



Environment

Water & Environmental Sanitation Network (WES-Net India)



Decentralization Community

Solution Exchange for WES-Net India and The Decentralization Community Consolidated Reply

Query: Improving water and sanitation governance by PRIs, from SEUF, Kerala (Experiences).

Compiled by Pankaj Kumar S. and Alok Srivastava, Resource Persons; additional research provided by Ramya Gopalan, Research Associate and Happy Pant, Research Officer

8 September 2006

Original Query: V. Kurian Baby, Socio-Economic Unit Foundation (SEUF), Kerala

Posted: 3 August 2006

Reforms in water and sanitation (watsan) sector have by now become institutionalized through: (a) pilot testing of alternate service delivery models by donors and GoI in selected locations and subsequent scaling up into programmes such as Swajaldhara and TSC across the country; (b) evidences of community acceptance, confidence and credibility in genuine reforms (c) demonstrated willingness to pay for assured, reliable and quality water services demonstrated at community level and (d) vesting watsan governance as a desirable responsibility to PRIs.

In Kerala, the Jala Nidhi programme is being implemented in selected 80 Gram Panchayats of 4 districts with the objective of assisting the Government of Kerala in improving the quality of rural water supply and environmental sanitation service delivery and to achieve sustainability of investments in the water sector. The programme covers partial capital costs and full cost sharing of O&M and has received an excellent response.

Experiences of the programme in various Gram Panchayats has shown that the success of the programme has helped political representatives to derive positive mileage from the programme, which could have been one of the factors responsible for their re-election for a second term.

Although the degree and nature of correlation between water sector governance and political prospects is yet to be adequately explored, effective watsan governance seems to make good political sense to PRIs. Yet, decentralized and sustainable service delivery is still in its infancy across the country.

In the above context, I request members to share their experiences on the following:

- Experiences from other parts of India where PRIs have effectively implemented watsan service delivery programmes.
- The institutional, political, technical, capacity-building and/or other factors that prevent gram panchayats from effective implementation of watsan reforms
- Suggestions on enhancing the buy-in of political institutions (including gram panchayats) for good watsan governance and long term sustainability.
- Evidence, if any, to corroborate the correlation between improved watsan governance and political/electoral prospects.

Responses received with thanks from:

1. [Rakesh Gupta](#), Deputy Commissioner, Karnal, Haryana
2. [S. Ramesh Sakthivel](#), WES-Net India, c/o Plan International, New Delhi
3. [Amitava Basu Sarkar](#), Himalayan Institute Hospital Trust, Dehradun
4. [P. V. Thomas](#), Indian Society of Agribusiness Professionals (ISAP), New Delhi
5. [Arun Dobhal](#), Swajal Project, Dehradun
6. [Ashok Kumar Paikarav](#), Mahavir Yubak Sangh, Bhubaneswar
7. [Anita Karwal](#), Sardar Patel Institute Public Administration, Ahmedabad
8. [Bikash Rath](#), Vasundhara, Bhubaneswar
9. [Saroj Kumar Dash](#), Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology (CAPART), Bhubaneswar
10. [N. Sanyasi Rao](#), Action in Rural Technology and Service (ARTS), Srikakulam
11. [Biswajit Padhi](#), Srusti, Khariar
12. [Parth Das](#), Unnati, Ahmedabad
13. [Yogesh Kumar](#), Samarthan - Centre for Development Support, Bhopal
14. [Nirmala Sanu George](#), SDC CAPDECK, Thiruvananthapuram
15. [Debadutta K Panda](#), MP Associates, Bhubaneswar

Further contributions are welcome!

Summary of Responses

The query on the role of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in effective management of water and sanitation (watsan) services stimulated members to present successful and not-so-successful examples of Panchayat-based watsan schemes. Respondents listed factors preventing PRIs effective watsan governance. They also identified capacity-building topics for PRIs and gave suggestions to improve the efficiency and buy-in of panchayats to responsibility for watsan governance.

Respondents presented several **examples** from a number of states where panchayats have demonstrated varying degrees of ability implementing watsan service delivery programmes. National programmes such as the Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC), Swajaldhara and Bharat Nirman are implementing several projects through PRIs. For example, in Karnal, [Haryana](#), the district achieved dramatic improvements in sanitation through multi-stakeholder support from the PRIs, Panchayati Raj Department, Anganwadi workers and media.

Similarly, examples from other regional programs in [Kerala](#) demonstrated how PRIs meet the water needs of un-reached populations in a creative and cost-effective manner, and are now involved in advanced issues like long-term planning of water resources, integrated water

management and water literacy. Participants reported that some panchayats in [Maharashtra](#) have waived house taxes and are meeting the revenue loss by selling waste, while another project from **Orissa** enhanced technical and organizational capacities of PRIs to maintain watsan infrastructure. Another example is a panchayat from [Madhya Pradesh](#) that installed a piped water supply system and implemented a sanitation scheme, managing it through tax-based revenue.

However, an experience from **Orissa** indicated that watsan programmes initiated with involvement of the District Administration and PRI representatives later ended up with minimal involvement of PRIs. Similarly, a watsan experience from **Uttaranchal** indicates that sustainability of schemes depends on actual users and that PRIs can at best play a monitoring and supportive role. These experiences show that the degree and impact of implementation of watsan programmes varies from district to district and the correlation between active PRIs and effective implementation of watsan programmes needs further analysis.

Members listed a number of **factors preventing PRIs** from taking up effective watsan management. Among institutional factors, participants felt that while PRIs are being given more and more responsibilities, they are not empowered financially nor given the opportunity to develop adequate skills to manage these. In this context, members mentioned a case in [Madhya Pradesh](#) where the state government transferred watsan infrastructure to PRIs without sufficient capacity building, and later decided that panchayats had failed to maintain them. Additionally the relationship between PRIs, which have constitutional authority and local water institutions such as Pani Panchayats (without a constitutional mandate) or MANISAs is ambiguous; often leading to inappropriate interface between the two. In addition, members also mentioned lack of proper infrastructure and adequate human resources for carrying out watsan as factors leading to inefficient watsan service delivery by PRIs.

Participants stressed lack of support from upper tiers of PRIs is another factor impeding watsan management. Another difficulty is that staff of various government line departments tend to resent being in positions that make them subservient to PRIs. Members also felt line departments need to have their capacities developed to handle the demand-driven style of operation now required, as opposed to the earlier supply-driven approach. Moreover, “technical” departments such as Public Health Engineering Department still consider technical knowledge their domain, even though decisions made by panchayat members often lead to significantly cheaper and more sustainable outcomes. Respondents noted other factors preventing effective watsan implementation are lack of revenue collection models for PRIs in watsan and government sidelining panchayats when NGOs are the implementing agencies.

Quoting examples where improved watsan delivery by PRIs has **enhanced electoral prospects** of panchayat functionaries, participants pointed out that water is a basic service that citizens expect PRIs to deliver. This is also, why panchayats feel pressurised to improve their performance in watsan.

Respondents listed areas to build management **capacity of PRI functionaries** in watsan. Firstly, awareness about the implications of 73rd Constitutional Amendment and corresponding state laws is of the utmost importance. In addition, the capacities of panchayats to address household level issues like toilet usage, wastewater disposal and rainwater harvesting needs developing, felt members. Additionally, a change in political leadership following elections makes earlier trainings irrelevant because the new representatives now have to receive training.

Members provided some **suggestions to enhance watsan governance** by PRIs.

- Reorientation of state agencies for enhancing the role of PRIs from mere involvement in implementation of watsan programmes to actual empowerment by devolution of funds, functions and functionaries.
- Using tools like effective activity mapping and localised, folk media based IEC to strengthen panchayats as primary stakeholders and service providers of watsan.
- Introducing pricing policies based on water use to sustain financially water governance institutions. Here, members cited the dual water tariff system of USA, incorporating a positive marginal cost for additional unit of water consumed.

The group also suggested ways to **enhance the buy-in of PRIs** in watsan governance. They emphasised giving panchayats the flexibility to plan and implement watsan infrastructure. In places where panchayats have flexibility, such as in **Kerala**, PRIs have used local sources and creative solutions to improve access and quality of watsan, have achieved a close rapport and better accountability with their constituency. Other methods they suggested were revenue generation through watsan services, like in **Madhya Pradesh**, and building and maintaining untied corpus funds. Members also presented an innovative experience from **Gujarat**, where all municipal candidates, irrespective of whether they had won or lost, were trained because the functionaries would all come from same pool.

To conclude, members emphasised the need to strengthen PRIs institutionally, financially and capacity-wise to improve watsan governance. They stressed that watsan services require institutionalization in the larger body of water users, even though delivering of good watsan services may provide temporary electoral success.

Comparative Experiences

Haryana

Total Sanitation Campaign in Karnal District (from [Rakesh Gupta](#), Deputy Commissioner-cum-District Magistrate, Karnal, Haryana)

The district water & sanitation scheme undertook extensive IEC activities to promote sanitation; however, coverage of toilets for Below Poverty Line (BPL) families only increased on paper. To remedy this, in 2005 the government used an inter-departmental approach involving PRIs, the media, Anganwadi workers and the Panchayati Raj Department. The strategy resulted in 109 of 380 panchayats achieving 100% coverage in above poverty line & BPL households. Read [more](#).

Orissa

From [S. Ramesh Sakthivel](#), WES-Net India, c/o Plan International, New Delhi

Drinking Water Project in Kalahandi District

An NGO implemented a program from 1997-2000, which developed a successful model involving PRIs to maintain hand pump. It consisted of training PRI functionaries, establishing spare part banks, and training and paying a small honorarium to local youth to serve as mechanics- thereby addressing maintenance delays and creating a closer relationship between PRIs and communities. However, it eventually failed because the government withdrew the honorarium.

Maharashtra

Tax Waiver for Better Waste Management

Under the Government's Water Supply and Sanitation programme, some panchayats chose to reward better waste management practices of individual households by waiving their house tax.

The panchayats made up the revenue loss by promptly selling waste disposed of by their communities in one location. Moreover, even if they failed to make up the full loss, it prevented additional expenditures to deal with problems caused by poor water and sanitation facilities.

Gujarat

“Sevavrutti Abhiyan” Capacity Building Exercise (from [Anita Karwal](#), Sardar Patel Institute Public Administration, Ahmedabad)

The state recently trained all candidates (irrespective of whether they won or loss) who contested the last urban local body elections in municipal administration. They decided to train all candidates after observing that the pool of contestants in the local elections remains more or less the same. The exercise received a very positive response, now there are demands to institutionalize the training process and conduct sessions at least twice a year. For more [details](#)

Andhra Pradesh

Community Based Organizations (from [N. Sanyasi Rao](#), Action in Rural Technology and Service (ARTS), Srikakulam)

ARTS supported MANISAs, community-based organisations to implement a water and sanitation programme in Seethangaram and Kurapam mandals of Vizianagaram. The MANISAs are constructing and managing water supply systems and the communities are contributing. ARTS is helping facilitate the process having PRIs collect the contributions to maintain the watsan infrastructure. The PRIs are still in the process of taking over the systems from MANISAs.

Kerala

From [Nirmala Sanu George](#), SDC CAPDECK, Trivandrum

Water User Committees in Kozhikode District

The centralized water supply covers only a few households. To overcome this problem, the community from the Olavanna panchayat formed local beneficiary (water user) committees as part of an initiative to provide safe drinking water to all households. The groups identified local water sources, and formulated, implemented, and monitored micro-projects. Later the panchayats made the project part of their plan integrating resources, schemes and contributions.

Local Developmental Creativity in Ernakulum District

Chellanam is a coastal panchayat, with salty water. Being a ‘tail end’ place from the pumping station, the panchayat receives very little water and in the gram sabha, the community raised this problem. Various solutions were tried- local technologies, integrated with new technologies and discovering methods on a contextual basis. In the absence of other water resources people resorted to storing rainwater using different methods.

Water Conservation Project in Trivandrum District

An initiative by SEWA and the Vilappil panchayat, supported by SDC-CapDeck, is devising sustainable development norms with water, soil and energy as major components. The initiative is working to establish cooperative relationships for conserving water. The NHGs, gram sabhas and the panchayat committees discussed and made some discussions. For more details

Micro-Projects in Water Resource Management

In three panchayats in Palakkad district, National Healthcare Groups (NHGs) formulated micro-projects in water resource management, & presented them in the Gram Sabha. They were included in the panchayat plan & NHGs implemented them. The panchayats are also developing a

long-term perspective plan to manage water, monitoring the local water situation through the resource centre, & conducting awareness programmes for the community and school students.

Madhya Pradesh

From [Yogesh Kumar](#), Samarthan - Centre for Development Support, Bhopal

Panchayat Maintaining Water Supply by Collecting Taxes in Sehore District

In Manpura village, the Rola panchayat installed and maintained a piped water supply scheme by collecting taxes on use. The village has attained 'open defecation free' (OD free) status, every household has a toilet and a soak pit for household wastewater. Additionally all houses have a roof-water harvesting structure to improve the area's depleting water table. The neighboring Rajukhedi panchayat has replicated the scheme and has also attained OD free status. Read [more](#)

Transferring O&M of Water Supply to Panchayats

The government attempted to transfer the O&M of the water supply to panchayats by issuing a hasty order without making adequately developing the capacities of panchayats. Subsequently, the government suddenly withdrew the order citing a poor maintenance rate of hand-pumps. However, there was no independent survey of functioning hand-pumps done prior to the order and there was no systematic study to determine the reasons for the poor performance.

Related Resources

Recommended Documentation

Case Study: Manpura Village, Sehore District, Madhya Pradesh (from [Yogesh Kumar](#), Samarthan - Centre for Development Support, Bhopal)

<http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/environment/cr/res24080601.doc> (Size: 194 KB)

Provides a case study of the Rola panchayat in Manpura village of Sehore District, which installed and maintained a piped water supply scheme by collecting taxes on water

From [Ramya Gopalan](#), Research Associate

Detailed Implementation Plan for Modernizing Government Program

Water Resources Department, Government of Kerala; November 2003

Click [here](#) to view PDF (Size: 373 KB)

Explains how to frame and implement a holistic water resources policy fully integrated with a total sanitation sub-policy to address issues in a coordinated manner

Project Implementation Plan

Vizianagaram Initiatives on Sanitation, Hygiene Education and Water Supply (Vishwas); February 2004

Click [here](#) to view PDF (Size: 855 KB)

Document outlines the VISHWAS' implementation strategy that is consistent with national policies and relies on CBOs/NGOs to execute relatively small schemes in the water sector

Rehabilitating the Urban Water Sector in Cambodia

Water Supply and Sanitation Feature Stories, No. 9; March 2006

<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWSS/Resources/cambodia.pdf> (Size: 100 KB)

Discusses the Urban Water Supply Project, which assisted development of national water supply and sanitation policy to foster well performing public utilities

From [Happy Pant](#), Research Officer

Lessons from DFID Water and Sanitation Programmes in Pakistan: Developing Programmes with Local Government and Civil Society (Briefing Note 21)

By Julie Fisher and Kevin Sansom; WELL: Water, Engineering and Development Centre (WEDC), Click [here](#) to view document

Briefing Note presents experiences of DFID-Pakistan in urban and rural water supply and sanitation programmes following devolution of powers to local governments

Water and Sanitation Priority Sector (Community and Infrastructure): Reconstruction Needs Assessment for Liberia

United Nations, World Bank and the Transitional Government of Liberia; December 2003

Click [here](#) to view document

Outlines the water and sanitation sector needs assessment conducted to create action plans for tow years (2004-2005), to address the identified needs

Recommended Organizations

Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC) (from [P. V. Thomas](#), Indian Society of Agribusiness Professionals (ISAP), New Delhi and [Arun Dobhal](#), Swajal Project, Dehradun)

<http://ddws.nic.in/tsc-nic/html/index.html>

This program is being implemented in rural areas to ensure communities have sanitation facilities, with broader goal to eradicate the practice of open defecation

Swajaldhara (from [P. V. Thomas](#), Indian Society of Agribusiness Professionals (ISAP), New Delhi; [Arun Dobhal](#), Swajal Project, Dehradun; and [Saroj Kumar Dash](#), Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology (CAPART), Bhubaneswar)

<http://www.swajal.org/dhara.htm>

The project provides guidelines for PRIs to be involved in implementing the scheme-emphasizes empowering and capacity building of PRIs

Nirmal Gram Puraskar (from [P. V. Thomas](#), Indian Society of Agribusiness Professionals (ISAP), New Delhi)

<http://ddws.nic.in/tsc-nic/html/ngp1.htm>

Incentive scheme initiated for PRIs to ensure complete sanitation and 'open defecation free' status at the village, block, and district level

From [S. Ramesh Sakthivel](#), WES-Net India, c/o Plan International, New Delhi

Antodaya

Kaniguma via Bhawanipatna 766001, Kalahandi District Orissa; Tel: 91-667032038/34012; Fax:

91-667032038; antodaya_kld@hotmail.com;

<http://www.interconnection.org/antodaya/drinking.html>

Implemented a drinking water project, which enabled a close rapport between PRIs and communities and reduced delays in repair and maintenance of water sources

Water Supply and Sanitation Department

Government of Maharashtra, first floor, WSSD, Mantralaya, Nariman Point 400001 Mumbai

<http://www.mahawssd.gov.in/prjInnov.asp?innovid=132>

Department is implementing the Water Supply and Sanitation Program, which has an initiative where taxes are waived for households with better waste management practices

Sardar Patel Institute of Public Administration (from [Anita Karwal](#))

<http://spipa.gujarat.gov.in/>

Conducted a capacity building exercise called Sevavrutti Abhiyan for candidates contesting ULB elections, replicable for PRIs working in water and other services

SDC – CAPDECK (from [Nirmala Sanu George](#))

Pattom, Trivandrum 695004, Kerala; Tel: 0471-2543392; Fax: 0471-2543391;

capdeck@md5.vsnl.net.in

This program on Capacity Development for Decentralization in Kerala is recommended for its initiatives in water resource management particularly the one in Palakkad district

Responses in Full

[Rakesh Gupta](#), Deputy Commissioner, Karnal, Haryana

I would like to share a success story in my district in involving Panchayats in water and sanitation, which would be of interest to members. We have made dramatic achievements in Total Sanitation Campaign in the past ten months in Karnal District (Haryana) by involving the Panchayats.

While working as Chief Executive Officer of the DRDA in the same district five years ago, we had undertaken extensive IEC activities for promotion of sanitation and also involved NGOs in the process. The coverage of toilets amongst Below Poverty Line (BPL) families increased consistently on paper, but these toilets were rarely built or used by village people in reality.

Later, as Chairman, DRDA-cum-Deputy Commissioner in Karnal in October 2005, we initiated a water and sanitation scheme using an inter-departmental approach. We involved Village heads (Sarpanches) in a big way in the process. We also honoured 109 panchayats (out of total of 380 in the district) on Republic Day 2006 for having achieved 100% toilet coverage in both Above Poverty Line (APL) and BPL households. Before Independence Day 2006, about 190 panchayats will also achieve the same. We intend to cover the remaining 80 Panchayats or so within the next two months. We are short of about 15,000 households to reach the total target of 1,67,000 households, making the overall coverage to more than 90% (as against the national/state average of 30-45%). The Panchayati Raj Institutions, Media, Anganwadi workers and Panchayati Raj Department have played a crucial role in this campaign.

We will be happy if any external agency monitors the progress and advises us on our work. Let me add that we have used a unique model in Karnal district, which can be easily followed by other prosperous districts in India.

[S. Ramesh Sakthivel](#), WES-Net India, c/o Plan International, New Delhi

I agree with Mr. Rakesh Gupta that involving PRIs, with appropriate support of NGOs/Government Departments, to work with communities/community groups brings about better synergy at the grass roots.

A drinking water project implemented in the Kalahandi district of Orissa by Save the Children (UK), during 1997-2000, with support of DFID in close collaboration of Rural Water Supply (RWS) Department involvement of PRIs demonstrated a successful model beyond the traditional 3-tier maintenance system of hand pump/water sources. The project consisted:

- Training of Panchayat functionaries on maintenance of water sources and registers of spare banks and repair schedules.

- Spare part banks at Panchayats were established that functioned with support of RWS.
- Local youth were trained as mechanics by RWS (they were paid a honorarium of Rs. 50/- per pump per month by RWSS approved by Panchayat)

This system effectively addressed the delay in repair and maintenance of water sources. The scheme brought very close rapport between PRIs and the communities leading to better accountability. Thus, PRIs looked upon this as an effective area of service to impress communities for better electoral prospect, while communities were able to gauge the effectiveness of their elected representatives clearly. Apparently, the scheme failed due to withdrawal of the honorarium of Rs. 50/- per pump to trained youths per hand pump by the Government. For details, you may contact Antodaya, Kalahandi at antodaya_kld@hotmail.com.

Also, the waiver of house tax by few Panchayats in Maharashtra to households for better waste management is interesting and praiseworthy under the Government's water Supply and sanitation programme. This loss of revenue was made up by the Panchayat by selling waste disposed by the communities at one location promptly. Even if a Panchayat fails to make the entire loss of revenue, it prevents expenditure required to address issues caused due to poor water and sanitation facility in the future. This idea may be extended to cover issues like toilet usage, wastewater disposal and rainwater harvesting at the household level.

For more information, please visit the following site of Water Supply and Sanitation Department, Maharashtra. <http://www.mahawssd.gov.in/prjInnov.asp?innovid=132>

Amitava Basu Sarkar, Himalayan Institute Hospital Trust, Dehradun

There are no two ways about it. PRIs are the grassroots level elected government closest to the ultimate users. And in any case the process of decentralization of power to the end users, to ensure sustainable development as per their felt need and effective self governance has reached a point of no return with the 73rd constitutional amendment. So far so good! Yet we should not go overboard, in our eagerness to kick-start the process.

1. PRIs have increasingly been handed over more and more power, without ever sparing a thought about empowering them appropriately and adequately to face the challenges! Thereby jeopardizing the sustainability of the momentum thus created.
2. The state agencies, mostly, have an attitude problem are not at all empowered to handle this new demand driven community participatory approach. They still think it is their monopoly and they are the boss of the sector. No doubt that they are the major players with wealth of experience, but in this new approach all the stakeholders are to combine together for a better tomorrow. NGOs/CBOs/VOs are better equipped to handle this aspect.
3. The state agencies being the major players must reinvent themselves through strategic planning and training to live up to their billing. Until then let us keep our fingers crossed. Unfortunately none of them have shown any inkling in this regard till date!
4. Unbridled power given to the PRIs also is viewed with a tremendous amount of disgust and weariness among the government officers. The CR of the District Magistrate/Executive Engineer etc. is to be written by the PRI members of various different level! We must ponder and think how much of it is justifiable and practically sustainable!!!! The need of the hour is to opt for a balanced perspective.

Till we are crystal clear in our mind and been able to evolve a clear approach and methodology, the celebrations and euphoria and the ensuing hullabaloo may be relegated to the back burner.

P. V. Thomas, Indian Society of Agribusiness Professionals (ISAP), New Delhi

The Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC) and Swajaldhara Programmes sponsored by the GoI, Ministry of Rural Development have been implemented in about 359 districts in the country during 2004 - 2005. Probably this number might have gone up and the remaining districts have been covered under these programmes.

Right from the inception TSC and Swajaldhara have been implemented with the full involvement of PRIs at all levels. In order to encourage the PRIs, MoRD has also instituted awards in the form of "Nirmal Gram Puraskar" to reward relatively better performing Panchayats in implementation of these programmes. Several districts / blocks and gram panchayats have received this award in last two years.

During 2004-05 independent third party monitors were entrusted with the task of monitoring & evaluating the implementation of this programme. Quarterly and annual reports have been submitted by these agencies giving details about the performance of the programme at the district / block and village levels. Out of eight districts of Haryana surveyed by the evaluators, Karnal district presents a mixed bag of performance. The percentage of the fund utilized for Haryana as a whole is estimated at 81.65% while Karnal district has utilized only 75.5% although they had the maximum allocation of funds of Rs. 531.54 lakhs under TSC alone. However, in terms of targets Karnal have achieved the best results with nearly 63% of the target achieved whereas Haryana as a whole has achieved only 35% of the target.

Detailed report about project outlays and progress, targets and achievements, district wise distribution of toilets by year of construction, coverage of villages, location and other details are available in the report brought out by Agriwatch, the nodal agency who coordinated the survey operation. It is evident from the report that the degree and impact of implementation of TSC varies from district to district although the institutional framework of PRIs remain the same throughout the state. There are several districts in the country, which have inactive and ineffective PRI institutions, and yet some of these districts have shown excellent record of performance in implementation of these two programmes. It is another matter that some of the State Government are adopting their own nomenclature to describe an essentially national programme the form and content of which remains the same. Panchayats, on the whole are encouraged to implement several of the popular programmes nation wide at least in principle and nothing can prevent the representatives of the grass root level in effectively implementing community oriented and socially useful programmes and schemes.

Arun Dobhal, Swajal Project, Dehradun

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment entrusting the Panchayati Raj Institutions with the responsibility of 29 departments has been a watershed in the process of empowerment of the PRIs. Uttaranchal has made a significant progress towards this, and 14 departments including water supply have been devolved to the PRIs. The experience of Swajal-Phase I, the current Swajaldhara and Total Sanitation Campaign shows that sustainability of the schemes hinges on the actual users.

PRIs have a fixed tenure of five years and the election trends of PRIs show that they are virtually now held on commercial lines. These factors have a marked effect on any scheme's

sustainability. Every next lot of PRIs after five years requires another cycle of capacity building, training etc; moreover, they also have their usual prejudices against the previous regime. The whole process of stabilization of PRIs will take some more time.

It is high time the actual user based model is practiced for the WATSAN sector by the PRIs with their role limited to monitoring of the service delivery and coordination with other stakeholders.

Ashok Kumar Paikaray, Mahavir Yubak Sangh, Bhubaneswar

I have been involved with TSC in Orissa since 2003 in Khordha, where it was launched under Water Sector Reforms. Initially, the District Administration, Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Department and PRI representatives were all involved in the programme. However, now I feel that the PRIs are involved only on paper. PRIs must be involved much more, if the TSC programme is to be successful.

Anita Karwal, Sardar Patel Institute Public Administration, Ahmedabad

I am responding to the message of Mr. Arun Dobhal with regard to this query.

We at Gujarat recently completed an interesting capacity building exercise called Sevavrutti Abhiyan. The participants were all contesting candidates of the last Urban Local Body elections. So all candidates without discrimination as to whether they had won or lost the last elections were trained about municipal administration. We had a tremendous response with demands for institutionalizing this process and conducting such programs at least twice a year. This was done after careful consideration of the fact that the pool of contestants in local body elections remains more or less the same. This is worth trying for the PRIs too. Otherwise, the fast turnover will affect the expected outcomes adversely.

Bikash Rath, Vasundhara, Bhubaneswar

Entrusting the PRIs with responsibilities of management of watsan infrastructure seems a step towards further decentralization of power. However, the irony is that even though PRIs are 'empowered' more and more, there is greater realization of the extent to which they are actually handicapped. Thus, without proper infrastructure, adequate human resources, and necessary technical knowledge, how can we expect them to perform all these activities? This is an important reason explaining why the projects fail either partially or completely in such cases.

The Orissa government has recently decided therefore that instead of directly burdening the PRIs with the job of repairing tube wells, the concerned technical officer from the concerned department would be deputed to the PRIs to take care of the work under the supervision of the Panchayats.

Saroj Kumar Dash, Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology (CAPART), Bhubaneswar

It is really a matter of concern that although the National Water Supply and Sanitation Programme was introduced in the country during 1954, we are yet to reach a position to promise safe drinking water for all even by 2015. Even with the introduction of ARWSP in 1972-73, setting of National Drinking Water Mission and opening of the Department of Drinking Water

Supply since 1999, we are yet to cover all uncovered habitations and address the problem of water quality in all habitations.

In the above backdrop, the Panchayats can, in my opinion; the effective role for Panchayats in management of Safe Drinking Water can be as follows:

- The Swajaldhara guidelines mention that the PRIs can be involved in implementation of the scheme in selecting the location of hand pumps, stand posts and spot sources and in operation and maintenance. However, emphasis on empowering and capacity building of the PRIs will enable them to discharge their responsibilities.
- Drinking Water is also one of the components of 'Bharat Nirman' but the targets set for Bharat Nirman will not be achieved unless we take village Panchayat bodies as primary stakeholders and service providers instead of banking on line-departments. An effective activity mapping in this regard could be worked out as an initiative of effective devolution of 3Fs - funds, functions and functionaries.
- Further, a demand responsive approach, community participation and effective activity mapping can really work for providing safe drinking water to all uncovered habitation by the year 2015.
- The IEC activities of the State and Union Government need to further strengthened by developing localised content and dissemination through folk media.
- An untied (Corpus) Fund may be provided to all Village Panchayats from the Administration to ensure effective operation and maintenance.

N. Sanyasi Rao, Action in Rural Technology and Service (ARTS), Srikakulam

Our organisation has promoted community-based organisations called MANISA to implement water and sanitation programme in Seethangaram and Kurapam mandals of Vizianagaram. The MANISAs are constructing water supply systems with community contribution and are managing them. Our organisation is facilitating the process of linking with PRIs to collect contributions to maintain the water supply and sanitation infrastructure in the Panchayats. The PRIs are still in a process of taking over the systems from MANISAs.

Biswajit Padhi, Srusti, Khariar

I would like to share my views on watsan activities in my own district- Nuapada in Orissa.

The government entrusted NGOs with the job of setting up low cost latrines in assigned villages without doing any need assessment. The PRIs were also never involved in the process nor their views taken.

Later, the government agencies adopted very stringent measures for evaluation - they expected the NGOs to not only do community mobilisation but also build latrines with a financial assistance of Rs. 500 only. The money was to be given to NGOs after completion of construction & after the beneficiary started using it, followed by a certificate to be given by Junior Engineer, RWSS. It was impossible to do the above at such low cost and without any support from PRIs.

Now, the government has enhanced the amount for latrine construction but participation from PRIs is still lacking.

Parth Das, Unnati, Ahmedabad

I wish to share an experience of a gram panchayat, where we have seen that the effective implementation of a drinking water supply work had improved the electoral prospects of a panchayat leader, though the internal village politics finally did not let him contest the panchayat election and a consensus candidate was selected to file nomination. However, the current sarpanch gives a lot of weightage to the earlier Panchayat leader.

The gram sabha and gram panchayat were extensively involved in prioritization of issues identified in the village Micro Plan, and in designing and planning the implementation of the drinking water supply work. The gram panchayat organized two *special* gram sabhas that indicates the relevance of the gram sabha as a mechanism for organizing people. Considering the feudal and patriarchal society of western Rajasthan, the entire process was inclusive and focused on 'vulnerability reduction'.

Reasonable support was received from all departments/agencies/organizations in this. However, the following shortcomings could have been rectified:

- Institutional - Lack of substantial support from upper tiers of PRIs;
- Political - Change of political establishment and thus a little delay in the overall processes;
- Technical - Inadequate coordination between line departments; &
- Capacity Building - Lack of awareness of the 73rd CAA and the confirming State law among Gram Panchayat members.

Lessons learnt were that once the gram sabha is convinced of the objective of the process and its outcome, the goal may be achieved, though it may look difficult in the beginning. The entire process has to be inclusive across gender, caste, political affiliation etc. Differences and misconceptions/apprehensions get resolved through dialogue and action only.

Yogesh Kumar, Samarthan - Centre for Development Support, Bhopal

Water and sanitation is one of the key services that a citizen demands from his/her local self governance body. Therefore, Panchayats feel a significant pressure for improving their performance in this area.

Local communities have managed water using local wisdom since ages. Technological innovations such as India Mark II in water and twin-pit low-cost toilets in sanitation have also taken place, which are considered people-friendly but are still controlled by the Department of Public Health Engineering. In several cases, Panchayats have the capacity and wisdom to choose an appropriate site for purchasing and installing a hand-pump or drilling a bore well. The Panchayat decisions are wise and cost effective at almost 40% to 50% lower than the cost estimated by PHED. However, on technical grounds, Panchayat's initiatives are discouraged and technical sanctions rejected on the pretext that it does not meet the desired technical norms/standards. This is why utilization rate of resources under WATSAN sector reform project of the Government - later called Swajal Dhara (a pro-decentralization project) is substantially low across the states, even in states considered far advanced in the decentralization process.

Water and sanitation cover cannot be attained unless the three tier PRI structure is strengthened, given flexibility and freedom to implement programmes. There are villages in MP, where the number of installed hand pumps is sufficient according to government criteria but half of them are dysfunctional. For Panchayats, such hand-pumps are meaningless whereas in the aggregated government statistics, these are saturated villages.

In Madhya Pradesh, as in other states, the government has made half-hearted attempts to transfer O&M of water supply to Panchayats by issuing an order overnight without adequate preparation on how Panchayats will deliver such an important function. Thus, the capacities that PRIs will require for performing this function, the appropriate level (viable size) to bear the cost of a mechanic and the resources needed to maintain a hand-pump at Panchayat level are not planned. The order was withdrawn overnight after a couple of years on the pretext that the maintenance rate of hand-pumps has gone down. No independent survey of functioning hand-pumps was done before handing over the pumps to Panchayats and no systematic study was done on the reasons for the poor performance by Panchayats to maintain hand-pumps before reverting back to PHED system.

There are several examples of demonstrated capacities of panchayats to take care of water and sanitation needs in their Panchayats. The Rola Panchayat in Manpura village of Sehore District installed has maintained a piped water supply scheme by collecting taxes on water. The Panchayat also installed the scheme. The village has attained 'open defecation free' status as every household has a toilet and a soak pit for household wastewater. There is a roof water harvesting structure in every house to improve the depleting water table in that area. The case study of the village can be found at the following link: <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/environment/cr/res24080601.doc>

The example has been replicated in a neighboring Panchayat Rajukhedi, which has also attained OD free status.

Nirmala Sanu George, SDC CAPDECK, Thiruvananthapuram

I would like to highlight a few specific examples from Kerala on Panchayati Raj and water. Considering water as part of the habitat in which we live, it has its linkages with shelter, health, livelihood means, sanitation and so on. The components and determinants of rural habitat cannot be seen separate. I am just sharing a few local initiatives of water literacy, settlement norms, management, preservation and alternate methods.

The initiative taken by Olavanna panchayat of Kozhikode district in providing safe drinking water is a widely appreciated model. The centralized water supply would cover only a few households. Therefore they tried to overcome their water problems. They formed a local beneficiary (user) committee. These groups identified local sources, formulated micro projects, implemented and monitored them. Later these projects were part of the Panchayat plan and they tried to integrate in all resources, schemes and beneficiary contribution. The committee monitors the timely water supply, maintenance and water usage by the households.

Chellanam (Ernakulam district) is a coastal panchayat with salty water as its problem. And being the 'tail end' place from the pumping station; the panchayat received very little water. Water was raised as the issue in gram sabha. It is interesting to see how they tried to find out local technologies, integrate with new technologies and have different methods for different areas. In the absence of other water resources people resorted to storage of rainwater using different methods. It is a typical example of local developmental creativity which only Panchayati Raj can provide.

In Erimayoor, Eruthempathy and Vadakarappathy panchayats in Palakkad district, NHGs formulated micro projects in water resource management and presented them in the gram sabha. These were included in the Panchayat Plan and NHGs implemented the projects. There were also awareness programmes for the community and school students on conservation and natural resource management. At the school level they formed a water club. A local long-term

perspective plan for water management is being developed. Panchayat resource centre, which has facilities to monitor climate, rainfall, water situation also functions at the panchayat office. They have also conducted water balance studies at the panchayat level. This was facilitated by an NGO called Maithri for these panchayats. Another initiative is by SEWA and Vilappil panchayat in Trivandrum district to evolve sustainable development norms where water, soil and energy form the major components. This is by establishing mutual relation and cooperation for conservation of water. The discussions and decisions are arrived at in the NHGs, gram sabhas and the panchayat committees. Water literacy has been their main plank. Both this initiatives were supported by SDC-CapDeck.

To conclude, rural habitat of which water is an indispensable component is to be managed locally. It is only through decentralization that the linkages and integration can be made possible and strengthen the Gram Panchayats for effective implementation

Debadutta K Panda, MP Associates, Bhubaneswar

The experience in Orissa in supporting people's participation in water management through Pani Panchayats has unfolded several facets. In the event of a conflict between the Pani Panchayat committee with the Gram Panchayat, the former becomes weak and defunct because Gram Panchayats have a constitutional backing. If this continues, and if short-term and quick benefits do not appear in Pani Panchayats, people may soon get discouraged and develop apathy towards them.

A rational pricing policy based on water use by each Pani Panchayat can sustain the Pani Panchayats and make them financially autonomous. A possible system for ensuring financial sustainability could be a dual system of water tariff (as in USA), where a fixed levy is charged based on the area irrigated, followed with a charge on every additional unit of water used. In this way, a positive marginal cost is built into the pricing system and the price of water is kept sufficiently high to break even the O&M costs. Thus, traditional systems of water distribution and maintenance can be encouraged with a scientific reorientation and not be subject to external influences.

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@solutionexchange-un.net.in or the Decentralization Community at se-decn@solutionexchange-un.net.in with the subject heading "Re: [se-decn][se-wes] Query: Improving water and sanitation governance by PRIs, from SEUF, Kerala (Experiences). Additional Response."

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