

Nenmeni Sudha Jala Vitharana: professional community-managed water supply

Kerala

COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT OF RURAL WATER SUPPLY Community Water *plus*

Three interesting features of this case

- A supporting organisation is appointed for transferring the scheme to the community, through empowerment and assistance in forming legally recognised Beneficiary Groups and Scheme Level Executive Committees.
- “Apex level” community bodies are formed that represent different Beneficiary Groups – these “Scheme Level Executive Committees” are an example of professionalization as they then contract out operational costs at a larger scale
- The Gram Panchayat is an enabling support entity.

Key data of the Kerala context

All India data for reference in parenthesis

Water supply coverage: 93% (96%)

GDP per capita: \$5,922 (\$4,243)

HDI: 0.790 (0.467)

Devolution Index rank: 1 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. This is a case study on the *Nenmeni Sudha Jala Vitharana Society* (NSJVS - Nenmeni Drinking Water Supply Society) as a model of professionalised community management of water service delivery.

NSJVS is part of Kerala Government’s efforts of decentralised governance wherein 1058 water supply schemes that were originally managed by Kerala Water Authority (KWA) were transferred to Gram Panchayat (GP) with powers to collect user charges, and with support of the World Bank aided Jananidhi I project.

Nenmeni faced water shortage, which the scheme managed to address. Initially the GP maintained the scheme for over two years before handing it over in 2007 to the community-based Scheme Level Executive Committee (SLEC), which has successfully managed it since. It was supported by Kerala Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Agency (KRSWA), autonomous government body and a support organization called Shreyas (an NGO).



The enabling support environment

The enabling support environment consists of KRWSA, Shreyas and Gram Panchayat. Their roles during scheme formulation were as follows

- KRWSA selected the GP for the scheme and formalising its entry, approving an eligible support organisation and engaging them in pre-feasibility survey, engineering survey and scheme design.
- The GP was the main project implementing agency during the two year implementation period. Its role involved identifying the support organisation and training and development of beneficiary groups with the assistance of KRWSA and Shreyas.
- The NGO Shreyas was selected by GP, assisted BG in scheme design and capacity building during implementation phase to enable them take the scheme forward.

After system construction, KRWSA has officially withdrawn from Nenmeni. However, it provides support depending on type of demand from the beneficiary groups. Also Shreyas exited in 2007, but still works with the GP in other sectors. The beneficiary groups seek Shreyas’ advice when in need. The GP plays a supportive role by including large scale expenditure in the village development plan.

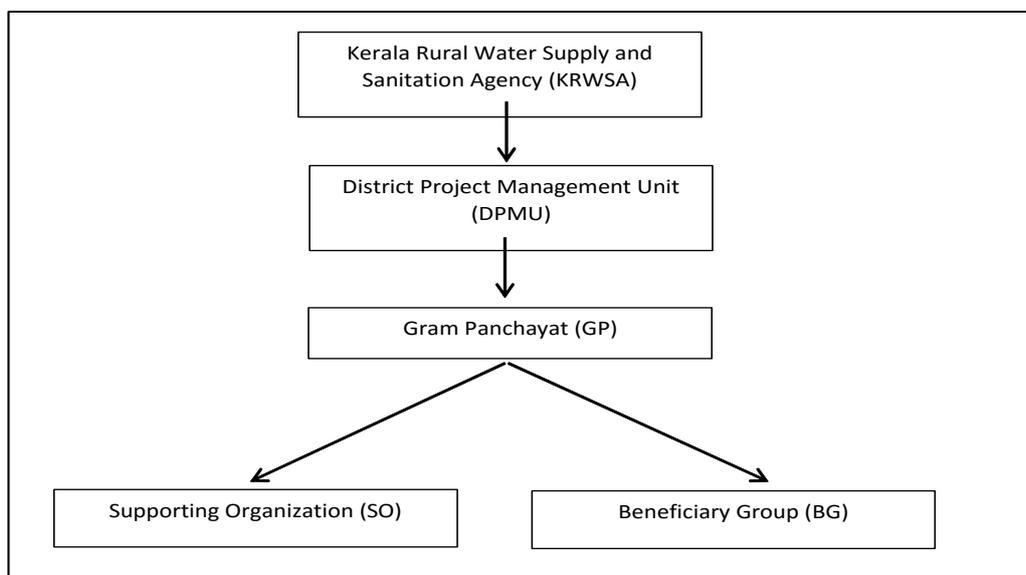


Figure 1: Stakeholder Diagram

Community service provider

NSJVS is now the service provider and is an independent body with a dedicated team under a technically sound and efficient leadership. It manages the water scheme professionally and provides expertise to other organisations involved in water supply management.

Its responsibilities include water supply for the residents of Nenmeni on a long term basis, operate and maintain the water supply facilities by taking up required repairs and collecting user charges for the same and resolve any disputes arising with regard to water supply under this facility. NSJVS adopts professionalised book-keeping, applies a progressive block tariff for household connection and does monthly meter reading.

It maintains high level community involvement through community engagement, awareness, and information sharing on changed services, convenient payment points and accessibility to discuss issues of water supply, water quality or temporary disconnection.

Service received by households

NSJVS service reaches 18 of 23 Wards of the GP but only a portion of households have connected to the water supply, which varied from below 10 to 360 per Ward. The remaining households receive water supply from other service providers or from their own open wells. Among SC/ST, coverage is only 16.7 per cent, well below the one of the general population. Reasons include the cost of services and dispersed household locations.

Overall, the level of service is high, with good quantities of water delivered to the home in a continuous and reliable manner. In general, the community is satisfied with NSJVS services except for water quality, which some consider to be poor due to river source and rains making it muddy.

Table 1: Household Service Levels

Service Level	Quantity	Accessibility	Quality	Continuity	Reliability	Overall
High	99%	100%	91%	100%	97%	89%
Improved	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	6%
Basic	0%	0%	4%	0%	0%	0%
Sub-standard	0%	0%	4%	0%	0%	3%
No Service	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	2%

The costs

Capital costs have come mainly from the World Bank supported Jananidhi project, which was co-financed by the Gram Panchayat and the community, in line with standard practices of the demand-responsive approach. Users cover the costs of operation and minor maintenance almost fully. But for capital maintenance, they depend on grants from the Gram Panchayat or KRWSA. This means that the total recurrent costs are shared between community and different government entities.

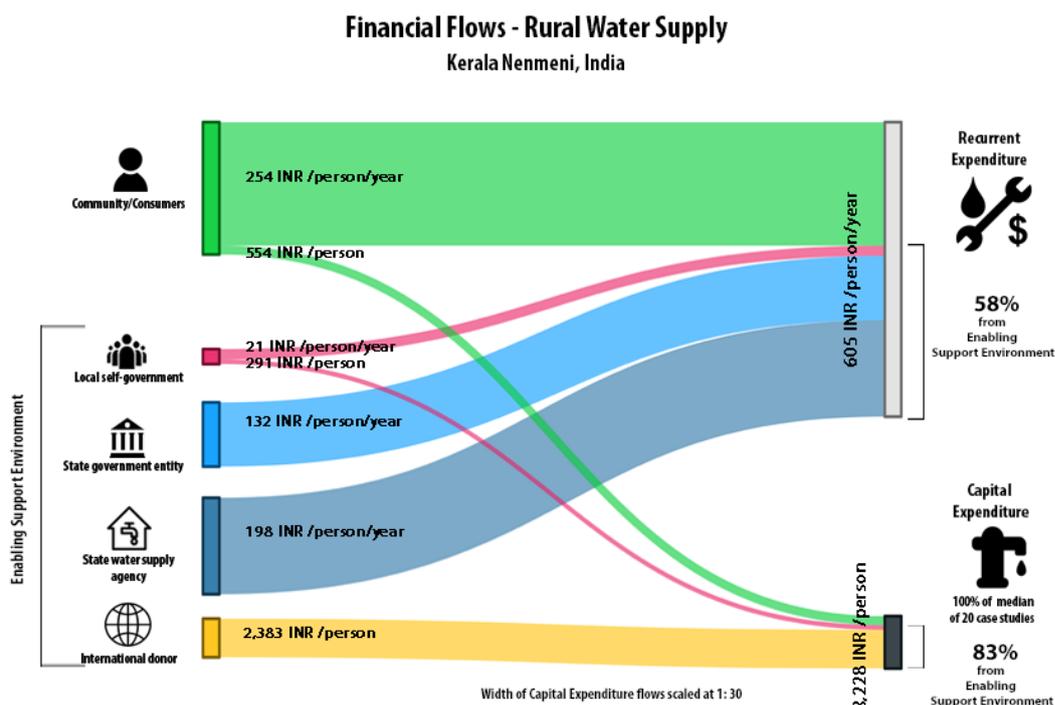


Figure 2: Costs and financial flows for capital and recurrent expenditures

Conclusion

This case is an example an independent entity exclusively dedicated to the provision of water supply, though with strong ties to the Gram Panchayat and KRWSA. Being an independent entity has allowed NSJVS to become professionalised in the way it operates, maintains and administers the system. This was made possible due to the participatory process by agencies involved during the project implementation. Specifically, community contracting at the implementation phase strengthened community's capacity, which is essential for subsequent operation and maintenance of the schemes. Efficient support organisation played a vital role in capacity building and skills of the community.

This now has resulted in an increased customer base and area coverage. These receive a high level of service through household connections with all but continuous supply. Only some concerns exist around water quality, as the source of water is surface water, which at times turns muddy.

Whereas NSJVS has been able to cover almost all operation and minor maintenance costs from tariffs, it still needs to rely on grants from the Gram Panchayat and KRWSA for major capital maintenance and occasional support.

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 Rema Saraswathy and the summary 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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