

Drastic Change, but not a Dream - Lessons from WASH Sector in Gujarat¹

Gujarat has a special place in WASH sector in India. The situation of water resources, mega-multi-purpose water resource projects, alternative experiences in promoting local solutions, effective administrative instruments, political will and community participation make Gujarat a very special state in India in terms of WASH services. To understand the intricacies of WASH sector in Gujarat, WASHCost India team organized an exposure visit to Gujarat. Water And Sanitation Management Organization (WASMO), Gandhinagar supported this and hosted the team from Andhra Pradesh. WASMO helped in planning this exposure visit and facilitated the learning process of the visiting delegates. A brief profile of the exposure visit is given in Box No 1.

This note gives the details of this exposure visit including summary of discussions; key observations and lessons learned.

Lessons Learned from Interactions with Chief Minister, Rural Development Minister:

The Honorable Minister, Secretary, ENC & Country Coordinator had an opportunity to interact with Mr. Narendra Modi, Honourable Chief Minister, Gujarat State and while the delegation had an opportunity to meet Mr. Parbatbhai Patel Honourable Minister of State Water Supply Gujarat; Mr. H.K. Dash Principal Secretary (Water Supply) Dr. Jaipal Singh, Additional Secretary and CEO WASMO.

Box No 1

Details of the Exposure Visit to Gujarat

Dates: 2nd to 5th Dec 2009

Team Members:

From Government of Andhra Pradesh:

- Mr P.Vishwarup, Honorable Minister for Rural Water Supply and Sanitation, Mrs Chitra Ramachandran IAS, Secretary, RWSS; Mr B.Rajeshwara Rao, Engineering Chief; Other Senior Officers - Mr M.Narasinga Rao, Mr G.Veera Pratap; Mr U.Venkata Ramaiah and Mrs G.Kavita

From WASHCost India:

- Dr Snehalatha, Country Coordinator WASHCost (India); Dr Rama Mohan Rao, Consultant (WASHCost India Project) and MV Rama Chandrudu Director WASSAN and Documentation and Communications Officer

Purpose of the Visit:

"To understand and learn from good practices in WASH sector in Gujarat state".

Places Visited/ Persons Met:

Meetings with Honourable Chief Minister of Gujarat; Honourable Minister for Rural Development of Gujarat; Principal Secretary of RWSS Department; WASMO team including Chief Executive Officer; NGO

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During these interactions, the team could understand the broad policy framework and spirit of operational strategies in promoting sustainable WASH services in the state. These are briefly mentioned here.

- Drinking water is primary need for human life and it is the responsibility of the state to provide safe drinking water to its citizens. However, it is important to involve citizens in the process and engage them “emotionally” in the management of system.
- Local institutions such as Pani Samitis (Water Committees) would give an opportunity to citizens to take part in the management of WASH services.
- Pani Samitis function as a sub-committee of the Gram Panchayats, thus have a legal status of PRI.
- Pani Samiti gets its legitimacy and involvement of all citizens through Gram Sabha decisions on all crucial issues.
- Cost sharing by communities in capital investments and Operation & maintenance is an important requirement and non-negotiable.
- Government has to ensure the provision of sustainable source of drinking water thus strengthening and augmenting supply of local sources assumes importance.
- Government has to promote appropriate institutional systems such as Water And Sanitation Management Organization (WASMO) to promote community participation
- Appropriate systems for monitoring water supply; tariff collection; power supply are important for effective management
- Support of NGOs in institution development and capacity building of Pani Samitis is essential.
- Innovation is key to achieving drinking water security at village level such as dual water supply, 24x7 supply, roof rain water harvesting, development of multiple sources.
- Outreach of the programme – Scaling up: In seven years of its existence WASMO has its presence in over 15,000 villages in the form of Pani Samitis, works have been completed in 4,688 villages, and 3039 villages are in the process of building the infrastructure in the village.

Arrangements for promoting water supply systems in Gujarat State:

The following arrangements are made to promote drinking water facilities in the state.

- The Gujarat Water Infrastructure Ltd pumps water required for drinking and irrigation into Narmada canal. The Gujarat Water Supply and Sewerage Board takes the responsibility of supplying drinking water either by gravity / pumping up to village level. In both the cases costs are born by the government.
- The Water and Sanitation Management Organizations (WASMO) is a society formed under society’s act, to coordinate, monitor, provide social support and facilitate the Pani Samithi to implement the programme. WASMO prepares the Drinking Water Supply projects/ plans considering the existing arrangements and infrastructure along with water source protection measures.

- NGOs are engaged to mobilize the community and build their capacities towards owning and implementing the programme as well as its future maintenance.
- Pani Samiti is a judicially empowered body that plans and executes the programme with support from NGO and WASMO. It also looks after operation and maintenance with the help of WASCO and supported by a paid waterman.
- People contribute 10% and government provides grant of 90%. Government also creates a corpus fund to the extent of 10% of the cost of the project to deposit in the GP account for meeting maintenance costs.
 - Average cost of 70 lit water supply per HH is around Rs. 5000 and more than what is spent in AP
 - The power supply is free and assured sound the clock.
 - In fact Swajaladhara is extended to the entire state and norms there in are followed.

Lessons Learned From SCADA:

The drinking water is supplied from Narmada Canal under Sujalam Suphalam program to 31 villages in Gandhinagar district. For ensuring proper allocation of drinking water and monitoring the same, Government of Gujarat established elaborate “supervision, control and data acquisition” (SCADA) System at Raisan Village for monitoring the allocation of water (quantity) at different points. Based on this system, the quantity of water delivered at various points can be monitored and documented. Bulk transfer of water is monitored at the outlets from the distribution system (the inlet to the village that receives the water) and data is compiled centrally. Based on this data base, the village level committees and others could manage their water resources more efficiently. Collection of tariffs, decision making regarding quantity of water required, etc would be made more transparently. The broad lessons learned from this system are the following.

- Monitoring and data base generation are important requirements in any large scale supply system that supports several villages. Automated and accurate monitoring systems help in making the system effective and support in decision making and effective tariff collections.
- Develops transparency between government and communities as the data is available to all as per the requirements

Interactions with WASMO and NGO Partners – Main Observations:

Government of Gujarat established Water and Sanitation Management Organization (WASMO) to promote community based drinking water and sanitation facilities in rural areas of the state. As large number of villages is covered under Sardar Sarovar Project on Narmada river for drinking water supply, it was necessary for the state to evolve local management systems. Government of Gujarat realized the need for strengthening and integrating existing local water supply systems (as a back-up) with the external Narmada based water supply systems (which provide drinking water in a sustainable manner). For facilitating this, WASMO partnered with around 75 Non Governmental Organizations in the state. During the interactions with about 20 representatives from NGOs in Gujarat, the following lessons are learned.

- Role of Local Institutions – Pani Samitis (Water Committees)
 - Community participation is absolutely essential in providing sustainable WASH services.
 - Community organization is not a miracle that can be achieved by issuing a government circular/ order. It requires considerable facilitation and hand holding of the communities.
 - Village level action plans are developed following integrated water resource planning. These plans have the following components.
 - Developing/conserving local water resources for recharging so as to sustain water sources in the village
 - Construction of water supply infrastructure after considering the local available facilities
 - Building local institutions – Pani Samiti for management of water resources and drinking water facilities
 - Contribution from villages and cost sharing in capital investments and decisions related to water tariffs for maintenance and operations
 - After the infrastructure facilities are established, local institutions – mainly Pani Samitis (Water Committees) took the responsibility of managing the infrastructure and provision of water services.

- Role of NGOs:
 - Role of NGOs is critical in this entire process. Over a period of time, WASMO developed series of methods/ systems for streamlining the entire partnership.
 - Capable and committed NGOs were selected through a rigorous and transparent selection process.
 - NGOs in Gujarat developed locally relevant communication material and organized various communication campaigns. WASMO supported these initiatives in each district.
 - Mile stones are decided in terms of field level activities and outputs and accordingly the payments to NGOs are evolved.
 - NGOs mainly provide support through activities like social mobilisation, communication, capacity development, participatory rural appraisals, developing the Village Action Plan, and technical support for the smooth implementation of the scheme to the local institutions – Water Committee. Training needs assessment is conducted and related training modules/ materials are developed by NGOs and WASMO. Several NGOs contributed in this process.

Box No 2
NGO Representatives who participated in the NGO Interface

Viksat, Development Support Centre, Foundation for Ecological Security, Prakruti, Mahiti, PRAVAH, Cohesion Foundation, AKRSPI, Tata Foundation and others

- Names of NGOs representatives who participated in the meeting are given in Box No 2
- Role of WASMO
 - WASMO activities are not just limited to those villages which received Narmada waters, actually such villages were addressed in the second phase. Wherever communities are ready, WASMO provided support to them in IEC, in planning, project preparation and implementation and so on.
 - WASMO functions in an autonomous mode and flexible to respond to the needs of the communities.
 - WASMO has a strong focus on Information, Education and Communication related processes. WASMO believes that focused attention to IEC interventions would make considerable difference.
 - Contribution and cost sharing from communities is a non-negotiable for WASMO. Communities are motivated to contribute and share the cost of capital investments (up to even 30% of total capital costs in some cases). This adherence to people's contribution by a government organization is a remarkable feature of WASMO promoted WASH services in the state.
 - WASMO was able to influence the political cadre (MLAs/ MP/ Local Party cadre) in positive way. There is very little political interference (on the negative side) in the process of establishing Pani Samities/ developing & executing action plans related drinking water.

Main Lessons and Observations from the Field Visits and Interactions with Villagers:

The team from Andhra Pradesh visited three villages namely – Chowkdi, Japar and Vinjhalpur. All these villages have established Pani Samities with local communities in their villages. They developed the action plans for water resource development and established systems for drinking water. Local NGOs such as SAVA, AKRSP (I) and WASMO's community organization team supported these Pani Samities in the entire process. The main observations and lessons from the visits to these villages are presented here.

- Drastic, but not a Dramatic Change:
- Communities in these villages suffered for a long period for want of adequate potable drinking water. The local sources dried up and women had to struggle to get a pot of water. This situation changed drastically, but not dramatically over a period of time, with the support WASMO and local NGOs. NGOs systematically provided IEC inputs, household visits, motivation campaigns to the villagers. This process created hope in the minds of people that their ideas/ aspirations would find a place in the locally developed action plans. This process was slow but yielded results. After sustained inputs for a long period, the villagers came together to improve their own situation. This change is drastic, but dramatic.
- Contribution from Communities:

- All villages have a common point. Villagers contributed GENUINELY to the capital costs. This contribution is in the form of cash. In most of the cases, this is an advance contribution. WASMO and local NGOs did not compromise on this principle. This genuine contribution gave considerable confidence to the local communities in deciding the course of action in the village. They could control the choice of works., quality of works and performance of infrastructure.
- Action Plans are the Tools of Empowerment:
- Action plans for drinking water did not narrowly look at ONLY drinking water. A comprehensive action plan is developed for all water resources in the village. Conservation of water resources is the first step in most of the villages. They also developed necessary infrastructure facilities for water supply. The local systems are integrated with external supply systems –mainly Narmada waters from Sardar Sarovar Project. Each village has multiple sources for drinking water, which enhanced the sustainability of services in long run. The action plan is used as a tool for empowering the local communities in improving the WASH services in the villages.
- Transparency and Systems
- The Water Committee (Pani Samiti) is local institution that interfaced between WASMO, Grama Panchayati and communities. Transparent systems are developed for water distribution, tariff collection and record keeping. Records for all funds received (including local contributions) are systematically maintained by the Pani Samitis. The legitimacy of Pani Samiti is enhanced by recognizing them as Sub Committee of Grama Panchayat, through a Government Circular. Records, wall paintings and other means are used to enhance the transparency of the systems.
- Tariff Collection:
- The IEC and capacity building inputs helped the communities to realize the need for rigorous financial systems for sustaining the water supply systems. Villagers agreed to pay the water tax in advance and the management of the system was completely dependent on the local fund mobilization. The tariff is agreed by the villagers in a Gram Sabha. The Pani Samiti keeps the amount collected from the villagers and it does not have to remit to the government. This fund is used for maintenance of infrastructure and payment of salary, payments to GWSSB, etc. The tariff collection improved from 10% to 90% (of expected tariff), after the formation of Pani Samiti.
- Innovations
- Several local innovations are included in the action plans and they made a dramatic difference in the availability of water in the villages. As an illustration, Vinjhalpur villagers established a system through which all connections get equal amount of water, irrespective of their location. Generally, the households at the tail end of the pipe would get low quantity of water due to low pressure. This triggers various types of malpractices in water collection –

pit taps, connecting motors to pipe lines are some of such practices. In this village, the village is divided into four zones. Each zone is divided into 15 clusters. Each cluster would have 4 to 7 tap connections. These tap connections are given from a single raised point. At this point, the water pressure is same for all these 4 to 7 connections. Since water is taken separately for each household from the same point, all connected households get equal water. By increasing small amount of costs, they were able to get water at assured and equal pressure. This entire system is devised by local masons. WASMO allowed such interventions and innovations as part of water resource plans of the village.

- Women Leaders
- Another interesting point is emergence of women leadership in the villages. Genuine activists from the village became leaders of the process of transformation, of which most of them were women. This is a natural process that was allowed and nurtured. The sensitivity of local NGOs and WASMO ensured that local voices of both women and men are heard during the planning process. These active members became the obvious choices of the villages, when the Pani Samitis are formalized. Women perform several roles in execution of plans, quality control and ensuring transparency are some of these functions.

Conclusions:

The changes that one could observe the villages are drastic, but not dramatic. These changes were expected as the policy and strategy have a clear focus on multiple sources; local institutions; partnerships among Government Institutions, NGOs and CBOs; genuine contribution. NGOs and WASMO struggled hard to achieve these results. These results are expected to come, when such hard work and sound strategies go together. However, WASMO is now focusing on improving sanitation facilities also.

The exposure visit organized by WASHCost India team helped the project in several ways – understanding and learning several newer approaches in improving the WASH services; role of community based institutions, government institutions (WASMO) and NGOs in the above process; cost sharing processes and its implications on sustainability of water services; policy formulation process and guidance from top; contribution of various instruments such as action plans, non-negotiable contribution, integrating with local systems; and several others. More importantly, the WASHCost India team and representatives of Government of Andhra Pradesh had opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences. It is hoped that the lessons learned during this exposure visit would be implemented in Andhra Pradesh and the WASH services would improve the state.