

# COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT OF RURAL WATER SUPPLY

plus  
Community Water



managed by Cranfield University on behalf of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) of the Australian Government



## Community Management of Rural Water Supply: Community Water <sup>Plus</sup> Concepts and Research Methodology – Summary Paper

### 1 Introduction

This summary paper introduces the concepts and methods of the Community Water *Plus* project, which is a three year research project funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) of the Australian Government as part of the Australian AID Development Awards Research Scheme. Australian AID is interested in understanding issues of community management of water in India – a country which is considered as leading the way in scaling up rural water supply services – so as to replicate these best practices in their development programmes in other parts of Asia and Africa, and to help develop the knowledge base needed for government to roll out these practices throughout India. This is a summary of a more complete working paper that introduces the concepts and methods for this research.

The research is being undertaken by a consortium of partners including the Administrative Staff College of India (Hyderabad), the Centre of Excellence for Change (Chennai), Malaviya National Institute of Technology (Jaipur), Xavier Institute of Social Service (Ranchi) and IRC from The Netherlands. Overall project coordination is by Cranfield University from the United Kingdom.

### 2 Background, Research Questions and Outcome

Community management has long been recognised to be critical for rural water supply services delivery. Indeed, community management has contributed significantly to improvements in the implementation of rural water supplies. However those supplies appear to be sustainable only when communities receive appropriate levels of support from government and other entities in their on-going service delivery tasks. Community Water <sup>Plus</sup> (Community management of rural water supply systems) is a research project which aims to gain further insights into the type and amount of support and professionalisation that is needed, and the resources implications of this ‘plus’ – in terms of money, staffing, and other factors, in order to achieve sustainable community management.

The research will investigate twenty cases studies of successful community-managed rural water schemes across India in order to determine the extent of direct and indirect support required to sustain services with a valid level of community engagement. The resulting analysis will categorize the different levels of ongoing support required for different technical solutions, at a level of competence and bureaucratic involvement that is indicative of normal conditions across many low-income countries. There is a great advantage in researching in India where the range of States, and their varying socio-economic conditions, gives a good sample of technologies and approaches which are of relevance to lower-income countries, both now and in the future as they also reap the benefits in their infrastructure development of economic growth.

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The expected outcome of the project is to have a better understanding of the likely resource implications of delivering the ‘plus’ of successful community management ‘plus’, and the possible trajectories for institutional development of effective support entities for community management. These valuable findings will be shared with WASH policy-makers, implementers and international finance institutions, both in India and globally.

In order to achieve that outcome, the project focuses on the following main research question:

- *What type, extent and style of supporting organisations are apparent in sustainable community managed water service delivery relative to varying technical modes of supply?*

This is further broken down in the following specific questions:

- What are the current modalities of ‘successful’ community management and how do they differ in their degrees of effectiveness relative to varying technical modes of supply?
- What supporting organisations are in place to ensure sustainable water service delivery relative to varying technical modes of supply?
- What are the indicative costs of effective support organisations relative to varying technical modes of supply?
- Can particular trajectories of professionalising and strengthening the support to rural water supply be identified?

## 3 Conceptual Framework

Ultimately, we believe that for successful community management, proper support is needed to deliver water services that are: *effective* in terms of quantity, accessibility, quality and reliability; *equitable* in that all rural households can access services irrespective of gender or social status, indeed that there is a bias towards the poorest who most benefit from good public health provision; *sustainable* or *viable*, in that there are adequate resources available, from whoever, to ensure the continuation of the service; *efficient* such that the minimum resources are used to deliver the desired quality of outputs; and *replicable* such that approaches can work at scale across different localities, not being dependent upon particular situations or leaders.

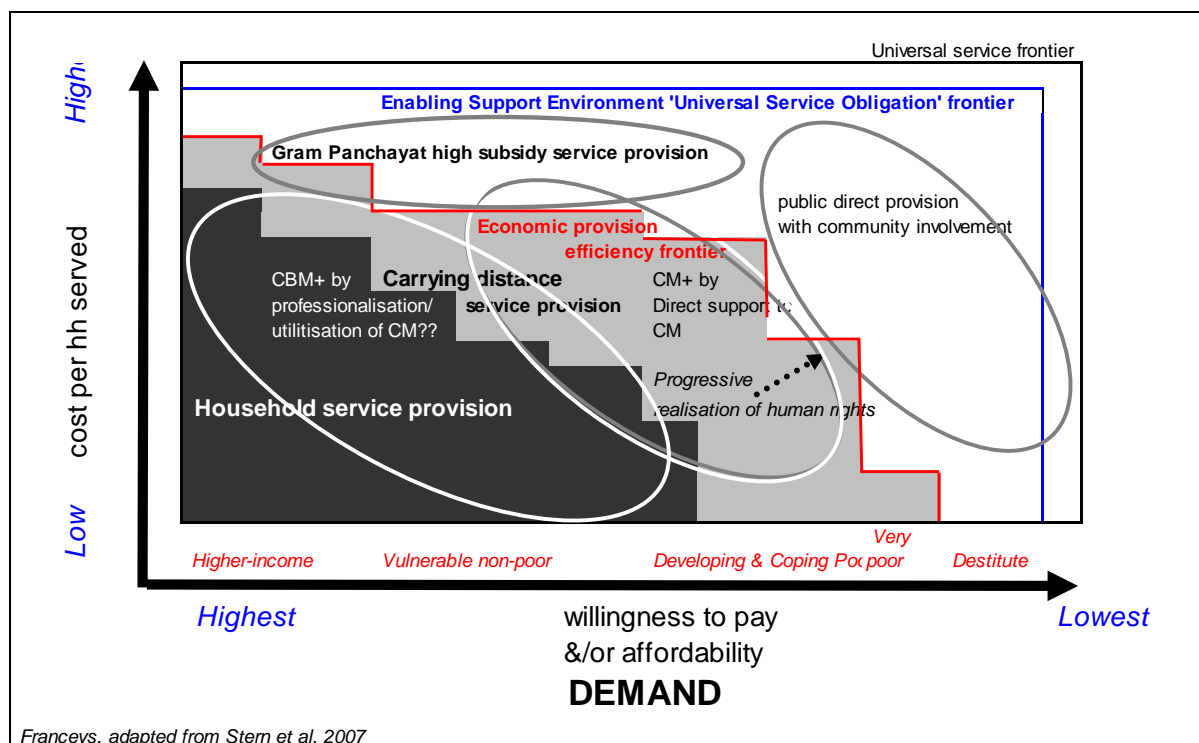
Building on these principles and applying general insights from the theoretical literature on participation and partnerships, the research identifies several “community-engaged approaches” to ensuring the fulfilment of the human rights to water. These are illustrated in the diagram below and include: 1) direct provision with community involvement, 2) community management with direct support and 3) community-based management. These three broad approaches represent different levels of balance of what communities themselves do, and the extent to which they are supported by external agencies. We believe that these different approaches are closely related to factors such as average income levels, cost of technology, development status and context and that across the demand and cost continuum it is expected that the intensity of community involvement will vary.

Key to all three models is the presence of what is called an ‘enabling support environment’ within the Indian context. The enabling support entities (ESE), that make up this environment, fulfil what Lockwood and Smits (2011) call service authority and monitoring functions, such as planning, coordination, regulation, monitoring and oversight, and direct support functions, such as technical assistance. The main objective of such support is to help communities in addressing issues they cannot solve on their own and gradually improve their performance in their service provider functions. Within this research, we will seek

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to classify the varying types of community management and the necessary enabling support environment, and get a further understanding of which models are functioning best. An interrelated objective will be to identify the resource implications of this *plus*, economic as well as financial, which is needed to deliver demonstrably successful, sustainable water services across these typologies.



**Figure 1: Application of *plus* approaches in relation to demand and costs of water supplies. Source: adapted from Franceys and Gerlach (2008) after Stern et al. (2007)**

## 4 Research Methodology

The study will investigate twenty case studies of successful community management. What can be considered successful can be understood at various levels: at the level of service that users receive, at the level of the service provider carrying out its tasks with a certain degree of community engagement, and at the level of partnership between the support entities and the service provider. The research will therefore assess the degrees of success across various elements, as summarised in Figure 2 below, recognising that the ultimate validation of success are the service levels received by users.

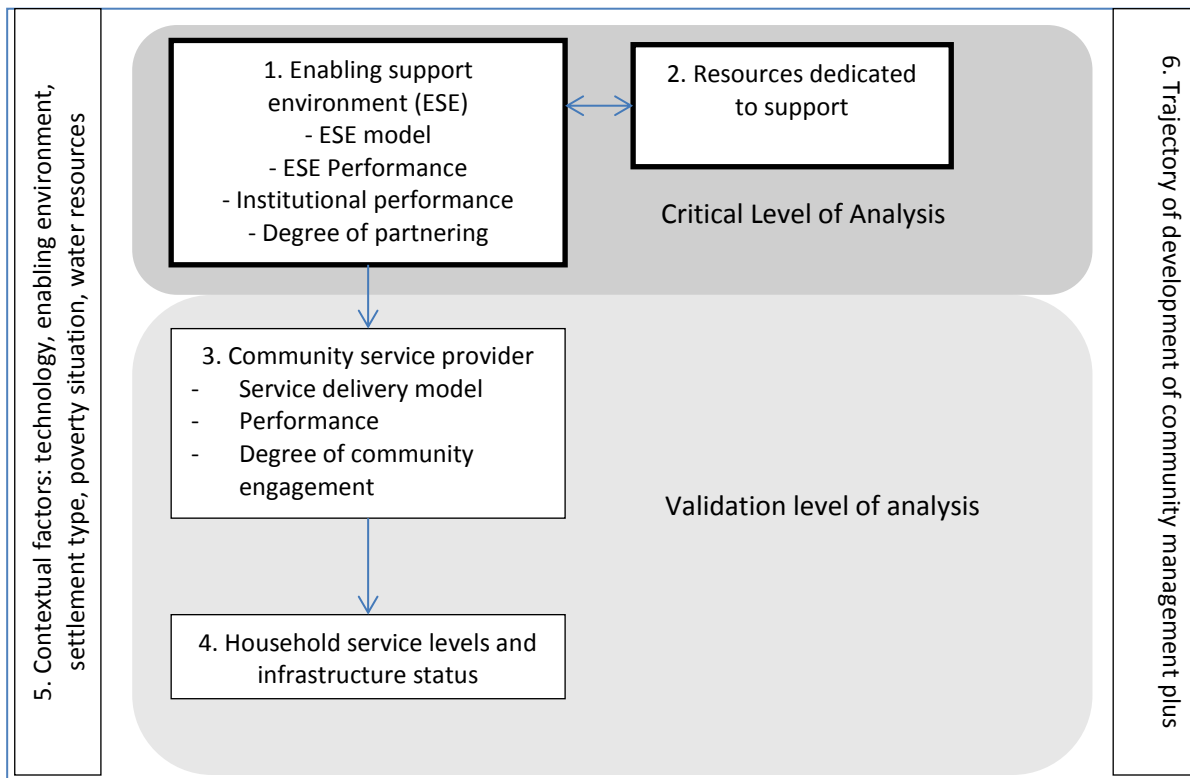
In selecting the twenty best practice case studies, the research has scanned over 161 community management support programmes in India covering a combined population of nearly 50 million people. Through a detailed process of selection using both secondary data and pilot visits, the most successful 20 case studies will be selected. In each case study, the support organisations alongside four villages will be studied to understand the nature and experiences of support and to validate the level of services households receive. This will include three best practice villages and one 'control' village per programme enabling intra-case as well as inter-case comparability.

Data collection will involve key informant interviews, focus groups and surveys as well as data mining from secondary sources, such as financial records, annual reports and other documentation. Qualitative and quantitative data will be collected, coded and analysed to provide a rich description of the entity or

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entities responsible for support, including an assessment of institutional performance and the degree of partnering with service providers.



**Figure 2: Elements of the research**

The resource implications of supporting and delivering *successful* community managed water supply – that is the cost of the ‘plus’ – will also be assessed. This includes putting a financial cost on these resources based on discussions and analysis of the financial records of support organisations. Ultimately, the research will enable us to report that it costs INR 'x' per person per year to deliver successful community management of rural water supply. Such figures, properly taking into account the software costs of support organisations, have not previously been available.

For additional information and updates on the project, including the full methodology working paper and research protocols, please visit the website: <http://www.ircwash.org/projects/india-community-water-plus-project>

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