CHAPTER: 15

EMPOWERMENT OF COMMUNITY BASED ORGANISATION THROUGH WASH PROGRAM IN RAJASTHAN DESERT

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ABSTRACT

Access to water and sanitation is fundamental for human health. Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) interventions continue to be implemented to improve the availability and services of water and sanitation especially in low and middle-income countries (LMICs). There has also been a paradigm shift from top-bottom to bottom-up approach in development which recognizes the benefits of engaging the community and allows for local participation right from planning to decision making which has been welcomed even in rural water supply.To raise the community voice and advocacy, the approach with bottom up has make huge impact in the project named Aapni-Yojna in India, is the good example for the impacts of waking up the voice of community for development through community-based organisation and increased community participation. This chapter though different case studies examines a range of WASH interventions including hardware interventions such as new latrines and water supply systems, their operation and maintenance and software interventions such as the introduction of WASH or water committees and health promotion and education programmes and training in Aapni Yojna project in Rajasthan Desert through community participation approach to form and empower community-based organisation.

Keywords: *Aapni Yojna, Payment Model, Community Based Organisation, Community participation Water and Sanitation, Empowerment, Rajasthan*

INTRODUCTION

The literature shows mixed effects of community participation interventions, with some showing positive effects while others show no effect (Garn et al., 2017). In an effort to understand why WASH interventions fail, there is an expending body of research that seeks to examine the contexts

(environmental, sociocultural, institutional, economic) in which they are interventions introduced (Bhutta et al., 2018). This research highlights the importance of understanding the influence of context on the success or failure of community WASH interventions and emphasizes that no single strategy can be successful in all contexts and circumstances (Jiménez et al., 2019). Current literature shows multiple benefits of community participation; for example, participation is a means of cultural exchange and knowledge building between implementing partners and is useful for ensuring that interventions are relevant to local priorities (Harter, Mosch and Mosler, 2018). The literature also shows that communities (especially indigenous communities) have developed knowledge structures of place, space and relationships over generations that are passed down from one generation to the next, which provide information about how to use water resources to support their longevity (Nguyen, Ross, and Barriers, 2016). Without participation, problems may arise such as community views that are not aligned with the intervention (Naiga and Penker, 2014).

Definitions and manifestations of community participation in WASH interventions vary significantly between articles and studies. In rural areas, community participation involves the active involvement of users in the management of water services. It can also mean involving community members in the planning, construction, decision-making and ongoing management of their water system. Community participation also means allowing communities to initiate project ideas, decide on the type of technology and facility placement that best suits their needs. In the context of this document, community participation is defined as community members having a role in the planning, design, construction, decision-making, delivery or management (including finance, operation and maintenance) of WASH interventions.

To empower community-based organisation strong community participation is needed which is a process in which poor and marginalized are motivated to come together as a collective and form a common unit or organization to be at par with the mainstream of the society and to create that space for the deprived communities to assert themselves through joint action and initiatives

Aapni Yojna is a way breaking venture in the zone of arrangement of safe drinking water to the water starved villages and towns in the desert territories of Rajasthan where the lack of water is dependably a major issue. It is a one-of-a-kind case of association between Government (Public Health Engineering Department), Consortium of Non-Government Organizations and Community Based Organisation: Village Water and Health Committee. While the PMC has effectively carried water to the towns through setting up a dispersion framework and equipment, the Community Participation Unit, a consortium of five NGOs driven by the Indian Institute of Health Management Research, guaranteed network cooperation in water asset the executives at the neighborhood level. The remarkable highlights of the venture were that the sheltered drinking water is accessible nonstop in the project villages through PSP water supply and the families pay consistently for the water devoured in the families.

The water charges are gathered by the network ahead of time and kept with the PHED. The accomplishment of the task can be ascribed to the most recent innovation and the network cooperation model utilized. Be that as it may, the execution of the undertaking has been conceivable simply because of

the confidence and collaboration among the Government and Non-Government accomplices. Furthermore, the dynamic association of all NGO individuals from the consortium (with various center skills) has guaranteed the achievement of the community driven program. The venture had two primary parts: Hardware and specialized segments and correlative measures and delicate help exercises. The venture canvassed 370 villages and 2 towns in which safe drinking water gave and faucet water supply was introduced with the involvement of community and community-based organisation right from planning, implementing and in operation and maintenance.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To understand strengthen how and when community participation and community-based organizations in water and sanitation interventions affects access to clean water and sanitation, shifts in health or behavior, and sustainability of WASH resources and services.

METHODOLOGY

To develop the case study, various data collecting methods had been applied. Here following three stages methods were carried out (Punch, (1998):

1. An in-depth interview of the community-based organisation in the project villages, project staff and other stake holders with a specific focus on women participation in Aapni-Yojna project at Rajasthan Desert.
2. Document analysis of the National Water Policy (NWP)-2012.
3. Review and Analysis of the documents and records found in the water management of Aapni Yojna project.

Case Study 1: We, the People

Village Ojharia of Taranagar tehsil is predominantly inhabited by Jat community and has about 110 households. It has one of the most active, aware & assertive Water & Health Committees. Its potential for effective self-management was put to the test. One day a shepherd from the neighbouring village arrived in this village with large flock of sheep at the cattle water trough. Aapni Yojna was not operating in the shepherd's village. The villagers standing nearby informed him that he would have to pay for the water provided to the sheep. He agreed to pay but his relative Rajendra living in village Ojharia discouraged him from making payment for the water consumed. On finding out about the dispute WHC reasoned with Rajendra.

But Rajendra would not listen. Rajendra's relative went without paying for the water. WHC continued to persuade Rajendra for three days that the shepherd should pay after which he turned violent and started using foul language. He challengedthe community to extract payment from him.

A case was lodged with the Police. A Hawaldar went to Rajendra's and told him to pay for the water consumed or else send his relative to the thana. Rajendra got furious after the Hawaldar left. He was so annoyed that he wanted to teach the community a lesson and therefore, that nighthe deliberately left open the tap of the PSP next to his house. The water started flowing in the streets. A woman from

the same mohalla closed the tap. Rajendra shouted abuse at the woman and again opened the tap. The woman immediately informed the incident to the WHC. The WHC arrived at the PSP to note the meter reading. The meter reading was again noted in the morning. The water thus wasted was calculated and a complaint against Rajendra was lodged in the Taranagar police station. Rajendra was taken into custody.

Rajendra's family members and his relative came to the police station and apologized. An understanding was taken. Rajendra had to pay for the water consumed & wasted, conveyance charges of the committee, and the fine levied by the committee. This incident was a lesson for all. After that no other Rajendra has dared to take the WHC unconscientiously. Everyone pays the monthly payments to the committee so much so. The community members also ensure that water is not wasted.

The Aapni Yojna achievements with the philosophy of transferring water distribution management to village level committees show the importance of local responsibility. Before Aapni Yojna the communities looked upon the water supply systems as a governmental business, and the systems were not properly maintained. Through the establishment of WHCs and Pani Panchayats, a sense of ownership and responsibility was created. Through local Water and Health Committees (WHC) *"They have shown their ability to recover operation and maintenance costs on a sustainable basis. The prospect of having control over the operation of their local system and being fairly independent of a poorly functioning government service is a highly motivating factor for the communities to participate in management and implementation by contributing cash and kind."*

Case Study 2: The Last Straw

Village Rajpuria in tehsil Rajgarh is inhabited by members of mixed community like Jat, Brahmin, Nai, Nayak, Meghwal and Babriya castes. When the CPU initiated work in this village, the team members observed avoidance of people of one group i.e. the Babriyas from the project work. The general belief of the other communities was that the Babriyas are nomadic, robbers and generally quarrelsome. It was felt that Babriya community was incapable of participating in the development work, and furthermore may obstruct the work of the project.

WHC was formed without representation from the Babriya caste. Even as the project work gradually progressed, the Babriyas too did not take any initiative to participate. Evidence from the past uncovers that this community had differences with the Jats regarding use of water sources and a court proceeding was going on. The project staff strongly felt that excluding one community from the benefit of the facilities was in contradiction to the spirit of Aapni Yojna, but no amount of persuasion would have any effect on the community. Whenever project staff tried to bring up the subject the villagers would sidestep the issue.

The WHC was formed and the process for its legalisation had also taken place. Security money was being collected from the villagers. The other communities were of the opinion that Babriyas could not deposit security amounts because they did not belong to this place. Nevertheless, the project personnel kept up their efforts to convince this community to participate. During their interactions it

was observed that the way of life of the Babriyas was quite different from that of the other castes. These people hung animal skins in their huts. Their diet was mostly non- vegetarian.

In the meantime, the last stage of voluntary labour was reached when the pipelines were laid down for the water supply. This was the last opportunity for the Babriyas to own the project, but they were still indifferent. As luck would have it, one of the project staff met a boy of this caste who was the only matriculate in his community and supportive of the Aapni Yojna. At the same time one of the Jats (an erstwhile Sarpanch), and a pipe fitter from the same caste also expressed similar opinions. The CPU workers had a meeting with these three men and decided to make one final effort at integrating the Babriyas.

Another village meeting was organized and this time the Babriyas attended. It was conveyed to this community that it was their last chance to get integrated with both the development work and the rest of the village. Unless they participated now, they would miss the opportunity to progress. Other communities would develop while they would always remain isolated and backward. This revelation left them shell shocked. It gave them food for thought; stimulated them to think about their own future. They finally accepted the project. The security money was paid. Another Public Stand Post (PSP) was constructed in their area and the community proceeded to dig for the pipeline extension to their mohalla. Today water management is still going on in the village with the participation of the whole community.

Case Study 3: Our Heroes

Punsisar is the tail end village situated in Taranagar tehsil of Churu district. The village shares its boundary with the neighboring district of Hanumangarh. Spread over a geographical area of 3679 hectares, it inhabits 640 families belonging to various castes such as Brahmins, Jats, Rajputs, Nai and Schedule Castes. Agriculture and livestock are the main source of income. Bajra (pearl millet), gram, and pulses are the chief crops, and gypsum deposit is heavy here. The rainfall in this area is below average and the villagers faced harsh living conditions and scarcity of water. Majority depended on the irregular rainwater and ground water, which is saline and contaminated by high levels of fluoride. As a result of low rainfall the water table has gone down substantially. To add to the hardships the quality of water is poor.

Earlier the village had four wells, of which the water of only one well was potable. The water from the other three wells was used for the daily household chores and construction work. The well to do families had constructed *kunds* to store the rainwater. This water was used for drinking purposes. Despite everything these arrangements were insufficient to even fulfil the need for the drinking water. Poor women had to walk 2-3 kilometers to fetch drinking water. Owing to the paucity of water the status of hygiene and sanitation was also poor.

Way back in 1983 Punsisar was connected through a pipeline to Sahwa village 20 kms away by the department of water in the hope to alleviate the suffering of the people. However, the scheme did not work. Again in 1990 effort for water supply was made through laying down pipeline from Punsisar

to Pandusar, a neighbouring village of Hanumangarh district. However, due to an irregular and insufficient supply of water this scheme too did not improve the situation. The villagers thought it to be their destiny to live with insufficient water. Theyleft the things to fate.

In September 1996 the CPU initiated its activities in this village. In the preparatory phase information campaigns for environment building in the village were held, information on project details and benefits, tremendous cost involved and how the project will ensure a reliable water supply were given to the villagers. The villagers were not persuaded for they had already *experienced* two water schemes and were witness to the *failure* of both the schemes. They were not willing to trust any other government scheme and *burn their hands*again.

There was a youth Group (Yuvak Mandal) in the village, which used to organise small development activities in the village from time to time. Most of the members of this group were educated with an interest in the social activities. The CPU team came in touch with this group to win their faith and associate them with the Aapni Yojna. To begin with the members of the group themselves viz. Prahaladji first, Prahaladji second, Ummed Sighji, Ramniwasji, Noranglalji, Ramlalaji etc. tried to comprehend the program. In the course of discussions with the Youth Group, the senior officials of the Yojna too talked about various aspects. Convinced, the group started creating an enabling environment for Aapni Yojna at their level in the whole village. As the youth group already had its credibility among the villagers, the villagers too, slowly, started accepting the Yojna. A village meeting was called. Although the elderly of the village were still skeptical of the success of any scheme but owing to the conviction and enthusiasm of the youth in the village, they decided to entrust the responsibility to the Youth Group to function as the Water and Health Committee. At the village level the WHC manages the water distribution systems.

The WHC in village Punsisar had ten members, eight men and two women. The WHC collected from every household in the village an amount of Rs 30/- and deposited a sum of Rs 13,699/- to the PMC. Meanwhile women's groups were also made. Activities like map making, site selection for the stand posts and cattle water troughs, selection of their own payment model for collection of water charges, labour construction for trench digging etc. were undertaken by the WHC with women's involvement assisted by CPU field staff. A total of 25 stand posts, four cattle water troughs and 182 low-cost sanitation packages were constructed. In March the water supply commenced.

The villagers were getting potable & safe water 24 hours a day! The villagers were bewildered! They couldn't believe that life was happening to them. Eventually their age-old dream was realized. The villagers are completely satisfied with the quality of water being provided to them. So many years have gone by and there has not been a single defaulter in the village. The other associated activities like health education, health camps, school sanitation programs and self-help groups of women etc. are operating successfully. Basic spirit in efforts of CPU has been that rural people themselves are to identify their needs, manage and govern the basic facilities. Quoting one of

the villagers Rakesh says, "This is the creation: We all are made up by five elements – earth, water, fire, air and sky. But of all these, water is the foremost.

Case Study 4: Our Village, Our Responsibility

The village Dhana Bhakran is situated 6 km away from Taranagar on the Sardarsahar – Taranagar road. This village is comparatively better off than the other villages in the area. Still people feared that guests would ask for water to drink. They were more willing to offer milk or ghee. The water level in the wells was very deep and at places girls would wind ropes around their waists and drag water containers from the wall by walking away from the well. During summers the problem of water scarcity could become so acute that many families had to take their cattle and migrate to other places.

The needs of the community were assessed minutely, and the strategies were formulated accordingly. It was an event of momentous importance when water was released on March 31, 2000, in the year of severe drought and scarcity and proved as boon to the people. "The dream was finally realized in March 2000". Dhana Bhakran was the first village to pay the water bills. Their first bill amounted to Rs. 771/- with a meter reading of 403 units. The bill was paid on the 19th of May 2000.

One of the biggest hurdles of the project was to make the community pay for drinking water, which they thought was their birth right. "With the state assuming the responsibility of water supply, community ceased to think of water as a precious resource. They relinquished their responsibility to manage the resource and gradually the community did not feel the need to group together for managing water" There is some discontent among the community now regarding household connections, erratic supply of water, the water supplied is not pure, Water is not available for 24 hours as promised by *Aapni Yojna*, The water is contaminated with insects and bacteria, Animals face pregnancy problems after consuming the water, Strong odour of medicines can be found in the drinking water.

Aapni Yojna believes in the capacities of the general community. This is one of the rare projects where the community is truly entitled to have command and control over the resources. "The WHCs have been given a sufficient level of freedom to decide on the internal issues of the villages," shared Omprakash.

Case Study 5: Water Voices

In Ojharia Village of Taranagar Tehsil many wells and the traditional rainwater harvesting structures had dried up completely. Because of deforestation, soil erosion and overuse of ground water, agriculture was not bringing sufficient crops to feed the villages anymore. The communities were breaking apart because many men migrated to the cities in search of work, leaving their families behind. The situation was very bad.

And then one day, with no more drinking water available an old man from the village told me, "Do something about it, you are dynamic, you are knowledgeable, you should do something to change this," remembers Netramji. Aapni Yojna surfaced at the opportune time.

Several months before the taps were to be installed, CPU collected information in and around the village, drawing up village profiles to dictate the approach & plans for the scheme in our village. During the neighborhood and household visits, we explained the project to men and women. Villagers were asked to set up Village Water Health Committees.

"The water and health committee in each village, is independent of the panchayat, and decides on where the public stand posts are going to be, and once the taps are there, they make sure that all families pay their share of the water bill. The WHC is also responsible for reporting any fault to the pumping station," explains Netramji, President of the WHC. Netramji, who is also the Vice President of the Pani Panchayat, is logical in his way of thinking, puts his point of view in an articulate manner and is a true leader. His grit and persuasion made it possible for village Ojharia to realize the dream of regular supply of potable water. Apart from managing the own systems of water distribution, he has gone one step ahead and has initiated water conservation.

"There is only one water measuring meter for the village. By the 5th of the month, we get the water bill for the village. Then we call the subcommittees who are responsible for the tabs in our village, and we divide up the bill. By the 20th of the month, everyone has to pay his or her share, and then go to the office in Taranagar to pay the village bill".

Netramji says, "Our community is much stronger now. We don't depend on the government we do everything by ourselves. And if repair work needs to be done, we do everything with our own hands and don't wait for anyone else to do it. While the whole community life improved, it's the women who have benefited most."

"My learning has been that solutions for improving water access and quality become more sustainable when local people feel that water is their resource. Their actions to preserve and protect it make a difference", sums up Netramji.

Case Study 6: WHC - Living Up to Its Name

The extra ordinary rate of payment of water fees has solidly remained between 95 and 100 percent despite frequent droughts and constraints on people's income. However, it has not always been easy for WHCs to extract payment for water charges.

Village Ladam is in the district of Hanumangarh. One of the residents of the village, Mr. Vikram Singh, refused to pay the water bills. The villagers approached him to pay. They cited example of all the villagers paying up. Vikram did not oblige and remained adamant on paying whenever he felt like. He was cautioned that he might be penalized for his non-compliance.

In response Vikram challenged the authority of the Water and Health Committee saying that issuing penalty was not under the jurisdiction of the WHC.

The WHC members were unhappy by Vikram's non-cooperation. Offended they filed a case against him. Vikram Singh was summoned to the district court and asked to pay or else face an imprisonment of three and a half months. He immediately paid up and has been paying his water bills regularly since then. This action had its effect on other defaulters too and villagers are paying their

water bills regularly Battling against the obstacles and winning over the odds Nahar Singh and other team members bravely faced the manifold challenges of the harsh geographical conditions, superstitions, traditional beliefs of purity or impurity, low level of literacy and many more challenges to create a niche for Aapni Yojna. The story goes that people in this area were ready to willingly offer a bowl of Ghee to the guest but were reluctant to give water. They feared guests. In the initial days of the Aapni Yojna, many villages had one or two persons who defaulted in making payments. In Village Galar one Mr. Rajendra refused to pay the water charges due on him for about three to four months. When the WHC Communicator (Sampreshak) approached him for the money, Rajendra refused to pay. An emergency Gram Sabha was called, and the villagers approached him to create peer pressure and force him to pay the water charges. However, Rajendra did not buckle under the pressure.

After this the villagers approached the concerned Executive Engineer, PMC-PHED who sent the police to the village. Rajendra was called to the school building of the village and asked by the police to pay up. However, he still declined. At this the police threatened to take him to the police station to start legal procedure against him. Rajendra finally yielded and paid the whole amount due on him. The other defaulters too were sent notices to pay the due amounts to prevent legal action against them. All the defaulters paid the due amounts, and the committee did not face this problem again.

Case Study 7: We are the World.

The village Dallusar is situated 35 km from the Taranagar Sardarsahar road. This village along with 32 other villages receives water from the four reservoirs located at Sardarsahar. The villages that have started receiving water have risen above caste and class considerations by ensuring that members of the water and health committees include the scheduled castes and women. Equal access to water at public taps has ensured equality in social relationships. Such was the case with village Dallusar.

The field coordinators working in the village initially had problems in convincing the mostly illiterate users of the need to own and manage their local system. There were also a lot of misconceptions associated with the quality of drinking water supply. According to the villagers, during the environment building process of Aapni Yojna most of the people in the village cooperated towards the project and offered voluntary labour except for some people from the north and west side of the village. They did not participate in voluntary labour.

Later on, it was found that a pundit from Banaras, residing in this village had spread word among the villagers that the water supplied to them was not fit for drinking from their religion point of view. The rumors were that the same water was also used by the local "Dhobi" to clean the clothes. Animals and cattle also drank the same water and sometimes animals were even found dead in the water. It was easier for the community to believe the pundit, thus, some people joined the pundits' philosophy and refused to offer voluntary labour during the construction of the infrastructures.

The work was interrupted for three months because of the non-cooperation. Later, in a meeting, the Community Participation Unit (CPU) team, Project Management Cell (PMC) and some

influential people of the village gathered and discussed the problem with the villagers and mutually solved the problem. The wife of the pundit was also chosen as a member of the WHC. A mutual consensus was thus reached, and the project started functioning properly.

During the initial two to three months of commissioning water, consumption of water was generally high as water users filled their store, tankas and kunds. Once satisfied with the reliability and regularity of water supply, the consumption fell below the designed criteria. The community regularly pays water bills at the agreed amount per unit. So far, no family has defaulted in payment of bills.

Case Study 8: We shall Overcome

Tunda Khedi village situated on the main road is divided into two hamlets. One of the hamlets is mainly inhabited by the Brahmins and Kumhars whereas Harijans and some tribals predominantly populate the other hamlet. Since the village has a large population of Harijans (SC), the WHC also has a larger representation of the same to facilitate the collection of water bills and other activities.

Jaded by the misguided efforts of earlier schemes, they had little faith in Aapni Yojna's vision of development. "*Dekhedee hai Sarkar ki yojnaae, bhaiji paani to hamari aankhoon se hi aasi. Yojna to ke paani desi*" (we have experienced government's scheme for water supply, brother only our eyes are going to water. What would your scheme provide)? With little or no support from the community the road to success was eluding. To make matters worse the male members of the community were resistant to women's participation in the process. They believed, "Aa to Germany ka agent *hai*, *lugaaeeyan ne le jaasi, desh ne gulaam karsi*" (They are agents of Germany, they will take away the women and rule over our world).

"Creating a niche for Aapni Yojna was not "Ready, steady, go", says Rakesh. We had to face several ordeals. Problems surfaced during field activities, which sometimes appeared insurmountable. But with the dedication, perseverance, and commitment of the team members resistance from the community weakened; their distrust made room for trust; women and girls came out of their shells and perceived for the first time, meaning in their contributions; people were ready to sort out problems.

After a few months of smooth functioning the Brahmin hamlet complained that the other hamlet was wasting water, which created a pressure on the water bills, of both the hamlet and the village. The villages have a single meter. The Brahmins demanded for the hamlets to separate meters for both monitor the water usages. They even approached the PMC, CPU and the field team to get a solution. However, the teams turned down their request.

The CPU team asked the WHC to reach an amicable solution through mutual discussion. However, as of now the WHC has failed to reach any consensus and still finding a solution to the problem. "Merely transforming knowledge cannot always help. Behavioral change is a difficult process. Beliefs and practices among the communities are deep rooted in people's minds. The communities find it difficult to change them", observes Rakesh.

FROM THE DIARY OF FIELD TEAM AND COMMUNITY BASED ORGANISATIONS

a. Initial days of doubts and mistrust

"These people are agents of foreign country, and we will again loose our independence." "Please talk to us, why do you people want to talk with our women folk."

"Strangers moving around in the village, keeping track of our movement and houses, we might get looted".

These echoes of mistrust and doubts reverberated throughout the interior villages during our reconnaissance of the villages during the initial days of the project. As the CPU workers moved from village to village for ground level appraisal, they were mistaken for representatives of the government.

The company of German Consultants with the CPU field team further deepened the mistrust and villagers viewed them with suspicion and weariness. The CPU filed team continuously interacted with the Panchayati Raj representatives, teachers, Anganwadi workers and prominent people of the village, had discussions and dialogue with them regarding the concept of Aapni Yojna scheme. They in turn motivated the villagers and familiarized them with the benefits of the Aapni Yojna scheme.

They also assured the villagers of the good intention of the CPU workers and the Aapni Yojna Scheme. Slowly the villagers overcame their suspicion and trust was established.

– Karyakarta's diary, Field Coordinator.

When we were talking to women's groups on health education, we realized that they cleaned their utensils with sand. This was an accepted practice in the desert area. Washing them with water was never done.

When CPU field workers were talking of the possible infections using sand a suggestion came that they prepare big containers of 'ash' for cleaning cooking vessels. The elderly women accepted this.

But next morning, the younger women raised a big opposition – they did not accept 'ash' as a cleaning agent because it damaged their hands – the skin turned black, and they did not like it. Finally, we had to give up our suggestion in spite of the fact that the elderly women supported us. We knew that if the actual workers disapprove of an idea, it would never be functional, leave alone sustainable.

Traditional anga system is adopted by all the villages. Anga is a water consuming unit (person or cattle). A person is one anga irrespective of age and gender. Anga for cattle is calculated as 1 camel = 1 buffalo = 1 cow = 10 goat=10 sheep = one anga (Number of goat and sheep in one anga vary from village to village). A village census is conducted to know total anga in a household and hence in the village. The census data are recorded in a book public standpost-wise. Anga per stadpost are recorded household wise. User of a stand post forms a user group. Toal village water bill is divided by the total anga in the village to know the water charges per anga. Water charges per PSP are calculated.

Payment collector for the PSP collects water charges from each and every household of three user group and deposit the amount to village payment collector. The PSP payment collector makes an entry in the payment card, which is kept by the household. The village payment collector issues a receipt of the total money received from a PSP payment collector. The PSP payment collector keeps payment record of household sharing a PSP whereas the village payment collector maintains payment

record of PSPs. The PSP user group is generally responsible for changing a broken tap or maintenance and upkeep of PSP. The payment model is based on the principle of social justice i.e. those who consume more water pay more. Village water and health committee has formulated its rules for water consumption. Household construction activities must per Rs 10 per mason per day. Rs 5 are charged for camel cart tank (500 liters) from a non-resident of the village. Penalty is imposed if one found bathing or washing clothes or bathing buffalo on the PSP.

b. Map making

Local level power dynamics are intricately woven in the very fabric of villages. These are largely a function of social political and economic factors. None of the earlier water supply projects had taken into consideration the existing social dynamics of the village. There were no concerted efforts to evolve a participatory approach in the project implementation at the ground level. All the earlier projects thus had remained 'theirs' instead of becoming 'ours', in the minds of the villagers.

Aapni Yojna, as an initiative to address one of the most pressing needs of the people is a success-story. It can inspire imagination and creative vision for many more initiatives provided the core principles of operationalization learnt through this project become part of basic planning.

CONCLUSIONS

Our transdisciplinary study of the Aapni-Yojna project on community engagement, empowering Community Based Organisation, participatory approaches and gender in WASH enables us to draw the following main conclusions :

1. It was clear from the above study that at the very outset two kinds of processes were required in the water project. First, which related to the management of technical expertise and second, which aimed at full participation of the community at the project area. While the first part was governed by efficiency centered management techniques, the second part was rooted in sensitivity and respect for people's perceptions which were to be geared towards a sense of 'ownership' of the project.
2. The basic pattern of the community participation and empowering community-based organisation are: First-preparatory phase, involving environment building through communication teams; orientation and planning with the villagers. Second: Implementation phase, involving capacity building of functionaries and teams at all levels, evolving specific strategies for each component and taking village participation in all construction work. Third, the Follow up phase, in which all the implementing mechanisms were monitored and strengthened. The broad approach has been to keep the marginalized sections center stage in all considerations and excesses of decision making.
3. To make the community involvement in WASH projects to be successful, community engagement must be done intentionally and over an extended length of time.
4. The community hierarchy, structure, and power dynamics, as well as the cultural context and values, must all be taken into account and understood for successful community participation.
5. The use of existing culturally ingrained leadership institutions, such as such as schoolteachers, religious leaders, formal and informal community leaders, is necessary for community engagement in WASH.
6. Through capacity building and training programmes that put the new or shared knowledge into practice, it should seek to establish a clear connection between knowledge sharing and knowledge

activation.

7. Educating community members to the change agents, especially young ones, on how to spread knowledge and incorporate change throughout families and communities.
8. Including communities in the co-production and co-design of WASH interventions is a fantastic way to increase acceptance and ownership within the community at large.
9. The community's acceptability and ownership of WASH initiatives, as well as the knowledge, accessibility, and understanding of WASH interventions, may all be enhanced by robust community involvement in integrated WASH program.
10. Beyond merely increasing awareness, equitable and sustainable WASH management requires active community engagement at the grassroots level to: (a) guarantee that innovative solutions are developed at the right scale to address particular needs; and (b) provide opportunities for the acquisition of knowledge and skills, personal efficacious experiences, and problem-solving abilities. In order to (c) comprehend WASH concerns and issues from the viewpoints of communities and (d) co-create locally meaningful solutions while taking livelihood variety and social, cultural, and economic determinants into consideration, participatory design and co-design are potential approaches.

THE WAY FORWARD

- **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) -** Clean water and sanitation WASH is essential to human life. Safe and sound water and sanitation services and adequate and equitable sanitation for all will drive progress in health, gender equality and livelihoods by 2030.
- **WASH is a defense against infectious diseases.** Governments, the Ministry of Health and development partners must address WASH shortages in health facilities to support the control of the spread of infectious diseases such as COVID-19, cholera and typhoid to ensure a safe environment for health care providers and patients.
- **The WASH commitment is key to climate adaptation plans.** Policymakers and government must ensure that water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, hygiene behaviors and facilities endure and are maintained during and after climate-related disasters to protect public health in an uncertain future.
- **WASH can push economic growth**. Investing in WASH brings positive returns in reduced health burden and increased productivity, removes barriers to the participation of marginalized groups in society and creates long-term employment opportunities.
- **Conflict of interest:** None

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