Chapter 8. Mobilizing for Democracy: Civil Society Mediation and Access to Policy in India

Ranjita Mohanty

Introduction

This paper discusses the mediating played by role civil society actors in creating an interface between citizens and the state that enables citizens to access state policy using the right to information provided under the Right To Information Act (RTI) Act of 2005. The two cases presented here are about the use of RTI by poor citizens, specifically women, to access information about various state-sponsored programmes related to subsidized food, livelihood and wages, water supply, education, loans, pension etc. Access to RTI thus unlocks information about a plethora of development and welfare programmes the state has instituted for the poor. In mobilizing women for rights and information, civil society brings women to interface and interact with the state. Civil society in this case comes into picture and prominence because, while the state makes pro-poor policies, it does little to ensure that poor citizens effectively access these policies.

In India women in different sites are using RTI to make governance structures accountable. This paper is based on qualitative data from two sites. The first in the Sundernagri slum in Delhi where women are mobilized by the Parivartan campaign to raise questions about gaps in the Public Distribution System (PDS) related to subsidized food for Below Poverty Line (BPL) families. The second is found in the Ahmedabad and Sabarkantha districts in Gujarat where women in rural areas are mobilized by the Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) Unnati to demand basic services of water, electricity, pension etc. from the municipal government. At the same time women are trained to organize and facilitate RTI camps for fellow citizens to provide them with information about RTI, the procedures to file applications and the follow up required at higher levels of administration if the local administration does not respond. The two cases represent two different types of mediation- the case of Parivartan is more advocacy-oriented whereas the case of Unnati is more towards building citizen leadership.

At the heart of this politics, is the reality that even when pro-poor policies are made by the state, does not mean that the state is always supportive when it comes to implementing these policies. It is for this reason that citizens must organise and mobilise to actually secure the policies to which they are entitled. As the present cases reveal there are varying degrees of co-operation, as well as conflict, between civil society organisations and the state with it that characterize the overall process of mediation. The process of mediation thus deepens democracy even as it contests it. This happens in two significant ways, by impacting on governance as well as empowering citizens.

Of the two, however, I would argue, the former, as the cases indicate, is often transient and incomplete, and therefore, constant engagement with the state seems
the only way to keep the governance attentive to the needs of people, where as the impacts of citizen empowerment are not only multifaceted and multilayered, they are also more durable and result in a spiral effect with one process often leading to the other. This latter aspect is the most enduring contribution of mediation to democracy.

The rest of the paper is divided into five sections. Section-I grounds the study in the theoretical perspective of civil society - state interaction in shaping democracy as well as the current context of participatory governance in India. Section-II details out the larger civil society- state relations in India and provides a historical snapshot of their interaction. Section-III discusses the two cases of use of RTI by women in two different situations as strategized by Parivartan and Unnati, and the process and outcome of mediation. Section-IV looks at mediation from the vantage point of these women protagonists and provides an account of how mediation results in citizen empowerment. The concluding section sums up the key arguments of civil society mediation for democracy as evident in the two select cases from India.

**Grounding the Study**

The paper is based on the premise that civil society and the state mutually construct each other through the processes of mediation (Mohanty, Thompson and Coelho 2010). Democracy is constituted and re-constituted through mediation, which, in itself, is a process of mutual influencing between civil society and the state. While it may appear that civil society actions are only responses to the state behaviour, this is only partially true. Civil society, as is evident in India, also sets the context for state behaviour, more so during articulation for new rights. The Right To Information is an example of new rights pushed forward by civil society, and their recognition by the state. Once rights are legalized and shift to the domain of the state, the state begins to control the behaviour of civil society. There is thus not only constant interaction between civil society and the state, but there are also shifts in the pattern of their interaction.

The paper thus locates mediation in the context of society-state relations in a democratic setup, both the overall macro context of that relation as well as the local micro contexts where mediation actually takes place. As it appears, the state apparatus in New Delhi has responded to citizen demands in shaping the macro policy of RTI. However, the local or sub-national state apparatus often creates bottlenecks in the implementation of these. Hence much of mediation actually takes place vis-à-vis the local governance at the level of policy implementation. RTI is a complex policy as it can be used to demand information that the agencies may not be willing to share for the fear that there would be subsequent demand for their implementation. There is also the fear of exposure of corrupt practices and vested interest that government agencies and officials have in blocking policy implementation.

In exploring the link between civil society and democracy, the paper also investigates the potential of participatory governance to respond to mediation. Popularized in
the wake of neo-liberal restructuring of the state, participatory governance envisaged increased collaboration between the state and civil society as also opening up spaces for increased citizen participation in development and governance. This is visible in state action in creating institutional spaces for citizen participation that range from grassroots local governance to consultative policy spaces at the national and provincial level. However, what is now increasingly evident is participation per se does not guarantee that the state will respond positively to demands raised by civil society.

Civil society mediation highlights the inadequacy, failure and at times lack of willingness of local governance to implement the development policies related to provision for basic services and livelihood for the poor. In Delhi women expressed their lack of faith on local governance including councillors and members of parliament to deliver PDS; in Gujarat women expressed the same sentiments about local governance that has consistently lagged behind in implementing rural livelihood, basic services and social security schemes.

**Civil Society and State Interaction in India**

Civil society-state interaction in India needs to be understood in four overarching contexts. First, the historical context of evolution of particular forms of political order and particular forms of social manifestation of aspiration and discontent it gave rise to. For example, the state legislation for the distribution of free land to certain sections of poor people as a measure to ensure social justice points to a socialist and democratic orientation of the political order. As such when civil society makes demands on the state to fulfil those aspirations, the state can evade initially, but it cannot bypass the demands completely (Joshi 2003). Contrast this with economic growth agenda of the state – for example, mining. Here the state goes to any extent in taking away the livelihood resources of the poor without any information or deliberation. It invokes the ‘public good’ argument that entitles the state to take land for what is considers as national good. In this context the political order is no longer socialist or even democratic, but of a neo-liberal market economy in which the state assumes the role of a global player. Resistance to such state action by the citizens often invokes suppression and violence from the state (Mohanty 2010).

Second are the complexities and contradictions inherent in the state’s influence in its interaction with civil society. On the one hand, there is the demise of the welfare state and rise of a neo-liberal one; on the other, there are many progressive steps taken by the state to promote rights, equity and inclusion. While the state has withdrawn from many spheres, particularly those related to entitlements and social security and has consolidated its power in pushing the economic growth agenda with an unprecedented ruthlessness, it has also enacted landmark legislation related to decentralized governance, the right to Information and employment guarantees that are premised upon rights, inclusion and equity. Citizens are thus caught between a state that promises participation, equity and equality, and one that supports neo-liberal reforms and has shrugged off its welfare-oriented responsibilities. This has a
significant bearing on inclusive politics for both the state and citizens (Mohanty 2012).

Third, civil society and state interaction is not played out in any isolated field where actors from both sides meet and then retreat. Like civil society, the state is deeply embedded in social settings in which it operates. The larger social context at times sabotages progressive actions from the state. For example, institutions which are created by the state to mobilize low caste, women and tribal communities to take active part in matters of local governance are often sabotaged by the social settings in which they function. Dominant castes often sabotage low caste issues, and patriarchy often sabotages women’s issues. In such contexts even when the state is close to low castes and women by virtue of its location in their own village/block/district, there are instances where the state, instead of allying with the marginalized people, works in collusion with the dominant social forces (Morris 2007, Mohanty 2007).

Last but not the least, civil society-state interaction are to be understood in the context of certain apparent contradictions that characterize Indian society and politics – mass based electoral democracy that coexists with social exclusion; economic growth that coexists with mass poverty, hunger and malnutrition; progressive state policies that co-exist with the brutal killing of people who oppose the state; decentralized governance that co-exists with persistent and rigid bureaucracy that overshadows participation.

Civil society has a robust presence in India dating back to anti-colonial struggle. Once independence was gained civil society actions fell within the democratic framework. In post-independent India, civil society has found expression in a variety of forms – formal NGOs, mass based social movements, community based groups, loosely structured campaigns are some of the dominant forms of civil society action. Over several decades, civil society actions have covered a gamut of issues that talk, on the one hand, about state negligence and inadequate governance, and on the other, demonstrate how, by standing in the sphere of civil society, poor people have asserted themselves vis-à-vis the state.

The diversity, plurality and strength of civil society has grown and so have its strategies of interface with the state which have become more refined. On the side of the state, following the rise of the neo-liberal framework there are collaborations and consultation with civil society on policy matters. The emergence of participatory governance has brought the state even closer to civil society actors. Yet, as noted above, there are tensions and caveats in state-civil society relations. Even when civil society is performing the role the state is expected to perform – that is, implementation of state policies – and therefore, appears as an extended arm of the state, still the state can choose to withdraw support, intimidate and sabotage civil society actions. This makes the gains from mediation unpredictable and often episodic and transient.

Mediation: Issues, Sites, Actors, Strategies and Outcomes
The section discusses a set of issues that relate to poor women in both urban and rural areas who are situated in the overall contexts of a democratic state system that constantly fails to meet their basic needs and civil society structures and organizations that support women’s access to entitlements and rights. Focussing on the Right to Information Act and how two different civil society interventions have mobilized women to use this Act to access information and claim various development policies and programmes, the section highlights the dynamics of civil society mediation vis-à-vis the state to make state policies effective.

The Right To Information Act was passed by the Indian Parliament in 2005. The Act is considered as a progressive step towards making the government systems transparent and accountable. It is also progressive in giving citizens the right to put pressure on the state. In this context it is important to note that the Act came through after sustained mobilization from civil society (Baviskar 2009). In that sense it is a case of favourable response from the state to citizen demands; a positive and collaborative effort between civil society and the state. The Act is a highly enabling piece of democratic tool, but to what extent it can be used effectively by people depends on where people are placed on the socio-economic hierarchy and to what extent the state shows its willingness to implement this policy. Thus the poor and under resourced, and particularly women, are often in a disadvantaged position to use the Act. The situation is further aggravated due to apathy and hostility of the governance agencies responsible for RTI as well as those who deal with the basic services on which information is often sought. In such contexts civil society interventions support poor people’s interface with the governance structures.

The two cases discussed in the paper present two different types of civil society formation and action in two different locations in India. Parivartan (literally meaning transformation) is a Delhi based campaign that mobilized women in the slum settlements to claim their fair share of entitlement provided under the state programme of Public Distribution System (PDS) by using RTI. It was an advocacy campaign that mobilized women on a large scale to file RTI applications to get information about PDS entitlements and then claim the same from the PDS distributors called ration shops that hold government approved licenses to sell subsidized food items. So women, who had never participated in the public life so openly, began pitching against the government agencies as well as ration shop dealers, and importantly against the nexus between the government and the dealers. There were moments of success, but the success could not be sustained, not due to lack of effort on the part of civil society, but because the vested interest within the government was far more powerful than citizen agency.

The second case is in Gujarat where Unnati, an NGO, has been mobilizing women to use RTI for various developmental and social security entitlements. Unnati’s action profile is different from Parivartan. It is not a fully-fledged advocacy campaign on RTI, but aimed at gradually building the capacities and leadership skills among women to make governance accountable. Accessing the RTI is thus part of overall programme of creating a cadre of aware, informed and empowered citizens. Women
in this case act at different spaces: self-help groups, government-sponsored programmes in health and education, and as elected representatives of local governance institutions. In their various roles women thus constantly interact with the governance system. In this overall scheme of development of women leadership, RTI fits in two ways: women themselves claim information on various projects and entitlements, popular among which are pension, wage, education, loans, and social security; at the same time they facilitate other people’s access to RTI through RTI camps. Besides their own action, women also enable others to act, and that is a significant aspect of mediation in this case. In this case also there is indifference, apathy and hostility from the government thus making the outcomes of mediation episodic, transient and unsustainable.

However, as I indicted earlier, one of the outcomes of mediation is citizen empowerment and seen through the lens of women protagonists in Delhi as well as in Gujarat, it is evident how the process of mediation have changed their lives. This is a significant contribution of civil society mediation that builds cadres of vigilant citizens who are always watchful of the state.

Parivartan

Parivartan does not have a formal organizational structure, it functions in a semi-formal and often in an informal campaign mode. Its small one room office in the Sundarganri slum of East Delhi has two staff members – one male and one female. Youth from the community work as volunteers for Parivartan. The office is always busy with people visiting to seek help and advice on everyday issues that emanate from their living in the slum.

When Parivartan began mobilizing for RTI in 2002 (the Delhi State RTI Act was passed in 2002, three years prior to the national one), the first step it took was to provide awareness regarding the Act. It distributed printed material and held regular meetings in its office and in the community. Since food supply through PDS was a critical issue, it was felt that RTI could be effectively used to revamp the PDS system. As women are often burdened with the responsibility of getting food items from the shop, they joined the campaign in large numbers, and one of them named Triveni took the initiative to file an application seeking information about the quantity of different food items (rice, wheat, sugar, lentil etc.) her family was entitled to, the frequency of supply and price of each food item.

Once Triveni obtained the information, it was found that the shop keeper had cheated her several times. She was threatened by the shop keeper to keep quiet and her own family members were against her for being ‘too brave’ and inviting ‘danger’. Yet she made the information public and that motivated many more women to file application seeking information about PDS. Gradually this escalated into a fully fledged campaign and the shop keepers came under pressure to provide each family what they were entitled.
The story however, is not that straightforward. The process was fraught with shades of conflict and cooperation from the state officials. After Triveni’s success in obtaining information, Parivartan filed an application with the Food and Supply Department to obtain information about all 17 PDS shops in the area. It took several months before Parivartan received information about the distribution of subsidized food items and prices at which they were sold to people. There were several incidents of delay and secrecy from the government institutions as well as terror including physical violence from the side of the shopkeepers that marred the process. The staff members of Parivartan were enticed to take bribes and leave the campaign, and when they refused the proposal, they were physically attacked several times during the campaign. In one such attack a young female coordinator was badly injured and was taken to the hospital. This, however, did not deter her but made her more resolute (per com 2011).

Finally, collective action in the form of mass demonstration, appeals to the Chief Minister of Delhi and filing of RTIs en masse put pressure on the government to respond. Yet the response did not bring transparency in the dealings of the PDS shop keepers – only those households that had obtained information under RTI were given the exact quantity of ration at the actual price. This led Parivartan to do a household survey of the entire area. Based on the survey findings that revealed discrepancies in ration distribution through the PDS system, Parivartan mobilized people once again. Consequently, the Delhi Government passed several orders to bring transparency to the PDS (Sisodai 2003). That happened in 2003.

When I visited Parivartan in 2010 the changes were visible after seven years, but to a lesser degree – there were still discrepancies in ration distribution, irregularities in providing beneficiaries with ration cards and the shop keepers still treated people badly. Talking to women who had once fought the tough battle I could gather their consciousness about their rights, their ability to collect information about various service delivery schemes and their confidence in talking to government officials. The struggle for transparency in PDS is still relevant and so are the questions of rights. Women, while still addressing these old issues, have also moved on to address many other issues related to their everyday life such housing, education, health care etc.

**Unnati**

Unnati has a different profile. It is a formally structured NGO with its main office in Ahmedabad, the capital of Gujarat, and several field offices. The field offices are located mostly in close proximity to the cluster of villages where Unnati works, and they work as links between the communities and the main office. Unnati staff members make regular visits to their field offices and to the villages. So there are well-integrated and co-ordinated structures through which the organization mobilizes rural people for their rights and entitlements.

Unnati’s facilitation and mediation process is different. Women who organize and facilitate RTI camps have already gone through several stages of leadership development under Unnati’s Citizen Leader Programme. The citizen leaders are
selected on the basis of their potential to work as community leaders such as panchayat (local government) members, leaders of Self-Help Groups, Anganwadi (government sponsored pre-school centres that also serve as health and nutrition supply centre for pregnant mothers and small children) members. A few of these citizen leaders are also part of development projects of other NGOs. Networks of citizen leaders are formed at three levels (corresponding to the three tier local government structures so women interact with the state structure at each level) – village, block and district. Unnati staff members organize regular meetings with women at all three levels to discuss the difficulties they face in accessing various basic services / entitlements such as water, electricity, pension, and work and wages under National Rural Employment programme. Discussions also focus on effective ways of addressing the issues. In the beginning Unnati members had to provide hand-holding support to women and orient their male family members who disliked their women (most of them are married) talking to government officials or holding public meeting in the village.

RTI camps are held at the block level, which is the middle structure between the village and the district. The camps are organized with a view to orient large numbers of people about the Act. Women who run these camps are provided training on RTI; some of them have already used RTI and are familiar with the process. The RTI camps provide information about RTI, help filling application, take follow up with the concerned government agencies. There is thus a continuous effort to bring many more people to be part of the policy domain, who in the absence of these camps, would have remained uninformed not only about RTI but also about their rights and entitlements that have implications on their livelihoods, health, education, shelter, pension and many such aspects on which poor people are dependent on their survival. As people from the villages visit the camps to seek information on various government-sponsored schemes related to employment, wages, social security, agricultural loan, the camps often turn into popular public spaces.

For Unnati, mobilizing women is, in itself, a pedagogical process. Regular capacity building training is a key element of its strategy that covers: awareness building, organizing collectives of women, holding public meetings and interaction with local bureaucrats. Much like Parivartan, Unnati members both facilitate interface with governance systems as well as provide backup support when women need them. In their own specific way, both forms of mediation have gradually transformed women in to mediators who can talk to the government on their own.

It is not surprising that local bureaucracy and service delivery departments often put up resistance to RTI. Yet, in several cases, particularly related to agricultural loans, social security, PDS, water supply and electricity connections, the schemes reached people only when they sought information using RTI. The rural setting also offers a curious mix of how formal and informal interact and facilitate mediation. Most local officials, particularly those on the lower rungs, are from the same locality/ region and thus have family networks in the villages. There is thus continuity in interaction both in their official capacity as members of a formal system as well as socially as members of informal networks. This formal-informal mix often dilutes the stiffness
of official resistance to citizen demand. At another level, the familiarity that civil society activists as well as people have with local bureaucracy enables interaction and dialogue. Often, the informal helps in ‘finding a way out’ in the formal system.

The presence of locally recruited members within the governance system, however, does not guarantee that the system will necessarily respond to poor citizenry. As in Delhi slums so in the rural areas of Gujarat, the transformation in governance is temporary and unsustainable, thus demanding continuation of mediation and mobilization. In Delhi, due to large scale advocacy campaigning and mass mobilization, several changes in state action took place, but these changes were short lived. In Gujarat due to the nature of mediation, the outcomes are more family or at best village centric. We thus find one woman going all the way to claim PDS, and another woman getting information about widow pension, and a third one on education loan for her child. This success stories, however, do not bring about change in the governance system. When we look at the two cases, it is evident that both large scale systemic changes as well as small individual efforts to pressure the government action are possible, leading to concrete gains sometimes. Nevertheless, both can be episodic, incomplete, transient and unsustainable, not the least due to lack of citizen agency or civil society action, but due to vested interest within the governance system.

These two cases of civil society mediation vis-à-vis state policy also show the limits of participatory governance, a collaborative path that neo-liberal reforms envisaged for the state and civil society to traverse together. As this case of RTI illustrates, the macro state apparatus occasionally responds to the policy demands from civil society, yet the local state apparatus can sabotage implementation and poor people’s access to policy. There is no guarantee that participation will percolate down all the way to the bottom of the governance structure. It is also evident that though the state when pressured yields to citizen demands, it tries to respond only partially, often minimally so that mobilization does not turn violent and question the very basis of the state power. The state seldom tries to reach out to citizens; negotiation for information and entitlement invariably take place in the state’s own domain, in its office premises, as and when it is convenient to the state officials.

**Mediation as citizen empowerment: Looking through the lens of the protagonists**

Irrespective of its impact on governance and concrete outcomes, mediation itself is a life-changing experience for women who go through it. Whether the government responds or not or only partially responds, capabilities that mediation enhances are significant in building leadership, political consciousness as well as an active and empowered citizenry. As in the urban slums so in the villages, the empowering experiences that take place during mediation are most enduring and have transformative effects on individual and collective lives.

For most women any effort to access the policy is an experience at several levels: stepping outside their private space to occupy the public space, collective discussions and deliberations, making their own voice heard, raising their own
information about policy provisions, capacity for decision making, interaction with the state officials, assertion of rights, imbibing the language of formal discourse as different from informal conversations at home, sharing collective responsibility to support members of the community, awareness about ‘self’ and identity and last but not the least demonstrate capacities for public role. For most women, mobilization for RTI these constitute their ‘first’ experience in stepping into the domain of both organized civil society as well the state. And all these experiences taken together shape what women come to experience as their empowerment.

Being in the public domain

Being in the public space brings women new experiences as well as new challenges. Not only public space is different from the private space that constitutes home and family as the primary locus, it is also different in terms of identities and roles that women inhabiting the public space are expected to play. We can also say that they come to occupy the public space because they want to assert their other identities and roles.

The collective space civil society organizations build for women provide them with the warmth of solidarity and camaraderie of purpose; women know that they have support of the group even when they are taking individual action many times. The sense of empowerment that comes from being part of a collective not only counters the fear associated with acting as a lone individual; it also infuses women with a sense of shared goals, shared responsibilities, an understanding of their collective marginalization, and a sense of collective strength to question marginalization and overcome it. In a way it is this sense of collective that prepares women to question the might of the state in situations where women have neither the resources of education nor the access to formal political power, let alone having the comforts of material resources to provide them necessary security in life. While liberal democracy is premised upon individual citizenship, what this struggle for rights and access to policy reveals is the sense of shared collective marginalization that prepares and supports women to assert their citizenship vis-à-vis the state.

Being in the domain of the state

The image of the state women have is constitutive of many different elements – physical space of the official building, rule books, procedures, officials and their behaviour, office hours, formal conversation, middle men and brokers representing the state, and above all the power and authority the state has over the citizen. The fact that more often than not the state officials are men brings the cultural dimensions of gender into women’s interaction with the state.

Women have walked into the state domain from having no ideas about the state to have their demands framed in the language of RTI. Talking to women speaking so eloquently about rights, their struggle and how they obtained the information they had sought for as well as supported others in the same pursuit, it is difficult to imagine that at the initial stage they did not even have any idea about the
Constitution. They did not know what policies mean and how they are formulated, why policies are not implemented and how they, as citizens, can demand information. It never occurred to them earlier that they have legitimacy to act as citizens and the state is accountable to them. It was a whole new world that Parivartan and Unnati opened up for them with its attractions and challenges, its promises and possible dangers; it was fascinating and fearsome at the same time. That first set of pamphlets that Parivartan circulated in the slum areas of Sundarnagari in many ways paved women’s entry into the domains of the state. For women protagonists in Gujarat villages, some of them had familiarity with the state as representatives of the local governance, but for most women the state was still alien until the citizen leadership programme of Unnati brought them together and familiarized them with the state at the micro level of the village and block and then at the districts.

Sending written applications under RTI, as women recollected, was not as intimidating as actually entering an office building and interacting with an official. The building representing the formal space of the state has an intimidating effect on women, at least on their first visit. Women did not know whether they would be allowed to enter; they did not know whether it would be considered an offence by the government for which they would be punished. Such fear emanates from the fact that the state is remote from the lives of women, and wherever it is present, it presents itself as police, PDS dealers, Block Development Officer - all flaunting their power over people. Yet women overcome their fear, and not only they physically enter the office building but also engage in a face to face interact with the officials.

Many women I met recalled their first meeting in a government office. Among many incidents of harassment and ill treatment, they also recalled the overwhelming feeling of meeting with, what they call a proper officer, not a clerk or peon. Their narrative was full of anecdotes of good officer who listened to them carefully and promised that their work would be done, and bad officer who dismissed them. Since the bureaucrats are invariably male and are perceived yielding enormous power, interacting with them is often an intimidating experience. However, when women come across state officials who are friendly, helpful and treat them with respect, they shed their fear of the state.

Mobilization and mediation have made women learn the arts and skills of governance that they continue to use beyond the specific case of RTI. Since poor women are constantly struggling to access entitlement and rights, such learning provides them the necessary skill to interact with governance systems in other contexts. Mediation thus results in spiral effects often one set of action leading to another. And this very aspect of mediation sustains citizen agency against the setbacks from the state. Over a period of time, women who were once new entrants in the public space, emerge as mediators influencing many more people to join them. This continuity in civil society and citizen action, as I mentioned earlier, is the most durable contribution of mediation to democracy as it makes people watchful of the state and keep exerting pressure on it so that the state does not bypass the poor citizenry completely.
Conclusion

The paper set out to explore the link between civil society mediation and democracy. It did so by examining women’s access to public policy using the RTI. It is evident that the implementation of policies actually takes place at the micro sphere of the state vis-a-vis governance representatives and local bureaucracy, and much of mediation and access to policy also get sabotaged at the local level. In assessing the concrete gains from mediation, the cases presented in the paper show that such gains are often partial, episodic and unsustainable. The state sets the terms of mediation and yields to citizen demands only minimally due to vested interest within its own sphere. The participatory governance goal of bringing civil society and the state closer to strengthen development and democracy is less evident in these cases. This is not due to a lack of interest among civil society actors but due to the tendency of the state to retain power and a lack of genuine interest to reach out to poor citizenry.

What is significant from the point of view of both civil society and democracy are the citizenship outcomes of mediation. No matter how the state behaves, the process of mediation infuses people with critical consciousness about their rights and entitlements, prepares them to raise their voice and make demands on and interact with the state. It is in the sphere of civil society that a cadre of empowered citizens emerges and sustains itself beyond the specific case of mediation to keep a constant watch on the state. This is the most enduring contribution of civil society mediation to democracy.

References – to be added