Case Study: **Nepal**

#14 | July 2022

INCREASED ACCESS TO SAFE DRINKING WATER IN THE VILLAGE OF CHINA, NEPAL

Background

The right to water and sanitation entitles everyone to have access to sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible, and affordable water for personal and domestic use. In 2010, the UN General Assembly and the Human Rights Council recognized clean drinking water and safe sanitation to be human rights, essential to the full enjoyment of life and all other human rights. Additionally, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6.1 aims to "achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all" by 2030.[1] The rights to water and sanitation are essential for eradicating poverty, building peaceful and prosperous societies, and ensuring that "no one is left behind" on the road toward sustainable development.

Nepal has made significant progress towards realizing human rights on water and sanitation in the last decade, but challenges remain. For example, the Multi Indicators Cluster Survey (MICS) Report 2019, showed that access to basic water supply coverage in Nepal has reached 95.4% whereas safely managed services are only 19%. Additionally, drinking water quality at the source and household level seem highly contaminated with *E. coli* (75% and 75% respectively).[2] The remaining key challenges are the functionality

[1] The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), 2016-2030.
[2] Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey Final Report 2019, Monitoring the situation of children and women in Nepal.

of water supply projects, management mechanisms, and water quality as well as the fact that many water supply projects require repair and rehabilitation support.

China village is a small but beautiful village located near Gamgadhi Bazar in Chhayanath Rara Municipality-02 of Mugu district. The village consists of 45 households, one basic level school, and one police checkpoint which does not have access to a safe water supply and had challenges fetching water. Previously, the water had been supplied through Srinagar Large Water Supply Project with public taps but due to the functionality and operational issues, it was discontinued. The locals relied on a spring tap at China Khola, which was located 20 minutes away from the village. The burden to fetch drinking water lied on women and children by making several trips in the morning and evening and their days were shaped for the walk and queueing for watering. For drinking and cooking purpose, the water was used from spring tap, however, for other household chores, water from nearby river was used, which was contaminated. Thus, this possessed serious challenge to achieve SDG target to the government.

Strategy and implementation

The 2030 SDGs focuses on providing safely managed water, sanitation, and hygiene for all at the global level and stressed that no one is left behind. The Nepal government has also committed to fulfilling the SDG targets as it has developed the WASH Sector Development Plan (SDP) for 2016-2030 in line with SDG; and adopted guidelines on the Water Safety Plan (WSP) to speed up the progress under the WASH sector. Additionally, the Constitution of Nepal has embedded access to water supply and sanitation as a fundamental right of a citizen through provisions made in Article 35(4).[3] However, there is an imperative need to localize SDGs 6.1 and 6.2 through water safety plans and water safe community (WSC) certification initiatives which has already been applied in other municipalities and water user communities.

UNICEF Nepal initiated a WSP intervention in China village's water supply project which is the foremost action to localize SDGs in rural communities. Through this programme, the capacity and knowledge of users were strengthened on water safety, functionality improvement of water supply projects, water quality testing, treatment, and the institutional set-up for regular operation and management. This process was facilitated by mobilizing a Civil Society Organization (CSO) named HIRYSDEC-Mugu which conducted the following activities in partnership with UNICEF Nepal. Implementation steps included:

1. Provided WSP training to the municipality and ward representatives, water user committee members including female community volunteers, school and HCF representatives
2. Assisted user committee for WSP team formation, conducted system analysis, hazard identification, prioritization, and WSP plan development of the China village WSP
3. Provided technical support on WSP plan implementation that carried out field-level surveys, designing, and cost estimates to revive the existing water supply system
4. Coordinated with the office of ward no.2, municipality office, and other development agencies and shared the situation for resource leveraging and WSP implementation

[3] Constitution of Nepal, 2015.

5. Provided technical support on the construction of intake, repairing of pipelines, and construction of RVTs and distribution lines
6. Trained users on water quality monitoring and provided technical knowledge on regular treatment services
7. Oriented users on the concept of WSC and its a certification process and sustainability compact
8. Rigorously guided the establishment of a management mechanism and provided day-to-day coaching for regular operation and services
9. Conducted sanitation and hygiene promotional activities in the community
10. Facilitated self-reflection of the system as per the WSC indicators and developed the status report which was reported to the ward and municipality
11. Coordinated with ward and municipality for joint monitoring, field verification, water quality testing, and third-party monitoring that certified a WSC as well
12. Guided water user committees for WSC documentation and reporting.

Progress and results

The following progress and results have been made:

- User committee members and local level stakeholders are capacitated on WSP/WSC tools and techniques
- WSP team formed and developed a WSP plan to ensure access to safe water supply and mitigate identified risks
- Developed the technical documents with detailed cost estimates
- Chhayanath Rara Municipality, UNICEF/HIRYSDEC and users invested NPR 1.15 million, NPR 900,000 from, and NPR 300,000 respectively for the project
- Timely completion of construction work with physical progress that completed one intake, repaired one intake, repairing pipelines (22 metres), constructed RVT of 10,000 m3 and distribution lines with household connection in 45 households and one school
- Users and Village Maintenance Workers (VMW) are capacitated on water quality monitoring and regular treatment services and equipped
- Made sustainability compact with well-defined roles and responsibilities
- Established user community-level management mechanism that appointed VMW and generated tariffs for regular operation and management
- Upgraded sanitation facilities in five households and one school and improved hygiene situation in each household
- Developed the situation report of the system as per WSC indicators and submitted it to wards and municipality office
- Conducted third-party monitoring with the participation of municipality and WASH sector expert agencies that is certified as WSC as well
- China village community has been declared a WSC and committed to serving safe water forever.

Through the joint effort and close coordination with different stakeholders, each house and school are now connected with regular and reliable water supply services. The project has also offered long-term solutions by involving relevant stakeholders, promoting self-sustainable business models, and implementing social campaigns. The lives of local people have improved in fundamental ways. According to the locals, having taps in their yards was only an imagination, which has become a reality. Now, the young girls do not have to worry about fetching water before going to school due to the project intervention.

Bijaya Hamal of Chhayanath Rara Municipality said the following about the project:

> *"The locals, who have been fetching water from the spring and river source in China Khola, 20 minutes away from the village, have been surprised with the connection of safe drinking water taps in their houses. The female members and children are most benefited and comfortable after the construction of drinking water taps in each house of this village. The positive impacts have been seen in every aspect of social and economic development".*

Lessons learned

The systematic intervention of WSP targeting WSC has proven to be effective for community-level realization, building on using safe water and improved sanitation. During the process, users were trained and engaged in risk assessment, WSP plan development, and its implementation under the leadership of community people. Due to the community engagement, the locals were involved in water quality monitoring, regular treatment services, and established management mechanisms. Besides, local government and line agencies provided technical guidance and validation of water quality and mechanisms for sustainability. Community people ensuring the realization of SDG indicators at the community level is an example of local leadership, thus determining the success of the intervention.

The household connection with a safe water supply has proven to be efficient for household and other livelihood activities. In this water supply project, 275 people and 96 students in schools directly benefited from access to safe drinking water and users themselves established local level management and water quality monitoring mechanism. The community people are less likely to contract waterborne illnesses, contributing to health improvement.

The contribution of local government ensured accountability toward the realization of rights on water and sanitation, whereas community contribution ensured ownership. Moreover, the technical guidance for timely and quality construction of water supply projects supported the sustainability of services.

Way forward

The systematic intervention of WSP targeting WSC remains a very effective tool for small and remote communities as this can be replicated in similar rural areas of Chhayanath Rara municipality and other rural municipalities as well. This tool is also applicable to other urban areas of Nepal and other countries as well.

Related links:

- Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey Final Report 2019,
- United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by General Assembly resolution A/RES/70/1 of 25 September 2015
- Nepal's Constitution of 2015
- Sustainable Development Goals, 2016-2030
- Climate Resilient Water Safety Plans Guideline, 2017, Government of Nepal, WHO and UNICEF

UNICEF

Author: Katak Bahadur Rokaya; Email: kbrokaya@unicef.org