

CHANGING THE LIVES OF WOMEN IN REMOTE VILLAGES

NEPAL: LOAN 2008

COMMUNITY BASED WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION SECTOR PROJECT¹

By Tulin Pulley, ADB Consultant, and Suman Subba, Gender Specialist, ADB Nepal Resident Mission

From being a little girl to being a mother in Banskhor village of Kapilvastu, Gena Kohar's life had been a constant struggle—walking long hours to fetch water every day, living in a house without a toilet, and drinking unsafe water leading to endless water-borne diseases—until a water supply and sanitation project helped change her life and the lives of other women like her in their village. Women like Gena and her friends have found more time to engage in activities such as making candles, which are being sold to boost the family income. ADB's project in rural Nepal has shown what can be done when the local people and the Government work hand in hand, and most importantly, when women are involved in changing their own lives.

--excerpt from Binita Shah Khadka, ADB/Nepal Newsletter, March 2009



Context:

Despite abundant water resources, access to water supply remains difficult with Nepal's mountainous terrain especially for people living in remote rural areas. Many still rely on unsafe sources of water in shallow wells, ponds and streams. The burden of lack of access to water is borne disproportionately by lowest income groups and by women and girls as they spend long hours everyday fetching water from distant sources. Women forgo opportunities for income generation while girls reduce school attendance. For people of lower castes such as *dalits* and other disadvantaged groups who are usually the poorest, water sometimes becomes unaffordable. As a part of its 10th National Development Plan (2002-2007), the Government had emphasized the need to improve water supply, sanitation and community health services as a means to reduce poverty and accelerate economic growth for the poor and disadvantaged

¹ Loan 2008-NEP: Community Based Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Project was approved on 30 September 2003 for \$24.0 million. The Project became effective 01 April 2004 and will be implemented until 2010.

groups. The Three Year Interim Development Plan of the Government (2008-2010) also emphasizes water and sanitation services to be accessed by all.

Expected Outcome and Scope:

The expected outcomes of the *Nepal: Community Based Water Supply and Sanitation Project* are (i) the expanded coverage of improved water supply and sanitation (WSS) facilities to underserved populations, especially to poor and remote areas; (ii) improved health and hygiene practices of the beneficiaries; (iii) reduced waterborne and sanitation related diseases; and, (iv) reduced time for water collection. The Project uses a community-based, demand-driven approach to extend WSS facilities to approximately 1,200 communities in 21 districts in the conflict-affected areas of western Nepal through its rural WSS component. It also facilitates building the capacity of district and village development committees (DDCs and VDCs), and to strengthen decentralized decision-making at the district level through its institutional strengthening component.

1. The Rural Component:

- a. *Community Mobilization and Capacity Building for Sustainability:* Project beneficiaries are organized into Water Users Groups (WUGs) to develop their capacity to plan, construct, manage, operate and maintain water supply schemes and sanitation facilities and ensure their sustainability after project completion.
- b. *Construction of Community Water Supply and Sanitation Facilities:* The Project finances the construction and rehabilitation of water supply schemes by WUGs including gravity pipe systems, rainwater harvesting, piped systems with overhead tank and ground water wells with hand pumps. The Project also has a Sanitation Revolving Fund to provide credit to the poor beneficiaries for the construction of individual family latrines. To ensure sustainability and active participation of the community, the WUG contributes at least 20% of the cost of the scheme with at least 1% in cash and the estimated cost of 1 year of operation and maintenance of the scheme in cash.
- c. *Health and Hygiene Program:* To reduce the incidence of water borne diseases, the Project trains and supports DDCs and VDCs and community leaders in planning, monitoring and evaluating sanitation and hygiene improvement programs including gender-sensitive hygiene awareness campaigns.
- d. *Gender, Caste and Ethnic Minority Program:* The Project conducts training and awareness raising programs to increase the active participation of disadvantaged groups and women in all project activities. As a condition for funding, the communities have to form Water User and Sanitation Committees with at least a proportional representation of poor, castes, ethnic minority groups and with at least 50% women among their executive and general members.

2. The Institutional Strengthening Component:

- a. *Strengthening DDC Capacity to Provide Rural Water Supply and Sanitation (RWSS):* The Project trains and gives technical support to participating DDCs to develop materials, training packages and manuals focusing on community participation, operation and maintenance of RWSS, and on gender, caste and ethnicity issues which are incorporated in the various training programs conducted at the district, village and community levels.

- b. *Supporting the Decentralization Policy and Department of Water Supply and Sewerage (DWSS)*: The Project provides technical assistance for developing and implementing a human resource strategy in line with the new roles and responsibilities of DWSS defined under the RWSS sector strategy.

Framework for Gender, Caste and Ethnicity (GCE) Awareness and Empowerment:

An ADB evaluation conducted under the Nepal: Fourth Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Project in 2001 highlighted that lack of women's participation in decision-making in water user and sanitation committees (WUSCs) seemed to have had an adverse impact on planning, resource utilization and tariff collection. During the evaluation survey, women questioned the lack of transparency of system costs and illegal extensions using private pipelines by WUSC chairmen.



Subsequent surveys conducted during the project preparatory technical assistance confirmed that without targeted interventions, women and poor men were often excluded from participation in decision-making related to project planning and resource allocation for RWSS in Nepal. Empowering women and socially excluded groups such as *dalits* to participate in decision-making about improved RWSS resources, and have equal access to water, sanitation and other project benefits like training and employment were, therefore, considered critically important to address in the *Nepal: Community-Based Water Supply and Sanitation Project (CBWSSP)* through intensive social mobilization efforts and gender-sensitive processes. The Project was classified as a core poverty intervention loan with human development and gender and development themes.

Gender, Caste and Ethnic Inclusive Design: GCE Strategy and Implementation Plan

One of the key objectives of the CBWSSP is “to increase the participation of disadvantaged castes, ethnic minority groups and women” so that not only they can benefit from new opportunities but also feel a sense of ownership of the Project.

During the design phase, a GCE Awareness and Empowerment Strategy was developed to (i) ensure capacity building to promote women's and disadvantaged caste and ethnic group's involvement in WSS decision-making at central, district and community levels; and (ii) set targets for women's and disadvantaged group's participation and access to sub-project benefits. This strategy has promoted inclusion of the disadvantaged caste and ethnic minority groups for the first time in a rural water supply project in Nepal to address the issue of exclusion in a broader context. Diversity among women in their caste and ethnic identities including the locations they belong has been considered by the project.

In 2006, a GCE Implementation Plan was developed to revise outputs and performance indicators which were then incorporated into the Project's design and monitoring framework (DMF) for regular progress reporting and evaluation. GCE Strategy is reflected in the DMF outcome indicators: 20% time reduction in collecting water; output indicators: caste and ethnic minority groups receive improved WSS services and represented in WUSC with 50% WUSC members women; and input indicators: 0.04% budget allocation for the GCE program and Project based Gender and Social Development Specialists hired at central and regional levels.

| GCE Implementation Plan | Results Achieved by mid-2009 |
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| <p>1. Community Mobilization and Capacity Building for Sustainability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disadvantaged caste and ethnic groups received orientation on participation • Poor women and disadvantaged groups linked with income generating activities • Non-formal education conducted for women by NGOs • Training on GCE approach to staff of DWSS, DDC/CWSSUO, and NGOs • GCE awareness and participation training for WUSCs conducted by NGOs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 22, 748 users (53% female, 47% male including about 18% <i>dalits</i>, 15% ethnic minority groups and 67% other castes) including WUSC members, local CBOs and beneficiaries were provided orientation on the participation of GCE in CBWSSP in 20 districts • 5,976 users were provided non-formal education (99% female) which includes literacy classes in reading and writing • Efforts are in place to link beneficiaries with organizations involved in income generating activities |
| <p>2. Construction of Community WSS Facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GCE group participated in site selection, construction of structure and collected upfront cash contribution • 30% of participants in group meetings are women, and proportionately from disadvantaged groups • Sanitation subsidies provided to the 10% poorest households • Two Village Maintenance Workers (VMW-male and female) as paid workers selected and trained in each sub project | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CBWSSP has ensured equal representation of men and women from all GCE groups in WUSCs, in decision-making processes about site selection and construction of facilities and access to structures like water taps and tanks • 15,031 participants attended Water Users group meetings on construction and site selection (61% male and 39% female) • 106 VMWs have been trained (56% male and 44% female). Two VMWs (1 male/1 female) were recruited and trained in each subproject; however, women were hesitant to do their job as it required them to use heavy machinery to fix water supply systems. Also a sense of insecurity discourages women to travel to forests and isolated places where the water systems are generally located |
| <p>3. Health and Hygiene Program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two sanitation masons (man and woman) in each subproject trained • Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHV) trained on health and sanitation • FCHV to provide orientation on health and sanitation in each literacy class twice a month • Training on health and sanitation for WUSC ensuring 50% participation of women | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2,375 WUSC members and water users (49% female 51% male) were provided information and training on sanitation approaches of CBWSSP including the subsidies, sanitation revolving fund and behavior change communication program. • 570 users were trained as sanitation masons (58% male and 42% female). Social norms and taboos for females have restricted females to be equally involved in constructing and repairing toilets. • 1,354 women were trained as FCHVs to work at the ward level |
| <p>4. Gender, Caste and Ethnicity Minority Program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% women in executive and as general members in WUSCs with proportional representation of all castes and ethnic minority groups • Gender awareness training for WUSC members, women's groups and other community groups linking with project activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 662 WUSCs have been formed in 20 districts with 5,987 members. Out of these, 51% are female and 49% male. The female group comprised of 12%, 8% and 31% users and the male group had a total of 6%, 7%, and 36% users from <i>dalit</i>, ethnic minority groups and other castes respectively. • 1,839 participants consisting of WUSC members, water users, mothers' clubs and other CBOs received with gender awareness training during the construction phase |
| <p>5. Strengthening DDC Capacity to Provide Water Supply and Sanitation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DDC/CWSSUO implemented and monitored GCE programs in 21 districts • PMUO organized gender sensitivity training for at least 50% staff of DDCs and CWSSUO • 21 DDC/CWSSUO maintained a database on beneficiary population and project progress indicators disaggregated by gender, ethnicity and caste | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GCE programs are being monitored through the implementation of gender and social inclusion implementation plan. • 607 participants from DDC/CWSSUO, DWSS and NGO staff attended GCE orientation (88% male and 12% female). • DDC/CWSSUO maintains a project monitoring database on beneficiaries disaggregated by GCE criteria. The project reports on progress of GCE participation in its regular trimester progress report. |

Project Results to Date:

Information gathered through regular project review mission and reports coming from the field suggest that changes on the ground are happening as a result of participation of GCE groups in CBWSSP, Examples of such changes are:

- Increased women's voice and consideration of their needs and priorities.
- Increased input from both women and men on decisions connected with site selection for construction of structures as well as the decisions which are taken in day to day household matters.
- Sensitization of water users to the changes of gender roles through orientations and trainings.
- Increased women's leadership particularly within WUSCs where both men and women are encouraged to choose their representatives.
- Increased women's empowerment with regard to decision making process within WUSC. Women believed that their individual roles and responsibilities have not only boosted their self-confidence, but also empowered them to contribute effectively in making decisions during meetings.
- Increased number of women as WUSC chairpersons who have been successfully leading the groups towards project implementation has increased acceptance from the men to have women leaders even from the disadvantaged communities.
- Users of Niglihawa subproject in Kapilvastu, Panderakhola, Khamerapani subproject in Pyuthan and Smialtola subproject in Bajhang district have started growing vegetables in their kitchen gardens using water from completed water supply subprojects. Now the consumption of fresh vegetables has increased.
- Employment opportunities for sanitation masons and village maintenance workers for rendering their services. The equal opportunity provided by the Project for women and men to receive training for sanitation mason and maintenance workers has encouraged women to come forward in these kinds of non-traditional professions.
- Tulsia Giri, a Sanitation Mason who is also the Secretary of Water Users Sanitation Committee in Niglihawa, Kapilvastu, has received a 10-day training. After the training, she grew in confidence and later engaged in construction of household toilets. When asked about the benefits of becoming a Sanitation Mason, she replies that the Project has provided her with the skill to learn a living and deposit savings in a bank account.



- 10% of the poorest beneficiaries, as identified by the socio-economic profile have benefited through wages in terms of cash for contributing their labor and have also received facilities of toilets that are constructed under sanitation subsidies and the sanitation revolving fund.