

## Decentralisation paving a way for efficient service delivery

Kerala

# COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT OF RURAL WATER SUPPLY

## Community Water *plus*

### Interesting features of this case

- High literacy rate, general awareness among people and their active participation in politics.
- Decentralization of service delivery, backed up with powerful policy mandate.
- Financial allocation through statutory and formula-based transfer.
- Participatory and rational planning process to ensure appropriate and equitable utilization of funds

Community Water Plus, a research project, has investigated twenty case studies of successful community managed rural water supply programmes across 17 states in India. Through these case studies, the research has gained insight into the type and amount of support to community organisations that is needed, and the resources implications of this ‘plus’ – in terms of money, staffing, and other factors.

This document presents the approach of community-based managed of water supply in Mallapuram District, Kerala. Kerala has always set a benchmark for decentralized services in the nation and this is reflected by the strong role of the Kodur Gram Panchayat in the water supply, but with support from the Kerala Water authority (KWA).

### Key data on the Kerala context

All India data for reference in parenthesis

Water supply coverage: 93% (96%)

GDP per capita: \$5,922 (\$4,243)

HDI: 0.79 (0.467)

Devolution Index Rank: 1 out of 24



## The enabling support environment

Rural water supply in Kerala is the responsibility of the Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRI), particularly the Gram Panchayats. KWA - an autonomous authority established for the development and regulation of water supply and waste water collection and disposal in the state – is only responsible for the bigger schemes: of the 24 water schemes in the Kodur Panchayat, all (except for one, in which the KWA provides water through its network) are managed by the Gram Panchayat.

That means all the policy related decisions are taken by the Gram Panchayat, and funds are disbursed to the Gram Panchayat for planning and service delivery. The Gram panchayat had the following responsibilities towards provision of water services to the communities - monitoring and control

(auditing), water quality testing, water resources management, technical assistance, conflict management, support in identifying investments needs, (re)training of service provider

Kerala Water Authority does the construction of the work and provides technical assistance. After the completion of construction, the scheme is handed over to the Beneficiary Group.

Kodur Gram Panchayat was also supported by Local Self Government Department (LSGD) with an Engineer and two overseers.

## Community service provider

The service provider roles is carried out by the Beneficiary Groups. These are established at the moment of developing the water supply system by different members who have time and passion for service delivery. The Groups are registered under the Society Act, comply with all the legal statutes and have their own mandate. These groups are highly informed about the latest programmes and schemes that are available for the community.

The group members perceive that they do not need any additional training, as they themselves are able to tackle any sort of problem. In case of any technical assistance (minor repairs or for any technical advice), they would seek the help of an engineer/retired employees who belongs to the same village. Every Beneficiary Group employs mechanics or plumbers. The selection of the committee members is also done in a systematic manner. Any member can join the committee and become a member by paying INR 100 towards a membership. The selection would take place every year in an annual meeting. There was found to be a good rapport between the members. The members had unified opinion about the support received from the Panchayat. The Panchayat had succeeded in providing the right enabling environment for the Beneficiary Groups to perform better. The communities also echoed that the Beneficiary Groups were always available when required.

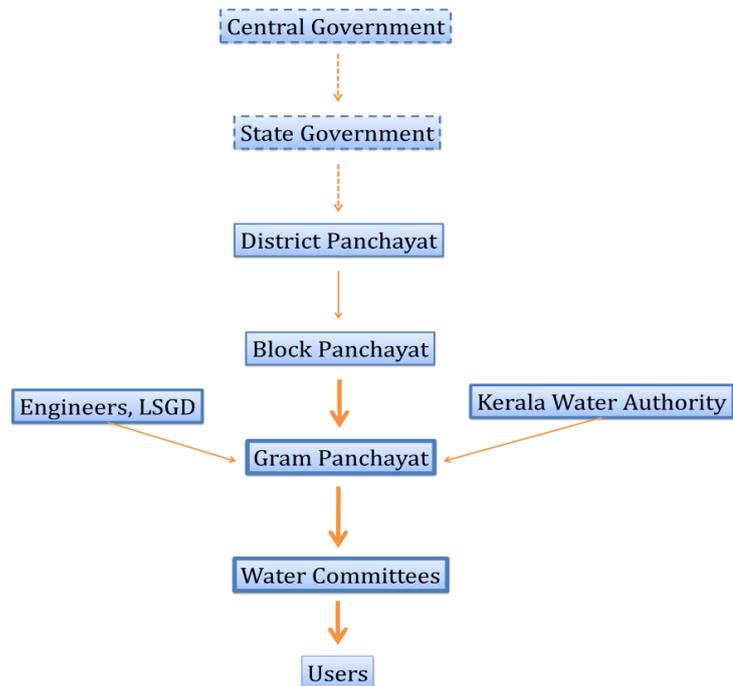


Figure 1 Stakeholders

## Service received by households

Every scheme had a pump operator and a meter reader who looked after the service provision. In terms of quantity, all the three schemes reported high quantity, i.e more than 80 lpcd of water.

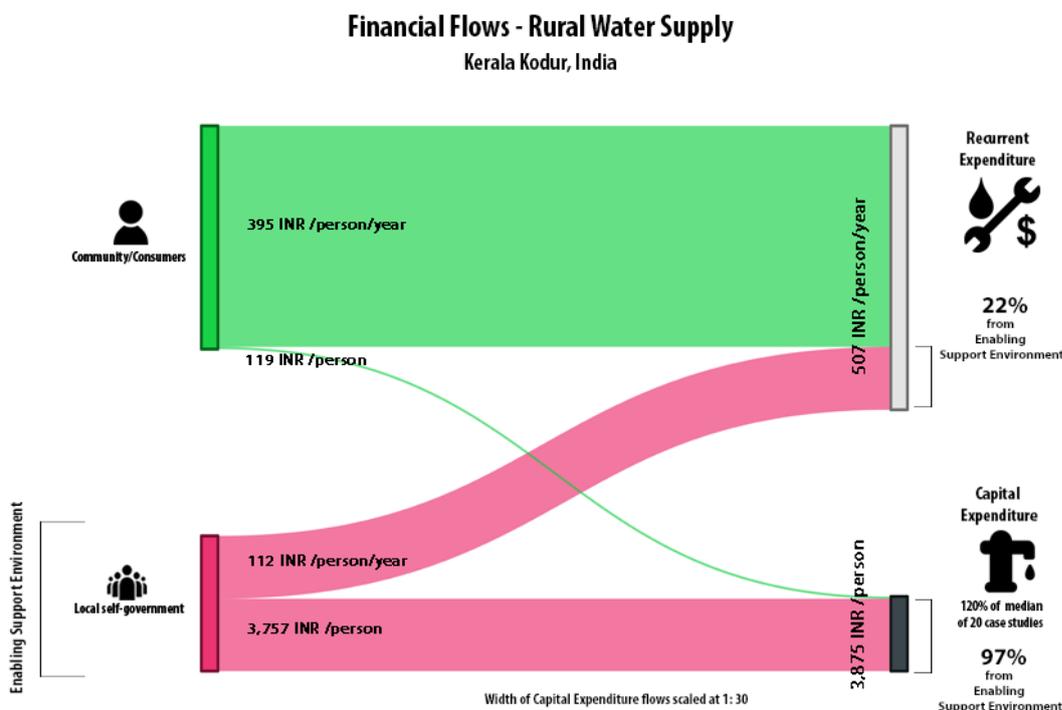
The community expressed their satisfaction levels on the quantity, quality, accessibility, continuity and reliability of water service provision. From the survey, the reliability of the water services in all the three successful villages was high. All the households had metered piped water connections and hence equitable water service provision was evident. All the residents paid the same amount for a new connection and the same tariff with respect to the quantity of water that was consumed. Similarly, the services from Beneficiary Groups were same towards every individual. Every individual could take part in the meetings and express their views and concerns. The communities also felt that their concerns were well addressed by the service provider.

Service Levels for Best Practice Villages (n=30)					
Service Level	Quantity	Accessibility	Quality	Continuity	Reliability
High	93%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Improved	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Basic	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%
sub-standard	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
no service	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Table 1 Household service levels

## The costs

Capital costs - of a total of 3,875 INR/person - are largely done by the local government support entities in the study area, with only a minor contribution of 3%. In terms of recurrent costs, it is rather the opposite: a major part (75% of the 507 INR/person/year comes from communities. These are roughly the costs of minor operation and maintenance, for which they the workers (valve men, pump operator, administrative and other contractual workers) and material costs that include electricity charges, connection charges.



## Conclusions

The rural water supply systems in Kodur Gram Panchayat was found to be working exceptionally well mainly due to the decentralisation policy in Kerala and the pro-active role that the community level service providers, in this case, the Beneficiary Groups played in providing efficient service delivery of rural water to the community. Additionally, the support agency, Kodur Gram Panchayat, provided the necessary structure to implement the schemes successfully. The only challenge in rural water supply provision was dependence on only one water source which was the Kadalundi River and hence raised the issue of sustainability in the schemes. The institutional partnership among the service provider and the support agency partnering assessment was found to be high ranking. The role of the KWA and the LSGD cannot be discounted in terms of the technical support they provided to the entire rural water supply system.

## About this note

This is a summary of a full case study as part of the Community Water Plus project. The original case study was written by Srinivas Chary Vedala, Shaili Jasthi and Swapna Uddaraju, and the summary was prepared by Ruchika Shiva. The full case study can be downloaded <http://www.ircwash.org/projects/india-community-water-plus-project>

The project has investigated successful community-managed rural water supply programmes and approaches across India, and drawn out lessons on the support needed to make community-management successful. The project is funded by Australian Aid and is being implemented by a consortium of partners, including: the Administrative Staff College of India (ASCI), the Centre of Excellence for Change (CEC), Malaviya National Institute of Technology (MNIT), the Xavier Institute of Social Service (XISS) and IRC with overall project coordination provided by Cranfield University.



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