

Community-managed handpumps in Patharpratima

West Bengal

COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT OF RURAL WATER SUPPLY Community Water *plus*

Three interesting features in this case

- Jalabandhu (handpump mechanics) as mechanism to do repairs, paid for via tariffs and GP contributions
- Support by the NGOs not only towards water committees, but also towards the GPs (e.g. in developing local resolutions like a resolution whereby making it mandatory for all water points to have a water committee that is active with a minimum balance in order to avail the co-finance for major repairs of the handpumps)
- Working towards full coverage, before moving to a next GP areas

Key data on the West Bengal context

All India data for reference in parenthesis

Water supply coverage: 89% (96%)

GDP per capita: \$3,997 (\$4,243)

HDI: 0.492 (0.467)

Devolution Index Rank: 7 out of 24

Community Water Plus, a research project, has investigated twenty case studies of successful community managed rural water supply programmes across 17 states in India. Through these case studies, the research has gained insight into the type and amount of support to community organisations that is needed, and the resources implications of this ‘plus’ – in terms of money, staffing, and other factors. In this document we capture the inputs that contributed in improving water supply to households and an assessment of cost approximation by the Water For People in West Bengal.

Patharpratima is a block within the South 24 Parganas District of West Bengal. Of the 15 Gram Panchayats (GPs) in Patharpratima, five were declared as “everyone”, i.e. covered all households. This has been achieved by a joint-up effort of the non-governmental organisation (NGO) Water For People, its local partner NGOs and the Gram Panchayats, who have been installing handpumps, and developing mechanisms for support to community-management of those.

Photo: Jalabandhu arrives to check hand pump (Stef Smits/IRC)



The enabling support environment

In Patharpratima, a complex set-up of complementary support roles of four organisations has evolved that are enabling community-managed rural water supply:

- Gram Panchayats provide the first line of support to water committees, who are the responsible for day to day operation and maintenance. When water committees are unable to deal with a problem with water supply, e.g. a repair that is beyond their capacity, they can request the GP for support. GPS also play an enabling role by defining local by-laws or resolutions
- The GPs in turn are supported by the block that amongst others assists in channelling funding for new hardware and rehabilitations, it also assists GPs in its planning and coordination functions, adopt block-wide by laws and access certain funds from political representatives.
- There is a grassroots NGO, Digambarpur Angikar, which plays a lead role in community mobilization and training during implementation (or rehabilitation) of hardware.
- This in turn is supported by Water For People, that provides the technical assistance to Digambarpur Angikar by training its staff and orienting the programmatic approach. Water For People carries out monitoring of services delivery (through its FLOW monitoring system), and does research to inform programme management.

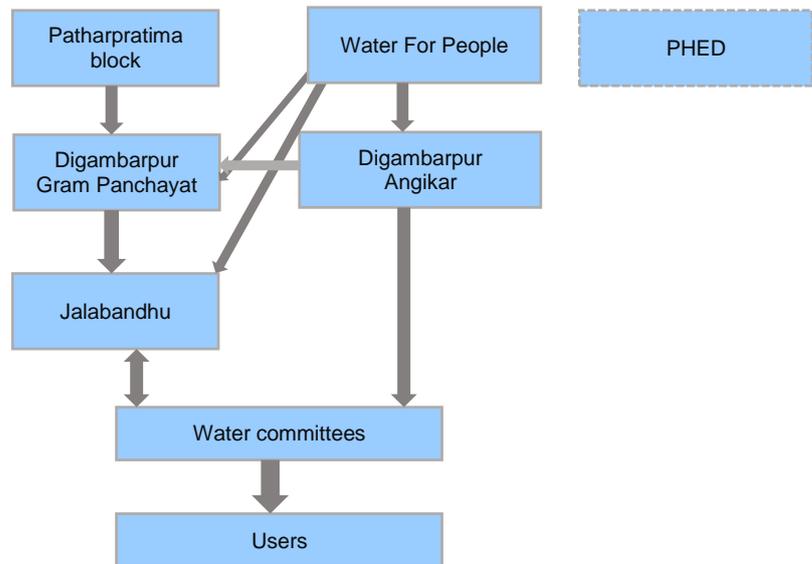


Figure 1: Institutional set-up in Digambarpur Gram Panchayat

Community service providers

Their service provider roles is distributed over three entities:

- Community water committees are semi-formal groups of 9 members having a bank account. They carry out day to day operation and minor maintenance activities. In addition, they keep a basic administration of the limited tariffs they collect, and which they use for some minor repairs.
- Jalabandhus are trained private entrepreneurs, who provide handpump repair services, contracted for this purpose by the water committees.
- The GPs is next to an enabling support entity also a service provider as, it plays a lead role in funding new investments, co-finance the larger repair works and monitoring. Moreover, they contract Jalabandhus to carry out preventive maintenance. The GP presents strong local leadership and willingness and to support community management, but they lacking professional skills, tools and resources to do so.

This arrangement was found to be functional, whereby water committees in the villages studied are functional and fulfilling their roles. The Jalabandhus are also active and getting a reasonable amount of business being contracted by water committees and/or GPs. However, the arrangement is set up to act at a low degree of professionalization, so book keeping is basic, and little formalised.. Still, the overall service delivery contrast sharply with villages in neighbouring GPs, where there is no active water committee, as a result repairs are not done in a timely manner, and where there is not even a minimal cash reserve for small expenses.

Service received by households

The coverage in all of the villages that were assessed as part of this study was 100%, all users having access to the handpumps within the stipulated distance. The service level received is presented below:

Table 1: Distribution of households with different service levels from handpumps in Digambarpur (n=88)

Service level	Quantity		Accessibility		Water quality perception	Reliability
	Summer	Non-summer	Summer	Non-summer	Summer and non-summer	Summer and non-summer
High	0%	0%	24%	35%	85%	20%
Improved	0%	0%	20%	27%		38%
Basic	0%	0%	15%	19%	11%	0%
Sub-standard	6%	1%	33%	15%	3%	32%
No service	94%	99%	8%	3%		6%
No data	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	5%

This table shows that the service level for quantity of water was classified as sub-standard or no service. That is due to the fact that the amounts that people obtain from the handpumps was below the reference 40 lpcd, or even below the 20 lpcd. People only fetch water for drinking and cooking and other smaller household uses – including water for cattle - from the handpumps. Those domestic uses that require more water (personal hygiene, laundry, washing utensils) are generally done as “in-stream use” in the ponds themselves. This results in the quantity service level appearing low.

The costs

The costs of this service delivery model are shared between the various organisations involved this can be seen below the table. Capital costs are shared almost equally between the local government and NGOs The remaining 10% - around INR 17/person – comes from communities. Communities are expected to cover the operation and maintenance costs through tariffs. Though the tariffs are low at INR 9/person/year, a modelling exercise showed they are sufficient to cover minor maintenance. Capital maintenance costs come mainly from the government, whereas the direct support in software mainly comes from the NGOs.

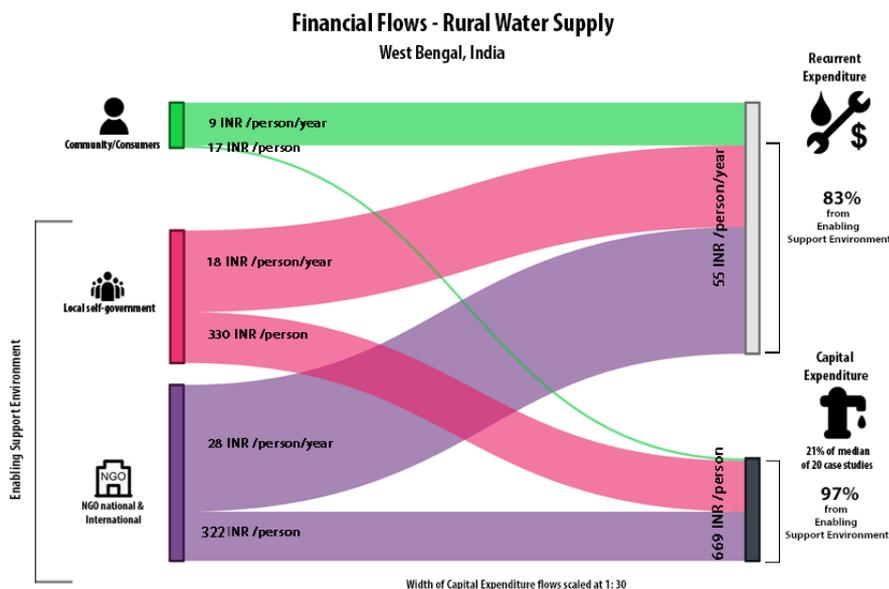


Figure 2: Summary costs and sources of funding in Digambarpur Gram Panchayat area

Conclusions

Central to the approach of Water For People to comprehensively address water needs in Patharpratima block was the concept of concentrating efforts in a limited number of Gram Panchayats so as to reach everyone with water supply. In addition, efforts went into improving sustainability by putting in place maintenance arrangements at different institutional levels: water committees for day to day operation and minor maintenance, Jalabandhus providing repair services to water committees and on assignment to Gram Panchayats, grassroots NGOs to support the water committees and working closely with local government to develop appropriate by-laws and other local resolutions.

A clear support model has evolved to support community-managed handpumps in Patharpratima, both in terms of the (technical) capital maintenance, as well as in the software of community management. Through that support, water committees can function and carry out basic organisational and financial management and outsource technical maintenance to Jalabandhus. As a result, everyone in Digambarpur has now access to functional handpumps – even though these provide only a basic level of service for drinking and cooking mainly. The reliability and accessibility are higher than in areas where this form of supported community management is absent.

The set-up can be classified as a form of “community management with direct support”, as the community does most of the maintenance but receives significant support. This support comes in the form of dedicating an estimated 10% of capital investments to software activities, including the setting up and training of water committees. Moreover, it consists of a strong contribution to direct support, i.e. the ongoing training and mentoring of water committees and GPs.

About this note

This is a summary of a full case study as part of the Community Water Plus project. The original case study was written by Stef Smits and Snehalatha Mekala, and the summary was prepared by Ruchika Shiva. The full case study can be downloaded <http://www.ircwash.org/projects/india-community-water-plus-project>

The project has investigated successful community-managed rural water supply programmes and approaches across India, and drawn out lessons on the support needed to make community-management successful. The project is funded by Australian Aid and is being implemented by a consortium of partners, including: the Administrative Staff College of India (ASCI), the Centre of Excellence for Change (CEC), Malaviya National Institute of Technology (MNIT), the Xavier Institute of Social Service (XISS) and IRC with overall project coordination provided by Cranfield University.



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