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PEOPLE AND SYSTEMS FOR WATER, SANITATION AND HEALTH

Capacity building for sustainable rws in Sri Lanka

Kokila Ranasinghe and Sunidha Senaratne, Sri Lanka

MANAGING THE FACILITIES by the Users has not been a common practice in Sri Lanka. During the last decade, innovative strategies adopted in development programmes influenced Sri Lanka to steer away from dependency culture, similar to the other countries of the region and the developing world. Self-reliance, effective utilization of indigenous resources, sustainability of the facilities provided and utilization of lowest appropriate levels in implementing the development programmes are some of these new measures introduced.

All such new attempts are made within a rural environment using user/community centred approach.

In the field of water supply and sanitation, community centered demand driven approach is extensively adopted. Under this approach, the role of the user changes from the receiver of facilities to the implementer, as the user is involved in the process of planning, implementation and management of such facilities.

By involving beneficiary communities from initiation to finalization of the projects, as thinkers in the planning, as workers in construction and as the managers in operation and maintenance, it is expected that facilities provided would be sustained for a longer period, and viable in operation and maintenance.

Small town water supply programme (STWSP)

The National Water Supply & Drainage Board (NWSDB) of Sri Lanka in late 1994 established a programme unit under the Rural Water Supply (RWS) Division for implementation of Small Town Water Supply Programme under the IDA assisted Community Water Supply & Sanitation Project (CWSSP).

A Small Town Water Supply Scheme is defined as a scheme providing water supply to a community of about 2,000 to 6,000 inhabitants which includes commercial, institutional and small scale industrial establishments, or a fast growing rural centre, where pipe borne water supply is regarded essential for economic development.

The Project carried outby the NWSDB was concluded by 1999.

The community contribution generally expected in the project was 20% of the capital cost, by way of labour and cash contributions. However, the expenditure at the completion of the project has shown that it has varied from 11% to 22%, depending on the nature of the scheme.

Sustainability of facilities

In the programme, the beneficiaries themselves have been given the opportunity to select the O&M Authority of their preference. The beneficiary either opted for their own Community Based Organization (CBO) established for the purpose to operate the system or to hand it over to local authority (Pradesiya Sabha- PS) or NWSDB.

There are three types of models developed and adopted for the management of small town water supply schemes, as indicated in Table 1.

Legal recognition for CBOs was provided by entering in to agreements with government sector institutions at National and Local levels. One purpose of such an agreement was to define the obligations of the CBO and other parties to the agreement in the management of the scheme, and to ensure carrying them out. In Small Towns Schemes for Hali-Ela, Kalawana, Kuruwita and Kirinda/Puhulwella, where the CBOs are supposed to bear the main responsibility, are now carrying out the responsibilities vested to them

Table 1. O&M Arrangements of small town W.S.S

Management Model	Small Town	Maintaining Authority	Monitoring/ Development Supporting Authority
A	Hali-Ela Kuruwita Kalawana Kirinda/Puhulwella	Community Based Organisation (CBO)	LA/NWSDB
B	Passara Koslanda Hakmana	Local Authority (LA)	CBO/NWSDB
C	Denipitiya	NWSDB	CBO/LA

satisfactorily. Other schemes, managed by the Local Authorities and NWSDB are managed under the government regulations. However, the managing authority has to act according to the Agreement, and consult the other parties in taking decisions.

Assessing the capacities of O&M authorities

It is found that capacities of the maintenance agencies play a vital role in achieving successful results in implementing the schemes with community centred and participatory approach, with regard to the water and sanitation facilities. The quality of delivering the services depends on the capacities of community organizations and local level governing bodies which manage them.

Capacity of an organization could be measured by various means depending on the outputs it is expected to deliver. In this study, the capacity of the maintenance authorities of RWS facilities were assessed to find out in which areas they have performed as well as expected, and in which areas it was poor. In this exercise, it was clearly found that adopting the community centred approach alone would not help to deliver the expected level of service.

For the purpose of assessing the capacities, a sample of two O&M authorities were selected from the small towns mentioned above. One of them is a Community Based Organizations (CBO) who manage Kirinda/Puhulwella Small Town Water Supply Scheme and the other is a Local Authority (Pradeshiya Sabha -PS) who manage Passara Small Town Water Supply Scheme.

Present operation details of Kirinda/Puhulwella and Passara Water Supply Schemes (as at December 2000) are as tabulated in Table 2.

Analysis of the present situation

It is apparent from the Table 2 that CBO is ahead of the PS even though the schemes maintained by the CBO comprises pumping. However, this has to be viewed in consideration with the other responsibilities vested with the PS from the legislature. It is evident that PS has to bear a much heavier workload and responsibilities than CBO which handles only one water supply scheme.

Further, it is evident that both schemes are managed under a limited scope at present, and no consideration given to the need for further improvements of the scheme to cope up with the increasing demand. (It has been the experience that due to the rapid growth of demand, schemes reach the designed capacities within a short period than anticipated). Further, the political influences were observed to be at a higher level in the PS managed scheme, presumably due to the political advantages expected from the scheme.

It was also noticed that schemes developed under demand-driven and community centred approach may not remain as community managed water supply schemes forever. It also can be subjected to various development processes and expansions, and sometimes, changes in technology which lead to needs of subsequent changes of the management style. However, methods to accommodate such changes has not been adequately provided while implementation or when hand over the O&M responsibilities.

Table 2 indicates performance of PS with regard to O&M has not been in par with there overall capacity.

Above situation reiterates that comprehensive post project activities including capacity building aspects should be provided if a meaningful sustainability to be achieved and that it should be a prime consideration while planning and implementation of a community centered participatory project.

Capacity development of institutions

Kirinda/Puhulwella and Passara examples elaborates that participatory development approach should be coupled with an institutional strengthening programme for maintenance authorities, (CBOs or PSs) to sustain the facilities provided and improve them. Whichever institution carries out the operation and maintenance functions of the scheme, it is found that there are common issues with regard to capacity building, in order to achieve the success, which are indicated below:

- Human resources development programme in the areas of technical, managerial, financial and stores management;
- A logistic development programme to build stores, mini-workshops and increase of mobility;

Table 2. Operational details – sample schemes

Name of the Scheme	Description								
	Maintaining Authority	No. of House-holds	Type of Technology	State of Revenue	Attending to Complaints	Availability of Manpower	Availability of tools and equipment	Repairs	Effectiveness of O&M Agreement
Kirinda/ Puhulwella	CBO	411	Pumping scheme with disinfection	Profitable	90%	Skilled people not available	Bare minimum	Well attended by hiring of services	Very effective
Passara	PS	523	Gravity scheme with disinfection	Cover only the expenditure	50%	Skilled people available	Adequate	Attended generally	Not much effective

- Legal recognition of the CBOs; and
- Development of procedures and mechanisms to streamline and standardize them to facilitate smooth O&M.

Kirinda/Puhulwella and Passara studies indicate that in order to guarantee the sustainability, the above areas should be addressed comprehensively after completion of the schemes under the post project measures.

It is specifically identified that, under the prevailing institutional arrangement and legal framework of Sri Lanka, main obstacle for the functioning of CBOs has been the legal recognition of them, even though it has certain level of the social recognition in the area. Therefore, providing adequate legal recognition of CBOs is an essential requirement that should be carried out along with capacity building activities for CBOs.

With regard to the Pradeshiya Sabhas, capacity development packages can be affected by the political climate prevailing within the PSs and also other diverse type of work loads and different objectives. It is important to create an enabling environment for capacity building to achieve the meaningful results.

Conclusion

Adopting community centered demand-driven approach is undoubtedly a valid and proven concept. However, it is evident that post project strategies are essential to achieve an effective sustainability of provided water supply and sanitation facilities. Whoever manages such systems, this post project strategies should include a capacity building package for the authorities managing the water supply facilities. With regard to PSs, this includes creating an enabling environment appropriate to each setting. For CBOs, the process should be coupled with providing them legal recognition to function effectively in their environment.

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