



## The SWAJAL project: a new approach

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UTTAR PRADESH SUFFERS from water scarcity, with over 60 per cent of its rural habitations receiving less than the Government of India's prescribed basic service level of 40 litres per capita per day. Consequently, a considerable amount of time — an average of 1-3 hours per day and much more in arid or hilly locations — is spent by villagers in collecting water for domestic use.

The existing rural water supply systems range from traditional open wells and handpumps to piped water supply schemes with public and private connections. Maintenance of these rural water supply systems is not of a high order, with about one third of them being unoperational at any given time. Moreover, public facilities for drainage are poor.

Sanitation levels in the State are also below the national average, with only 2.5 per cent of the rural populace using latrines. As a result, water related diseases constitute a major health problem, particularly for infants and children. According to unofficial estimates, as many as 80 per cent of all rural children suffer from some form of diarrheal diseases annually.

### Existing system

The present system for rural water supply and sanitation in the State is mainly supply driven, with Government agencies deciding the types of systems to be installed as well as their location. Drinking water systems are installed by the Uttar Pradesh Jal Nigam and latrines by the Panchayati Raj department.

The involvement of the beneficiaries in either the installation or the management of these systems is minimal. For drinking water especially, lack of accountability of the service provided to users also results in poor design, sub-standard construction and an overall costly service delivery. Therefore, there is a need to develop alternative systems for planning and delivering services which take user demand and preferences into account.

### Project profile

The Government of Uttar Pradesh has received a loan of \$59.6 million from the World Bank (4056 IN) for implementing an integrated rural water supply and environmental sanitation project (the SWAJAL project). 1000 villages in 15 districts of the State ( nine hill districts and six districts of the Bundelkhand region) will be covered by the project. Selection of villages will be based on transparent criteria of demand, need and technical feasibility.

Shortlisted Support Organisations (Non Governmental Organisations) will assist village communities in planning, designing and implementing their schemes. The project has four stages or batches, with 108, 242, 325 and 325 villages covered in each batch. Each batch has a scheme cycle of 33 months, which is divided into pre-planning, planning and implementation phases.

### Project scope

The project supports a package of investments for rural water supply and environmental sanitation services through community development and construction activities. Community development activities would promote active participation of the communities in all stages of decision making, in order to increase local ownership, effective use and sustainability. The construction component will provide choices to consumers in type of technology and service level. Community development activities and construction activities which have been envisaged tentatively (the actual choice will depend on the community), include:

#### *Community development activities*

- capacity building activities such as community mobilisation/organisation through provision of workshops, group discussion, information campaigns and participatory community action planning, training and non formal education;
- hygiene and environmental sanitation awareness training, and women's development initiatives including orientation and training to assist women;
- assistance in planning, implementing and maintaining water supply and
- environmental sanitation schemes including environmental resource enhancement initiatives;
- encouraging participation in resource mobilisation activities such as collection of user charges, monitoring and evaluation

#### *Construction activities*

- construction, augmentation and rehabilitation of water supply and environmental sanitation schemes, including spring/stream gravity, tubewells with handpumps/electric pumps, and stream pumping;
- protection of the catchment area through activities including the establishment of tree nurseries, reforestation, alternate energy sources to fuelwood, erosion control and other site specific programmes;

- construction of community drains;
- construction of demonstration and household human waste disposal facilities;
- provision of environmental management through activities including construction of filtration structures for community ponds, solid waste disposal and mosquito and fly control.

### Project objectives

The main objectives of the project are:

- to deliver sustainable health and hygiene benefits to the rural population through improvement in water supply and environmental sanitation services;
- to test an alternative to the current supply driven mechanism;
- to increase rural incomes through time saving mechanisms;
- to promote sanitation and gender awareness;
- to promote the long term sustainability of the rural water supply and sanitation sector by identifying and implementing an appropriate policy framework and strategic plan for the sector.

### Project strategy

The broad strategies to be adopted to achieve the objectives of the project are:

- Demand driven approach for sustainability:* demand and user preferences in terms of type of technology and service level are being taken into account for inculcating ownership and long term sustainability. The best proxy for demand is willingness to share in cost. The user community will make a contribution of about 10 per cent of the capital costs of the scheme as well as pay 100 per cent of the operation and maintenance costs.
- Community participation:* the formation of a legal, representative and responsive Village Water and Sanitation Committee (VWSC) elected by the villagers would form the base for community participation. The VWSC would be a subcommittee of the Gram panchayat. The project focuses on providing the means for users to take a lead in decision making at all stages and in collective sharing of benefits.  
To enable users to take ownership of their schemes, the community action planning (CAP) process provides opportunities for small groups of villagers to investigate, analyse problems, resolve conflicts and build consensus.
- Empowering women:* Women are the main users and managers of water resources, and influence the family's sanitary habits through their central role in family hygiene, child care and food preparation. The project implementation strategy would focus on strengthening the role of women in all stages of the scheme cycle to increase their capacity and to ensure that they

participate and share fully in project benefits. Community development activities will promote the role of women in five key areas:

- women are guaranteed minimum 30 per cent representation on the VWSC;
  - hygiene and sanitation awareness and nonformal education activities will focus on women;
  - the women's development programme will provide specific skill and management training to increase the scope of income generating activities and to help women to gain access to the formal credit system;
  - women will be encouraged to form female tapstand groups to collect monthly operation and maintenance fees;
  - women will be trained in operation and maintenance.
- Support Organisations (SOs) to provide single window assistance:* SOs will provide an integrated package of assistance to village communities. Suitably staffed with professionals from diverse disciplines, the SOs will provide technical guidance, assist the community in preparing their community action plans, and help create health and hygiene awareness.
  - Integrated approach:* An integrated approach is being adopted in the project towards water supply, environmental sanitation and health and hygiene to maximize benefits. While water supply has traditionally been given high priority in India, relatively fewer resources have been allocated for sanitation and hygiene. In the SWAJAL project, water, sanitation and hygiene are all part of an integrated package.
  - Continuous training:* training is the thread which runs through all components of the project. A comprehensive training programme has been evolved which covers all those involved in the project, be it the village community, the SO or the Project Management Unit. The training will be dynamic rather than static.

### Project management and monitoring

Macro level management of the project will be undertaken by a Project Management Unit (PMU) based at Lucknow. The PMU is an independent body registered under the Societies Act. The PMU is assisted by seven District Project Management Units (DPMUs), four in the hills and three in Bundelkhand. There is a mix of public and private sector professionals from diverse disciplines in the PMU and DPMUs.

The main role of these professionals in the PMU and DPMUs will be to facilitate, coordinate and monitor the progress of the project. Additionally, independent service agencies will be used from time to time to supplement the efforts of the PMU in monitoring and evaluation. Among other tools, performance and process monitoring indicators will be used to get periodic feedback. A continuous learning and correctional process will be also be built into the monitoring and evaluation process.

### **The policy framework**

The design of the SWAJAL project is the first of its kind in India. Viewed as a large pilot, the project will test an innovative approach to service delivery which is demand driven and promotes a participatory approach to decision making. The project's philosophy is also in keeping with 73rd Constitutional Amendment, which promotes decentralised management to the lowest appropriate level.

Side by side, a long term strategic plan for the sector is being planned which will take into account the necessary institutional, economic, social and financial factors. The long term strategic plan will also recommend policy reforms, if any, needed for the long term sustainability of the rural water supply and environmental sanitation sector in the State.