

Gram Vikas support to community-managed rural water supplies

Odisha

COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT OF RURAL WATER SUPPLY

Community Water *plus*

Four interesting features of this case

- 'Gram Vikas believes in high quality solutions that should be 'cost effective' rather than 'low-cost'. Toilets and separate bathrooms are constructed, as well as three taps in each house. The aim is to provide water for 24 hours a day in all villages.
- There is a high commitment threshold for the programme. Every single household in the community has to agree to participate; full coverage with toilets needs to be achieved, with households contributing around 50% of the costs for toilet construction.
- Households contribute INR 1,000 to a capital reserve fund to pay for extensions and maintain 100% coverage with household connections
- Schemes are kept simple and operational manuals and designs are 'de-mystified'

Key data on the Odisha context

All India data for reference in parenthesis

Water supply coverage: 94% (96%)

GDP per capita: \$2,998 (\$4,243)

HDI: 0.362 (0.467)

Devolution Index Rank: 13 out of 24

Photo: Prakash C Dash

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 document presents the case of the NGO Gram Vikas in Odisha, that has been developing and supporting community-managed rural water supplies across the State.

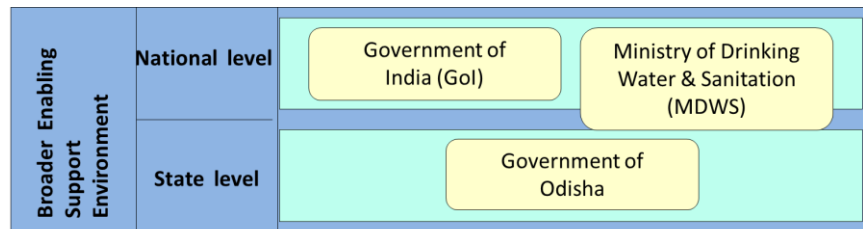
Gram Vikas works with communities on development issues with water and sanitation being the entry point. The Gram Vikas model aims at making communities self-sufficient. Its role at the time of entry is of a community mobiliser, at the implementation stage it plays a role of a trainer, post construction it assumes the role of a facilitator, building the villagers' capacity to manage systems independently.

Another key tenet of the programme is the provision of high levels of services with household connections and 24x7 supply. The scheme of Gram Vikas has brought wider benefits to the community members, as time used to fetch water is now being used for economic activities by women. Further, Gram Vikas villages have also become a preferred choice for women to get married into.



Gram Vikas as the enabling support entity

Gram Vikas is the support agency in the villages studied. It is an NGO based in Odisha, working with communities on development issues with water and sanitation being the entry point in villages.



The initiation of Gram Vikas' interventions in a village is contingent upon agreement and participation of 100% of the families in each village or habitation, ensuring that the benefits are shared equally among all.



Figure 1: Institutional set-up of the Gram Vikas programme

The Gram Vikas model aims at making communities self-sufficient, its role at the time of entry is of a community mobiliser, at the implementation stage it plays a role of a trainer, post construction it assumes the role of a facilitator, building the villagers' capacity to manage systems independently. Ample support, in terms of training, is provided to the community to demystify the engineering behind the water systems. Gram Vikas continues to provide timely support (within 24 hours), on request from a community.

Village Water and Sanitation Committees

The Village Water and Sanitation Committees (VWSC) fulfil the service provider role. In the initial phase of community mobilization, Gram Vikas support the community in forming a VWSC. These committees are inclusive and representative of the community, with at least half of committee female members, representing all castes and social classes in the village equitably. The members are selected unanimously and are trained by Gram Vikas on various aspects of managing the schemes.

During the service delivery phase, the VWSCs, in consultation with the community and some support from Gram Vikas, are responsible for:

- Tariffs and financial management: VWSC sets the tariffs. They collect tariffs that are then deposited in a separate bank account in the name of the VWSC. The committees keep track of the transactions and producing annual accounts.
- Managing supply: VWSC is responsible for setting the duration of supply and alteration of quantity of supply for special occasions. They employ one pump operator.
- Project planning: they are also responsible for expansion planning keeping in view local conditions and preferences.
- Water conservation: VWSC also plays a role in sensitizing community members of water conservation.

In villages where tariffs are too low to cover repair and bills, community member contribute in monetarily or in labour at those times.

Service received by households

There is complete coverage with household connections in the Gram Vikas supported villages. In terms of quantity, accessibility, quality, continuity and reliability of water supply, the services in Gram Vikas villages was high as illustrated in the table.

Table 1: Household service levels summary

	Quantity	Accessibility	Water quality perception	Continuity	Reliability
High	65%	97%	100%	99%	96%
Improved	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%
Basic	30%	0%	0%	1%	0%
Sub-standard	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%
No service	5%	2%	0%	0%	0%

While all villages showed a high level of satisfaction, Lakhampur shows the lowest overall satisfaction with 7% of that community being dissatisfied. The reason for this is intermittent water supply and the low quantities following from it. However, keeping in mind all other aspects of the services are working very well, the overall experience is still positive. In term of equity, there was no correlation between total household income, land ownership and quantity or accessibility could be found in the Gram Vikas village, whereas in the control village, a correlation between household income and reliability could be found, the households experiencing the highest number of breakdowns and the longest response time have some of the lowest incomes in the village.

The costs

Capital costs - of a total of 2956 INR/person - are largely done by the external support entities, mainly the national government. The government channels funds via Gram Vikas, who also contribute some 2% of the costs, essentially those related to capacity building and community mobilisation. Community contributions to the initial implementation costs are 18%. Of all the capital costs, around 3% is for software support.

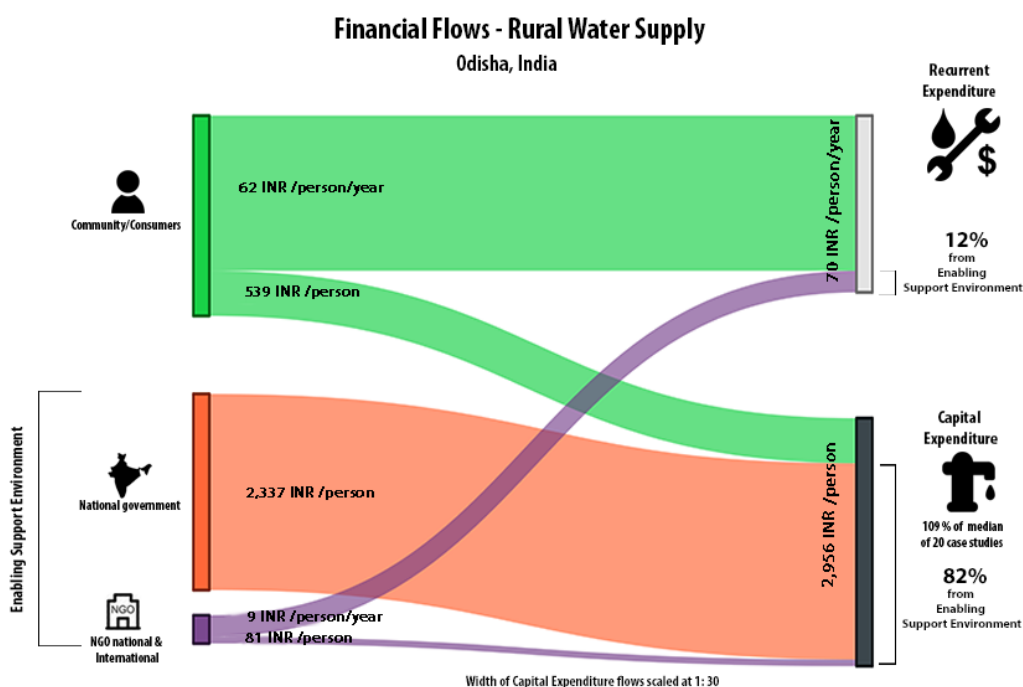


Figure 2: Financial flows of capital and recurrent costs

Of the 70 INR/person/year of recurrent costs communities pay around 88%. These are roughly the costs of minor operation and maintenance. The contribution of NGOs is largely in the form of direct support to water committees in their administrative tasks and advice on book keeping, retraining and so on.

Conclusion

Gram Vikas was found to be effectively organised and staffed and having a clear vision and mission, which is taken up by the employees. Intensive support is given to communities before implementation. VWSC is formed in every village and members trained in technical, as well as administrative and financial matters. For ongoing support, Gram Vikas provides it mostly on a request basis.

The VWSC were found to be functioning well, they often do not need support for longer periods of time. While approach of mostly on-demand support seems to be working very well, providing systematic retraining to committees after several years of operation could further ensure sustainability. Partnering between Gram Vikas and service providers was assessed as mostly operational and collaborative, which shows the close and good cooperation.

The institutional model can be classified as community management *plus*. The community is highly involved and the VWSC manages the system quite independently, although it gets some support from Gram Vikas. User charge collection is enough to cover recurring costs, so no direct financial subsidy is needed. The intensity of community involvement, as well as the professionalisation is lower in the control village, which places it on the border to direct public provisioning with community involvement. This especially because user charges does not cover operating expenditure and RWSS, a government entity, pays the full electricity bills.

In villages supported by Gram Vikas, 95% of users receive acceptable quantities, compared to 48% in the control village. Direct support costs for Gram Vikas were estimated at INR 33, indirect support costs at INR 8 per person and year.

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 Matthias Javorszky, Prakash C. Dash and Pramil K. Panda. 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.



The research has been funded by the Australian Government through the Australian Development Awards Research Scheme under an award titled Community Management of Rural water Supply Systems in India. The views expressed in this summary sheet are those of the project and not necessarily those of the Australian Government. The Australian Government accepts no responsibility for any loss, damage or injury, resulting from reliance on any of the information or views contained in this summary sheet.

