



CASE STUDY

Kyrgyzstan: Program Taza Suu for improvement of rural water supply and sanitation conditions

In Kyrgyzstan, lack of drinking water and access to sanitation is a pressing problem which reinforces social vulnerability and poverty. Financed by the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank, actions have been taken to improve access to drinking water and sanitation by the Ministry of Health. These projects had a high level of community involvement which increased the sense of ownership.

Background

Until 1990, rural water pipelines belonged to collective farms. After breaking up of those farms, the rural water pipeline service system, Kyrgyzzaylsuu has been liquidated. Most existing systems of rural water supply needed capital repairs, maintenance of water mains pipelines along with sanitary protection zones and water treatment facilities. Lack of access of rural population to safe drinking water under conditions of poor sanitation caused epidemiological tension in terms of acute enteric infections and helminthism. In 2002, people in 608 villages (more than 700 thousand) had no access to drinking water sources and had to use water from irrigation canals, aryks and rivers. Limited access to water in the households complicates use of water for personal and family hygiene, washing, bathing, cleaning, washing up, etc. Moreover, women and children bear heavier burdens in searching for water sources and fetching water. In addition, this also hampers to economy adding cost to water treatment, public health costs and reducing the income from tourism, recreation, and decreased agricultural productivity. In combination with poor hygienic skills, small children and students were suffering from high level of children parasitic diseases. This aggravated gender relations and increased poverty. Low level of access to clear drinking water and better sanitation is a factor of poverty in the Kyrgyz Republic.

Actions taken

The Kyrgyz Ministry of Health adopted the Act on drinking water including the new drinking water standards. Also, The Kyrgyz Government made a decision about the free transfer of rural water pipelines to rural communities of drinking water users (RCDWU) that directly would be responsible for receipt and repayment of credits, operation and maintenance of water-pipes and would set water tariffs and water-pipe operating schedules.

As a response, three complementary projects “Taza suu” (“Rendering infrastructure services at settlement level” and “Rural water supply and sanitation”, as well as of the project “Hygiene and sanitation in rural area” funded by DFID were initiated with the following aims:

improving access to drinking water in most villages using community approach,

improving hygiene, sanitation and water use at individual, family and institutional levels. The above projects supported synergies with the projects financed by ADB and World Bank and were based on an understanding of the inseparable relationship between water supply, hygiene, sanitation, and health.

To get involved in the project, communities made a contribution (20% of the total project cost), of which 5% is cash contribution and 15% is in in-kind form (earthwork). Collection of money fees and process of discussion inside the community improved understanding of a need for contribution and collection of water use fees in order to cover water-pipe O&M costs.

The projects contributed to decentralization of rural water-supply management system and promoted the establishment of Rural Water-Supply Department (RWSD) to deal with policy development and support rural communities of drinking water users (RCDWU).

Outcomes

By the beginning of 2008, construction and reconstruction of water-pipes in 506 villages enveloping 9 599 thousand dwellers had been completed. 504 Water users authorities were established. Those communities have their own management structure, including elected representatives, and deal with planning, implementation or management of their own water-supply systems and collect water tariffs. Communities contributed cash and in-kind form (earthwork) in the execution of projects. The projects contributed to decentralization of rural water-supply management system and promoted the establishment of Rural Water-Supply Department (RWSD) to deal with policy development and support RCDWU. This developed the sense of ownership and responsibility among the communities in maintaining RCDWUs.

Lessons Learned

The projects had positive impact on better access of rural people to safe drinking water and changes in hygiene and sanitary skills of local communities. It is important to stress that ownership and responsibility is owned by RCDWUs.

It should be noted that in developing centralized water supply systems, the projects did not make adequate provisions for disposal and treatment of wastewater.

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