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**A Case on Village Water and
Sanitation Committee**

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A CASE OF VILLAGE WATER AND SANITATION COMMITTEE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Village level institutions (VLI) are collectives of people residing in the same village. These institutions are formed either through external intervention or are initiated by the people. VLIs are formed for different purposes and perform a variety of roles. Objective of the village committees formed by large-scale development projects is to make development participatory and give people control over their resources and decisions made in relation to these resources. These village level institutions function towards larger public good in the communities, deliver services, encourage people's participation and co-operation and encourage them to play a more enabling role. It is in this context that the effectiveness of these institutions assumes importance in development discourse and practice.

2.0 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

Objective of this study is to do a comparative analysis of the contexts and factors, which contribute towards the effective functioning of village water and sanitation committees.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

1. Selection of sites

Five villages were chosen for the study of Village Water and Sanitation Committee in two districts in Uttarnchal. The following criteria are adopted for the selection of sites:

A. Geographical location: The villages were selected on the basis of their geographical locations. Therefore two villages in hills (Uttarkashi) and two in plains (Dehradun district) were selected)

B Agencies or Support organisations: To study the role of intermediation, the villages facilitated by two support organisations were chosen.

C. Labels of 'Effective' and 'Non Effective': Those villages were chosen which were labelled effective and non-effective villages by DPMU.

D. Duration: The villages were sufficiently old (Batch I and Batch II) villages to give enough data on effectiveness.

Profile of Selected Villages

Dehradun district

All three villages are close to the road. They have mixed caste groups, including Banjaras, Gadariyas, and Harijans, besides Gorkhas residing in the village. Literacy is 60%; women are aware and articulate.

1. Mithiberi

The village Mithiberi is a batch II (Batch II) comes under Sahaspur block of Dehradun district. The village is divided in two parts -Old Mithiberi and New Mithiberi. The total population of the village is 960 with about 180 households. The village before SWAJAL scheme came had absolutely no source of water. The villagers used to go to a nearby market in Mithiberi village to get the water. Later one tap was installed in the village, which is used by 40 household in the new Mithiberi. The situation is very grave as the water comes only for two hours in the morning and in the evening. People stand up in the queue since 4:00 AM in the morning with a hope to get the water. Often arguments and brawls take place over the water in the village. The Garhwal Jal Sansthan provides water through tap, which is not clean and often leads to health problems. The supply of water is also available in old Mithiberi, but the people complain of bad quality and irregularity. The other sources available are a nearby river and the IMA Campus, which is 1 Km away from the village. The women who would go to IMA campus would be harassed and men would be caught and locked. In this backdrop the village Mithiberi was selected as SWAJAL village. The water has not started to come in the village. The pump is yet to be installed and water delivery is yet to commence. Due to the conflict with the panchayat pradhan, the construction process was delayed. Consequently, even though the work is incomplete, the support organisation has withdrawn and it is now the Committee's responsibility to ensure the installation of the pump and commencement of water delivery. This is also the top most priority of the committee, and all efforts are currently focused towards it.

2.Gokulwala

Gokulwala (Batch I) is a large village of approximately 250 households, with a total population of 923. It is situated about 30-40 kms from Dehradun. The village is home to a mix of castes. Before the advent of SWAJAL in these villages, women had to trek two to three kms to fetch water from a stream, that would often dry up during peak summers. Then, they would go to the surrounding villages in search of water. Things changed with SWAJAL. People now receive water at their doorsteps, have much more time at their disposal for more productive work, there is greater cleanliness and hygiene, as there is sufficient water not only for drinking but also for cooking, cleaning and bathing. There are 66 private tap connections and 5 common standposts in Gokulwala.

3.Laxmipur

Laxmipur is a neighbouring village of Gokulwala and is batch I village. It has 173 households with a population of over one thousand comprising primarily of Banjaras and Gorkhas. Laxmipur has 116 private connections and 7 standposts. Besides this, there are two cattle traps also in Laxmipur, to provide for drinking water to the cattle.

Uttarkashi District

Both the villages are in Naugoan block. These villages have mixed caste groups like Brahmins, Harijans, Rajputs, and Muslims.

4 Masu-Palar

Masu Village (batch II) was identified for SWAJAL because there was the scarcity of water and the supply of Jal Sansthan was irregular. Samata, the support organisation in SWAJAL was working in Masu since 1992-93. The villagers had trust on SAMTA because of long relationship with this organisation. There is one tank in the village, which was installed by HARC ten years ago; the people in the village still use that tank for drinking water. Since the population of the village was less (500 pop and 65 households) the village could not be taken up under SWAJAL which had the provision of catering to 900 population. Therefore a neighbouring village Palar was taken up which did not have a grave problem of water. A stream flows in the village in Palar. Both Masu and Palar constitute one panchayat. The construction work is still going on, the work is delayed and water has not come in the village. The SO and DPMU have withdrawn since the project period lapsed.

5.Dharali

This village has 77 households.

2. Data Collection

The study was exploratory in nature. Data for the study was collected adopting the following methods:

A. Secondary documents like Government reports and documents on SWAJAL, The rules and regulations, tripartite agreement etc. were used to get an idea of the projects, its stages, and VWSC.

B. Primary sources

Individual interviews and group discussions with VWSC members and panchayat pradhans was carried out. Group meetings with the community were taken up to get their perceptions on the effectiveness of VWSC. Discussions with representatives of SO and DPMU officials were also held.

4.0 ANALYSIS

4.1 About the Project

SWAJAL (Uttar Pradesh Rural water supply and environmental sanitation project) is a World Bank assisted pilot initiative.

The main objectives of the project (SWAJAL) are to:

- assist the GOUP to identify and implement an appropriate policy framework to promote long term sustainability of the Rural Water Supply and Environmental Sanitation sector
- deliver sustainable health and hygiene benefits to the rural population through improvements in water supply and environmental sanitation

- improve rural incomes through time saving and income earning opportunities for women;
- test alternatives to the current supply driven service delivery mechanism; and
- promote sanitation and gender awareness.

Each batch follows a thirty-three months cycle with three distinct phases- Preplanning (nine months), planning (12 months) and implementation (12 months).¹

There are four key stakeholders (District Project Management Unit, Support Organisation, VWSC and the communities) involved in the project. The project has been divided into four stages with different sets of activities:

1. Preplanning phase (9 Months)

1. Selection of SO: The selection of SOs is an important output of the Preplanning Phase. The PMU follows a rigorous selection process. Advertisements are placed in the newspapers and applications are sought from NGOs to act as social intermediaries with the community. Fields visits are undertaken by the DPMUs to ensure that each SO (1) is legally registered (2) has a constitutional provision to engage in rural water supply environmental sanitation service delivery and related activities. (3) has audited and certified accounts. (4) has a proven track record of at least three years' experience in rural water supply and environmental sanitation or community development activities evidenced by the satisfactory completion of a participatory and demand driven project and (5) has demonstrated staffing capacity to carry out the proposed services or ability to procure such staffing capacity. **2**

After SOs have been selected for the project, then it is they who conduct 'Prefeasibility Studies' to select villages, on the basis of the village selection criteria. The three basic criteria for selecting villages are **demand** (willingness to share 10% of capital costs and pay for 100% O&M costs), **need** (future time savings, insufficient supply of water or

water quality problems) and **technical feasibility** (adequate water source). SOs are trained in the permissibility process by PMU and sent to select villages. The list of villages selected by SOs is sent to PMU, which uses an independent agency to 'site appraise' the villages selected, to ascertain whether the eligibility criteria have been followed by the SOs. After the final selection of villages the PMU enters into a contract with the SO for the Planning Phase.

2.Planning (12 Months)

Village Water & Sanitation Committee (VWSC) Formation

The SO mobilises the community to form the VWSC. The VWSC consists of 7 to 12 members, democratically elected and representative, with a minimum of 20% scheduled Caste/ Scheduled Tribe members and 30% women members.' This body is most intimately involved with the Planning, Implementation, Maintenance and Management of the water and sanitation schemes.

Empowering the Community

Non Formal Education (NFE), Hygiene Environmental Sanitation Awareness (HESA) and Women's Development Initiatives (WDI) activities are utilised as tools towards attainment of this empowerment. The community is divided into geographical clusters and these aforesaid activities are carried out cluster-wise. The broad objective of the HESA component of the project is to reduce morbidity by generating a demand for safe water and sanitation. The NFE component aims at providing the community with information and functional literacy according to the needs expressed by them. The Women Development Initiatives (WDI) is specifically aimed at empowering women by enhancing their capacities through the formation of grass-root bodies like Self-help Groups cluster-wise an Swajal Saheli Samoohs which are representative of the whole community and supportive to the Village Water and Sanitation Committees in their responsibilities. The idea is to build the capacities of the community towards sustainability and leave behind a legacy of strong village bodies, which will then be in a position to take care of their development in all spheres not only the water and sanitation sector.

The Community Action Plans (CAPs)

The culmination of the community participation process in the Planning Phase is the formulation of the three Community Action Plans (CAPs). These plans basically outline the way in which they are going to implement all the project activities in their community, according to their needs. The three plans are as follows:

- **Technical Plan**, which incorporates the Construction of water, supply schemes. Latrine and Drainage and Village Environmental Action Plan(VEAP)
- **Contribution and Management Plan**, which incorporates the Monitoring & Evaluation
Operation & Maintenance and Cash and Labour Contribution Plans.
- **Community Empowerment Plan**, which incorporates the Hygiene and Environment Sanitation Awareness. Women's Development Initiative and Non-Formal Education Plans.

Choice of Technology

The SO facilitates the community in selecting technically and financially viable water supply and sanitation options. As part of the Feasibility process, the SO engineers give at least three water supply and sanitation technology options to the VWSCs to choose from. It is essential that the community is informed of and made fully aware about the pros and cons of the different alternatives open to it. The VWSC selects the technical option, Which is than ratified in a village-wide Agree-to-do Meeting.

3. Implementation

Signing of Implementation Phase Tripartite Agreement (IPTA)

Once the VWSC has collected the upfront cash and the Detailed Project Report covering

the design and cost details of the schemes is prepared, the Implementation Phase Tripartite Agreement (IPTA) is signed. This signing of IPTA marks the commencement of the Implementation Phase. This is a tripartite agreement between the PMU, SO and VWSC. Hence, there are as many agreements as there are villages. The roles and responsibility of each of the three signing parties are spelt out. An integral feature of the agreement is that all capital funds of PMU's and the community's go into a joint village account operated by the SO and VWSC. The buying of materials, construction etc., takes place in this phase.

During the end of implementation phase, the SO withdraws and VWSC takes up the full responsibility.

4. O and M phase (Min 20 years)

In O and M phase, the committee maintains the water systems in the village.

4.2 The purpose of VWSC, Roles & Responsibilities

The village water and sanitation committees (VWSC) are 'project-initiated' committees that have been formed under SWAJAL. The purpose of VWSC is not very well articulated in the documents. It is largely viewed in relation to roles and responsibilities. The committee has been formed to plan, implement the project and maintain water and sanitation facilities which provides a large scope for it to function within the ambit of the project. The VWSC is created to be the representative of the community who has the responsibility to maintain the water scheme for next twenty years.

The roles and responsibilities of VWSC differ in each stage as all the stages in the projects have a set of component.

The involvement of VWSC members was greater during the construction phase. The members contend that they gave their time when it was required, when there was work to be done. But now that the major task is over, the only work that remains is pertaining to the operation of the pump, releasing the water on time, ensuring the collection of tariff and payment of bills, etc., for which full time involvement of all members is not required.

Other activities, pertaining to human resource development particularly (non-formal education, HESA and WDI), have stopped completely. Under the environment protection plan, some trees were planted during the implementation phase, but that was the end of it. The only role that the VWSCs are performing currently in Dehradun villages is ensuring that water is supplied regularly as scheduled (twice a day for 1.5 hrs each, in winters and thrice a day in summers), the tank is cleaned regularly and the tariff and bill payments made in time. In Uttaranchal district the committees have not entered this stage.

The committees in Dehradun districts are performing their primary duties of operating and maintaining the water delivery mechanism to the satisfaction of the community, albeit at the persistence of only one or two members. People see the VWSC as the harbinger of water - the basic necessity of life, which they were deprived of. Though some voices of dissent regarding hike in water tariff, the duration of water supply, location of standposts and the dominance of one or two members in the decision making of the VWSC are also floated, by and large, the Committees are effective in quenching the thirst of hitherto water-starved households.

The committees in three villages in Dehradun districts take up measures to ensure that the villages are kept clean after the construction of household latrines. The women in the communities also feel the same but also believe that some more time is required before everyone in the community uses latrines, attitudes and behaviours change slowly. In Mithiberi, women in the committee initiated a drive against scattering of polythene bags in the village, other women in the community also extended their support in this intervention.

The general feeling in the community is that VWSC has been very helpful in providing water and sanitation to them. The people though have high expectations from the committee. They feel that since community has fulfilled one need, it could fulfil other needs as well like road construction, employment opportunities, which in any case is not the mandate of this committee. Some needs are related to water like providing irrigation facilities and cattle traps (where those do not exist).

The situation in Masu-Palar and Dharali villages is very different. The work is not complete despite being a batch II village. Due to prolonged internal conflicts in the villages the scheme has not been able to provide water in the village. Though nine standposts have been installed in Masu-Palar. The water source is 10 Km away, the committee does not know whether it can put stopper somewhere to supply water during

some hours in the day. The general impression is that the water will flow regularly as it will be tapped from some natural resource. The committees in these villages are not very aware of the roles and responsibilities.

In the planning stage the VWSC is involved in selecting options for the technology and gets involved with SO in facilitating software components. In the implementation phase the co-ordination of accounts, ensuring contributions from the community, procurement of materials, supervision of construction are some key responsibilities of VWSC. In O and M phase the committee is responsible for running the project effectively which gives the responsibilities like paying electricity bills, collecting water tax, repairing the damages, putting chemicals in the water.

The committees have been perceived as an instrument for community participation even after the withdrawal of the SO and DPMU. The villagers in Gokulwala, Laxmipur and Mithiberi see committee as a group representing community members to work in the benefit of larger community. The villagers also view that it is impossible to have the participation of whole community, some have to be the leaders. There is also a greater accountability and responsibility as members and solutions to water problems are quicker.

4.3 Process of formation of VWSC

The VWSC members are identified in wards or clusters, the process is facilitated by SO. Intensive ward meetings in the planning stage and preplanning stages where the Prefeasibility study is taken up by SOs, some active members are noticed. During planning phase the meetings in wards enable the selection of the members. The post of office bearers are decided by the committee members, the names of the members are put on the wall and in an agree to do meetings when the choice of technology is made, the names of the members are announced so that whole village can know the names of their members.

The process of formation is very crucial, as the people selected have to play a very crucial role ahead. It is apparent that the community has chosen two kinds of people as members: those who are highly respected and regarded in the community for their age, experience and wisdom, or those whom the community considers 'worldly-wise' to handle the matters of the Committee, and take on the opposing forces single-handedly. The members

selected in the committee are those people who are energetic and can take up responsibilities. All the members are articulate and interested. The chairperson in all the committees studied so far are men and those who are respected and trusted in the village. -The project documents however mention that women will be preferred for the post of treasurer which in some ways imply that the chairperson has to be a man. Either the chairpersons are ex pradans, or eager to be pradans or very influential. The leadership qualities in the Chairpersons therefore are desired by the community since the amount of work that committee has to do, requires strong leadership skills, ability to influence.

In Gokulwala and Laxmipur there was no problem in the formation of the VWSC as there were no opposing contenders for the membership. However, in Mithiberi, process of formation of the VWSC gave rise to a bitter conflict with the Panchayat Pradhan, who wanted to nominate a particular candidate as the Chairperson of the VWSC. The open vote system of electing the members did not allow for this, and consequently the Pradhan withdrew her support to the project. The current chairperson of the VWSC had contested the panchayat elections opposite this Pradhan. In Dharali, the formation process was done in one-day meeting. The DPMU officials, the SO facilitated the process. The village was divided into six wards and from each ward 2 members each were nominated for the VWSC. The community felt that only 30% of the villagers were interested for the project to come, so only they were present during the nomination meeting. The VWSCV President and two members however stated that about 50% were interested in the project and that the community was represented in the meeting.

According to the SO the selection process was dividing the village in clusters and then asking each cluster to nominate one person for the VWSC. However, the criterion of women and backward representation was maintained.

Masu-Palar: Three committees in Three years

Masu was the village which needed water as there was only one tank that was built by HARC ten years ago which is still being used by the villagers. Unfortunately, despite the need, the project criterion did not allow for the inclusion of Masu, as the minimum number of households required for SWAJAL scheme was 900 (This was shared by the people in the community). It was suggested that the neighbouring village, Palar if joined with Masu could solve the problem in Masu village.

In Masu people were in favour of getting the water while in Palar as there was no need, the villagers were not in favour of the scheme coming into their village. Though, they felt that if they get involved at least Masu would get the water. When the committee was to be formed, it had to have the representations of both the villages. Therefore six people from Masu and five from Palar were selected by ward meetings. The Masu people feel that since the need of water was more in Masu all the members should have been selected from Masu but the project criterion did not have this provision of individual committees. A member from Masu was chosen as the chairperson while the treasurer belonged to Palar. (Both are men in these two villages). But gradually a lot of disagreement began to surface between the villagers in Masu Palar. Palar people opined that if they were not included, Masu would have been thirsty forever, While Masu felt that they should have been given the project since the commitment from the Palar is less. During the process of contribution of labour, Palar backed out. The community in Masu refused to dig till first initiative was taken up by Palar. It took very long to resolve the conflict, till then some people in the village complained District Magistrate about this and accused the committee of misappropriating funds and not complying with the demands of the community. They also did not spare DPMU and SAMTA resulting in immediate action by DM who sealed the accounts and dissolved the committee. The other parties in the village put pressure on DPMU and SAMTA to restore the committee. After several rounds of negotiation with DPMU and SAMTA, DM agreed but on one condition that a new committee will be constituted. The chairperson was also replaced as he was uneducated and the project demanded a lot of paper work, awareness, supervision of accounts and tender, which a well-respected person could not do because he was illiterate. The second committee was constituted which villagers say was not chosen by them, most of the villagers did not know when the second committee came into being. Some people accuse of a conspiracy by handful of people in Masu and Palar. Many villagers feel some representation was also not there. While the committee members say that meeting was held and if people do not want to participate, then nothing can be done. The villagers forced SAMTA and DPMU to constitute a third committee that was the representation of the people. People in the villages accuse SAMTA and DPMU of finalising the names of the people by sitting in a town , Barkot. All the ,members were invited there and some were asked to leave so that their wives could be in the committee. Since the project demanded representation of women, SC and ST. A member, Chaturial says , ' I felt very bad when they suggested my wife's name in my place. I knew hat her participation would be nil since she is uneducated, also uninterested in these matter. She does not give time at all, neither the members encourage the women's participation. Wherever she is told she agrees. The registers reach her place, she puts thumb impression on the request of other members. I sometimes read out, if I understand anything'. Many people in the villages do not know the names of new members (though some are those who have been in the committee earlier) .

All this has led to prolonged delay in the work. As stipulated time has expired, DPMU and SAMTA have withdrawn leaving behind committee and community to resolve conflicts.

4.4 Structure of VWSC

The VWSC consist of 7-12 members (depending upon the number of wards that each village has) with a min of 20% SC/ST members and 30% women representatives. The committee is headed by the Chairperson who has the responsibility of overall management of the scheme. One of the members is chosen as treasurer who maintains all the records and registers. Others are members who play roles in decision making and collecting water tax.

The VWSC in Gokulwala has eleven members, in Mithiberi there are ten members and in Laxmipur, nine. Of these, 30% are scheduled castes and 20% are women. This is a statutory requirement within the project design. The criterion for representation is one member from each ward/cluster. The key functionaries are the Chairperson and Treasurer. In some committees like Gokulwala, the post of convenor has been created by the to take responsibly of calling up meetings etc.

4.5 Internal systems and mechanisms (process)

1. Systems

The planning and monitoring of the activities of the VWSC is done primarily by the Chairperson, although meetings are called for discussing the plans and problems with the other members of the Committee. There are no rules regarding planning, monitoring and information sharing activities, but the project documents do mention the responsibilities of the VWSC.

The rules and regulations were formulated based on a brainstorming session held with the VWSC members by DPMU and WDO. The rules that emerged during this session were compiled and given a final shape by DPMU. These were then circulated to all VWSCs which are implementing these.

Systems for maintaining records are sound and the records are updated regularly in all the three villages. The VWSC maintains separate registers for recording the minutes of the meetings, the agenda that is circulated prior to the meetings, Cash books, Payments made to various parties, contributions received from the households, etc. As per the rules circulated by the DPMU, the VWSC is supposed to maintain 10 separate records. The VWSC in Mithiberi is maintaining more than 20 separate registers.

The members of the larger community in Gokulwala, Mithiberi and Laxmipur , however, do not check the accounts or records because they trust the VWSC members to be honest. The people in three villages , Gokulwala, Laxmipur and Mithiberi, reported that they chose those people in the community who are known in their village to be honest and sincere, therefore they place complete faith in the Committee. Moreover, till date, the Committee members have not given them any reason to doubt their integrity. The

working of the Committee is transparent and the people as well as the Panchayat, have complete freedom to scrutinise the accounts whenever they so desire. The project documents specify the VWSC as a sub-committee of the Panchayat, and by virtue of that, the VWSC is liable to present its accounts and budgets for approval to the Panchayat. In practice, however, the system operates more on mutual trust than on rules and formalities.

The VWSCs do not formally present their accounts and records to the Panchayat or Gram Sabha for scrutiny, nor is the Panchayat proactive in ensuring this. In fact, in Mithiberi, due to the conflict between the pradhan and the VWSC, the latter denies the former any right to scrutinise its accounts. The pradhan is also not interested in exercising her authority over the committee. In fact, the treasurer, also said that the VWSC is accountable only to those households that have taken SWAJAL connections, and hence have the right to question the expenses and activities of the VWSC. She refuses to present the Committee records and accounts to anyone else except the SO, DPMU, water subscribers and visitors.

Every month meeting is mandatory, but during the planning and implementation phase the committee members and the communities say that meetings used to take place every week in the month. In absence of full strength, the quorum suffices for the meetings. The members availability is a problem as most of the members are working as labourers, employees in the government agencies, some have their own shops and business. Therefore, it is difficult for them to spare time for meetings. During O and M phase the agenda is focused on maintenance of water resources and collection of taxes. The committee feels that since not much work is required in this phase of the project, laxity has crept in.

When a meeting is required to be held, an agenda is first circulated to all members, with the date and time proposed. Those members who agree, sign on the agenda register. A quorum of seven members (six in Mithiberi) is required. If that cannot be reached, a fresh date and time is proposed. Minutes of every meeting are recorded, which are then circulated to those members who were not present for the meeting. A member who does not attend the meetings of the VWSC on three consecutive occasions after signing on the agenda register, is liable for dismemberment. However, none of the three Committees have so far taken this kind of action against any member since they feel that members have given enough time and it might lead to despair, discontentment and unhealthy

environment in the village. Moreover, in all the villages it is seen that community facilitator plays an active role. Though he/she is not a VWSC member and was rather a SO staff during implementation phase, but the VWSC members treat those facilitators as 'one of them' and they also like any other committee members go to household, collect water taxes , convenes meetings.

The Committee discusses issues like new connections (if any), status of payment of tariff by the users, payment of the electricity bills by the Committee, disconnections (if any), expenditures of the Committee, etc. If there is an important matter to be decided, like tariff hike, then a meeting of the entire village is called.

In Uttarkashi district, however the committee meets but the villagers do not know when the meeting takes place. In Masu-Palar the members are also unaware of the days when the meeting is called. Sometimes the registers reach the members home for signatures. This is due to lack of interest of the members.

2 Processes

Communication channels are largely informal, except when agenda registers or minutes of the meetings are circulated to the committee members. Any other information is conveyed verbally, including that of tariff hike. The committee members though call up meetings if some decisions like increasing tariff hike , buying generators have to be conveyed or discussed

The committee members in Gokulwala, Laxmipur and Mithiberi say that hardly any situation had arisen when discontentment and disappointment has resulted. The committee has to take decisions, which benefit the people, and members understand this very well.. The committee remembers that earlier the meetings used to attract no. of people from the villages since the connections, construction of standposts used to be discussed. People from new Mithiberi used to come more often since they were the sufferers. Other than meetings, any body from the village can contact the Chairperson or the member to see the documents including the passbooks and financial registers. The ward members who are in the committee are supposed to keep informed the people in their wards about the decisions taken up by the committee. However this process is very

informal. All SWAJAL villages visited , puts on the walls the basic information of the scheme, money involved, money spent. This is one way to inform the whole village about the scheme.

Some villages like Mithiberi have adopted some innovative ways to inform the community. During the implementation phase of the project when the fears and stakes from the community were high, the committee would accept the instalment cheques in public. On receiving one instalment, the committee would provide details of the expenditures of earlier instalments. The auditing of accounts is done by DPMU, which in future will be the responsibility of panchayats. The committee will also be able to get the services from auditors available in the market.

The committee members feel that the community was very apprehensive in the beginning. They were doubtful about the success of the project and had some mistrust. The situation grew complicated when rebel parties got involved in instigating the community. Only during the implementation phase when the community saw the materials and drilling pumps, then they realised that the work would progress and they would get water. Only fear that prevailed was about the misappropriation of the funds. Some members in Mithiberi allege that they were targeted when they bought new clothes or got their houses repaired. They were seen as misutilising the funds of SWAJAL. Considering that the project was 'participatory' and communities acquiescence was prime consideration for the project, this kind of fears and anxieties question the participatory approach of the project. But long planning stage created certain doubts in the minds of people, they began to question why WB or any SO would think of the communities benefit, when the government failed to do so in last five decades.

In Masu and Palar however there are no systems, the villagers are not informed about the meetings, the progress of the work and the funds available with the committee. Even if meetings take place, not all the members are present. Some members have never in their whole tenure have gone for the meetings. Surprisingly some do not know the latest member in the committee. The registers reach home, so the need to go to attend a meeting does not arise. Masu-Palar , villages are in a conflicting relationship as their interests in the projects differ. The committees, SO and DPMU are accused of bungling and misappropriation as they feel the committee is unable to provide explanations and reasons whenever asked. A tank was shifted from the original site in Masu which created more doubts, nobody knows in the first place why the shift took place, surprisingly the

committee member do not have the proper reason, in fact they keep blaming the previous committee of all the problems in the village. There has never been any serious attempt by SO, DPMU or by VWSC members of both villages to take people in confidence. In lack of transparency, the matters are worsened. People get more suspicious.

3 Leadership

The leaders are trusted and respected individuals in the community. In the case of Gokulwala, the chairperson is a former pradhan who was in power for nearly 12-14 years. He is also the most active member of the Committee, but one reason for that is that he leads a retired life, and so has time at his disposal to devote to community work. He looks after the entire functioning of the VWSC, ensuring that tariff bills are dispatched on time, tariff is collected in time, electricity bills are paid up, and accounts are updated. He is also the one to decide when, and on what issues, is there a need to call a meeting. The execution of the above activities, is however done by the operator, who has been employed by the VWSC for the operation of the water source, and its maintenance. Although it does not fall under the purview of his duties, yet he is the one who circulates the meeting agenda, writes and circulates the minutes of the meetings, distributes tariff bills and collects the tariff. In Laxmipur, these duties are being discharged by the Chairperson. In Mithiberi, since the circulation of water has not yet begun, this aspect could not be observed. However, it is evident that in all the three cases, the responsibilities of the VWSC are being taken care of by one or two members only. In Gokulwala it is the chairperson assisted by the operator, in Mithiberi it is the treasurer alongwith another member, whereas in Laxmipur, it is the chairperson alone, who is handling the affairs of the VWSC single-handed.

4. Decision Making and Conflict Resolution

The committee members, either trust the chairperson to take the right decisions and to ensure smooth functioning, or are simply not interested enough anymore since water has started coming in two villages in Dehradun district, and they think their primary duty is over. Even in the cases where the water has not come, the members in the committee to a large extent trust the chairperson to take decisions for public interest

Conflicts are resolved through a majority vote. In case of any disagreement, a decision is taken in favour of what the majority feels.

One Person Show: No Confidence Motion against Chairperson

In Laxmipur, there appears to be some resentment within the Committee against the Chairperson. A couple of members alleged that the Chairperson is very dominating and decisions are not taken democratically. A member and also a up pradhan in panchayat shared that he had initiated a 'no-confidence' motion against the chairperson for this reason, but withdrew it later, on humanitarian grounds. He still appears keen to replace the existing chairperson. While the chairperson said that he had resigned voluntarily as he was over burdened by the VWSC responsibilities, but was forced to withdraw his resignation by the DPMU and SO. SO had discussions with members and had asked that a chairperson will have to give maximum time and since chairperson was working hard, there was no point of removing him unless some body equally devoted and committed could lead the committee. The members knew that the time, chairperson was putting needed to be acknowledged and nobody else could have given that much time. So eventually he stayed on in the committee as chairperson. He blames up pradhan and the member of the committee for playing politics as he is uppradhan and is seriously thinking of contesting for the pradhan post in next elections. Even Chairperson is keen to contest elections for the same post. He also says that he does not get the support from other members, even treasurer is not able to fulfil her role as a result he has to perform all responsibilities himself. He said that the treasurer has been removed from the committee (her name has also been scratched off from the list of members painted on the wall of the committee's office) because she was unable to devote the required time, the treasurer herself denies any knowledge of it. Though she agrees that Chairperson looks after the accounts etc. and does most of the work himself from collecting water tax to other external work. Other members acknowledge that he as a leader could take good care of the project, which at this stage does not need regular VWSC meetings.

The people who do not agree are made to agree by consultations and discussions. Committee has to play a very crucial role in solving conflicts in the villages. Those who have private connections get less engaged in conflict than those who have standposts, shared by 4-6 households. Since water is released on time, the arguments and fights take place over who used water most, who was not given enough time to fill up water while others washed clothes, utensils and bathed children. There are cases when the families refuse to give Rs. 20 per month as they feel that when sharing of water is not equitable, the question of giving equal tax does not arise. The committee members with other water users organise meetings, get the parties involved in discussions. If the conflicts persist over same issues, the committee stops the water to flow in standposts. In Laxmipur, there was a demand of making cattle traps in the village. The committee acted on this and arranged for cattle trap so that cattle could also get water. But later the committee

discovered that cattle were not provided water, but the traps were used for private consumption. The committee decided to stop releasing water in cattle traps.

The committee members in all three villages (Gokulwala, Laxmipur and Mithiberi) acknowledge the support that they had received so far from SO and DPMU. They feel that during frustration and conflicts, there was a supporting hand, which kept them moving. In situations of dilemma, the guidance and support from SO and DPMU officials was always present which constantly encouraged the members to take good care of the project. The Chairperson of VWSC in Mithiberi says, *' At one point of time, I and other members were so frustrated of suspicion of people in the village that I had decided that I would quit. Small things like buying a new shirt, wearing sunglasses would attract attention of the villagers who would not spare from mentioning that all these bought form SWAJAL funds. In any case, Pradhan was spreading many rumours about the integrity of the members. We could pull ourselves out because of grit and determination and also because we got counselled by SO and DPMU who asked us not to lose the battle so easily, but to prove that committee can handle a big project of Rs. 30 lakhs.'*

Unfortunately, these kinds of roles were not taken up by SO and DPMU in Uttarkashi for the villages, Dharali and Masu-Palar. The community members owe this to distant location of DPMU, Uttarkashi (60 Km away). Though SO was in Barkot but daily or weekly visits were not very possible because of the terrain. The reason could be initial conflicts in these two villages, which delayed the project.

4.6 Linkages

There are one or two different committees initiated under different projects within the villages in Gokulwala, Laxmipur and Mithiberi. However, each is functioning separately, without any linkage, except for an overlapping membership, which is more incidental than intentional. The community members in Gokulwala said, *' The committees have different mandates, therefore no linkage etc., can be expected. Some members are common in committees since each committee more or less demands a representation from each ward. And the community identifies those people who are educated, aware and wise, which are few and far between in any community.'*

There are some social groups like Mahila Mangal dals and Youth Groups that exist in the community but have no strong linkages. In some villages like Dharali, the youth groups consistently try to monitor the committee and hold it accountable.

The Village Water and Sanitation Committee is a sub committee of Panchayat under 29 (6) which means it is accountable to Panchayat, a legally constituted body. The committee has to present the description of its activities, the budget to the Panchayat annually. The suggestions of panchayts have to be incorporated by VWSC. Like panchayts accounts, the auditing of VWSC needs to be carried out. The panchayat has to ensure that new committee gets constituted every five years. But in reality, these roles and responsibilities are neither clear to panchayts nor to VWSC. Some members in the committee and larger community perceive that panchayts in any case are not very functional. They do not get their accounts audited on time , how can they ask any other committee to do so. In Masu-Palar when community members were complaining about non-accountability of the committee, a suggestion by researchers that pradhan can be requested to takes stern action against VWSC members if they hide truth and facts. The community members remarked, *' how can Panchayat make them answerable, because once when we requested Pradhan to put pressure on the members, the committee members asked Pradhan to fix a day where both parties present details of the accounts in front of the public. Pradhan was tight lipped. All these people are chips of the same block.'*

Though there is a provision of water management committee within panchayts , they are mostly dysfunctional.. And more so one panchayat can cover 10-11 villages while any scheme like SWAJAL comes only in one or two villages, therefore the management responsibility is given to the people who are beneficiaries themselves in the community and in the villages. The members from panchayts who can be the residents of non-SWAJAL village can not be included in the committee to mange the resources. The implementing organisations feel that where the panchayts have only one village like Mithiberi and where the pradhan is highly powerful and is in conflicting relationship with majority of people in the village, the chances of failure of the projects remain high. The panchayats are highly politicised and are not able to fulfil the functions which it has taken up.

Some VWSC members are also panchayat ward members but that cannot be taken as an indication of a conscious effort to involve the panchayat. It is only because these candidates were more readily available and were leaders from their ward/cluster. The VWSC does not regularly present its accounts and records to the panchayat for scrutiny, nor does it invite the panchayat to participate actively in the regular VWSC meetings. On the other hand, there is no proactiveness on the part of the panchayat also to exercise greater involvement in the VWSC.

There is however, scope for greater accountability of the VWSC towards the Panchayat, but for that the latter has to be proactive. There is a need for building a stronger linkage between the two, especially since the VWSC is a sub-committee of the Panchayat.

The Committee's relations with the Panchayat are harmonious in Gokulwala and Laxmipur. The Panchayats extended full support and co-operation to SWAJAL and the VWSC. In Gokulwala, the panchayat even arranged for funds from the block for the construction of a storage tank. The pradhan of Gokulwala say that in fact the committee members have reduced her burden since she does not go often to Gokulwala, the chairperson , community technician/operator keeps her updated about other village issues as well.

In Mithiberi, due to the on-going conflict between the pradhan and the VWSC members, there is absolutely no co-operation or exchange of information between the two parties. In fact, there are allegations of disrupting the digging and laying down of pipes against the pradhan. This raises a serious question on the accountability of the VWSC after the withdrawal of the SO. In the absence of any authority to which the VWSC will be answerable, there is the risk of members 'running the show' and twisting the rules as per their convenience.

CLASH BETWEEN PRADHAN and VWSC

Mithiberi village is divided into two parts- New Mithiberi and Old Mithiberi. New Mithiberi is relatively recently built and is suffering form acute water crisis and that was the reason why this village was chosen for SWAJAL. However, Garhwal Jal Sansthan was providing water in Old Mithiberi which was poor in quality.

A woman Pradhan in Mithiberi village was very active in supporting this initiative initially. During the selection of office bearers in the committee, she became angry as she did not support the current Chairperson and desired one of her loyalists to be the chairperson. From the beginning, she was not in favour of current chairperson's entry in

VWSC. Since he was nominated from the cluster by the people, she could not say anything. But she was opposing his post throughout. This enmity has a old history, from very beginning these households have been contesting panchayat elections, both accuse each other of criminal backgrounds and murders that was once the regular feature of the village. The current chairperson had also contested elections for the post of pradhan in the last elections and had lost by marginal votes. With SWAJAL, he is emerging as a strong leader in the community, which is also resented by pradhan. Other members in the committee have also built a very good relationship with the community, which also makes pradhan feel. The treasurer, is a very strong opponent next year for the seat of pradhan because of her rising support in the community. She is currently a ward member and has stopped attending panchayat meetings.

The day chairperson was selected, Pradhan withdrew her support from the project. This resulted in slow work in Mithiberi. Despite being a batch II village where the work should have been completed by September 2000, standposts and private connections remain to be given to the people. In acute shortage of water, people are desperate to get water as soon as possible. Pradhan put lot of pressure on WB, WDO (SO) and DPMU to withdraw the programme since people wanted to continue, the project remained in the village but this intensified existing dynamics. The pradhan is keen to jeopardise every effort that committee makes, while committee is keen to perform effectively as now they treat this as a prestige issue. There are conflicts and clashes which spoil the relationships. Pradhan had carried out demonstrations against SWAJAL. She sat on dharna and refused to get up when pipes were being laid. Grit, determination and support of villagers enabled committee to sustain its activities. The chairperson with some energetic members in the committee could approach electricity department to give electricity connection to the village for running the pump. The electricity department and engineers were threatened by pradhan. They refused to work unless committee and the chairperson were with them in the village while providing electricity connections. Pradhan in the meantime asked garhwal jal sansthan to provide water in the village which had remained thirsty and neglected for many years. Garhwal jal Sansthan pipes were also laid and GAREMA project was taken up which Pradhan's support groups are managing. One handpump is installed under Garema near panchayat ghar. Pradhan accuses committee of mismanaging the scheme and fooling people. While the committee says the charges are baseless.

The VWSC does not have any linkage with the government departments except for the UPSEB for electricity. The VWSC (like any other consumers) pays for the electricity consumed.

The only close linkages the VWSC in Dehradun villages are with the support organisation and DPMU, more so with the support organisation. The SO served as the link between the VWSC and the DPMU. It conveyed all decisions and other information from the DPMU to the VWSC, trained the VWSC members, conducted HESA, NFE and WDI activities in the community, transferred funds from DPMU to VWSC, etc. In short, the SO delivered the entire 'package' to the community, on behalf of the DPMU. The VWSCs share a close rapport with the SO and DPMU. Even after official withdrawal

from these villages, the VWSCs feel that they can still approach them when in need. For instance, the engineers available with the SO can be accessed by the VWSCs in case of any technical problem which the operator/community technician is unable to rectify. The DPMU also maintains a close contact with the VWSCs, checks their accounts and records (informally), and offers suggestions to the VWSC if approached with a problem.

The situation in Uttarkashi district is, however different. SO and DPMU are not regular advice or assistance providers because of the distant location.

4.7 Capacity building interventions

VWSC members have received training to build their capacities for managing the Committees, the roles and responsibilities of the members and office bearers of the Committee, maintaining the records, identifying quality construction material, etc. The members feel that their capacities have been enhanced considerably through these trainings. The trainings have been divided into hardware and software trainings. The hardware trainings aim at building the capacities of communities in such a way so as to enable them to plan and implement hardware/technical aspects of water supply and environmental aspects while the software training aim at community development with focus on empowerment. The SARAR is an approach that is used in SWAJAL to build the self esteem and associative strength of the community by ensuring its active involvement in identifying and investigating their problems and seeking their own solutions. Considering that these components are important, allocation of funds (1-3%%) for these present its dismal picture.

S	Self-esteem
A	Associative Strength
R	Resourcefulness
A	Action Planning
R	Responsibility

CDS has been a key agency in the project for imparting software trainings. It has been providing training to SO and DPMU staff who then provide trainings in the community. The community facilitator who is a paid staff of support organisation and mostly the resident of the community undergoes the training who has to later impart these training to the community members. As reported by Mr. Pushkin, Trainer in CDS *‘ Sometimes it was observed that the person who attended training programmes was not actually imparting trainings in the community. Therefore the quality of interventions suffered. ’*

The following training have been conducted exclusively for the VWSC members:

- Workshop for VWSC in the implementation stage
- Training for the Treasurer
- An orientation for VWSC members

The other trainings for other groups including VWSC members are:

- Training on Health awareness and sanitation awareness
- Training on community technician skills
- Training on latrine constructions

HESA/WDI/NFE were seen as components that were actively taken up planning stage and lost in oblivion in later stages. It is observed that these activities are currently taking place as isolated events not organically linked to the mainstream project activity, thereby weakening the community development component of the project which might adversely affect the prospects of sustainability of schemes both in short and long run. Since these activities were taken up in the planning phase, these were considered the entry point and were not taken up very seriously. The role of NFE classes in raising awareness about the health and hygiene awareness benefits was found to be missing, some women shared that they had forgotten what they had learnt as they had no opportunity to follow it up in the implementation phase to use it in the day to day life. Similarly HESA also met the same fate, one time intervention did not make much difference in behaviour. WDI also failed to

create any impact due to lack of forward and backward linkages, training has not generally led to any sustainable income generation activity.’

The trainings have definitely helped the members in understanding their roles better, and be confident in delivering their duties. The VWSCs are now managing the project independently in all the three villages. In Mithiberi, for instance, even though the implementation work is incomplete, the SO has withdrawn, leaving the VWSC in charge. As said earlier the software components lost their relevance completely, neither it was expected from VWSC to take these process forward in a continuous basis.

The following are some of the lessons that found place in the documents:

- Training programmes based on clearly identified output indicators instead of being input – driven.
- Training programmes to be increasingly more outreach and community based.
- Experience of VWSC members of earlier batches can be the most authentic and sound source of learning on the ground.
- Non- availability of good potential trainers at the local level is a major constraint in the decentralisation of training activities.
- Operation and maintenance being viewed and addressed largely as a hardware issue to the neglect of its serious software implications.
- Software i.e. community development activities tend to be totally ignored from the implementation phase onwards.
- Too many and too frequent changes in norms, procedures and formats at the Project Management Unit tend to create confusion on the ground.
- Recruitment and the resultant quality of project functionaries hired by PMU/ DPMUs / SOs has a critical bearing on the likely impact that a training intervention can make.

- Non- training factors (such as quality of recruitment, MPR, Payment conditions, channels of communication etc.) can determine the training outcomes more significantly than realised.

Lack of systematic learning about various aspects of project functioning within the project itself has been a major constraint in planning and organising capacity –building activities in general and training programmes in particular.

4.8 Impact / Results

1. Created sense of ownership

An environment has been created in the villages where people have been provided with a n opportunity to plan and manage their own resources. This approach defies the traditional approach by implying that dependence on others need to be reduced and communities should take up development of their communities in their own hands. In those villages where the people are unhappy with the committee, yet a feeling of ownership has sunk in. They realise that they will have to take care of scheme, otherwise they will be thirsty forever. Since other on going schemes of government will also be withdrawn gradually.

2. More Cleanliness and Availability of potable water

More cleanliness could be seen in the village owing to construction of latrines. The villages like Gokulwla and Laxmipur where the water has reached doorsteps have saved time of women in fetching water from the distant sources. Women are saving time and using it more productively. The communities are happy to receive clean water as a result there is reduction in the cases of illness.

3. Opportunity for community leadership

This project has given a space for women to enhance leadership skills as they have a good representation in the committee. They are given a space where they can take

decisions and play carry out 'community functions'. They are controlling financial resources being the treasurers in the committee. The other members are also playing a leadership role which is catching attention, this has led to create a demand on panchayats to deliver and function. In almost all the cases, the community has begun to compare the benefits provided by all the institutions which also implies a competition between these institutions to perform better.

4.9 Sustainability

Sustainability of VWSC depends largely on physical, natural, financial and human resources. The resources created under the project include the assets acquired, like the water pump, and the funds that have been generated from community contributions towards the operation and maintenance of the water supply scheme. All of these have been handed over to the VWSCs, and are now under their control. The Committees have not as yet utilised the reserve funds it has for the O&M. This fund is meant to be utilised in the case of a major fault in the machinery or damage to the machinery. This amount has been kept in the fixed deposit by Laxmipur and Gokulwala. In Masu-Palar and Dharali the amount is not much as people either did not contribute or put their labour that they had got during plantation (VEAP) which amounts to Rs. 32,147/-.

Day to day expenses of the VWSCs is met out of the water tariff collected every month from the users. The Committees mobilise contributions from the households for any other major expenditure that may arise. For instance, in Gokulwala, the committee generated contributions from the households when it planned to purchase a generator to ensure continued water supply incase of power failure. While the committees in Masu-Palar and Dharali do not know how they would collect taxes as people have refused to do so, once the water would be released, there might be no was to put stoppers which would be under the control of VWSC as all the pipes and tanks are exposed and any body can fiddle with these. Other concern is that since water would come form a natural source, it will be difficult o control its flow which also means waste of water and no monthly taxes by the users.

Another issue related to sustainability is interest and availability of people in the committee to take up leadership. As seen in the study, that committee members roles are not much during O and M phase, therefore the interest also dies down gradually and

eventually only one or two members remain active. In this situation, it is difficult to assume that interest of members will remain sustained for next 10-20 years. The mechanisms to elect new members every five years are not very clear. However, a related concern that emerged is the capacity building of new members who will come into the VWSCs after fresh elections. The project has invested considerably in trainings of different types for the current VWSC members. After re-election, the new members will not have access to this kind of capacity building. In fact, some of the current members are using this as a reason for questioning the need to have fresh elections.. This places a lot of responsibility on the committee to transfer capacities to the new members. Though it is unlikely that in re0 elections, completely new leadership will emerge.

4.10 Some Key Issues

1 Overlooking diversity and complexity

The VWSC is a project initiated committee, implying that the project determines process of formation, the structure, posts of office bearers, compositions, roles, responsibilities, applied universally in all contexts. This loses sight of flexibility in certain conditions. The overburden of do's and don'ts poses restrictions on the committees. The situations in the villages are different from each other, and they are neither homogeneous entities. Each village has a different starting point in the project. Some villages are more aware because of their locations, exposure, educational status while some remain isolated and cut off from the mainstream. The village level dynamic also varies in degree and nature but the packaged approach of the projects do not remain flexible and tend to overlook the diversity and complexity of the villages. In the villages where the conflicts are permanent feature, approach needs to focus upon conflict resolution mechanisms in the beginning which have to continue throughout till tensions are reduced to a level where small irritants do not become big issues to create obstacles in the work. The confined boundaries within the projects and limited time span often do not allow to go beyond a certain limit.

2 Intermediation role in institution building

Another relevant issue is intermediation. The projects ensure participation of the community and often create at least one layer in between to play an implementing or facilitating role to involve community in such participatory programmes. The role of intermediary organisations and their capacities also affect directly or indirectly the village

levels institution building. The building institutions need longer time than the intermediary organisations devote in a project cycle, In case of SWAJAL, the intermediary organisations role ends when two years and nine months lapse. It is assumed that after two years the community will begin to manage the project and will be capable enough to handle all the affairs independently. But in reality the stipulated time in the projects are so limited that things are rushed through. In two to three years time, the expectation that community is prepared for the project, contributions are sought, components like NFE, HESA, WDI are initiated, the capacity building (mostly trainings) are provided, construction materials are bought, construction begins and ends, community begins to own the project and resources, is too lofty. No institution building takes place randomly. The intermediary organisations have much larger work area, one support organisation has more than 10 villages and the number increases considerably as the project leaps into different batches. The approach of these institutions is also project driven and the staff are kept on contract who leave when the project ends or are retained when the same support organisation is identified in next batches. In some villages where the pace of the work gets affected and is not completed in 33 months, the project ends, staff goes, leaving behind perturbed and bewildered community.

All the intermediary VDOs in SWAJAL are referred as support organisations which themselves understand their role as implementing organisations till the project is on, therefore understanding that provision of the support is till the project remains in the village while the support needs to be extended more later. The capacities needed for running the project in O and M are completely different than during implementation phase. After the construction and accomplishment of hardware tasks, the focus should be more on software components.

In SWAJAL, the larger community and committee needs to be aware of their roles, the election process after five years, preparing panchayats and VWSC to be more effective and to be engaged in non conflicting relationships with each other, the procedures of transferring the capacities and responsibilities to the new members in the freshly formed committee. Unfortunately all these are not laid down..

It is understood that SOs are not going to intervene in resolving conflicts or motivating people throughout and there has to be a withdrawal strategy and people need to be self motivated and self driven and should cease looking out for assistance. But the

intermediation and support does not necessary mean only dependence but a different role by project initiators in the continuum of relationship.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS: ENABLING FACTORS FOR EFFECTIVENESS OF VWSC

The VWSC functions effectively when the community at large approves of such a representation of people to play a more lead role in the process. This helps in building a mutually beneficial relationship and communities also extend their co-operation to such bodies.

Effectiveness can also be seen when these committee serve the interests of the whole community, irrespective of caste, class, resolves the conflicts in the villages, remains flexible and democratic in the approach.

For effective functioning of VWSC, it is also essential that the committee understand the purposes of such institutions and has full understanding of their roles and responsibilities, has enough capacities to fulfil those roles and has a long- sighted strategic directions.

Another indicator for effectiveness is when the internal mechanisms are sound and appropriate. The communication channels are clear and the communities at large are informed regularly about every matter concerning them. The greater accountability and transparency help in strengthening trust which in turns facilitates the functioning of the committee. If the integrity of the members in the committee is high, the community 's co-operation also becomes high. The effective leadership also contributes largely in the effectiveness of the committee. The role of leaders in decision making, creating an environment where other members freely share their views, listening to view points and acting, resolving conflicts within the group and solving problems is very crucial to keep the committee functional and effective. Another role extends beyond the committee to the community where the leaders play an influencing role in the resolution of conflicts in the villages and motivating the people.

The effectiveness of the committee also depends largely upon its linkages with other groups, committees and statutory institutions like panchayts. When there exists a harmonious relationship with panchayats since these committees are sub committees of panchayats, the chances of its effectiveness are high. Similarly if other groups in the

villages have non congenial relationships with each other, the work gets tremendously affected as most of the time gets devoted in pulling back each other. If vested interest dominate over the larger interests of the community, the effectiveness suffers considerably.

When the project allows flexibility and appreciates the diversity and does not dictate terms and condition but gives a space for the committee to innovate approaches and devise ways to be productive and fruitful, the committee becomes more effective in the long run. If intermediary organisations pose restrictions and go with a package approach with stipulated time frame, there are chances that committee begins to do what the intermediary organisations begin to demand. This may result in narrow focus often leading to incapability of choosing strategies on their own.