

Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Fund Development Board

A Successful Model for Community - Managed Program Implementation



Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Fund Development Board (the Board), established on March 14, 1996 under the Development Board Act, 1956, is implementing demand – led community based rural water supply and sanitation programs with participatory approach to bring about fundamental changes in the conventional supply - oriented approach in water supply and sanitation sector in the country. The Board successfully implemented First Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project (RWSSP – I, 1996 - 2003) covering 49 districts which benefited about 0.6 million populations through the construction of 887 schemes under direct involvement of the community in scheme implementation and management.

Currently, the Board is implementing Second Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project (RWSSP –II, 2004 - 2009) as a follow – on to the RWSSP - I. It has adopted the general principles and approaches of RWSSP - I with some improvements in working modalities especially in some norms/ criteria based on the lessons learnt in the past.

RWSSP-II aims to raise the living standard of rural people by: a) Improving sector institutional performance and mainstreaming "Fund Board" approach in the Government's system, and; b) Supporting communities to form inclusive local water supply and sanitation user groups that can plan, implement, and operate drinking water and sanitation infrastructure that delivers sustainable health, hygiene and productivity benefits to the rural households.

The Board has targeted to benefit additional 0.813 million populations through the construction of 1355 schemes under RWSSP -II. The total project budget of RWSSP-II is US\$ 41.5 million, funded by IDA/World Bank US\$ 23.5 million (61%), GoN US\$ 11.6 million (28%) and community contribution US\$ 4.6 million (11%) both in cash and kind. Based on the positive impacts of the Board's project demonstrated at the community level, the IDA/World Bank has recently approved a grant fund of US \$ 27.00 million as additional funding for the on-going second project with an increment in the initial project target and extended the project period up to December 2010. The agreement to this effect was signed at the Ministry of Finance in Kathmandu on August 26, 2008.

Currently, the Board has undertaken in total 1173 schemes (i.e. 87% of the total target) of which till date 501 schemes completed; 196 schemes are in Implementation Phase and 476 schemes are in Development Phase. After the completion of all these schemes around 833,163 people (i.e. 103 % of the total target) will directly be benefited. Till date, the Board supported programs are spread in 71 districts.

The Board is implementing its program with an "integrated approach" through public private partnership (PPP) model. Apart from the construction of water supply system, which is an "entry point" activity, the

major program components include: health hygiene and sanitation; school sanitation; skill-based training; micro irrigation; environmental management; community organization and mobilization; Non-formal education and women technical support service (WTSS) linked to income generation activities. The Board emphasizes on improving and strengthening the capacities of community people as well as the capacity of its partner organizations (NGOs and consulting firms) to support the communities in planning, designing and implementation of the schemes. Moreover, the Board has focused on participatory approach; resource allocation jointly through the NGOs and communities; local resource mobilization; users' involvement in resource management and community procurement; public auditing/ transparency; social inclusion and equity considerations; participatory monitoring and evaluation; operation and management of schemes by communities; targeting poverty alleviation; and promotion of coordination, linkages and building partnerships with local government (DDCs/VDCs) and other stakeholders as the major guiding principles and working strategies.

The working modalities adopted by the Board have contributed in increasing the sense of ownership among the people towards the schemes, which eventually helped in smooth implementation and ensuring sustainability of the projects.

The long – term sustainability studies of Batch – I and II schemes, which are under community operation and management since last 6 - 10 years show that about 92% schemes are running in good condition. However, by taking considerations on all four major evaluation dimensions i.e. Institutional, Social/Environmental, Financial, and Technical aspects of the schemes, around 78% schemes are assessed fully sustainable. Similarly, the result of sustainability study of Batch – III schemes (carried out after 3 - 5 years of scheme operation) show that around 86% schemes are fully functional and well sustained under community operation and maintenance (O & M) system (source: RWSSFDB, 2008).

These institutional studies have also shown significant improvements in the health and sanitation practices of the community people including the construction and use of sanitary household latrines. The community's women are also found able to increase their household income with the use of saved time from fetching water in a number of income generation activities under Women's Technical Support Services (WTSS) component of the program.

Health, Hygiene and Sanitation activity is a central component of RWSSP to promote health and improve the quality of life among rural communities by provision of drinking water and environment sanitation programs with effective participation of the users. The Board raises awareness and motivates communities to practice

total sanitation with elimination of open defecation and unhygienic behavior. The educational program emphasizes on personal, domestic, and environmental sanitation. Under school sanitation, the Board has focused on child-to-child and child-to-community learning approach.

In sanitation aspect, the Board has been supporting communities for the construction of Institutional Latrines for schools within the program community and household latrines using sanitation revolving loan fund (SRLF) as well as self-help promotion through health and sanitation awareness programs. Till date, in total, 700 School Latrines and 63,825 household latrines have been completed and significant improvement in personal sanitation as well as environmental sanitation has been noticed. Knowledge on Health, hygiene and sanitation education is imparted to the community especially focusing the mother groups. An impact study has shown that the incidence of water borne disease has been reduced from 83% to 17% after intervention of the program.

The Board's contribution remained at 19.7% of the total rural population in water supply and 34.6% in sanitation services in the 9th plan; while the RWSSP-II benefited around 16 % rural population in water supply and 14% in sanitation under the 10th plan. The Board's contribution is thus vital for sector's performance and the Board has supported in achieving the MDG goal in RWSS sector. The Board's approach is gradually being institutionalized as to mainstream the sector approach. A Peer Review of DfID funded programs has pointed out social inclusion, coordination with local bodies, women empowerment, transparency and capacity building at the local level as some of the affirmative actions and results of the Board's approach (source: DfID PCR, 2005).



(Batch – VI Jharkada Tallo Padhera Scheme, Darchula SO: SYCD)

Similarly, the recent Implementation Support Mission of the World Bank has concluded that “the Board's approach is yielding positive results at the grassroots level and although their have been some implementation challenges; overall it has demonstrated that it is effective.”

Concluding Remarks

Despite of the country's adverse situation in the past due to political conflict, the Board has been successfully

implementing its program in the rural areas without any hindrance mainly because of its working approach and modalities which emphasizes on transparency, ensures direct control of community on resources, and their direct involvement in planning, implementation and the overall management of the schemes.

Different studies recently carried out by external agencies have revealed that the Board's programs have substantially benefited the rural communities. Significant achievements have been made under different program components beyond water supply e.g. improved sanitary practices (including promotion of household and institutional latrines), increased community mobilization and empowerment, increased incomes especially for women, capacity enhancement of community and SOs, supported social capital formation and poverty alleviation etc.

The success of this approach to the rural water supply and sanitation sub – sector has been widely acknowledged, and it has helped to define an effective demand – driven approach to service delivery through an inclusive, participatory process in which the communities are empowered to make informed decisions about their own development activities, including water supply schemes.

Considering the Boards' contribution in effective service delivery in rural areas of Nepal, the GoN is committed to establish the Board as a permanent “sector institution” under a separate Board Act. To this effect, a Bill to make the Board as a regular sector institution has been finally tabled in the Interim Parliament on 10th Jan, 2008. In this context, the Board needs strong policy support from the GoN and donor communities for becoming a strong sector organization that is able to lead the process for adopting a sector wide approach (SWAp) in WatSan in Nepal to ensure an effective coordination among the actors involved in the sector, better poverty targeting and increasing the outreach.



(Batch – V Kaseri Dumribot Scheme, Kaski, SO: NRCS – Kaski)

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