



## **Inclusion of marginalized groups in rural WATSAN in Sri Lanka**

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ACCORDING TO DATA from the United Nations nearly 1.2 billion people, mainly poor and marginalized people, around the globe live without access to safe drinking water. In Sri Lanka rural population represents 70% of total population and nearly 53% of rural people do not have access to safe drinking water.

People become marginalized due to poverty, social and cultural backwardness, illiteracy and family status (women headed families). Poverty among the rural population, which is the main cause for marginalization, in Sri Lanka is considerably high. According to the 1997 Census, 7.8 million out of 17 million people in Sri Lanka live below the poverty line with an income of less than US\$ 1 per day. Nearly 3.3 and 4.5 million out of 7.8 million people are living in high and low poverty levels, which are defined as per person's monthly income of Rs 860 (US\$8.5) and Rs 1032 (US\$ 10.3) respectively.

### **Study background**

Since the 80s, the Government of Sri Lanka has taken several initiatives to address drinking water issues in rural areas of the country. However, it is evident that poor and marginalized groups were overlooked due to inappropriate approaches and strategies adopted in these attempts. The main reasons for such exclusion were:

- Inability to identify the poverty, poor and marginalized communities/groups in project areas
- Lack of opportunity for communities where majority of people are poor/marginalized to apply for benefits.
- Adapting a uniform approach across the potential beneficiary communities irrespective of their socioeconomic status

The ADB(Asian Development Bank) assisted Rural Water Supply and Sanitation (sector) Project implements its programme in six districts of Sri Lanka aiming to provide water supply to one million people. The project is based on a demand driven approach and it is necessary for communities and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) to take lead role and make total decisions at all stages of project implementation including planning, design and construction. Several measures were taken by the ADB Project to include marginalized communities into project benefits.

This paper discusses the approach and strategies adopted by the ADB assisted Rural Water Supply Project to include

marginalized communities in water supply facilities in Sri Lanka based on the appraisal carried out including a field survey in 24 heterogeneous communities.

### **Approach in inclusion of poor/marginalized groups**

#### **Action – 1 Identification of poor/marginalized groups**

Participatory Rapid Rural Appraisal (PRRA) has been conducted in all project districts to collect socioeconomic and water resources data for macro level planning in water supply and sanitation. Primary and secondary data on income, housing, water supply, sanitation and social capital in each village was collected during the PRRA and concentrated more on identification of poor and marginalized groups.

#### **Action – 2 Sensitization of marginalized groups**

The Project conducted a comprehensive Public Awareness Campaign (PAC) to overcome one of the main issues in marginalization, which is ineffective flow of information to poor and other groups. The PAC is carried out for minimum of 30 days in each PS division and project policies and methods of applying for benefits are disseminated. The PAC has been designed with multi-media approach combined with posters, cluster meetings and street dramas and a targeted flow of information to sensitized marginalized groups.

Level of sensitization of poor /marginalized people was assessed with the submission of Self Assessment Form (SAF) to the Project by the villages where the majority of families are marginalized/poor. The effectiveness of PAC and appropriateness of the tools used is monitored and another round of PAC is conducted in the event of poor response from villages where the majority of families are marginalized. The assistance from Non-governmental organizations in the areas is obtained to conduct the PAC effectively. It is revealed that between 90-95% of the villages in project area have responded to the PAC even though they were aware that only 15 villages would be supported by the project.

#### **Action – 3 High weighting for marginalize groups in village selection criteria**

The existence of marginalized/poor groups in a village was one of the main social factors considered for the provision of facilities. A considerable percentage, 10 points out of

100, has been given for the existence of marginalized groups and for high poverty in village selection criteria. Villages where drinking water supplies are an acute problem together with the existence of high poverty have a high possibility of being selected for the project assistance.

#### Action-4 Ensuring the Inclusion of marginalized people in village water supply proposal.

The selection of costly water supply technologies by influential people caused the exclusion of poor/marginalized people from the benefits in the previously implemented RWS Projects. During village participatory planning processes a comprehensive analysis of advantages and disadvantages of the various water supply options is discussed. The technical, socioeconomic and environmental feasibilities of the options are reviewed, keeping the per family cash contribution within the reach of poor/marginalized people.

One condition brought into the implementation strategy is the requirement of obtaining consent from 75% of total families in village for the final water supply option safeguards the rights of poor/marginalized people and their bargaining power in decision making. It is evident that in many instances rich/influential families obtained the consent of poor/marginalized families for higher level of service (piped water) and agreed to bear the total cash contribution on their behalf.

#### Action – 5 Promotion of cross subsidy among beneficiaries

According to the condition stipulated of compulsory coverage, which requires the agreement of a the minimum of 75% of total families in village who have no safe water, high-income groups cannot ignore the rights of the poor. The project mobilized rich people to subsidized the poor by paying cash in place of their share in the construction activities. Accordingly high-income families are motivated to pay the cash values of unskilled labor. Cash contribution from poor families are covered with this money but poor have to provide more unskilled labour days, which they can provide easily, to meet the total required unskilled labour contribution.

In addition, CBOs are approaching donors, large companies and politicians for financial assistance. Such funds are used to set off the cash contributions of beneficiaries especially from poor families.

**Table 1: Loan Received by poor families from Credit Institutions to meet cash contributions**

District	Total cash contribution collected Rs.	Loan Received from RCIs Rs	Percentage
Anuradhapura	12,510,000	1,270,701	10%
Puttalam	11,940,365	280,000	2%
Kegalle	5,837,836	400,000	7%
Kalutara	4,546,206	582,900	13%
Hambantota	22,413,900	4,958,017	22%
Monaragala	12,883,263	433,000	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>70,231,570</b>	<b>7,924,618</b>	<b>11%</b>

Source: Quarterly progress Report – March 2003.

#### Action – 6 Arranging credit facilities from rural credit institutions (RCI)

The inability of poor to invest in a water supply is the main constraint in RWS programmes. Finding money for poor people to pay cash contributions for common facilities or to invest money to construct their own individual facilities is a challenging and difficult task. At the initial stages of community mobilization projects such groups are identified and links are established with RCIs. Once they have completed membership for 6 months and save a little money with RCIs they are eligible to obtain limited loan facilities. Table 1 presents details of credit available from RCIs to poor families.

In order to prevent the poor being dropped from the scheme at the time of providing house connections due to their inability to meet the connection costs, which is around Rs.2500 (US\$ 25), the project recommends that CBOs obtain credit facilities from commercial banks to buy water meters. Priority is given to the poor to allow them to obtain a water meter and arrangements are made to recover the cost of the meter along with monthly tariff in installments.

**Table 2: Provision of water supply by Income category (N=576)**

District	Provision of water supply		Non Provision of water supply		Total
	Samurdhi	Non Samurdhi	Samurdhi	Non Samurdhi	
Anuradhapura	45%	27%	5%	23%	100%
Puttalam	31%	26%	19%	24%	100%
Kegalle	47%	45%	3%	5%	100%
Kalutara	36%	39%	14%	11%	100%
Monaragala	42%	44%	8%	6%	100%
Hambantota	39%	40%	11%	10%	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 3: Provision of Water Supply to Families/HH Headed by Women (N=86)**

District	Covered		Not Covered		Total	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Anuradhapura	17	74%	6	26%	23	100%
Puttalam	3	100%	0	0%	3	100%
Kegalle	6	75%	2	25%	8	100%
kalutara	22	92%	2	8%	24	100%
Monaragala	4	57%	3	43%	7	100%
Hambantota	17	81%	4	19%	21	100%
Total	69	80%	17	20%	86	100%

### Action – 7 Increased project funds to assist low-income groups

The project provides funds for the beneficiary communities on an agreed cost-sharing model based on a maximum of 80% of the total cost of construction of the water supply facilities or the total per family allocation (per family ceiling varies on technology) per village which ever is less. However special circumstances can occur in villages where pumping of water is the only option and community contribution is unreachable. In these instances the project provides additional funds for special components identified such as installation of main electricity connections and main water transmission lines by considering the percentage of poor/marginalized families in the village.

### Action – 8 Promotion of representation of women and the poor in decision making

Provision of opportunities for the poor and women to have a voice at the community decision-making sessions is prerequisite in their inclusion into project benefits. This could be done by increasing the representation of the poor and women in executive committees of CBOs. There is a high opportunity for poor people to elect their representative to CBOs with the stipulated ratio of representation to the executive committee, which is 1:25 families. Further, women representation in CBOs was increased by the compulsory election of up to at least 40% of women.

### Field findings

#### Inclusion of marginalized / poor groups

The benefits of the inclusion of low-income families into projects has been assessed using the declared income of families and status of receiving Government welfare assistance. It is revealed that according to the declared income, nearly 52% of families who are earning monthly incomes of Rs 5000/= (US\$50) or less were included in project benefits. 4% and 13% of families out of the above are living in low and high poverty lines respectively.

Table 2 presents the data on the provision of water supply facilities to Samurdhi (low-income) and non-Samurdhi (high

income) families in the project area. It is clearly stated that 40% of families in the poor category were included in water supply facilities. A notable finding is that the families of low-income groups have obtained more benefits than families in high-income groups.

### Inclusion of households/ families headed by women into benefits

Women headed families are generally more vulnerable due to various social reasons. One of the main reasons for women being the heads of households is the 20 years old ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. In project districts around 15% are headed by women. This has been taken seriously by the project and as a result an effort has been made to include families headed by women into project benefits. Women are encouraged to participate and obtain project benefits and it is estimated that 80% of women headed families were provided with water supply facilities (Table 3).

### Conclusions

Field finding emphasized the importance and necessity of the adaptation of innovative methodologies and their feasibilities for the inclusion of marginalized groups in development activities. Further, it is identified that the reforms in policies in favour of marginalized groups is required to obtain the total participation of marginalized groups in implementation.

Although it is time consuming and costly, mobilizing and institutionalizing the target communities and provide opportunities for them to participate in decision making it is beneficial to both marginalized groups and to the country as a whole. Necessary measures are required to be taken to move out marginalized groups from dependency syndrome by sensitizing their potentials and skills systematically.

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