

**Water Resources Management Programme (WARM-P) Approaches for Managing VDC Water Sources Disputes** by *Dinesh Adhikari*, Programme Officer, Helvetas/Nepal



Helvetas Nepal's water programme started from 1976. The programme started with the name of Community Drinking Water and Sanitation Support Programme (CWSSP). During CWSSP, the drinking water schemes were implemented in rural area with the concept of working through government line agencies. One of the major learning during CWSS period was that the community did not have real feeling of ownership in the schemes because the approach was more top down for the implementation of the schemes. After 18 years of CWSS programme implementation and various level learning, some adjustments were done in the programme and started with Self-reliant drinking water support programme (SRWSP) from 1994.

With the learning of major lacking in social part of schemes in CWSS, SRWSP emphasized on social preparation to implement the schemes. The social preparedness to implement the schemes was checked through the stepwise approach where every step of programme activities was carefully judged before going to the construction of schemes. During SRWSP, the programme directly worked with the civil society that provided the civil society to involve from planning to completion of the schemes. During implementation of SRWSP projects, a number of water source disputes were encountered. Because of water source disputes, a number of drinking water schemes were dropped in the critical state of project start up. Therefore, the programme felt the need of overall water resources management of VDCs due to rising issues of water sources disputes. With the learning from SRWSP, the programme shifted to Water Resources Management Programme (WARM-P). The WARM-P concept was piloted in the VDC of Parbat district in Western Region of Nepal in 1998. With the overwhelming success of pilot programme, WARM-P was started from 2000.

Water Resources Management Programme, takes up VDCs for its programme implementation. The overall water use masterplan of VDCs is prepared. From the masterplan, the programme takes up some of the prioritized drinking water schemes for implementation. The preparation of water use masterplan (WUMP) plays important role on reducing the water sources disputes.

For the preparation of WUMP, the programme prepares sub-committees in Ward<sup>1</sup> level. In the sub-committee level the members are selected from ward key-persons, politically elected ward chair and vice-chairpersons by the mass gathering from each households.

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<sup>1</sup> Politically Nepal is divided into 14 zones, 75 districts and 5 Development Regions. Each district is divided into a number of VDCs and Municipalities and each VDC is divided into 9 wards. Each Municipality is divided into a number of wards.

Each subcommittee is formed with 5-7 members. From each of the subcommittees the chairman represent to the VDC level main body, WRMC<sup>2</sup>, to look after the water resources sector of VDC. The politically elected VDC chairman, Vice-chairman along-with the secretary<sup>3</sup>, by post, become chairman, vice-chairman and secretary of the WRMC. Furthermore, the WRMC consist of local level political parties' representatives as well.

In each of the wards, the water resources maps are prepared in about 2 days by the community with the help of social team of the programme. Water Resources maps includes tentative locations of each households, water sources, forest area, lands, roads, trails, existing infrastructures and other physical features within the ward. After preparation of the map, the community discusses about their sources and how they could be efficiently utilized. A number of projects are identified in water sector and are prioritized according to their need. After handing over the water resources map to the technical team, the technical team conducts the pre-feasibility level of survey for each of the schemes identified in the resource map. In this way social and technical assessments are done in all nine wards of the VDC.

With the information obtained from the ward level through social and technical assessments, the programme prepares draft Water Use Master Plan (WUMP). A three-day WUMP planning workshop is organized with the participants from WRMC members. In the workshop, the WRMC discusses finally the overall VDC level water related schemes and prioritizes them. Planning for implementation of the schemes is also done in major two categories- one-year and long term planning (5 or more than 5 years).

After the WUMP workshop, post WUMP workshop is carried out with the participants from district government and non-government development agencies, which work in water and related sectors. In the workshop the WRMC proposes the development agencies to implement the schemes identified in the WUMP.

### ***Approach to Manage Water Source Disputes in private lands***

In the preliminary stage of preparing Water Use Masterplan, each individual from every households of the VDCs gather, during social and technical assessment in wards, to discuss about how to use the entire sources in the VDC efficiently to develop the water related projects in the VDC. The objective of the gathering is to efficiently distribute the existing water sources to build community level projects benefiting each household equally as far as possible. While allocating sources for different water related planning, the tendency of individuals to hide their own sources and the water source disputes is reduced because of following reasons:

- a. Every community members are discussing in the mass meeting for their community managed planning of projects

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<sup>2</sup> WRMC is abbreviated form of Water Resources Management Committee

<sup>3</sup> VDC secretary is government staff to work for the VDC's office.

- b. Socially if one disagrees to provide his/her sources to the projects, then there will be chances that he/she could be excluded from other community level development schemes,
- c. Socially one cannot be isolated for a long time
- d. During the assessment, the reasons of disputes are also discussed and possible solutions are also discussed in the whole present mass i.e. similar to public hearing.

If the dispute remains unsolved during the social and technical assessment, the issue is directed to WUMP planning workshop.

### ***Approach to Manage Water Source Disputes in Public land***

In the WUMP, all the water related schemes are identified from the available sources. The planning is done for long term. Implementation plan of the schemes is done for 1 year, 5 year and long term. The optional use of the sources is discussed within the community therefore any disputes could be settled while allocating the sources.

If there is dispute between two or more VDCs, which have equal rights, in that case the programme prepares water use master-plan with the participants from the concerned VDCs. Furthermore, the programme prepares the master-plans of the interdependent VDCs in water sources. While preparing the WUMP for the disputing VDCs, personnel from both the VDCs sit together to finalize their WUMPs so that they can come together to distribute the sources for their future planning.

During the WUMP planning workshop the WRMC members discuss about any unsolved water disputes and settle them. Because of involvement of all party in the WRMC, if there is dispute in water sources, all party members sit together to solve the dispute. If the dispute remains as it is, then they plan how to solve the dispute to implement the scheme. The issue comes to district level. In majority of cases, the disputes are settled with the meeting of District Development Committee (DDC<sup>4</sup>).

After finalization of the WUMP, the all-party representatives and the VDC council approve the WUMP. The WUMP is taken in the VDC as the long term plan of VDC in the Water Resources Sector.

For the implementation of schemes from the WUMP, the users committee should get approval for the water-use right from the District Water Resources Committee (DWRC<sup>5</sup>). The DWRC is a district level body to look after water use right of the district. The DWRC provides the permanent water use right to the users committee if there are no water source disputes.

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<sup>4</sup> DDC is a politically elected body to rule the district with the members from 11 district regions autonomously. Each district political region consist of a number of VDCs.

<sup>5</sup> The DWRC includes Chief District Officer (CDO) as Chairman and DDC chairperson, local development officer (LDO) and chiefs of water related government line agencies as members.