

ABSTRACT

The Small Town Water Supply & Sanitation project (STWS&S) basically aims at providing safe drinking water, sanitation facilities and hygienic education to the selected communities in Ratnapura District. Kuruwita small town is one of the project locations where the project interventions have taken place. This study has focused on the assessment of community involvement, a key factor for the sustainability, in the operation and maintenance of the water supply project. Importance of the Community Based Organization (C.B.O.) and its appropriateness for the sustainability of facilities provided, have also been assessed.

Data were collected from 50 beneficiary families using questionnaire survey method and from 10 executive committee members of C.B.O. using interview method. The selection of sample in household survey was determined by the stratified sampling. In addition, the data and other information were collected through field observations.

Community involvement throughout the implementation of the project was assessed. It is found that regular and irregular participation during project implementation was 70 percent and 22 percent respectively. Participation in hygiene education programme was very low and only 4 percent of households participated. However, involvement of project beneficiaries in the operation and maintenance (O&M) activities was 88 percent. This nature of community commitment ensured the cost recovery for future sustainability of water supply facilities. A considerable portion of time and money spent earlier for collection of water by beneficiary households was saved due to this STWS&S project. The O&M staffs had been given adequate training in all aspects and been of good skill. This study revealed that the C.B.O. had involved successfully in mobilization, development, operation and maintenance phases, but not in construction phase.

The quality of construction of the water supply scheme also equally affects the sustainability of the scheme as community involvement. There were some defects in the construction, which should be corrected promptly in order to ensure the sustainability of the scheme.

Key words: Community involvement, Community Based Organization, Sustainability, Small Town Water Supply & Sanitation project, Operation and Maintenance