



Environment

Water & Environmental Sanitation Network  
(WES-Net India)



## Solution Exchange for WES-Net India Consolidated Reply

*Query: Exclusion in drinking water supply networks, from Independent Consultant, New Delhi (Comparative Experiences).*

Compiled by Preeti Soni, Resource Person and Moderator; additional research provided by Ramya Gopalan, Research Associate  
18 November 2005

---

**Original Query: Jyotsna Bapat, Independent Consultant, New Delhi**  
Posted: 2 November 2005

The demand driven sector reforms in rural and semi urban parts of the country in the Drinking Water sector is of interest to me. During my recent field visit in Rajasthan, I found that it is easy for a dominant caste group from a hamlet to use the 'demand driven approach' and avail a subsidy for getting piped water supply into their houses. In this process, they leave out the poor and the scheduled caste households who could not afford to contribute the cash for the piped drinking water network. At the same time once this piped supply become available to them, the maintenance of traditional sources of drinking water like dug wells and hand pumps are neglected, even though they continue to be used by the lower caste groups.

What I would like to know is how common or uncommon is my observation related to water sector reform program in other states/in other parts of the country? I would really appreciate if you could share your field observations with me.

Look forward to responses

---

### Responses received with thanks from:

1. [Jasveen Jairath](#), CapnetSA, Hyderabad
2. Kashinath Vajpai, TNS Mode, New Delhi [Response 1](#), [Response 2](#), [Response 3](#)
3. [Avani Mohan Singh](#), Haritika, Jhansi, Uttar Pradesh
4. [Ravi Parthasarathi](#), TATA Projects Ltd, Hyderabad
5. [Vinod Kumar.P](#), Maithri, Palakkad, Kerala
6. [Prema Gera](#), UNDP, New Delhi
7. [Pawan Kumar](#), Livelihoods Improvement Project for the Himalayas, Dehradun
8. [Rumani Pattanayak](#), Mahavir Yubak Sangh, Orissa

*Further contributions are welcome!*

---

## Summary of Responses

The query deals with the issue of social exclusion of poor and the scheduled caste households in the emerging scenario of water sector reforms in the rural and semi-urban areas. Under the policy 'voice and choice for all', the piped water is provided 'on demand' – as per need and paying capacity of the individual consumer. The incapacity of the poor to pay cash and the concomitant neglect in the maintenance of traditional sources of drinking water is the central concern of this query.

Members' responses highlighted a variety of aspects of exclusion based on their (context-specific) experiences, problems encountered by them, and possible steps that may be taken in this regard. Although many responses affirm social exclusion as inevitable in the demand-driven approach to drinking water, other responses indicate that caste-based exclusion is not necessarily a situation that is prevalent in a generic sense. While the **Bundelkhand** example points out the importance of numbers in ensuring that the scheme involves minority/hitherto excluded communities, the **Erimayur** example highlights the need for intervention by NGOs and Gram Panchayats to do so. However, the **Nagapattinam** experience shows that it is the usual administrative and other bottlenecks that need to be tackled since social exclusion is not really a hindrance to the provision of water in the region. Similarly, the **Uttaranchal** model indicates that the paramount need for water as a livelihood asset overshadows and transcends these barriers.

Members have cited a variety of other examples where it is not the caste or the poverty-linked dynamics which always determine the prospects of access to water - as a number of other factors may come into play, such as:

- **Geographical conduciveness:** Topography of the area (lowlands, hills, etc.) as well as location and distance of the different dwelling units/clusters too are an important factor in determining the supply of piped water. Though it may be true that the inhabitations of the poor and the marginalized groups may more often be disadvantageously located. Therefore, to cover all areas, specific additional provisions are required.
- **Heterogeneity and caste disparity.** Some examples show how a significant number of people belonging to a minority group can influence their involvement in development programs. Other examples, however show that the rich may misguide the poor in an attempt to maintain their own influence on them. Also an often-held assumption is that communities are homogenous; but in reality, there may be heterogeneity even within a community. The problems posed by heterogeneity can be resolved or minimized by fostering close-knit relationships and instituting exchange mechanisms.

In addition, poor or ineffective government intervention, low capabilities and lack of trust, reduced gender focus and indifference of administrators are all important contextual factors that impact social access, inclusion or exclusion. It is at this juncture that the wider picture involving the vicious circle of poverty and environment gains relevance. Members' responses also highlighted some steps that may be useful in overcoming social exclusion:

- **Capacity building and political mobilization:** As suggested, there is a need to provide platforms for minority groups to voice their demand which, in turn, requires social and political mobilization of these groups. Further the use of right to information is an important instrument to enable the poor to understand the method and process by which they can access such facilities. Additionally, capacity building is also required - both at the government and external agency level to adopt and implement context based strategies
- **Participation:** Efforts to encourage and incorporate participation at the community level is essential to ensure that the needs of those minority groups requiring assistance are especially taken into consideration. Regular and frequent participatory mapping particularly of PRIs and formal/informal Community Based Organisations (such as women self-help groups and user groups) is crucial to visibly

bring to the attention of all stakeholders a clear and transparent picture of the assets, their location and current status, as also credentials of the actual beneficiaries.

- **Targeting:** Although the need to shift from supply-driven to demand-driven approach has been accepted, due consideration to strategically important changes is required even within this approach - to effectively provide water supply and other social infrastructure to minority communities. Special processes and projects targeting these SC/ST groups is necessary particularly, where such groups are not being catered to and fall beyond the scope of the initially planned targets.

The interactions thus far and the detailed comparative experiences provided below indicate that future design and implementation of demand-driven approaches to water supply development requires a better understanding of the links between poverty, marginalization of specific groups and access to water. If explicit attention to this link is not given, social exclusion will continue and result in denial of development opportunities to the socially and economically marginalized communities. Continued thrust is necessary on sensitization of external agencies on the one hand and increased information sharing and capacity development of the socially marginalised groups on the other.

---

## Comparative Experiences

From [Avani Mohan Singh](#), Haritika, Jhansi

### **Bundelkhand, Uttar Pradesh**

The experience indicates that exclusion of the SC/ST community in the case of rural piped water supply is not necessarily a function of caste divisions. In the Bundelkhand region where the percentage of SC/ST population is higher relative to other castes, any scheme has to have full involvement from this community.

### **Chirkana, Jhansi District, Uttar Pradesh**

This is an example of a model village where all households have latrine with piped water supply run by the poor and SC communities for the last five years, along with other working schemes.

From [Ravi Parthasarathy](#), TATA Projects Ltd., Hyderabad

### **Nagapatinam, Tamil Nadu**

In Nagapatinam, evidence from a tsunami relief camp supplying water indicates that the program is being effectively implemented apart from routine skirmishes and altercations. There is no indication of exclusion of any community from availing drinking water supply on the basis of caste divisions.

### **Andhra Pradesh**

Experience from a fluoride affected rural habitation in AP, highlights the importance of water as a livelihood asset. Although village politics does prevail in the region, it does not influence the smooth functioning of the water related program.

From [Vinod Kumar.P](#), Maithri, Palakkad, Kerala

### **Erimayur, Kerala**

In spite of the possibilities of demand driven approach being monopolised by the local elites in this experience all of the targeted 850 SC households were covered. However, it was not strictly demand driven but more an intervention of the NGO and Gram Panchayat to ensure that the entire 6000 households in the village were covered in the program. However, this needed significant effort owing to the location of the marginalized communities, their inability to afford upfront cash contribution, as well as the influence of the rich and their reluctance to cross subsidize the poor.

### **Muthamalada, Kerala**

A program funded by the World Bank aimed particularly at covering around 500 tribal households. This number on detailed survey rose to 1030. Although due efforts were made, 600 households were covered through 19 schemes. This experience however is not without due hindrances posed by the rich local elites and the problem exacerbates given the fact that these tribal households are scattered over a wide area of 375 square kilometres and they do not particularly have adequate bargaining capacity.

### **Uttaranchal** (from [Pawan Kumar](#), *Livelihoods Improvement Project for the Himalayas*)

In the Swajal Project any scheme was unlikely to function unless due arrangements were made to incorporate the minority community. If a pipeline is passing through an SC village the water has to be shared with that community else it was rendered unviable. It was also observed that given the importance of water as a commodity such programs tended to transcend caste barriers.

### **Khordha District, Orissa** ([Rumani Pattanayak](#), *Mahavir Yubak Sangh, Orissa*)

Under the Total Sanitation Activities/Sector Reform Activities, which encompassed 5 Gram panchayats in Begunia Block in Khordha comprising 36 villages, a particular village includes 20 general and 140 SC/ST population. Although the general category of people is interested in the project, it is delayed due to the lack of financial contributions which the SC/ST community is unable to provide.

### **Andhra Pradesh** (from [Jasveen Jairath](#), *CapnetSA, Hyderabad*)

Evidence from drought prone areas in Andhra Pradesh indicates how physical structures under certain watershed programs are situated depending on the convenience of influential development owners, one main reason for this being that politically dominant groups occupy influential positions within the Watershed Committee. Therefore this has led to a leakage to the extent of 40-50% of allocated funds.

---

## **Related Resources**

### **Recommended Documentation**

#### **Everybody Loves a Good Drought: Stories from India's Poorest Districts** (from [Jasveen Jairath](#), *CapnetSA, Hyderabad*)

P. Sainath, 1996, Penguin Publishers, New Delhi, available at bookstores

*The book contains case studies from poor areas in India highlighting the living conditions of the poor, what sustains them and what they need to represent their interests.*

#### **SecureWater – Whither Poverty? Livelihoods in the DRA: A case study of the Water Supply Programme in India** in *SecureWater: building sustainable livelihoods for the poor into demand responsive approaches* (from [Preeti Soni](#), *Resource Person*)

Deepa Joshi, Overseas Development Institute, London, 2004, available at

[http://www.securewater.org/mainphase/India/RR\\_4\\_india\\_Securewater.pdf](http://www.securewater.org/mainphase/India/RR_4_india_Securewater.pdf) (size: 0.99 MB)

*The report outlines the research findings of the 'SecureWater' project that examined the application of the demand responsive approach in water supply policy in Andhra Pradesh.*

#### **Additional Documentation identified by [Ramya Gopalan](#), Research Associate**

#### **Social Exclusion** in Pro-poor Infrastructure Provision

Tim Conway, Overseas Development Institute on behalf of Department for International Development, London, April 2002, available at

[http://www.odi.org.uk/keysheets/ppip/purple\\_4\\_exclusion.pdf](http://www.odi.org.uk/keysheets/ppip/purple_4_exclusion.pdf) (size: 80 KB)

*This key sheet examines how the provision of infrastructure does not meet the needs of the poor people due to the influence of the various aspects of social exclusion*

### **Water Rights In India: A Case Study of Andhra Pradesh**

K.V.Raju & C.V.S.K.Sarma, International Working Conference On Water Rights: Institutional Options For Improving Water Allocation, Hanoi Vietnam, February 12-15, 2003, available at <http://theme5.waterforfood.org/pubs/200302conf/papers/33India.pdf> (size: 163 KB)

*The paper examines the water rights and water allocation situation in India by focusing on Andhra Pradesh which is the leading state for introducing water sector reforms.*

---

## **Responses in Full**

### **Jasveen Jairath, Capnet SA, Hyderabad**

This is the typical experience - not only with watsan inputs but also with any developmental intervention - it gets co-opted/monopolized by the local elites - sometimes making the poor even more vulnerable as you note. Innumerable experiences and research supports the observation.

Some of the examples are:

- Credit for borewells - most credit is monopolized by those who have connections with banks, have collateral, can do the processing without brokers. Poor farmers depend either on private sources that are more expensive or go through brokers for smaller credit - that also is more expensive than declared govt credit terms.
- Physical structures under watershed program of MRD are situated depending on the convenience of influential land owners. All the important positions in Watershed Committee are taken up by local political dominant groups. All funds are routed through this committee. There is a leakage to the extent of 40-50% in these funds that is accounted development funds- evidence form drought prone areas of Andhra Pradesh.
- Mis governance of drought relief funds - see P. Sainath's "every one loves a good drought". This is too well known a reality to need further demonstrating.

This is not to argue that such interventions are not required but that there is need to work out strategies of political targeting of such interventions to those in whose name they are undertaken. This may entail political mobilization of the marginalized to negotiate for their entitlements. To begin with to use the Right to Information about conditions/method of accessing such facilities by the poor

---

### **Kashinath Vajpai, TNS Mode, New Delhi**

Your observations are right, but it seems more specific case rather in general. The situation is varying in different region where sector reform pilots have been implemented. If we take the example of Uttaranchal where Swajal (a government of Uttaranchal and UP initiative between 1996-2003) was the success on 'Demand responsive' principles. But, on other hand the implementation in Swajaldhara need more in-depth understanding where such situation might be common.

You have very well pointed out the situation of traditional sources as a great negligence (I will not mention HP as traditional source). Piped water supply in areas like Rajsthan might be a problem issue, but in mountain states like Uttaranchal it's very feasible option. I will quote here that for sometime the situation will persist, the upper caste dominate and other will struggle.

This is global phenomena! We can't see this in rural context only!

---

**[Avani Mohan Singh](#), Haritika, Jhansi, Uttar Pradesh**

We agree with your concerns regarding rural piped water supply neglecting the poor and SC/ST community. But from our observations, it varies from village to village. Here in Bundelkhand region, the percentage of SC/ST population is higher in comparison to other castes, so any scheme has to have full involvement from this community.

We have working experience in more than 40 villages where we have worked on various technologies. We invite you to see the schemes run by the poor and SC community in a village called Chirkana in Jhansi district. It is a model village where all households have latrine with pipe water supply run by the same community for last five years, and for other schemes working as well.

---

**[Kashinath Vajpai](#), TNS Mode, New Delhi**

I am in agreement with Avani and his views. He has supported them well with the example.

I have already mentioned in my earlier posting that the situation which Jyotsna observed is not in general, there might be many more example coming during this discussion. Might be the situation across the country is changing with the planned implementation of reform principles by the coordinated efforts of different stakeholder groups including NGOs and Donors.

---

**[Ravi Parthasarathi](#), TATA Projects Ltd, Hyderabad**

I agree with your observation of demand driven approach; but differ in your opinion that when it's based on caste, it's a simple might is right approach and those with influence normally have their way. We're working in a relief camp at Nagapatinum (tsunami) supplying water and except for routine skirmishes or altercations all is well there. Like wise with respect to a launch in the fluoride affected rural habitations in AP where village politics prevail but has not affected water. If you are interested i can forward a small video presentation that we made to the CM-AP- last month.

---

**[Vinod Kumar.P](#), Maithri, Palakkad, Kerala**

I am Vinod Kumar, a new member to the Group. I am working in an NGO named Maithri in Kerala. We are mainly working in Natural Resource Management with the Panchayats.

I have played pivotal role in implementing the Demand driven rural water supply projects in 7 Grama Panchayths in Kerala funded by the World Bank and Royal Netherlands Embassy. The number of schemes supported by us now amount to 300+ supplying around 15000 households in the last five years.

After doing this much, the same work being scaled up to hundreds of villages across Kerala is making me worried. Unless and until the major players are extremely conscious and competent the demand driven approach will be hijacked by the middle class or worse torpedoed by the rich. In our first experience in Erimayur all of the 850 SC households were covered. But in retrospective it was not strictly demand driven, we- the NGO and Gramapanchayth- decided to cover the entire 6000 households and succeeded in that. Even beggars were covered.

But it was an uphill task. As a rule, marginalized people always live in marginalized lands, which are away from the rich, roads and other facilities. So providing water to a distant house is costly. They were not in a position to advance the upfront cash contribution (an integral part of demand driven approach) as others. Again they were misguided by the local opinion makers by telling them that they will/should get all these free from Government. Coupled with the mistrust regarding mainstream all these are sure ingredients to ensure their exclusion. In almost all of the beneficiary groups the majority was not willing to cross subsidize the poor. The effort needed to overcome all these need commitment, time, skill and processes.

From the project management's view point, they will not be able to see all these. They are keen on achieving targets and willing to compromise processes. Moreover it very difficult to get people at the field level with all these qualities. So ordinary officials took over and the exclusion of poor people becomes routine in demand driven projects.

Our second effort was in Muthalamada, specifically to cover 500 odd tribal households again funded by the World Bank. But as surveys progressed their number rose to 1030. After three years of effort and hard work, we somehow managed to cover 600 households through 19 schemes. Each scheme was a battle. The rich land owners who misappropriated most of the tribal land were not willing to give even three cents of land at the market rate to dug wells. They want to maintain the dependence of the poor on them water and tried their best to block efforts to improve the tribal's plight. These tribal households scattered over an area of 375 square kilo metres do not have capacity to bargain.

Here another aspect also came up, unless the schemes are designed in truly appropriate manner the tribal people will not be able to operate and maintain the schemes. The project will be a success but the water will not flow.

In a subsequent project at the same area we realized the bitter truth. This was also rural water supply and by that time most of the people learnt their lessons. So the project went smoothly but not the processes, the result being schemes controlled by the middle class. It again demanded external intervention to cover the poor people and the poor areas. But the result is still not satisfactory. Now I am sure that if there was not a special project for tribal people here they were never going to be covered under demand driven approaches.

In conclusion, the implementation of demand driven approach will not benefit the poor. If you want to support them, specific processes are to be laid down and **effectively followed** up by committed people.

---

**[Prema Gera](#), UNDP, New Delhi**

I have been reading the query as well as the several responses with interest.

The core issue is that the socially and economically marginalised communities and groups continue to remain excluded when it comes to accessing development opportunities. Given this concern, development programmes have been increasingly emphasising the need to move from a supply-driven approach to a demand driven approach. Although this is a major shift, it is not adequate - an issue rightly raised by several respondents. To reach the poorest of the poor, the processes that external agencies adopt become very important. A demand driven approach will not have the desired impact if the marginalised have no space in the community to voice their demand. In this context, the participatory tools for reaching the unreached continue to remain important. The right to information is a powerful instrument but for its effective implementation, capacity development is required both at the government/external agency level so that they inform 'everyone' as well as at the community level to demand information. Also, regular/frequent participatory mapping at a village level is crucial to visually bring to all stakeholders as a transparent picture of where are the assets located, their current status and who is benefiting from these.

The participation of both the panchayati raj institutions and formal/informal community-based organisations such as - federations, women self-help groups, user groups in identifying who is the needy/deserving in a village for a particular opportunity also becomes crucial. External agencies have to continuously make that extra effort to reach those who are getting left out or do not have the voice to express their demands.

### **Pawan Kumar, Livelihoods Improvement Project for the Himalayas, Dehradun**

To comment on Jyotsna's query, I would like to say that in perspective of Uttaranchal (where I worked in the Swajal project during 1996 to 2001) water is a precious commodity and in many cases transcends across caste barriers. If a pipe line is passing through a SC village or otherwise the water must be shared with the community otherwise the scheme is unlikely to be viable.

The relationships that people have with each other and the exchange mechanisms (of labour, kind etc) that are agreed between them is of paramount importance. Historically the societies have been well knit and interdependent with each other but some government interventions seem to have broken that fabric in the name of subsidy or we will do everything for you attitude.

### **Rumani Pattanayak, Mahavir Yubak Sangh, Orissa**

Greetings from Mahavir Yubak Sangh, Orissa. We are involved in Total Sanitation Activities/ Sector Reform activities in Khordha in Orissa. We are working in 5 Grampanchayat in Begunia Block in Khordha comprising of 36 Villages in the above Gram panchayat. While working with the community there is a village where there are only 20 general and 140 SC/ST population. In the above programme the SC/ST people are not able to contribute their participation of Rs 125/per IHL (Individual Household Latrines). But the general people are interested to have a SWAJALADHARA programme in the village. As against the SC/ST people who are not ready to contribute for the programme. There is the provision of MPLAD/ MLALADS which can not be utilized in the above programme.

Another issue is that there are good officers in the Administration on which depends the success/ failure of the campaign. Some officers are friendly towards the NGO/ CSO/ SHG while some favour the Contractors as a result of which the project is affected. Without social mobilization sector reform/ Total sanitation campaign is impossible.

### **Kashinath Vajpai, TNS Mode, New Delhi**

With great interest of all the members, would like to add some important issues from my experiences in a successful community led 'demand responsive' programme. On the basis of its success, the GoI-government of India, initiated the ambitious water supply programme-'Swajaldhara' across the country.

Prema has raised very important point upon continuous and extra efforts of the external agencies. In a situation where agencies are working in non-integrated project mode, the continuous reach of the agencies become crucial through integrated programme mode. With the active participation of local community groups and panchayat institutions the facilitating institutions/agencies could help the beneficiary/users through their capacity building efforts easily. Through a process of regular community interaction, we felt that people/community behave in cohesive manner and the problems faced by the economically marginalized groups automatically get sorted out during this.

In India there are 14 different government agencies taking care of the water development and management. Therefore, it becomes important to adopt the IWRM-integrated water resource

management approach, where the national and international agencies should focus upon, to involve and get active participation of all community groups including the poor section of society.

The points put forth by Pawan upon sharing of water, caste barrier and working for common cause seems relevant in community water management and sharing. Whereas, the issue of subsidy seems bit debatable, and non-relevant in the easy access to water, to the economically marginalized groups of the society.

To the point of Rumania for non-contribution and participation of the SC/ST population seems relevant during implementation of such community based programmers including Swajaldhara. Here, the point of Prema becomes much relevant where we need the continuous 'capacity building efforts' at initial stages to understand them the importance of such programmes. The understanding and support at government level (official level) is taking shape with time, and with the growing awareness of common public and facilitation of NGOs and agencies.

### Many thanks to all who contributed to this query!

*If you have further information to share on this topic, please send it to Solution Exchange for WES-Net at [se-wes@groups.solutionexchange-un.net.in](mailto:se-wes@groups.solutionexchange-un.net.in) with the subject heading "Re: [se-wes] Query: Exclusion in drinking water supply networks, from Independent Consultant, New Delhi (Comparative Experiences). Additional Reply"*

**Disclaimer:** In posting messages or incorporating these messages into synthesized responses, the UN accepts no responsibility for their veracity or authenticity. Members intending to use or transmit the information contained in these messages should be aware that they are relying on their own judgment.



*Solution Exchange is a UN initiative for development practitioners in India. For more information please visit [www.solutionexchange-un.net.in](http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in)*