

Equitable and Sustainable Supply of Drinking Water

Water and Sanitation (Create Social Preparedness to Avail Drinking Water)

In order to ensure drinking water security in rural India, Department of Drinking Water Supply under the Ministry of Rural Development GoI, brought about a paradigm shift in National Policy framework from 11th plan onwards and the "Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme" has been renamed as "National Rural Water Supply Programme (NRWSP) and Now it is known as "Har Ghar Nal se Jal".

Projects that are totally managed by the government and without active participation of the community leaves less scope for development as the end users cannot exercise their options and demand better service delivery. This applies to the rural water supply programs also. Further, the scenario would be more challenging with the increase in population, demand and rapid depletion of ground water resources. Over dependence on groundwater and depletion increases the incidences of quality issues. One of the solutions to address quantity and quality issues is to ensure achieving drinking water security at the household level. This could be achieved by involving the community in the process and at the same time enhancing their skills and abilities in such a manner that communities are empowered to manage and maintain their drinking water sources and systems. PRIs and local community together should be able to plan, implement, manage, operate and maintain the in-village water supply schemes.

However, this needs preparing the community with appropriate awareness programs and capacity enhancement activities.

In order to enable the different actors or stakeholders to play their role effectively and efficiently,



in a given context, it is essential that the gaps are bridged with relevant information and proper communication at different levels on one hand and different stages on the other. This not only enhances the participation and involvement of the end users i.e. the 'primary stakeholders' at all different stages but, simultaneously, also helps to inculcate the sense of ownership and belonging with the various provisions of the given scheme/ programme/ project.

In this context, Information Education and Communication (IEC) play a prominent role to dispel misconceptions and fill knowledge gaps and build on positive levels of understanding. Information dissemination helps the community to identify the options (for example various schemes and provisions) available to them (GP). This in turn helps them to plan as per their needs. Further, it helps in exercising their rights and shoulder responsibility too.

With this as backdrop GVNML got involved in a project “Create social preparedness to avail drinking water” covering 2371 villages across four districts viz. with IEC (information, education and communication) as the core activity. The four districts incidentally come under ‘dark zones’ as the ground water levels are dismally low and the fluoride content is observed to be more than the limits. Hence, the piped water supply in this context also addresses these issues as the water supplied is safe and potable.

There are three phases in the project cycle: (i) preparatory phase (ii) implementation phase and (iii) follow up phase.

Preparatory phase commences wherein an environment is created for people to come together and for the community to comprehend the concept, accept the need for mutual cooperation, and arrive at consensus for collective decision making. Data is collected through various exercises and analysed for understanding the situation and mapping the resources. Formation and strengthening of village institutions (VWHS&C, Mahila-mandal) to carry out the task is taken up during this phase. Information dissemination is taken up through various forms of communication material for achieving effective community mobilization and motivation.

Implementation phase starts with taking stock of the needs and resources available at the village level. In other words, it entails assessing the demand supply situation. Site selection for water

supply systems (stand post/CWT) is made with the involvement of the community. Collaborations and networking is made between the village institutions and the line department for undertaking physical works. Various capacity enhancement exercises are taken up for the stake holders to play their expected roles well. Upon commissioning of water supply, few individuals are selected and are given the charge to take care of the supply mechanism. This entire process is led by the community itself.

Follow up phase is when reliable and affordable services gain communities’ acceptance for contribution and payments for the services rendered. Financial participation by the communities is essential not only to demand quality in services, but also to ensure accountability. Banking on the willingness to pay and shoulder responsibility, an agreement is made between the village level institutions and the line department during this phase. In other words, management and maintenance systems are established along with the payment systems. Contributions are deposited as security deposits with well-defined support systems in place.

IEC

In development cooperation parlance, the term IEC i.e. “Information Education and Communication” as it is used is all about bridging the knowledge and information gaps that exist at different levels, through various communication methods so as to create an enabling environment. It is our belief that a well-planned/ executed IEC strategy plays a critical role in the sustainability of the program/ project.



Operational area of GVNML is given in the table below:

Table 1: Operational area

S. No.	District	Panchayat Samitis	Gram Panchayats	Villages	Households Benefitted
1	Bhilwara	8	381	1698	283960
2	Nagaur	5	111	426	88200
3	Jaipur	2	62	235	48000
4	Tonk	3	54	242	45496

The Outcome from this programme/ project is as follows:

- Community institutions promoted/strengthened that are meant for shouldering the responsibility of equitable distribution, continuous supply and O&M have become capable of handling issues and discharging their responsibilities effectively and efficiently;
- The skills and capacities of Panchayats and village level institutions that were enhanced through various exercises have enabled the respective representatives and, now, they are capable of articulating their local development needs, draw plans and devise systems for sustainable development;
- By bringing all the stakeholders together, community is in a better position to understand the linkages and arrangements required for collaborations;
- Increase in confidence of the community to manage and maintain is evident from the collection of water charges, maintain water supply system to keep it functional and leakage free; and
- Women manage the domestic water needs. Involving them at every stage i.e. from the start of planning the programme/ activities and implementation of the same provided a strong framework for community participation. Further, this has become a platform to discuss other related issues such as health, hygiene and water contamination etc.

