development projects to build capacity for advocacy, accountability, and ultimately, democracy. The RBA, I argue in the next chapter, is the only approach that works towards these goals, and addresses the structural conditions that led to lack of drinking water access in the first place. As part of my discussion in the next chapter, I will also propose some ideas for what we might expect to see as part of the MAR project if the project leads were using a rights-based approach instead of a basic needs approach.

## 5 Discussion and Implications

The MAR was exclusionary by design, creating a situation where a public drinking water source would be restricted to a narrow group of users. Using a rights-based approach, this would have been a key consideration when deciding whether to introduce the MAR technology to the region. The MAR may have technical and engineering benefits, but what about the social and political implications? A rights-based approach requires consideration of this question, and a project design that is thoughtful about how to work with conditions on the ground to include the most marginalized, build the capacity of the community to advocate for themselves, and reduce power hierarchies in decision-making.

Though some ad hoc attempts were made to do these things, on the whole these elements were missing from the MAR project design, and therefore I conclude that the project stakeholders were using a basic needs approach. The basic needs approach is focused on the redistribution of resources from wealthy countries and donors to the poor, and less on the poor being able to meaningfully access and make use of the resources. It is an approach that is more concerned with wealth transfer, than whether the process of the transfer has negative impacts on social inequality, political power, or other collateral effects that might harm people's long-term ability to advocate for these resources in the future.

Ackerly (2012) rubric was developed by and with grassroots women's rights activists; however, in this MAR project it is applied to a development intervention with arguably no activists. Rather, the stakeholders were funders, international institutions, government agencies, academics, for-profit businesses, and NGOs. This raises the question of whether Ackerly's rubric is sufficient in other development contexts - for example, the delivery of a good or service like

the MAR. I argue that yes, it could be valuable for other contexts, but that key aspects of the rubric need to be more fully elaborated - namely, decision-making and accountability.

Moreover, an RBA project related to goods and services would look very different from how the MAR was implemented. The community would be engaged prior to the decision to focus on drinking water. Efforts would be made to uplift the community's priorities, or the priorities of marginalized groups within a community. The RBA would not lead you to project-based funding where the type of intervention has already been decided, as in the case of the MAR.

Similarly, advocacy is already happening when activists are fighting for transformational political change, but this capacity may need to be developed during the simple delivery of a public good. This would look like working with communities to build or deepen an understanding of drinking water as a human right that they are entitled to, and engaging with power dynamics to build grassroots power capable of challenging inequalities to expand democratic participation for all. Grassroots power is built through community organizing and building large coalitions of groups to push power holders to be more accountable to everyday people.

Capacity building for self and group advocacy is a key element that sets the rights-based approach apart because it is what makes the work transformational rather than transactional. By building collective power, it addresses the root cause of resource scarcity or poverty, which is a lack of power to demand that these resources be protected for and/or allocated to poor people. The other approaches do not require a change in power distribution or political change, and this is a key weakness. Ignoring politics does not mean a development intervention is not political or

does not have political consequences (Ferguson 1990). Because it does not seek to change power inequalities, the approach ends up reinforcing existing unequal dynamics and relationships.

The need for and focus on advocacy hints at another fundamental aspect of the rights-based approach: accountability. What are we building the capacity of people to advocate for when we are trying to change power dynamics that have caused their poverty within the rights-based approach framework? We are building their capacity to hold their government, international actors, and local elites accountable to the poor and for creating structural conditions that make it harder for governments to be responsive to their needs. We are building the capacity for democratic accountability, or the sharing of power among a greater number of people and greater public control over the use of public resources. This is what reduces inequality, elite entrenchment of power, and corruption, which is essential to ensure people's human rights.

We observed with the MAR that the project leads did not communicate an accountability process to the project stakeholders and so communities did not have a clear process to lodge a complaint when the construction failures happened. The communities affected were left without a way to ensure the failures were corrected or for the various stakeholders to be held accountable for these failures. Building in capacity building for advocacy to demand greater accountability is key to the rights-based approach, and was mostly absent from this project.

In this chapter, I will provide analysis of the findings and why I do not conclude that the MAR utilized the rights-based approach. I will discuss the pitfalls of apolitical development and why without capacity building around advocacy and democratic accountability, a development project cannot be rights-based. I will provide some examples for what capacity building as part of a project can look like. Finally, I will provide modifications and elaborations to Ackerly's rubric.

## 5.1 The 5 Elements of the Rights-based Approach

### 5.1.1 Inclusion

Development projects often have finite resources, which can create conditions of exclusion. The existence of exclusion is not itself what makes a project not rights-based. The question is, does the exclusion exacerbate or lessen existing inequalities? If it exacerbates inequality, it is not transforming power relations and it is not a rights-based approach. If it redistributes resources to the most marginalized, or creates a public good that all can access equally, then it can transform power relations and it is a rights-based approach.

The drinking water project was chosen for implementation in Bangladesh. Bangladesh is one of the poorest countries in the world. The southwestern coastal area of Bangladesh was prioritized because of the widespread lack of access to clean drinking water and poor surface drinking water quality. The funders prioritized a country and a region within that country with fewer resources and greater need, which was a rights-based decision.

However, the biggest issue with the MAR technology and the decision to implement it, is that it was by design exclusionary, which was not a rights-based decision. When MAR was located on a public pond with open access, what was once a public resource open to all was transformed by the MAR into a private resource benefiting only a few. The issue here is not that the MAR could not serve everyone in the communities; the problem was that in most cases the introduction of the MAR removed a resource from public use and converted it to use by a select few.

Additionally, the selection of the specific sites was not rights-based. Though some care appeared to be taken to avoid clientelism in site selection (Dr. Matin emphasized that it was the

engineering specifications that would determine the final sites, not the NGO; moreover, I suspect UNICEF at least had clientelism in mind since, as I mentioned in chapter 4, the Human Rights Watch (2016) report uplifted it as a major cause of project failure for their 125,000 drinking water sites in Bangladesh from 2006-2012), the same care was not taken to ensure that nepotism on behalf of the NGOs did not favor certain communities over other communities. A rights-based approach would have some kind of process in place to attempt to target the most marginalized and most in need for the drinking water resource, rather than rely on NGO connections or relationships to mediate site selection. An RBA would have also attempted to provide alternative access to water for bathing and washing so communities were not gaining potable water, but losing water for other needs. The rights-based approach does not dictate what the project leads should put in place, but the idea is that using an RBA, we would expect that project leads would have guidance for a practice or process to attempt to circumvent or alleviate these issues.

I can imagine a few ideas, though they should not be construed as prescriptions. For example, the project leads could identify activists or advocacy groups in the region who are demanding better access to water like the one AOSED is connected to, and work with them or with networks of organized activists to connect with communities demanding better access to clean water, in order to build on existing efforts to draw attention to this human rights issue. Or, project leads could do ethnographic research on the front end to find communities where certain groups are experiencing marginalization – religious, economic, geographic, etc. – and target those areas for the MAR. Indeed, research has shown the benefits of using qualitative social science to inform hydrology projects (Quandt 2022). We did see this happen in some sites – for example in site 58, 25, 75, 34, and 11. However, whether an NGO targeted the poorest

community members for MAR usage rather than elites was ad hoc, and not required by the project design.

Alternatively, and arguably less transformational, project leads could have directed the NGOs to select communities where they do not already have beneficiary lists or where they are not already working; or even a quota of new communities, say 25-50% of the overall sites chosen. Increased capacity for the NGOs to expand their service area or to travel to hard-to-reach villages might need to be included in the overall budget.

### 5.1.2 Cross Issue Awareness

If project leads were utilizing a rights-based approach, we would expect that they would acknowledge that issues of water norms and gender norms would likely come up in some sites since they were identified in Blanchet's (2014) report, and they would have had some kind of strategy in place to address these challenges. A cross-cutting issue we identified in these communities was gender inequality. Women are the primary point people for water collection - gathering it, filtering it, cooking with it, and washing with it. Women are also an oppressed group who are constrained by social norms. There was evidence that the MAR project leaders considered this, because they required at least one woman be included on the MAR water management committee. This prioritized a marginalized group and was a rights-based decision, though the NGOs did not carry the spirit of his guidance forward in their selection of just one woman for each committee, doing only the bare minimum to meet the requirement that the committees be gender-mixed.

Moreover, simply including one woman on a committee did not significantly shift power. Including one woman was tokenizing – in other words, a perfunctory inclusion of a marginalized

identity without any thoughtfulness around whether they would feel valued by the group or able to exercise an equal amount of decision-making power. A committee dominated by men in numbers and in setting priorities is unlikely to be a space where women can exercise substantive decision-making power, or where a gender lens is likely to be applied. To significantly impact gender norms, the project design could have called for a stronger directive to provide extra support and training for women members to boost their confidence, along with processes in place to ensure their voices and priorities were considered on the committee. Additionally, training could have been provided to the men to enable them to uplift a gender lens in their decision-making.[73]

Addressing these challenges could have looked like guidance from the project leads for NGOs or training in dealing with these issues head on. The data demonstrates that overcoming these barriers to the MAR's use were not part of the project design, and therefore it was not rights-based.

### 5.1.3 Capacity Building

Access to clean drinking water is a human right (United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights 2023). In the case of the MAR, what we would expect to see from a rights-based approach is discussion about the MAR as a right and an entitlement, not a benefit, gift, or donation. We would expect the project leads to direct the NGOs to either work with existing activists or educate, support, and mobilize people to become activists. This could look like trainings on community organizing, education about the human right to water, giving people knowledge on how to demand and win more resources for their community (e.g., a

[73] Men can be critical actors for gender equality (Childs and Krook 2009).

community organizing training or training on how to strategize and win a political issue campaign), giving examples of other communities in Bangladesh who have demanded better drinking water access through political activism.[74] It could also look like communities or NGOs being part of a social movement or coalitions to fight for better water access for all, and connecting these communities to other activist groups to build collective power to demand better access to drinking water.

AOSED's creation of a water rights committee in site 27 to organize people in the region against the privatization of water and to establish water as a human right is a great example of what this could look like. Unfortunately, this particular committee didn't seem to have much of an impact because most people in the community didn't understand its purpose, but AOSED was on the right track with this attempt, and their intent was rooted in a rights-based approach. This was the only example observed in the 12 sample sites of anything close to capacity building, and it did not seem that AOSED was following guidelines from the project leads, but were taking their own initiative. In a rights-based approach, the project leads would encourage all partner NGOs to work to organize people in this manner.

### 5.1.4 Situational Analysis

The basic needs approach is less concerned with inclusion of the poor in participation and decision-making for its own sake or for its importance for democratic accountability. In this approach, "functional participation" is instrumental if it will increase the efficiency of a project

---

[74] For example, in 2001 Bangladeshi villagers sued the British Geological Survey (BGS) for arsenic poisoning BGS had dug wells in Bangladesh during the 1980s and early 1990s but did not test to make sure the well-water was free of arsenic, resulting in "the worst mass poisoning in history" (Clarke 2001). The case was tried by British courts, who cleared the BGS of culpability (Hopkin 2004). This wasn't a win for the people of Bangladesh, but it is a great example of how to be proactive in holding powerful groups accountable for failed development projects.

or reduce costs (Cornwall 2007; Pretty 1995; Stalker Prokopy 2004), but is considered secondary to the main goal, which is resource redistribution. In other words, political participation and inclusion of the poor can be instrumental to achieving basic needs, but is not inherent to the approach to or seen as required for the approach to achieve its ends.

There is a tendency in international development to talk about local control and participatory development (Mansuri and Rao 2013). Merely involving a higher *number* of local actors, or increasing their participation, does not inherently lead to redistribution of power. Indeed, it can simply mask power if attention is not paid to the level of participation of the most marginalized, particularly with regard to decision-making power and elite capture. As Mansuri and Rao (2013, 6), community-led initiatives are not always superior to government-led initiatives, because they can be susceptible to elite capture.

Community control can uplift place-based cultural practices, enable protection of local ecology and public health, and contribute to democratic decision-making (Bakker 2007; Shiva 2002). However, where the possibility of elite capture is high, it is important that whole communities be strengthened and that there be training and skill-building that is not limited to the elites (Platteau and Abraham 2002, 129). The rights-based approach requires that the poor be meaningfully involved in decision-making, and argues that without such inclusion no project will be impactful or sustainable. We can see from the data that the MAR project was not designed to include the poor in decision-making and in fact relied on elite decision-making to both select the MAR sites and serve on the water management committees, which was not rights-based.

As Cleaver (2005) argues, the poor face many obstacles in joining decision-making institutions like a water management committee. The poor struggle to spend their time outside of income-generating activities, because of their economic precariousness; they aren't part of

powerful social networks; even when they do participate, due to lack of education or leadership experience, their views aren't valued as highly. Moreover, a simple democratic vote to elect members to committees often results in traditional power holders and leaders being elected (Classen et al. 2008).

However, Classen et al (2008) find that when NGOs are intentional about promoting inclusiveness, building the most marginalized people's capacity in leadership and organizational skills, and facilitating their participation, there is less elite capture or reliance on elites for decision-making. Additionally, NGOs could offer a stipend for people who can't afford to take time off of work in order to participate. I could find no evidence that it was done as part of the MAR project.

### 5.1.5 Learning

That UNICEF commissioned the study from Blanche (2014) and also that they were interested in VU's findings shows that they were interested in learning. However, in the scale up to the 75 sites most of Blanche's recommendations seemed to be ignored. This seems to suggest the project leaders have a surface interest in learning, or an interest in appearing to be interested in learning, but are not committed to actually shifting their project design accordingly to improve outcomes.

In site 39, the community mobilizer reported that once the MAR management is handed over to the community, contributions will be collected from the users according to their capability and if any repair is needed they will collectively bear the costs.[75] When asked about how that would happen, he said neither he nor the management committee had any experience

[75] Aminur Rohman interviewed by Md. Newazul Maula 26 Feb 2015. Site 39 Report.

with collecting contributions, so he did not have an answer to how it should be organized. This is consistent with what (Hasan et al. 2020, 11) found researching the same MAR sites as our team, which is that the NGOs in many cases were not well informed of MAR policies and did not have much experience implementing community managed resources or much familiarity with the strategies required to ensure their success. This led the NGOs to suggest ad hoc institutional designs for MAR governance, with much variation between sites.

There exists over three decades of research on common pool resources and the institutional governance needed to support their success (Agrawal 2001; Baland and Platteau 1996; Barnes and Van Laerhoven 2015; Cundill and Fabricius 2009; Dayton-Johnson 2000; Ghate and Nagendra 2005; Gomes et al. 2018; Islam, Akber, and Islam 2019; Lobo, Velez, and Puerto 2016; Ostrom 1990; Pomeroy, Katon, and Harkes 2001; Poteete and Ostrom 2004; Rydin and Pennington 2000). Best practices in according to this literature include both practical, day-to-day management design elements such as regular management meetings, clear rules about who can access the resource, and low-cost enforcement mechanisms to uphold those rules, as well as higher-level, foundational design elements such as training and education for all users about how the resource works and a general willingness and ability to pay to maintain it. However, Hasan et al. (2020) found that the MAR NGOs had not incorporated many of the key strategies from that research, particularly the nitty-gritty of the day-to-day management. Instead, the NGOs typically focused on the higher-level factors - namely awareness raising and training - because they had experience with these strategies from other types of development projects, and because they were reluctant to "issues related to conflict and sanctioning" because these were "seen as potentially stirring up tensions regarding local politics, socio-economic relations, or cultural–religious identities" (Hasan et al. 2020, 8). These are exactly the dynamics that a rights-

based approach would be attuned to and concerned with influencing. That the NGOs were purposefully avoiding the more political aspects of the project signals that they were using a basic needs approach.

Even a basic needs approach should be concerned with designing a project that would succeed on its own terms – applying the learning from scholarship and research on what makes a community managed resource successful – whether or not you believe that this model is rights-enhancing. The problem is that most of the philosophers and scholars who advocate for a basic needs approach do not theorize beyond the simple act of redistribution of wealth. The thinkers behind the basic need approach do not take up the question of *how* funds are redistributed, and this leads to less thorough and less rights-enhancing project designs.

Learning, like capacity building, is deeply tied to accountability. Though international donors and institutions don't face democratic accountability for their lack of quality improvement or poor project outcomes, there is still a possibility for them to hold themselves accountable, for other actors in the international system to hold them accountable, and for people to hold them accountable (Clarke 2001). Accountability for learning would look like taking responsibility for failures, grappling with what went wrong, thinking about what needs to shift in the future, and then incorporating changes to improve project outcomes and impact. It would not look like shifting blame to people with less decision-making power over the project implementation, or like minimizing project design failures.

However, what we observed during our meeting with the project leads in April 2016 was a lot of shifting responsibility onto actors with less decision-making power and fewer resources. For example, when the MARs were constructed poorly by the private construction firms, instead of taking responsibility for this, Dr. Matin and Saifur Rahman of DPHE said the contractors

should have known the costs, rather than admitting that perhaps the budget or information shared about the costs of the project had been inadequate.[76] UNICEF assessed the project's main problem as a lack of ownership by the communities, blaming them for not stepping up. They also blamed the community mobilizers for not instilling this sense of ownership properly in the community. Dr. Matin and Mr. Rahman admitted to engineering design failures, but none of the project leads suggested that there was anything about their overall project design that had contributed to these failures. This lack of learning from project failures signals that they were not rooted in a rights-based approach.

### 5.2 Accountability and Democracy

The basic needs approach utilized by the MAR project leads is a strategy that extends resources to people in an apolitical way. The approach advances the idea that more people should have access to drinking water, yet it is indifferent to whether people's capacity to demand drinking water in the future is built in the process. It does not necessitate attention to whether the process of implementing a project exacerbates inequalities. Similarly, it doesn't matter if people understand access to clean drinking water as a human right. The political conditions are irrelevant; basic needs (as the approach conceptualizes them) can be met under any form of government. The approach doesn't suggest that power shifts are necessary for development to take place. In fact, the approach generally avoids any discussion of political change[77] and may even rely on a strong authoritarian government to push technocratic solutions (Easterly 2010).

---

[76] Dr. Kazi Matin Uddin Ahmed and Saifur Rahman. Meeting transcript. Dhaka. 26 Apr 2016.

[77] According to Sen (2000, 22), the creator of the Human Development Index considered the inclusion of political freedoms as part of the index, but decided against it. What we are left with are apolitical measures of wellbeing: education, life expectancy, and income. Likewise, the Millennium Development Goals do not include any indicators of democratic accountability or political freedom.

This may help some people, but it's not a sustainable way to ensure people have access to the human right to water. As the principle of indivisibility states, one human right cannot be enjoyed without the others and there is no hierarchy of rights. Without political and civil rights, economic and social rights are not secure, and vice versa. If a project sacrifices political rights for the sake of the right to water, it is not a rights-based approach, and it is not an approach that secures people's access to drinking water. If communities don't get their needs met – if the government doesn't provide adequate access to resources or if the NGOs, international institutions, or donor governments don't provide enough aid or ensure that the projects are successful – there are no accountability mechanisms built into a basic needs approach. It's an approach rooted in charity or benevolence – meeting the need is at the whim of the donor, not a responsibility or a duty. This is why building people's capacity for advocacy is such a key aspect of the rights-based approach. The goal is a more democratic society where people's human rights are most protected sustainably in the long term, with democratic accountability being a key mechanism (Davenport 1999; De Mesquita et al. 2005; Goodhart 2005; Poe and Tate 1994; Poe, Tate, and Keith 1999). A basic needs approach won't get you any closer to democratic accountability, but the rights-based approach will because it builds people's capacity for the kind of civic engagement that drives accountability.[78] Activism, advocacy, and community organizing as part of social movements can push governments in the long term to become more accountable and are in fact the key factor driving progressive policy change (Htun and Weldon 2012). The charity of the basic needs approach, by contrast, is a short-term, band-aid fix, and often, as in the case of the MAR, not even that.

[78] For a comprehensive list of civic engagement possibilities, see Sharp (1973).

### 5.3 Refining the Rubric

Ackerly's (2012) rubric was developed by and with grassroots women's rights activists; however, in my project investigating the MAR, it is applied to a development intervention with simply rights-related services that did not emerge from activist demands. Ultimately this case study was a test of whether a rubric developed with activists fighting for transformational political change can apply to the simple delivery of a public good. The answer, I find is yes, but that it would look very different from the way that this project was implemented. To adapt Ackerly's rubric to include project-based work, it would benefit from some further clarification and elaboration, particularly around decision-making and accountability. Rather than create new categories for decision-making and accountability, I think it better to simply add more detail to Ackerly's existing rubric.

Ackerly's rubric includes meaningful participation and leadership as a part of capacity building. Capacity building includes actions to build individuals confidence and ability to "speak with their own voice and on their own behalf" (Ackerly 2012, 138). Filmer-Wilson (2005, 219) adds specificity to what participation looks like for a development project, particularly with regards to decision-making. "As opposed to the traditional 'needs-driven' approach to development, whereby the needs of the poor and marginalized were identified by organizations and attempts made to fulfill those needs, the RBA requires that poor and marginalized groups participate in identifying their own development objectives. They must then be actively involved in designing and implementing projects to meet those needs." She adds that additional training should be provided to develop the necessary skills for these tasks. Of course, simply checking a box by conducting a training is not enough; there must be follow-through to ensure that the capacities have actually been built. Similarly, (V. Miller, VeneKlasen, and Clark 2005, 32)

emphasize how decision-making is key to participation; it cannot be a perfunctory or instrumental aspect of the development process. "[P]articipation is often framed narrowly as a methodology to improve project performance, rather than a process of fostering critical consciousness and decision-making as the basis for active citizenship. Rarely is participation implemented as a mutual decision-making process where different actors share power and set agendas jointly." Local or community-level participation is not adequate, but rather *within* the community the most marginalized and vulnerable must be included and centered in this decision-making, otherwise the process is vulnerable to elite takeover, who may claim to speak for the whole community, and intracommunity inequalities and oppressions will persist and be reinforced.

Ackerly's rubric includes accountability as a part of learning. Ackerly's conceptualization of learning includes both 1) an assessment of strengths and weaknesses of the organization and its programming including internal and/or external evaluation processes, as well as 2) a connection between these lessons learned and, accordingly, a future shift in actions or strategies based on this learning. This is an excellent start, but is not adequate to fully capture who the organizations should be accountable to. Additionally, though external evaluation is an option, public transparency is not required as learning is currently understood in Ackerly's rubric. Filmer-Wilson (2005, 222) provides some additional clarity on this. "Development organizations themselves must also ensure that their programmes are locally accountable. Transparency at all stages of the development process is an essential part of this." Accountability must be from below to the communities and most marginalized, rather than accountability above to funders, governments, or international institutions (Kindornay, Ron, and Carpenter 2012). As Nyamu-Musembi and Cornwall (2004, 47) explain, "…however it is operationalised, a rights-

based approach would mean little if it has no potential to achieve a positive transformation of power relations among the various development actors. Thus, however any agency articulates its vision for a rights-based approach, it must be interrogated for the extent to which it enables those whose lives are affected the most to articulate their priorities and claim genuine accountability from development agencies, and also the extent to which the agencies become critically self-aware and address inherent power inequalities in their interaction with those people." A fuller understanding of learning should explicitly include accountability to the communities and people the programming serves, which would look like transparent processes whereby poor people have a way to demand and receive changes or improvements in how programs are run to be more democratic and better suited to the needs of the community rather than the goals of the funder.

**5.4 Conclusion**

UNICEF is one of a handful of international institutions that has officially adopted the rights-based approach to its programming (Frankovits 2006). The objective of this project was not to catch UNICEF in a "gotcha!" moment, but unfortunately it does seem that in this case, UNICEF was not applying the rights-based approach despite their stated commitment to it. From start to finish, the MAR project lacked meaningful community-level decision-making and where it did exist, it was mostly elites participating. There was very little in the project design that built individual or communities' capacity for transformational change, and there was no accountability from the project stakeholders to the communities when problems arose. It is at the very least irresponsible to implement projects in communities with hierarchies based on clan, political party affiliation, religion, gender, and socioeconomic class and have no concern or plan in place for how the project could exacerbate these dynamics. UNICEF continues to claim that the MAR

is “an ideal solution for creating sustainable access to safe water in coastal communities affected by climate change” (United Nations Children’s Fund UNICEF 2018); however, the data I have collected as part of this project suggests otherwise.

## 6 Conclusion

The question driving this dissertation is whether there is a way to know what kind of development approach is being utilized by observing how the project is implemented at the community level. I have applied the rubric of the five elements of the RBA offered by Ackerly (2012) to the MAR drinking water project in Bangladesh to see if I could observe whether these elements were being utilized. The ethnographic data proved to be rich and provided many insights into the stakeholders' approach. The rubric and the ethnographic method provided data that was more than sufficient for what I set out to discern.

I also sought to answer what kind of approach this particular MAR project was utilizing based on observations about how the intervention was designed and carried out. I argue that, given the findings, the MAR project design and implementation is a case of a basic needs approach in practice. There were some instances where it seemed that the project stakeholders had included some elements of the rights-based approach - for example, some NGOs had considered how to disrupt power hierarchies by selecting the most marginalized in a community to be beneficiaries of the MAR water. There were also cases where the NGOs were observed addressing norms that would affect the project - for example engaging with some religious views that would impact views of the MAR providing clean water. However, these actions were ad hoc; beyond the requirement to include one woman on the MAR management committee, there was not much guidance provided as part of the project design regarding processes or practices that could or should be in place to address issues of exclusion, gender norms, water norms, elite capture, or unequal decision-making.

Scholars and practitioners of the rights-based approach have worked to define what it looks like in theory. Ackerly (2012) and Filmer-Wilson (2005) in particular, have helped us

understand what it looks like in practice. In this dissertation, I contribute to this effort by demonstrating the usefulness of Ackerly's rubric. I also demonstrate the value of qualitative research to uncover what approach is being used, as well as the community conditions that need attention from project designers using or aspiring to use a rights-based approach.

Social and political challenges are not mysterious or unknowable; indeed, even newly trained ethnographers are able to observe complex relationships and dynamics in the field. I hope that this sharpens the debate around the effectiveness of the rights-based approach by creating more specificity around what it looks like in practice, and how to collect data and measure whether it is being used, so that we can more easily differentiate between a rights-based rhetoric and rights-based practices that go along with it.

### 6.1 Limitations and Future Research

A key limitation of this project is that it cannot tell us whether the MAR would have been functioning and constructed properly if a rights-based approach had been used. If you measure success by the number of MARs built or number of MARs functioning after one year, it is impossible to predict this particular outcome using the RBA versus using another approach. This is because the approaches are starting from entirely different premises. Using an RBA, the project designers might have considered a different drinking water solution that was not exclusionary like the MAR. Or, it may be that the community, being brought into the decision-making process about what they need and what projects to carry out in their communities, would be interested in prioritizing something else entirely; perhaps not even a drinking water project at all. In this sense, it's hard to do a side-by-side comparison of the RBA versus basic needs for a single project's outcomes. Projects from these two approaches would be managed differently

from start to finish, including the conception of the project itself and what issue or issues to prioritize, what actors are involved, etc. It's not a matter of tweaking a few project design elements; the RBA re-envisions the entire goal and purpose of development.

What we can measure, however, are the processes that a project uses. Do the project leads uplift the voices of the most marginal and vulnerable in decision-making? Do they allow communities to shape their own development priorities? Do they consider and thoughtfully address power inequalities and hierarchies - based on religion, socio economic class, political parties, etc. – and have practices and processes in place to transform these? The RBA's measures of success are based on whether processes were in place and were carried out with intention and thoughtfulness. We could imagine other measures of success that might include the impact of these processes: e.g., self-reported increased skill or confidence level for the poor who are called upon for decision-making, increased capacity for advocacy, or deeper connections with activists or movements making similar demands for human rights.

This case study didn't provide an opportunity to observe the RBA in practice; future research might take up the question of what the RBA looks like in practice. It would be interesting to observe how communities responded to truly transformational projects. Would there be push back from elites? What would it look like? How do project stakeholders respond? There is also the question of donor support for the RBA. In this case, the Dutch trusted UNICEF to implement the project, but what would it look like for a funder to require the RBA, and then hold the project stakeholders accountable to using that approach?

## Works Cited


Ackerly, Brooke. 2008. *Universal Human Rights in a World of Difference*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

———. 2011. “Human Rights Enjoyment in Theory and Activism.” *Human Rights Review* 12(2): 221–39.

———. 2012. “Breakthrough Evaluation: An External Rights-Based Evaluation of Grantmaking for Gender Equality.” http://globalfw.nonprofitsoapbox.com/storage/documents/impact/ackerly_breakthrough_evaluation_research_2012.pdf (April 28, 2023).

Ackerly, Brooke, Mujibul Anam, Anna Carella, and Bishawjit Mallick. 2017. “Managed Aquifer Recharge: Complexities of Governance and Accountability in a Community-Based Water Project.”

Afxentiou, Panayiotis C. 1990. “Basic Needs: A Survey of the Literature.” *Canadian Journal of Development Studies / Revue canadienne d’études du développement* 11(2): 241–57.

Agrawal, Arun. 2001. “Common Property Institutions and Sustainable Governance of Resources.” *World Development* 29(10): 1649–72.

Ali, Anwar. 1999. “Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation Assessment in Bangladesh.” *Climate Research* 12: 109–16.

Alkire, Sabina. 2005. “Why the Capability Approach?” *Journal of Human Development* 6(1): 115–35.

Anam, Mujibul. 2016. *DPHE’s Perspective on the MAR*. . Report Prepared for the ISEE Vanderbilt Team.

Anderson, Andrea A. 2005. *The Community Builder’s Approach to Theory of Change. A Practical Guide to Theory Development*. New York: The Aspen Institute. https://www.theoryofchange.org/pdf/TOC_fac_guide.pdf (April 28, 2023).

Anderson, Elizabeth S. 1999. “What Is the Point of Equality?” *Ethics* 109(2): 287–337.

Arendt, Hannah. 1987. “Collective Responsibility.” In *Amor Mundi: Explorations in the Faith and Thought of Hannah Arendt*, Martinus Nijhoff Philosophy Library, ed. James William Bernauer, S. J. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 43–50.

Bakker, Karen. 2007. “The ‘Commons’ Versus the ‘Commodity’: Alter-Globalization, Anti-Privatization and the Human Right to Water in the Global South.” *Antipode* 39(3): 430–55.

Baland, Jean-Marie, and Jean-Philippe Platteau. 1996. *Halting Degradation of Natural Resources: Is There a Role for Rural Communities?* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Barnes, Clare, and Frank Van Laerhoven. 2015. "Making It Last? Analysing the Role of NGO Interventions in the Development of Institutions for Durable Collective Action in Indian Community Forestry." *Environmental Science & Policy* 53: 192–205.

Batiwala, Srilatha. 2013. *Engaging with Empowerment*. New Delhi: Women Unlimited.

Blackburn, James, Mary Ann Brocklesby, Sheena Crawford, and Jeremy Holland. 2005. "Operationalising the Rights Agenda: Participatory Rights Assessment in Peru and Malawi." *IDS Bulletin* 36(1): 91–99.

Blanchet, Thérèse. 2014. "Up-Scaling MAR for Providing Community Water Supplies in Saline Areas."

Brady, Henry E., and David Collier, eds. 2010. *Rethinking Social Inquiry*. 2nd ed. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2018. "Logic Models: CDC Approach to Evaluation." https://www.cdc.gov/evaluation/logicmodels/index.htm#print (April 28, 2023).

Childs, Sarah, and Mona Lena Krook. 2009. "Analysing Women's Substantive Representation: From Critical Mass to Critical Actors." *Government and Opposition* 44(2): 125–45.

Clark, Cindy, Molly Reilly, and Joanna Wheeler. 2005. "Living Rights: Reflections from Women's Movements about Gender and Rights in Practice." *IDS Bulletin* 36(1): 76–81.

Clarke, Tom. 2001. "Bangladeshis to Sue over Arsenic Poisoning." *Nature* 413: 556.

Classen, Lauren et al. 2008. "Opening Participatory Spaces for the Most Marginal: Learning from Collective Action in the Honduran Hillsides." *World Development* 36(11): 2402–20.

Cleaver, Frances. 2005. "The Inequality of Social Capital and the Reproduction of Chronic Poverty." *World Development* 33(6): 893–906.

Collier, Paul. 2007. *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries Are Failing and What Can Be Done About It*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Cornwall, Andrea. 2007. "Buzzwords and Fuzzwords: Deconstructing Development Discourse." *Development in Practice* 17(4–5): 471–84.

Cornwall, Andrea, and Celestine Nyamu-Musembi. 2005. "Why Rights, Why Now? Reflections on the Rise of Rights in International Development Discourse." *IDS Bulletin* 36(1): 9–18.

Cundill, Georgina, and Christo Fabricius. 2009. "Monitoring in Adaptive Co-Management: Toward a Learning Based Approach." *Journal of Environmental Management* 90(11): 3205–11.

Dasgupta, Aniruddha, and Victoria A. Beard. 2007. "Community Driven Development, Collective Action and Elite Capture in Indonesia." *Development and Change* 38(2): 229–49.

Davenport, Christian. 1999. "Human Rights and the Democratic Proposition." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 43(1): 92–116.

Dayton-Johnson, Jeff. 2000. "Determinants of Collective Action on the Local Commons: A Model with Evidence from Mexico." *Journal of Development Economics* 62(1): 181–208.

De Guzman, Kimberly et al. 2023. "Drinking Water and the Implications for Gender Equity and Empowerment: A Systematic Review of Qualitative and Quantitative Evidence." *International Journal of Hygiene and Environmental Health* 247: 114044.

De Mesquita, Bruce Bueno, Feryal Marie Cherif, George W. Downs, and Alastair Smith. 2005. "Thinking Inside the Box: A Closer Look at Democracy and Human Rights." *International Studies Quarterly* 49(3): 439–58.

Destrooper, Tine. 2016. "Linking Discourse and Practice: The Human Rights-Based Approach to Development in the Village Assaini Program in the Kongo Central." *Human Rights Quarterly* 38(3): 787–813.

Easterly, William. 2001. *The Elusive Quest for Growth: Economists' Adventures and Misadventures in the Tropics*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

———. 2010. "Democratic Accountability in Development: The Double Standard." *Social Research* 77(4): 1075–1104.

Eckersley, Robyn. 2015. "The Common but Differentiated Responsibilities of States to Assist and Receive 'Climate Refugees.'" *European Journal of Political Theory* 14(4): 481–500.

Eyben, Rosalind. 2003. *The Rise of Rights: Rights-Based Approaches to International Development*. Brighton: Institute for Development Studies.

Ferguson, James. 1990. *The Anti-Politics Machine: 'Development,' Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho. : .* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Filmer-Wilson, Emilie. 2005. "The Human Rights-Based Approach to Development: The Right to Water." *Netherlands Quarterly of Human Rights* 23(2): 213–41.

Frankovits, André. 2006. *The Human Rights Based Approach and the United Nations System*. Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000146999 (April 28, 2023).

Fritzen, Scott A. 2007. "Can the Design of Community-Driven Development Reduce the Risk of Elite Capture? Evidence from Indonesia." *World Development* 35(8): 1359–75.

Gates, Bill. 2013. "My Plan to Fix The World's Biggest Problems." *The Wall Street Journal*. http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887323539804578261780648285770.html (April 28, 2023).

Gates Foundation. 2022. "Annual Report." https://www.gatesfoundation.org/about/financials/annual-reports/annual-report-2022 (April 28, 2023).

Gauri, Varun, and Siri Gloppen. 2012. "Human Rights-Based Approaches to Development: Concepts, Evidence, and Policy." *Polity* 44(4): 485–503.

Gerhardt, Von Kurt. 2010. "Time for a Rethink: Why Development Aid for Africa Has Failed." http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/time-for-a-rethink-why-development-aid-for-africa-has-failed-a-712068.html.

Ghate, Rucha, and Harini Nagendra. 2005. "Role of Monitoring in Institutional Performance: Forest Management in Maharashtra, India." *Conservation & Society* 3(2): 509–32.

Gomes, Sharlene et al. 2018. "Capacity Building for Water Management in Peri-Urban Communities, Bangladesh: A Simulation-Gaming Approach." *Water* 10(11): 1704.

Goodhart, Michael. 2005. *Democracy as Human Rights: Freedom and Equality in the Age of Globalization*. New York: Routledge.

Government of the Netherlands. 2023a. "Netherlands Expertise." https://www.government.nl/topics/water-management/waterenvoy/netherlands-expertise (April 28, 2023).

———. 2023b. "What Does the Netherlands Do to Strengthen Human Rights Worldwide?" https://www.government.nl/topics/human-rights (April 28, 2023).

Hamm, Brigitte I. 2001. "A Human Rights Approach to Development." *Human Rights Quarterly* 23(4): 1005–31.

Harris-Curtis, Emma, Oscar Marleyn, and Oliver Bakewell. 2005. "The Implications for Northern NGOs of Adopting Rights-Based Approaches." https://www.intrac.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/OPS-41-Implications-for-Northern-NGOs-of-Adopting-Rights-Based-Approaches.pdf (April 28, 2023).

Harvey, Peter A., and Robert A. Reed. 2007. "Community-Managed Water Supplies in Africa: Sustainable or Dispensable?" *Community Development Journal* 42(3): 365–78.

Hasan, Muhammad Badrul, Peter P. J. Driessen, Shantanu Majumder, et al. 2020. "A Community Management Plus Model for the Governance of Rural Drinking Water Systems: A Comparative Case Study of Pond Sand Filter Systems in Bangladesh." *International Journal of the Commons* 14(1): 662–79.

Hasan, Muhammad Badrul, Peter Driessen, Annelies Zoomers, and Frank Van Laerhoven. 2020. "How Can NGOs Support Collective Action among the Users of Rural Drinking Water Systems? A Case Study of Managed Aquifer Recharge (MAR) Systems in Bangladesh." *World Development* 126: 104710.

Herrera, Rémy. 2006. "The Neoliberal 'Rebirth' of Development Economics." *Monthly Review* 58(1). https://monthlyreview.org/2006/05/01/the-neoliberal-rebirth-of-development-economics (April 28, 2023).

Hickel, Jason, Dylan Sullivan, and Huzaifa Zoomkawala. 2021. "Plunder in the Post-Colonial Era: Quantifying Drain from the Global South Through Unequal Exchange, 1960–2018." *New Political Economy* 26(6): 1030–47.

Hicken, Allen. 2011. "Clientelism." *Annual Review of Political Science* 14(1): 289–310.

Hopkin, Michael. 2004. "Geologists Cleared in Bangladeshi Poisoning Case." *Nature*.

Hossain, Md. R., Md. S. Khan, Md. A. Islam, and M. Hasan. 2022. "Pond Sand Filter as an Alternative System for Purifying Drinking Water: Climate Change Perspective in Mongla, Bangladesh." *International Journal of Energy and Water Resources* 6(2): 243–52.

Hossain, Mohammed et al. 2015. "Sustainability of Arsenic Mitigation Interventions - an Evaluation of Different Alternative Safe Drinking Water Options Provided in Matlab, an Arsenic Hot Spot in Bangladesh." *Frontiers in Environmental Science* 3. http://www.frontiersin.org/Groundwater_Resources_and_Management/10.3389/fenvs.2015.00030/abstract (April 28, 2023).

Htun, Mala, and S. Laurel Weldon. 2012. "The Civic Origins of Progressive Policy Change: Combating Violence against Women in Global Perspective, 1975–2005." *American Political Science Review* 106(3): 548–69.

Hughes, Alexandra, Joanna Wheeler, and Rosalind Eyben. 2005. "Rights and Power: The Challenge for International Development Agencies." *IDS Bulletin* 36(1): 63–72.

Human Rights Watch. 2016. *Nepotism and Neglect: The Failing Response to Arsenic in the Drinking Water of Bangladesh's Rural Poor*. https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/04/06/nepotism-and-neglect/failing-response-arsenic-drinking-water-bangladeshs-rural.

Hutchings, Paul et al. 2015. "A Systematic Review of Success Factors in the Community Management of Rural Water Supplies over the Past 30 Years." *Water Policy* 17(5): 963–83.

Islam, Maliva, Md. Ali Akber, and Md. Atikul Islam. 2019. "Willingness to Pay for Improved Drinking Water in Southwest Coastal Bangladesh." *Water Supply* 19(1): 1–10.

Kakwani, Nanak, and Ernesto M. Pernia. 2000. "What Is Pro-Poor Growth?" *Asian Development Review* 18(1–16).

Kindornay, Shannon, James Ron, and Charli Carpenter. 2012. "Rights-Based Approaches to Development: Implications for NGOs." *Human Rights Quarterly* 34(2): 472–506.

Knippers Black, Jan. 1999. *Development In Theory And Practice: Paradigms And Paradoxes*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Lincoln, Sheikh Sirajuddoula. 2016. "Death of a Housewife in Koyra Based on Issue of Taking Drinking Water, 3 Were Held." *Khulna News*. http://www.khulnanews.com/district-news/koyra/77094-koyra.html (April 28, 2016).

Lobo, Iván D., Maria Velez, and Sergio Puerto. 2016. "Leadership, Entrepreneurship and Collective Action: A Case Study from the Colombian Pacific Region." *International Journal of the Commons* 10(2): 982.

Mahmuduzzaman, Md., Zahir Uddin Ahmed, A K M Nuruzzaman, and Fazle Rabbi Sadeque Ahmed. 2014. "Causes of Salinity Intrusion in Coastal Belt of Bangladesh." *International Journal of Plant Research* 4(4A): 8–13.

Mansuri, Ghazala, and Vijayendra Rao. 2013. *Localizing Development: Does Participation Work?* Washington DC: The World Bank. A World Bank Policy Research Report. https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/dbf44593-5927-5acc-b1a2-3e1870600713/content.

Matin, Md. Abdul, Sudipta Chakraborty, Md. Al Amin, and Avishek Ghosh. 2016. "An Assessment of Shrimp Aquaculture in Selected Coastal Areas of Bangladesh." *The Journal of NOAMI* 33(1): 103–16.

Miller, Hannah. 2010. "From 'Rights-Based' to 'Rights-Framed' Approaches: A Social Constructionist View of Human Rights Practice." *The International Journal of Human Rights* 14(6): 915–31.

Miller, Valerie, Lisa VeneKlasen, and Cindy Clark. 2005. "Rights-Based Development: Linking Rights and Participation - Challenges in Thinking and Action." *IDS Bulletin* 36(1): 31–40.

Moyo, Dambisa. 2009. *Dead Aid*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Musyoki, Samuel, and Celestine Nyamu-Musembi. 2005. "Defining Rights from the Roots: Insights from Council Tenants' Struggles in Mombasa, Kenya." *IDS Bulletin* 36(1): 100–109.

Nadiruzzaman, Md., and David Wrathall. 2015. "Participatory Exclusion – Cyclone Sidr and Its Aftermath." *Geoforum* 64: 196–204.

Nederveen Pieterse, Jan. 2001. *Development Theory: Deconstructions/Reconstructions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Nelson, Paul J., and Ellen Dorsey. 2018. "Who Practices Rights-Based Development? A Progress Report on Work at the Nexus of Human Rights and Development." *World Development* 104: 97–107.

Nussbaum, Martha C. 2004. "Beyond the Social Contract: Capabilities and Global Justice. an Olaf Palme Lecture, Delivered in Oxford on 19 June 2003." *Oxford Development Studies* 32(1): 3–18.

———. 2011. *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Nyamu-Musembi, Celestine. 2005. "An Actor-Oriented Approach to Rights in Development." *IDS Bulletin* 36(1): 41–51.

Nyamu-Musembi, Celestine, and Andrea Cornwall. 2004. *What Is the "Rights-Based Approach" All About? Perspectives from International Development Agencies*. Brighton: Institute for Development Studies.

Offenheiser, Raymond C., and Susan H. Holcombe. 2003. "Challenges and Opportunities in Implementing a Rights-Based Approach to Development: An Oxfam America Perspective." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 32(2): 268–306.

Oosterlaken, Ilse. 2012. "Is Pogge a Capability Theorist in Disguise? A Critical Examination of Thomas Pogge's Defence of Rawlsian Resourcism." *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 16(1): 205–15.

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. 2014. "Aid to Developing Countries Rebounds in 2013 to Reach an All-Time High." https://www.oecd.org/newsroom/aid-to-developing-countries-rebounds-in-2013-to-reach-an-all-time-high.htm.

———. 2023. "Aid at a Glance Charts." https://www.oecd.org/development/aid-at-a-glance.htm (April 28, 2023).

Ostrom, Eleanor. 1990. *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*. New York.

Oude Essink, Gualbert H. P., E. S. Van Baaren, and P. G. B. De Louw. 2010. "Effects of Climate Change on Coastal Groundwater Systems: A Modeling Study in the Netherlands." *Water Resources Research* 46(10): 2009WR008719.

Pateman, Carole. 2004. "Democratizing Citizenship: Some Advantages of a Basic Income." *Politics & Society* 32(1): 89–105.

Peet, Richard, and Elaine Hartwick. 2009. *Theories of Development: Contentions, Arguments, Alternatives*. 2nd ed. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Pérez, Leda M., and Jacqueline Martinez. 2008. "Community Health Workers: Social Justice and Policy Advocates for Community Health and Well-Being." *American Journal of Public Health* 98(1): 11–14.

Petras, James, and Henry Veltmeyer. 2002. "Age of Reverse Aid: Neo-Liberalism as Catalyst of Regression." *Development and Change* 33(2): 281–93.

Piron, Laure-Hélène. 2005. "Rights-Based Approaches and Bilateral Aid Agencies: More Than a Metaphor?" *IDS Bulletin* 36(1): 19–30.

Platteau, Jean-Philippe, and Anita Abraham. 2002. "Participatory Development in the Presence of Endogenous Community Imperfections." *Journal of Development Studies* 39(2): 104–36.

Poe, Steven C., and C. Neal Tate. 1994. "Repression of Human Rights to Personal Integrity in the 1980s: A Global Analysis." *American Political Science Review* 88(4): 853–72.

Poe, Steven C., C. Neal Tate, and Linda Camp Keith. 1999. "Repression of the Human Right to Personal Integrity Revisited: A Global Cross-National Study Covering the Years 1976-1993." *International Studies Quarterly* 43(2): 291–313.

Pogge, Thomas W. 2002. *World Poverty and Human Rights: Cosmopolitan Responsibilities and Reforms*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Pomeroy, Robert S., Brenda M Katon, and Ingvild Harkes. 2001. "Conditions Affecting the Success of Fisheries Co-Management: Lessons from Asia." *Marine Policy* 25(3): 197–208.

Poteete, Amy R., and Elinor Ostrom. 2004. "Heterogeneity, Group Size and Collective Action: The Role of Institutions in Forest Management." *Development and Change* 35(3): 435–61.

Pretty, Jules N. 1995. "Participatory Learning for Sustainable Agriculture." *World Development* 23(8): 1247–63.

Quandt, Amy. 2022. "The Role of Qualitative Social Science. Discussion of 'Guiding Principles for Hydrologists Conducting Interdisciplinary Research and Fieldwork with Participants.'" *Hydrological Sciences Journal* 67(7): 1141–44.

Ravallion, Martin. 2004. *Pro-Poor Growth: A Primer*. The World Bank. http://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/book/10.1596/1813-9450-3242 (July 6, 2023).

Rawls, John. 1971. *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

———. 1999. *The Law of Peoples*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

———. 2003. *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Roberts, James M. 2014. "Foreign Aid: Breaking the Cycle of Dependency." http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2014/02/02/foreign_aid_breaking_the_cycle_of_dependency_121437-comments.html.

Robinson, Andrew, and Simon Tormey. 2009. "Resisting 'Global Justice': Disrupting the Colonial 'Emancipatory' Logic of the West." *Third World Quarterly* 30(8): 1395–1409.

Rydin, Yvonne, and Mark Pennington. 2000. "Public Participation and Local Environmental Planning: The Collective Action Problem and the Potential of Social Capital." *Local Environment* 5(2): 153–69.

Samater, Ibrahim M. 1984. "From 'Growth' to 'Basic Needs': The Evolution of Development Theory." *Monthly Review* 36(5): 1.

Sen, Amartya. 1999. *Development as Freedom*. New York.

———. 2000. "A Decade of Human Development." *Journal of Human Development* 1(1): 17–23.

———. 2004. "Elements of a Theory of Human Rights." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 32(4).

Sengupta, Arjun. 2001. "Right to Development as a Human Right." *Economic and Political Weekly* 36(27): 2527–36.

Shakur, Assata. 1987. *Assata: An Autobiography*. Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books.

Sharp. 1973. *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*. Boston: Porter Sargent.

Shiva, Vandana. 2002. *Water Wars: Privatization, Pollution and Profit*. London: Pluto Press.

Singer, Peter. 1972. "Famine, Affluence, and Morality." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1(3): 229–43.

———. 2015. "Forum: The Logic of Effective Altruism." https://bostonreview.net/forum/peter-singer-logic-effective-altruism.

Slim, Hugo. 2002. "Making Moral Low Ground: Rights as the Struggle for Justice and the Abolition of Development." *Praxis: The Fletcher Journal of Development Studies* 17: 128–33.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 1988. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg. Urbana-Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 271–313.

Stalker Prokopy, Linda. 2004. "Women's Participation in Rural Water Supply Projects in India: Is It Moving beyond Tokenism and Does It Matter?" *Water Policy* 6(2): 103–16.

Streeten, Paul. 1979. "From Growth to Basic Needs." *Finance & Development* 16(2): 28–31.

———. 1980. "Basic Needs in the Year 2000." *The Pakistan Development Review* 19(2): 129–41.

———. 1981. *Development Perspectives*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

———. 1984. "Basic Needs: Some Unsettled Questions." *World Development* 12(9): 973–78.

Tenhunen, Sirpa, Mohammad Jasim Uddin, and Dayabati Roy. 2023. "After Cyclone Aila: Politics of Climate Change in Sundarbans." *Contemporary South Asia* 31(2): 222–35.

The World Bank. 2022. "Fact Sheet: An Adjustment to Global Poverty Lines." https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/factsheet/2022/05/02/fact-sheet-an-adjustment-to-global-poverty-lines#:~:text=Once%20converted%20into%20a%20common,a%2Dday%20international%20poverty%20line (April 28, 2023).

Todaro, Michael P., and Stephen C. Smith. 2006. *Economic Development*. 9th ed. Essex: Pearson Education Limited.

Tolk, Lieselotte et al. 2014. *Underground Fresh Water Storage: A Practical Solution to Increase Water Security in Saline Deltas*. Gouda: United Nations Children's Fund UNICEF. http://docplayer.net/15375376-Underground-fresh-water-storage-a-practical-solution-to-increase-water-security-in-saline-deltas.html (April 28, 2023).

Tsikata, Dzodzi. 2004. "The Rights-Based Approach to Development: Potential for Change or More of the Same?" *IDS Bulletin* 35(4): 130–33.

United Kingdom Department of International Development. 2015. "2010 to 2015 Government Policy: Economic Growth in Developing Countries." https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2010-to-2015-government-policy-economic-growth-in-developing-countries/2010-to-2015-government-policy-economic-growth-in-developing-countries (April 28, 2023).

United Nations Children's Fund UNICEF. 2017. *Rural Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene in Difficult and Hard-to-Reach Areas of Bangladesh*. https://www.netherlandsandyou.nl/binaries/netherlandsandyou/documenten/publications/2017/04/27/bangladesh-unicef/Bangladesh_UNICEF.pdf.

———. 2018. *Managed Aquifer Recharge (MAR): Protecting Communities from Saline Intrusion of Groundwater in Costal Areas of Bangladesh*. New York: United Nations Children's Fund UNICEF. https://www.unicef.org/media/91391/file/Managed-Aquifer-Recharge-Protecting-Communities-from-Saline-Intrusion-of-Groundwater-in-Costal-Areas-of-Bangladesh.pdf.

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development UNCTAD. 2014. *Growth with Structural Transformation: A Post-2015 Development Agenda*. United Nations Conference on Trade

and Development UNCTAD. https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ldc2014_en.pdf (April 28, 2023).

United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. 2023. "About Water and Sanitation: OHCHR and the Right to Water and Sanitation." https://www.ohchr.org/en/water-and-sanitation/about-water-and-sanitation (April 28, 2023).

United States Agency for International Development USAID. 2014. *Strategic Plan FY 2014-2017*. Washington DC: United States Agency for International Development USAID. https://2012-2017.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/State%20USAID%20Joint%20Strategic%20Plan%202014-04-02.pdf (April 28, 2023).

Uvin, Peter. 2004. *Human Rights and Development*. West Hartford: Kumarian Press.

Van Parijs, Philippe. 2004. "Basic Income: A Simple and Powerful Idea for the Twenty-First Century." *Politics & Society* 32(1): 7–39.

Young, Iris Marion. 2006. "Responsibility and Global Justice: A Social Connection Model." *Social Philosophy and Policy* 23(1): 102–30.

———. 2011. *Responsibility for Justice*. New York: Oxford University Press.

## Appendix A: 2013 Semi Structured Interview Protocol

*Water*

- How many families use this water site?
- How long have you been drinking the water at this site?
- Before this water site came, what did you use for drinking water? Do you still use this?
- Are there any other water sites you use in this village in addition to this water site?
- Are there any other water sites that you no longer use? (this may have to be observation)

*Information*

- What information has been given to you about this project and by whom?
- How is information about the project given to the whole community? (NGO or committee)
- How much information do you have about:
- What is the condition of the water resource itself?
- What about other appropriators' cost of contributing and benefits derived from using the system?

*Planning*

- Do you contribute taka/month for a maintenance fund? How did you decide how much to contribute/collect?
- When did you start collecting this money?
- Does everybody who uses the water pay this? (whether people from other communities use the water, and do they pay)
- How many people are on the committee? How many of the committee members are women?
- Does the committee hold regular meetings? How often? What do you discuss?
- How many hours per month do committee members spend working on committee duties?
- Are there any rules governing how much water each family can use per day? If so, how do you monitor this? Who? Any punishments?
- What costs do you anticipate per month to pay after the NGO stops paying for maintenance? (Matin says 500 taka/month fuel, 1000 taka/month for technician, so we should test if they're aware of this)

*Politics*

- How did you decide on this placement? Were there any other possibilities for placement? If so, how did you decide on this specific location within the village?
- Who donated the land where the water site is located?
- Do the NGO representatives live in the village? (either the monitor or the administrator) Is the water site on their land?

**Appendix B: 2014 Household survey questions pertaining to my research**

**Working with NGOs**

As a community member here, what problems do you face regularly? In other words, what are the top 3 problems of this community for you? Their response should be ranked: *"What is the biggest problem? What is the next biggest problem? What is the third biggest problem?"*
1. Lack of income opportunities/jobs
2. Production of rice is low
3. Lack of roads/transport for resource mobilization
4. Lack of drinking/fresh water
5. Lack of health facilities/health care
6. Lack of education facilities/education opportunities
7. Lack of credit options (micro-loans, dadon, etc.)
8. Conflict (political/religious/economic/etc.)
9. Security
10. Other (specify) _______________

We know some NGOs are working on the problems you listed in your community. We identified a list of NGOs that work here. I'm going to list them. (list 5 NGOs gathered from community KII and write them below, make sure to include the MAR NGO partner <u>last)</u> What types of projects does (NGO name) do here?
1. Training/job skills
2. Employment/food for work
3. Health
4. Microfinance
5. Arts/entertainment
6. Sports
7. Emergency disaster/food aid
8. Infrastructure building/schools/cyclone shelters
9. Drinking water
10. Women's empowerment
11. Education
12. Adult literacy
13. Human rights/advocacy (labor rights, political rights, etc.)
14. Agriculture
15. Others (specify)_________________________

Of the NGOs we just listed together, which were you involved with personally?

Of these, which project were you involved with? (Use codes from question)

Did you face any problems working with them? Yes/No

Did anyone in your community face any kind of problems working with them? Yes/No

**Participation/Knowledge of MAR**

There is a new project starting in this community that will give you an opportunity to get fresh water. It is called the MAR and it is from DU. Have you heard about this project? (if "No," go to the next tab) Yes/No

How did you hear about this project?
1. Through the NGO partner
2. Through a community meeting
3. Through a community mobilizer (CM)
4. Through the UP chairman or ward commissioner (local govt)
5. From your neighbor
6. Other (specify)____________________

Did the MAR NGO organize a community meeting to explain their objectives? (If "No," skip to question 14.6) Yes/No

Did you participate in that meeting? Yes/No

Who were the participants at this meeting?
UP chairman
Ward commissioner
Representatives from other NGOs
School teachers/administrators
Rich/influential people in this community
Other community members but not you
Other (specify)_________

When the MAR is finished and the water is flowing, do you plan to use it as your primary drinking water source? Yes/No

If “No,” why?
1. It is too far
2. The location is not comfortable for you
3. Other reason (specify) ____________________

Do you know who in your community will be responsible for managing the MAR after the NGO monitor finishes his work here? Yes/No

If yes, how was this community manager or this community management group chosen?
1. By the NGO
2. By the local govt
3. By the community
4. Other (specify) _______________

## Appendix C: Work Plan and Site Visit Timeline

Sample fieldwork plan for a single site:

| Day | Activity |
|---|---|
| Day 1 | Entering into the site, Transect walk, identify the key issues and actors of the community, contact with CM, field note, reporting to Labib |
| Day 2 | Transect walk, observing community activities, informal interviews, selecting participants for key informant interviews, finalize a day with CM, field note, reporting to Labib |
| Day 3 | Informal interviews, Key informant interview, field note, Reporting to Labib |
| Day 4 | Transcribe and finalize the field note, sending field note to Labib |
| Day 5 | Staying the Day with CM, working with Modified Logic Model, interviewing CM and observing CM's activities and interaction, Field note, reporting Labib |
| Day 6 | Village focus group discussion, Field Note, reporting Labib |
| Day 7 | Transcribe and finalize the field note, sending field note to Labib |
| Day 8 | Interviewing NGO officials, field notes, reporting Labib |
| Day 9 | Interviewing DPHE officials, field notes, reporting Labib |
| Day 10 | Transcribe and finalize the field notes |
| Day 11 | Meeting with Labib in Khulna |
| Day 12 | Meeting with Labib and Anna in Khulna |
| Day 13 | Rest in Khulna apartment |
| Day 14 | Rest and establishing initial contact for the next field |

Field work 2015

| Month | | Week 1 | Week 2 | Week 3 | Week 4 | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| December 2014 | RA1 | -- | -- | -- | Dhaka | Training in Dhaka Dec 25-27 |
| | RA2 | -- | -- | -- | Dhaka | |
| January | RA1 | Field Test (Site 17) | Site 2 | Site 2 and Site 20 | Site 20 | LOCOS and MF<br>(12 DAYS PER SITE, 1 day break)<br>Labib in Khulna for Week 1<br>Skype meetings (Labib in Khulna):<br>- part of Field Test,<br>- calls in between,<br>- Skype after each site debrief in English with RAs |
| | RA2 | Field Test (Site 17) | Site 11 | Site 11 Site 25 | Site 25 | |
| February | RA1 | Site 20 | Site 34 | Site 34 | Site 39 | Shushilan and GMF (12-13 days, 2 days off)<br>Labib in Khulna for each skype meeting<br>Skype meetings (Labib in Khulna):<br>- part of Field Test,<br>- calls in between,<br>- Skype after each site |
| | RA2 | Site 25 | Site 35 | Site 35 | Site 63 | |
| March | RA1 | Site 39 | Site 27 | Site 27 | Site 75 | JSS and AOSED<br>VU spring break- Feb 28-March 8<br>Workshop 8-9, field trip 10th<br>Skype meetings (Labib in Khulna):<br>- part of Field Test,<br>- calls in between,<br>- Skype after each site |
| | RA2 | Site 63 | Site 56 | Site 56 | Site 58 | |
| April | RA1 | Site 75 | -- | -- | -- | Finish JSS and AOSED |
| | RA2 | Site 58 | -- | -- | -- | |

## Appendix D: Report rubric

For each section
1) describe the how the issue is expressed in this community
2) describe how the NGO addressed/dealt with/talked about the issue
*In each case, if the NGO didn't deal with it, please describe in detail and provide evidence to demonstrate that. If the NGO isn't engaging, that's also data.

### Introduction

Include information from the survey team's community surveys. Explain whether or not your data confirms it or whether you found contradicting data.

### 1. Inclusion/exclusion/discrimination (Intersectionality)

Here, I am primarily interested in how inclusion/exclusion/discrimination interacts with the MAR project. But think creatively about how different issues interact with the MAR – it may not always be obvious. Give a detailed example of how groups who have a lower social status (women, poor, young, religious minority, etc.) were either included or excluded from 1) important community events 2) the distribution of common the MAR resource or 3) decision-making about the MAR.

How did the NGO deal with existing exclusion/inclusion in the community? Were they aware of it? How did the NGO analyze the power dynamics in the community? If groups were excluded, did the NGO attempt to include them as MAR beneficiaries? Did the NGO create newly excluded groups by limiting the MAR beneficiaries? How did the NGO analyze the power dynamics in the community?

### 1.1 Hierarchy

The existence of hierarchy signals the likelihood of more exclusion and/or discrimination. Give a detailed example of either high or low hierarchy in the community (income equality or inequality, existence of a marginalized minority group, or not (religion, landless, etc.), gender equality or inequality, equality or inequality in decision-making, etc.).

How did the NGO interact with hierarchy? Did the actions the NGO took during MAR implementation seem to be an attempt to try to lower hierarchy in the community, i.e., create more equality? Or, did the NGO use hierarchy to their advantage? Did they ignore it?

### 1.2 History of collective action, working together

In theory, collective action would signal lower hierarchy and thus, less exclusion (unless certain people were excluded from the collective action – that happens, please note it). People working together as equals signals an ability to resist elite decision-making. Provide a detailed write up of people working together in the past on a common activity. Or, provide a detailed write up of a situation where they failed to work together on a common activity that could have benefited them collectively (e.g., working together to stop shrimp farming, dig a pond, manage a common pool resource, solve a problem, etc.)

How did the NGO work with the community collectively? Did they try to get the community to work collectively in some way? Did the NGO try to inspire collective management of the MAR? Or, did they seem satisfied if an elite managed the MAR individually?

**2.1 Cross-issue awareness part 1: community's description of their biggest problems**
Cross issue awareness means paying attention to and planning for 1) the ways in which the issues that are the NGO's focus (in this case, water) are also related to other needs/problems that the community has identified and/or 2) the challenge of existing beliefs or community strengths/weaknesses which might affect the "success" of the project (according to the NGO's definition of success). For #1 and #2, the NGO should have some kind of strategy to address those other problems as part of their implementation plan (how they address the challenges points to their approach – do they work *with* or *against* the community?). If the NGOs just talks about the problems, but doesn't take any action to alleviate them, then they aren't practicing cross-issue awareness, they just have a discourse that supports it.

Prior to going to the community, we will give you what the community reported was important based on SPSS data from the HHKII Survey. Your research should add to this data, to uncover what the community perceives as its biggest problems (i.e., unemployment, low agricultural production, bad roads/infrastructure, lack of healthcare access, lack of education access, etc.). Please include the original data about the biggest problem(s) and either confirm that your field work reveals that it is correct or explain what else you found to contradict it. If you can say anything about why you think we found the survey results that we did, that would also be helpful. In other words, in the cases where the survey results did not match your results, why do you think that happened? Note, it may be hard to get people to talk about anything other than water, since they will perceive us as affiliated with the MAR water project; you should use observation to confirm whether or not water appears to be their biggest problem.

Has the NGO tried to address the other needs/problems that the community identified, or does the NGO just talk about the community's need for water? If the NGO just talks about water, without an understanding of how it will impact other issues in the community, then they don't demonstrate cross issue awareness. Or, if the NGO tells you about how water impacts health or education, but the community hasn't identified health or education as problem areas, then the NGO has a discourse that puts those issues together, but it does not demonstrate cross issue awareness in practice.

Here I am looking specifically for problems that would impact the MAR or that have some overlap with the MAR. If the community identifies child marriage as its #1 problem (which is unlikely, right?) then we wouldn't expect the MAR NGO to be dealing with that since it's completely outside of their expertise, presumably, and it's unclear how the MAR could have an impact (if I'm wrong, then please enlighten me – but remember to make the connection explicit in your analysis). Issues that would obviously overlap with drinking water (off the top of my head) would be health, irrigation, etc. Even for these issues, please make the connection to the MAR explicit in your analysis.

**2.2 Cross-issue awareness part 2: Meaning of water**

How does the community understand water quality? Does water have magical powers? If yes, does filtering or paying for the water dilute its quality?

How did the NGO address the community's meaning of water? How well does the NGO understand the community's understanding of water? If the community has ideas about water that may affect MAR's use or acceptance, has the NGO done anything to educate about the MAR? Have they tried incorporating local beliefs into their programming (e.g., having the spiritual leader bless the MAR)?

**3. Capacity/coalition building**
There are two parts to this. First, working to increase the capacity of individuals to advocate for themselves, of individuals to strengthen their networks of supporters, i.e., build coalitions and of the community advocate together, or of individuals to advocate on behalf of their community. Second, acting as part of a network and/or coalition rather than recreating the wheel, i.e., duplicating other efforts.

How is the NGO building people's capacity to advocate for themselves and on behalf of their community? How is the NGO helping individuals to build coalitions (i.e., outside of community, maybe with other MAR villages?). Does the NGO see their work in the community as contributing to the development that is ongoing? Are they cooperating with other aid actors or activists? How? Give specific examples. Or, do they see their work as unique or better than other efforts? Are they building on other efforts? Or, are the undermining other efforts? Are they more concerned with getting credit for successes (attribution), or are they focused on the development of the community as a whole (contribution). They should see themselves as equal partners (not the authority) of the community and of others (NGOs, activists, etc.) who are working on increasing access to water.

**4. Situational analysis**
Exhibiting situational analysis means demonstrating an analysis of the context in terms of 1) people (stakeholders, partners) and 2) conditions (threats, opportunities). This would be revealed in the logic model, or in follow up conversations, and relates to their willingness and ability to network and/or form coalitions.

Does the NGO CM know which stakeholders, either in the community or outside of the community with influence in the community, who may *not* share their values or may create obstacles to their goals? Has the NGO thought about what people, situations or conditions may pose a threat to their goals in the community? Does the NGO recognize partners who do share their values and work in complementary ways? Has the NGO thought about what political, economic, and social conditions may create opportunities for them to help achieve their goals? In this section it's very important that if the CM is not aware of stakeholders or threats, that you describe that finding in detail. Here you will include information about the CM as well, such as:

The CM's role, daily activities, and relationship to the community, how s/he interacts with the community, etc.

- Does the CM appear to have the capacity to do the job as expected?

- How is the CM's relationship with the community?
- Does the CM appear to be working diligently?

**5. Individual, organizational, and movement level learning**
An NGO demonstrates being committed to learning by analyzing their own organizational strengths and weaknesses and by developing clear plans and strategies.

Does the NGO CM seem aware of the strengths/weaknesses inherent in their strategy? Are they willing to discuss the weaknesses of their approach, and think about ways they could improve? Do they seem to blame other actors, or are they willing to take responsibility for "failures?"

***Note, the interviews with DPHE officials should be in a separate document. I am mostly interested in DPHE's understanding of the MAR project and what their role was (i.e., situational analysis, logic model).**

**Appendix E: Modified Logic Model Guide**

This guide is for interviews with CMs and MAR Project Coordinators. Prior to starting in with the logic model, some priming will be required. One way to prime the CMs would be to ask them to tell you the story of how the MAR came to be put in this community, what actions have been taken re: the MAR, and how he has been involved (or not). Or, you might invite him to tell the story of another project if you think that they won't be able to talk honestly about this one because they think you are from the MAR. This provides the NGO worker with an opportunity to tell you about something he knows, on which he is an expert, and remind him that he does know valuable information. This will hopefully build his confidence and help him to feel more comfortable talking about the MAR with you.

This is the general outline of what I hope to walk through with the respondents:

1. This was the expectation (ideal)
2. But this happened (obstacle to ideal)
3. So it was done in this way (how they overcame obstacle)
4. Because we/they believe in this value (justification)

NOTE: If the CM feels more comfortable and has knowledge of another project, it might be worthwhile to walk through another project first (not the MAR). It might be harder for them to talk about the MAR so giving them the opportunity to describe another project may help them begin to feel more comfortable and let them practice the interview process with you.

1. In more detail, below: MAP IDEAL GOALS/INTENTIONS - Have the aid actor/CM map out what they think the intentions/goals are of other actors who are involved in this project. What did his boss tell him are the intentions of each of the follow vis-à-vis the MAR?
    - …UNICEF/Dutch government who are funding this project? Why?
    - …Dr. Matin? Why?
    - …NGO supervisor? Why?

It would be good to get them to articulate why an outcome that happens from an activity leads to certain development goals, to get community members to speculate about UNICEF, NGO, etc. development long-term goals as well as short-term successes, or to try and tie them together.

E.g., What are UNICEF's intentions here? UNICEF wants to bring clean water to this area. Why? Because they care about people having clean water. Why? Because they think water is a human right. Because they need to meet their quota. Because it's their job.

2. MAPPING OBSTACLES - What does the CM see as the obstacles to achieving the ideal intentions of…
    1. …the funders' ideal MAR, in practice? Why?
    2. …Dr. Matin's ideal MAR, in practice? Why?
    3. …NGO's ideal MAR, in practice? Why?
    4. …Community's ideal MAR, in practice? Why?

- Lines of questioning to dig deeper:
    i. Why is that an obstacle?

Analysis note: The obstacles they list may hint at their approach. Do they emphasize politics or injustice (rights-based approach) or technical aspects like level of education, attitudes of actors, etc.? It's not the RA's job to analyze, but this is what we're looking for. The more examples of obstacles you can get, the better.

3. OVERCOMING OBSTACLES - How does the CM describe actors overcoming obstacles they listed re: MAR? If they can't be overcome, why not? What would it take to overcome the obstacles? And, what values/norms do they use to talk about/justify their intentions/actions?
    1. "Now, think about how you described the obstacles that hindered the 1) funders 2) Dr. Matin 3) NGO from obtaining the "ideal MAR…."
    2. Question phrasing could be, "what would it take to overcome that obstacle?" Or, "in your view, if one other actor were involved who could solve everything, what kind of actor would it be and why?" Or, "what kind of community resource do you have to have in place in order for a project like this to work?" Or, "This is a really complicated project, it's got some engineering, it's got some community management – what do you think needs to be in place for this to work?"

4. MAPPING VALUES - What values/norms does he use to talk about/justify how obstacles were overcome? Need to interrogate what it means to "overcome the obstacle" or to "work" or to be "successful." When he gives an answer, follow up with, "and what would that give you?" and "why is that important to you?"

POST LOGIC MODEL – PROBING

*Appendix 5 provides more detailed explanations of these concepts and guiding questions that might be used in the field. Your training includes extensive discussion of appendix five in English and Bangla. Your goal is to gather as much data as possible.*

If the NGO workers don't mention issues of intersectionality/exclusion/discrimination, hierarchy, cross-issue awareness & implementation design/plan, history of collective action/working together in the community, the community's meaning of water, capacity/coalition building, situational analysis, or learning, you may need to prompt/probe them to talk more about these things in a follow up conversation.

Important: Don't probe using an accusatory tone, i.e., "why didn't you mention this?" Instead, say something that acknowledges what they do know, and praises them for being such a great source of information. For example: "Thank you for your interesting perspective. And, I know that you already know this, but could you explain to me a little bit more about how _______ has factored into your implementation plan?"

You may be able to tie each issue back into the logic model. If they say, no we didn't address _____, you can ask: "why?" If they mention an obstacle, then you are back in the structure of the logic model and can have them describe what they did instead (#3) and why (#4).

Note on analysis: if the above concepts are mentioned during the logic model conversation, then it shows that the NGO has a rights-based approach as they think about their interactions with the community and challenges they face. However, this is *not* a test of their familiarity with jargon. We are looking for what they actually *do/did*. If they talk about concepts, but cannot illustrate/describe how they actually put them into practice in action, then it is evidence that they have a discourse, not an approach. You will want them to link concepts to specific actions they have taken. Ask for examples. It does not matter what words they use to describe the work, the point is, when the RAs document the work that they are doing, we can discuss and analyze what it means. This project assesses actions not discourse, even though words certainly matter.

If they only address these issues in a follow up conversation after being prompted by the interviewer, then their description of these issues might be weighted differently. Why didn't they mention their awareness of these concepts on their own? Did they not think it was what we were looking for in which case it is weighted one way. Or do they not generally think in this way and your questioning prompted them to do so? We will also take into account how much authority the respondent has. If the CM wasn't involved in developing the NGO's approach, then we would expect them to know less about their approach, but we are still interested in HIS approach. We will take into consideration how much we would expect the NGO workers to know based on their position/authority. But, if the NGO's representatives in the field (CM) don't understand or can't describe the NGO's approach, then we should take note of that, too. If the NGO worker is using a rights-based approach, we would expect him to describe evidence of 1) intersectionality and 2) cross issue awareness & design in parts 1 (goals) and/or 2 (obstacles) of the logic model. We would NOT expect him to use these words and so the RAs have to work hard to find evidence of attention to exclusion and inclusion of all subgroups of the community and exclusion of people outside the community. Did they draw their boundaries of community more narrowly after the MAR? Why? Did that just happen? Or did someone articulate an administrative limitation on who could access the MAR. All of these and more are evidence of intersectionality. No one will use the word in the field. If they did, we would dig very deeply to understand where they first heard that word, when they began using it, what it means to them, etc. Similarly, on cross-issue awareness, we do not expect people to use that jargon/work. Rather, we expect them to DEMONSTRATE that they think about the connections among the issues.

**Appendix F: Data Log**

| Site # | Date of the fieldwork | Date final proofread report | Total # people interviewed | # people interviewed individually | # of focus groups | # of people interviewed in focus groups |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | 2nd + 3rd week of Jan 2015 | Nov 22, 2016 | 11 | 11 | 2 | Data missing |
| 11 | 2nd + 3rd week of Jan 2015 | Jan 31, 2016 | 38 | 8 | 2 | 30 (10 women, 20 men) |
| 17 (pilot) | 1st week of Jan 2015 | Jan 10, 2015 | Data missing | | Data missing | Data missing |
| 20 | 3rd + 4th week of Jan 2015 | Dec 7, 2016 | 14 | 14 | 2 | 12 (12 women, data missing for men's FGD) |
| 25 | 3rd + 4th week of Jan, 1st week of Feb 2015 | Feb 10, 2015 | 30 | 12 | 2 | 18 (10 women, 8 men) |
| 27 | 2nd + 3rd week of March 2015 | Mar 20, 2016 | 58 | 19 | 5 | 39 (15 women, 19 men, 5 mixed) |
| 34 | 2nd + 3rd week of Feb 2015 | Mar 6, 2015 | 18 | 18 | 2 | Data missing |
| 35 | 2nd + 3rd week of Feb 2015 | Aug 22, 2016 | 29 | 11 | 2 | 18 (11 women, 7 men) |
| 39 | 4th week of Feb + 1st week of March 2015 | June 2, 2016 | 13 | 13 | 2 | Data missing |
| 56 | 2nd + 3rd week of March 2015 | Feb 22, 2016 | 30 | 12 | 2 | 18 (8 women, 10 men) |
| 58 | 4th week of Mar + 1st week of April 2015 | Feb 12, 2016 | 27 | 10 | 2 | 17 (9 women, 8 men) |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 63 | 4th week of Feb + 1st week of March 2015 | July 5, 2016 | 28 | 9 | 2 | 19 (10 women, 9 men) |
| 75 | 4th week of Mar + 1st week of April 2015 | Mar 4, 2016 | 27 | 13 | 2 | 14 (8 women, 6 men) |

**2016 reports were proof-read in Nashville*
**In a spreadsheet dated Sept 22, 2014*