

Gram Panchayat Water Supply and Sanitation Committees in Ropar District of Punjab (India): Rhetoric and Realities

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Abstract

The aim of the study is to make an assessment on rural water supply and management with special focus on Roper district of Punjab (India), because of the drinking water crises due to semi mountain geographical area. Beside the adequate infrastructures provided by Punjab Rural water supply and sanitation project, the management of the water supply and sanitation is less effective and research finds out that the major reason behind was poor technical training provided to Gram Water Supply and Sanitation Committees. Furthermore, the reason was lack of trained man power to motivate rural population and stake holders of this project. The project has also suffered because the implementing agency's prime motive was to build infrastructure for water supply, giving less importance to participation of community stakeholders of this project. The concept of participation was widely practiced in early 1970s to address the issues of rural population in problems solving mechanism and to provide better results. This paper is a case study of Roper district of Punjab (India). The paper focuses on community participation in water supply and management working alongside with other stake holders and seeks to evaluate the level of participation.

Keywords: Rural, Water, Sanitation, Stake holders, Committees, Project, World Bank, Cooperation and Participation.

Introduction:

Government of Punjab was devoted to reform the sector to improve sustainability and appraise of rural water and sanitation services in Punjab. The government of Punjab also committed the decentralization and strengthening the Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs). Therefore the government of Punjab started the Punjab Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project and its implementation will be responsible for facilitation, planning, implementation, operation and maintenance of the schemes. The Department of Water Supply and Sanitation (DWSS), Government of Punjab is the nodal agency. The main developmental objectives of this program is to improve the quality of rural water supply and environmental sanitation service delivery, sanitation and hygiene, to achieve sustainability of investments and generate health and income benefits in the State of Punjab by involving Panchayati Raj Institutions and local communities. At the village level for program implementation by Gram Panchayat Water Sanitation Committee (GPWSC) selected by the Gram Sabha working in partnership with the Gram Panchayat. The Gram Panchayat Water Sanitation Committee constituted as a recognized body under section 25 of the Punjab Panchayati Raj Act, 1994. The Sarpanch will be the ex-officio chairperson of the Gram Panchayat Water Sanitation Committee. The Gram Sabha will directly select the remaining members of the Gram Panchayat Water Sanitation Committee. The Gram Panchayat Water Sanitation Committee members will select a Secretary and Treasurer. The Junior Engineer of the District Water Supply Sanitation in-charge of the village will be the technical member cum convenor of the Gram Panchayat Water Sanitation Committee GPWSC. Gram Panchayats / Gram Panchayat Water Sanitation Committee will be responsible for planning, technology selection (type of scheme), procurement (bid invitation, award), construction and operation and maintenance management of all new water schemes and for all intra-village water supply works of multi village water supply schemes. To provide training for technical aspects of the project to GPWSC members was soul responsibility of the State Program Management cell and District Water Supply and Sanitation Department. Beside from this the both above mentioned departments were also responsible for sensitizing beneficiaries for importance of safe water and its uses. Unit Coordinator (M&E) his presentation on "Monitoring and evaluation frame work under Punjab Rural Water Supply and Sanitation". He stressed that the objective of the monitoring and evaluation system is to monitor the programme implementation evaluation, to continuously learn about the corrections during implementation wherever required to monitor the targets for the entire state. D.K. Bhasin (2009).

in the “Overview of procurement procedures as per World bank Guidelines” said that role of the procurement is a valid alarm for promoting good governance and better fiscal management of project. Procurement is a critical element in a project implementation and unless it is carried out efficiently and promptly, the full benefits of the project cannot be realized. The World Bank developed guidelines for procurement of goods, works, and consultancy. Er P.R. Sharma (2009)

presented on “Overview of financial management and accounting under Punjab Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project.” The financial management manual gives detailed information on various financial & accounting aspects like planning & budgeting, flows of funds from World Bank to various levels, accounting policies, bookkeeping and accounting at SPMC, DPMC, and GPWSCs level financial reporting, auditing etc. Since the participants are not from the field of finance, such a detailed knowledge is not required by them. Only the relevant information relating to financial management & accounting which every person who is associated with PRWSS project should know is given hereunder. Vabha Mehta (2009)

report on “Feeling the Pulse, A Study of the Total Sanitation Campaign in Five States” This report is the outcome of a study undertaken to understand the principles of what has worked and what has not worked in Total Sanitation Campaign which is the national programme on reforms in rural sanitation launched by the Government of India in 1999. The focus of this study is to draw learning lessons from the implementation experience so far, for improved effectiveness in the future. The study team is immensely grateful to women, men and children of 40 Gram Panchayats in 20 blocks of 10 districts across 5 states of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Karnataka, and Tripura. Methods used for generating qualitative information included focus group discussions, in-depth interviews and discussions. The report concluded with the result in states and districts where PRIs have been actively involved in TSC, the results have been quicker and more sustainable. Lack of awareness of disaster risks related to floods, droughts, earthquakes, landslides, cyclones and other events, and their possible impact on sanitation facilities at the household and community levels women, poor and the marginalised in total sanitation is skewed and undertaken on fairly unequal terms in places visited in Bihar for example, no consultation with the poor dalit communities even in NGP villages had taken place and women were not even aware of the program. Water Aid (2008)

in her paper on “Inefficiency Water Supply Schemes in India” this Policy Paper extracted from the World Bank Study on Review of Effectiveness of Rural Water Supply Schemes in India, June 2008. The author explores in this paper about the inefficiency in cost management in rural water supply in India from last one-and-a-half decades, there has been an annual average expenditure of about one billion US dollars in the rural water supply sector in India. This has led to an appreciable increase in coverage (from 75 percent in 1997 to 97 percent in 2006, according to official statistics), but the overall improvement in the provision of water supply in rural areas has not been commensurate with the level of expenditure undertaken due to inefficiencies and wastages of various kinds. The paper concluded with the study of ten states on the Effectiveness of Rural Water Supply Schemes, undertaken by the World Bank at the request of the Government of India, has looked at various aspects of ‘inefficiency’ along with measures to address these issues. Smita Misra (2008)

Methodology:

The district Ropar comprises five administrative blocks, Rupnagar, Anandpur Sahib, Nurpur bedi, Morinda and Chamkaur Sahib and includes 624 villages. Since the implementation of PRWSS project is just not limited to the participation of community members and GPWSC members but also intends to look into the effects on the quality of life of the community members as well. The PRWSS project has started from 2008 still there is not a single study on this project but thus a need was felt to understand and evaluate the functioning, awareness and performance of the beneficiaries and the GPWSC committees towards achievement of the PRWSS goals. For the purpose of the study four villages have been taken from each administrative block. Total twenty successful working Gram Panchayat Water Supply and Sanitation committees have been selected and studied.

The objectives of this paper at analysis of the contribution of the Gram Panchayat Water Supply and Sanitation committee in terms of activities done in community. The first objective is to analyse the activities to aware local community in terms of safe

drinking water and importance of water management and water sources. The second objective of the paper is the contribution of individual members and the issues relating to conduct of meetings.

The present study was conducted in the villages of Ropar District. For describing the general features of the study and the pattern of the GPWSC at the District level, secondary data has been utilized, while primary data were collected directly from the selected respondents. The methodology adopted for the present study is primarily descriptive, interpretive and evaluative in nature. Since this study has been carried out in the twenty villages of one of the districts of Punjab with, unique feature of the district is that geography of the district include Kandi Area, Bet Area and Plan Area, thus the researcher may be able to provide an overall picture of the functioning of Punjab Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project in entire state. The study would cover 20 villages of Ropar District where the Punjab Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project being implemented. For the purpose of evaluating the GPWSC, a random sample of 100 respondents was drawn. To give an equal representation to each village and each committee, 5 members from each committee was randomly selected.

The tools for data collection was Structured Interview Schedule and on the spot observation from the selected sample of the present study. The Data was collected with the help of a pre-designed and structured interview schedule.

Findings

The awareness level of GPWSC members and beneficiaries about activities done in community:

Under the Punjab Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project the SPMC (State Program Management Cell) has been signed MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) with the Gram Panchayat Water Supply and Sanitation Committees. The MOU clearly define the activities that were nukkar natak to create awareness amongst the community members and conduct exhibition for awareness of the school children. Other activities are like road show, school level competition to mentor students. The GPWSC also spreads awareness about disease accrued through contaminated water. The Table 1 indicates awareness level of the respondents about the activities of GPWSCs perceived by respondents

Table 1: Activities of GPWSCs.

Activities	GPWSC Members			Beneficiaries			Total		
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
Nukkar natak to aware community	36 (36)	64 (64)	100 (100)	75 (37.5)	125 (62.5)	200 (100)	111 (37)	189 (63)	300 (100)
Exhibition to aware children of school	35 (35)	65 (65)	100 (100)	54 (27)	146 (73)	200 (100)	89 (29.67)	211 (70.33)	300 (100)
Road show to aware local people	42 (42)	58 (58)	100 (100)	27 (13.5)	173 (86.5)	200 (100)	69 (23)	231 (77)	300 (100)
School level competition to mentor students	23 (23)	77 (77)	100 (100)	22 (11)	178 (89)	200 (100)	45 (15)	255 (85)	300 (100)
Awareness about importance of safe water	11 (11)	89 (89)	100 (100)	24 (12)	176 (88)	200 (100)	35 (11.67)	265 (88.33)	300 (100)
Awareness about disease accrued through contaminated water	36 (36)	64 (64)	100 (100)	75 (37.5)	125 (62.5)	200 (100)	111 (37)	189 (63)	300 (100)
Importance of saving water	15 (15)	85 (85)	100 (100)	15 (7.5)	185 (92.5)	200 (100)	30 (10)	270 (90)	300 (100)

- **Multiple Response Table**
- **Figures in brackets show percentage.**

The present analysis indicates the fact of overall conditions about the level of awareness of respondent about the activities of GPWSC's different parameters. The first activity of nukkar natak's is to make the community aware about the importance of safe drinking water which is only 37 percent amongst respondents yes other 63 percent have no knowledge about this activity. On the other hand exhibition for school children to make them aware about the importance of safe water, fewer 29.67 percent were aware about it. Road show to make local people aware had only 23 percent respondents. At School level competition to mentor students only 15 percent have knowledge about this activity. Most important activity at village level which is awareness about important of safe water, only 11.67 percent had knowledge about it; awareness about disease accrued through contaminated water is 37 percent and

importance of saving water get minimum positive response only 10 percent respondent have knowledge about the saving of water. The Table shows that majority of respondents have less knowledge about the activities of GPWSCs at village level.

The second objective of the paper is the contribution of individual members and the issues relating to conduct of meetings.

Meetings of Gram Panchayat Water Supply and Sanitation Committees GPWSC's

The issue related to the meetings of GPWSCs are conducted or not will be clear in the following discussion. The issues of the agenda of the GPWSCs meeting are mainly related to the collection of the beneficiaries shares, opening of saving account in the name of GPWSC, construction of the water tank and maintain the quality of supply pipes and collection and resolution about amount of monthly water supply bills. The chairman of the GPWSC maintains the minutes of the meetings and gets the signature of the members in circulation.

Table 2: about Conduct of Meeting Whether it's Conducted or Not

Blocks	GPWSC Members			Beneficiaries			Total		
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
Ropar	8 (8)	12 (12)	20 (20)	10 (5)	30 (15)	40 (20)	18 (6)	42 (14)	60 (20)
Morinda	4 (4)	16 (16)	20 (20)	8 (4)	32 (16)	40 (20)	12 (4)	48 (16)	60 (20)
Nurpur Bedi	4 (4)	16 (16)	20 (20)	12 (6)	28 (14)	40 (20)	16 (5.33)	44 (14.67)	60 (20)
Anandpur Sahib	6 (6)	14 (14)	20 (20)	11 (5.5)	29 (14.5)	40 (20)	17 (5.67)	43 (14.33)	60 (20)
Chamkour Sahib	5 (5)	15 (15)	20 (20)	3 (1.5)	37 (33.5)	40 (20)	8 (2.67)	52 (17.33)	60 (20)
Total	27 (27)	73 (73)	100 (100)	44 (22)	156 (78)	200 (100)	71 (23.67)	229 (76.33)	300 (100)

- *Figures in brackets show percentage.*

The finding in the Table 2 was surprising, a huge majority (76.33 percent) of the respondents agreed that the meetings were not conducted; on the other hand merely (23.67 percent) gave the positive response and agreed that the meetings were taken placed. From the analysis, it can be concluded that the situation of members attending of the GPWSCs in project was the worst. The lack of interest and importance about functioning of GPWSCs is the most appropriate reason behind that, therefore it can be suggested that there were need to reorient the GPWSCs members so, they can value the importance of GPWSCs and their meetings.

Participation of the GPWSC Members in Meeting

The issue of participation of the GPWSC members in meeting is very important. As pointed out earlier, the meetings of the GPWSCs are held only on papers. The issued agenda of the GPWSCs meetings are mainly relating to the utilization of funds or some resolutions regarding construction of water tank and laying of supply pipes in the village. The chairman of GPWSC records minute's meetings on a particular issue and gets the signatures of members in circulation. As earlier mentioned the huge majority agreed that the meetings were not conducted so the participation in meeting is very low the decision regarding any purchase or the important resolutions are taken only by the chairman as well as the technical member or convener of the committee.

From the analysis, it can be concluded that the situation of participation of the GPWSCs members in project in Punjab was the worst. It is because there is no particular method to take attendance of the GPWSCs and the meeting held in a formal manner.

Keeping in the view the general lack of interest among the GPWSC members and low awareness level about the meeting, it can be suggested that there is need to reorient the GPWSCs members as well as the beneficiaries of the project so that they value the importance of GPWSCs and their meetings see the Table 3 for more details.

Table 3: Participation of GPWSC members in meetings

Participation of GPWSC members in meetings	GPWSC Members (N=100)
No Response	31 (31)
Frequently Participation	11 (11)
Sometimes Participation	12 (12)
Other Participation	6 (6)
No Participation	40 (40)
Total	100 (100)

- *Figures in brackets show percentage.*

From the above mentioned table it can be concluded that the participation in the meetings of GPWSCs was very low, the frequent participation of the members is only 11 percent of the total and 12 percent participation some times. The participation of the other persons on behalf of committee members is 6 percent which existed. The majority response 40 percent was no participation in meetings and other 31percent respondents gave no response.

Meeting of GPWSCs in a Calendar Year

Getting response about the meeting of GPWSCs in a calendar year is very essential because it helps to analyses the serious level among the members of GPWSC about the working and participation in functioning of the committee. As per the memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the state program management cell (SPMC) and GPWSC at least one meeting should be held in a month so that progress of the scheme can be analysed at village level. The response of the GPWSC members about the meeting in calendar year is not uncommon.

From the analysis, it reflects that the situation of the GPWSCs meeting in calendar year is not up to the mark, because the members of committee were busy in to their day to day life work and have no time to participate in the meetings. Even the members of GPWSCs did not get any invitation from the chairman about these meeting.

During the analysis it's found that there is a general lack of interest among the GPWSC members and low awareness level about the meeting. Therefore it can be suggested that there is need to reorient the GPWSCs members as well as the beneficiaries of the project so that they value the importance of GPWSCs and their meetings see the Table 4 for more details.

Table 4: The Meeting of GPWSCs in a Calendar Year

Participation of GPWSC members in meetings	GPWSC Members (N=100)
Monthly	11 (11)
Quarterly	14 (14)
Six Monthly	10 (10)
When Required	5 (5)
No Response	70 (70)
Total	100 (100)

- *Figures in brackets show percentage.*

Above table revealed that large number of respondents (70 percent) had no response about the meetings in a calendar year other from this, 11 percent say monthly,14 percent quarterly ,10 percent six monthly and only 5 percent in favour of when required.

From the analysis it can be projected that the serious level among the GPWSCs member is not up to the mark as required, so it is very necessary to create project friendly atmosphere which can help higher level of participation in meetings.

Conclusion

The paper highlighted the important aspects related to the beneficiaries' level of awareness and the contribution of Gram Panchayat Water Supply and Sanitation committees. Besides the clear cut instructions given by the World Bank about the activities of the GPWSC, majority of beneficiaries were unaware. The members of Gram Panchayat Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Committee also have lack of information about these activities and its relevance and significance to the project. In the light of second objective about the meetings and participation of GPSWC members shows very pathetic result majority of GPWSC members were

not aware about meetings and its frequency as well. Otherwise in government reports the progress of these aspects of drinking water supply and sanitation projects has a different picture, which shows rural community has been self reliant in the area of drinking water supply and sanitation.

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