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**Rural Village
Water Resources
Management
Project Phase III**

Project Support Unit
Dadeldhura
Sudurpaschim Province
Nepal

**RURAL MUNICIPALITY
WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE
MANAGEMENT BOARD CONCEPT**



FCG ●

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Acronyms

MIS	Management Information System
O&M	Operation and Maintenance
RM	Rural Municipality
RME	Rural Municipal Executive
RVWRMP	Rural Village Water Resources Management Project
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
WASH	Water Sanitation and Hygiene
WUSC	Water User and Sanitation Committee
VMW	Village Maintenance Worker
WSP	Water Safety Plan

1. Background

The Rural Village Water Resources Management Project has strong linkages and a long history of working with the local government level. The project has worked since 2006 with participating local governments in 10 districts of Nepal (Achham, Baitadi, Bajhang, Bajura, Dadeldhura, Dailekh, Doti, Darchula, Humla and Kailali) in WASH and livelihoods sectors. Phase III of the project began in March 2016 after the successful completion of Phase I (2006-2010) and Phase II (2010-2016). The project started close cooperation with Rural Municipality (RM) at once when the new local level governments were established in 2017, channelling the investment and recurrent funding via the municipal system. Currently, the project is working closely in 27 core Rural Municipalities (RM) and has past experience of working in 41 other RMs of Karnali and Sudurpashchim provinces. The project works in four result areas: WASH, livelihoods, renewable energy, and governance support. In practice, this means WASH and livelihoods implementation in the RMs, alongside continuous capacity building of the local government and communities.

Sustainable Development Goal 6 is to ***achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all by 2030.***

Ensuring the sustainability of WASH services is crucial. To retain WASH services, local governments need strategic planning for Operation and Maintenance (O&M) as well as skills in the management of water supply systems and implementing Total Sanitation and Dignified Menstruation Management. As provisioned in the Constitution of Nepal and the Local Government Operation Act 2074, local governments are responsible for the WASH service delivery to the citizens. To perform this function, local governments need to develop local regulations, institutions and partnerships.

2. Problem-Solution Statement

Problem

The continued sustainability of water supply schemes is not possible without the establishment of effective O&M systems. A scheme is considered sustainable when it functions throughout its designed lifespan at full capacity. Therefore, post construction actions for O&M management should be given equal priority with construction activities.

Problems such as source depletion and damaged pipelines/other structures are observed frequently, which lead to non/partial functionality. In the future, with climate change, these problems will emerge more frequently. RMs have invested a lot of money in repair and maintenance but intended results have not always been achieved. The risk of some of the schemes collapsing is inevitable.

The mid-term evaluation of the project (2019) showed the need to enhance post construction efforts to ensure sustainability. In a majority of the Phase I and II supported schemes, the following issues were found:

- a. Lack of regular WUSC meetings
- b. VMW not mobilized/discontinued
- c. WSP not formulated/implemented
- d. No annual meeting
- e. Water tariff not raised/discontinued

Solution

The new governmental system gives Rural Municipalities and Municipalities executive power to promulgate policies and regulate systems. Ultimately, local governments are the permanent structures that look after the sustainability of WASH services and new development interventions. Based on this governance shift and the monitored challenges, RVWRMP has identified a need to update the post-construction approach.

The project has developed the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Management Board concept together with Rural Municipalities (RMs) to institutionalise WASH governance. The objective is to pave the way towards sustainable management of WASH services. The concept has also resulted in the formulation of the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Management Directive (2077) for all 27 core RMs. The Directive is based on the Local Government Operation Act (2074). Actions as provisioned in the Directive are already being implemented in all 27 core RMs

Key Points of the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Management Board Concept

- WASH Management Board
- WASH Unit
- RM Level Scheme Repair Fund
- RM WASH MIS
- Registration and Renewal of WUSCs
- WUSC Network
- Annual Reporting by WUSC
- Annual Evaluation of WUSC
- Rewards for WUSCs
- Commitment to SDGs

3. Framework of the WASH Management Board

WASH Management Boards have been constituted by Rural Municipality

Executives (RME), with the Chair being the Chairperson of the RM or RME (nominated by the RME). The Chief of the WASH Unit is appointed as Member Secretary.

WASH Management Boards are formed and oriented in all 27 RMs. Also, RM level stakeholders have been oriented on the concept. WASH Management Boards meet regularly and as per need. The WASH Units are established and functional.

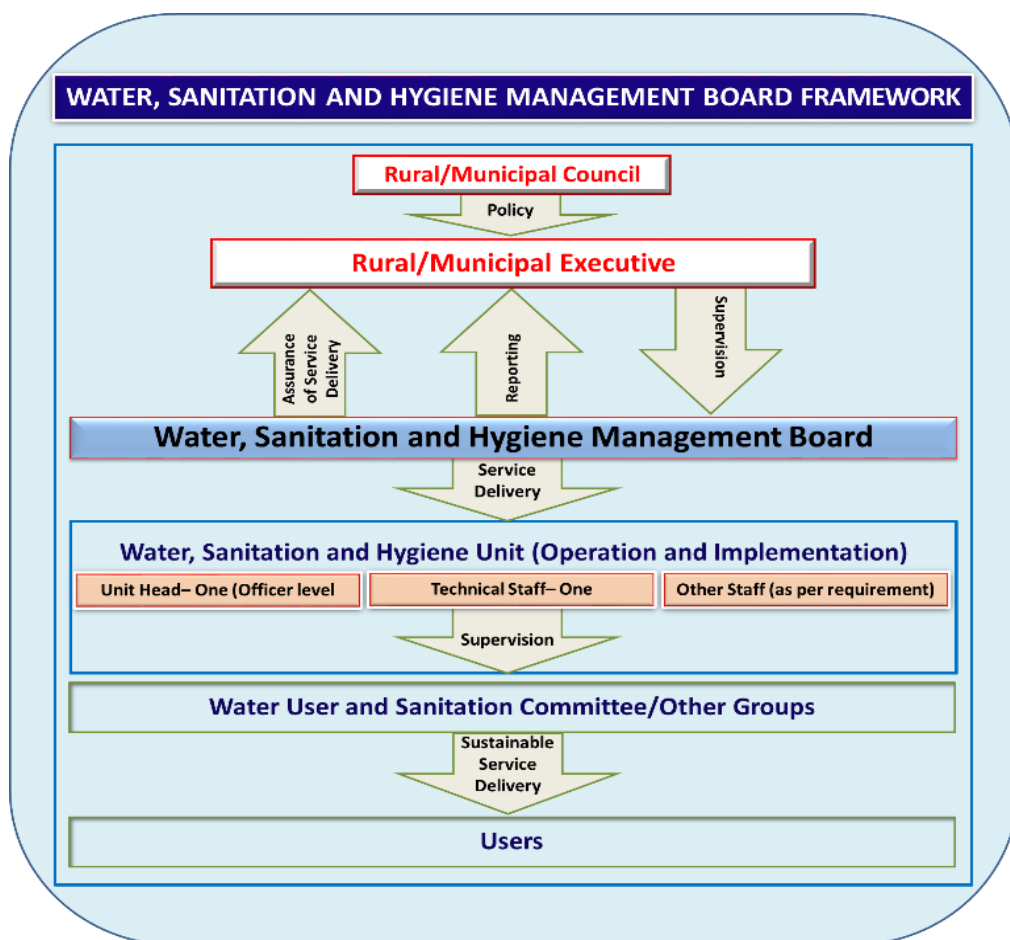


Figure 1: Frame of Water Supply Management Board

4. Role of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Management (WASH) Board

The main responsibility of the WASH Management Board is to promote WASH governance at the local level. The main duties of the Board are presented below:

- Prepare periodic plans on WASH with a clear vision.
- Prepare annual planning with budgeting of WASH sector.
- Support the RME for policy formulation regarding the WASH sector.
- Establish and operationalize the RM-WASH Management Information System (MIS).
- Establish and operationalize the RM level WASH repair and maintenance fund.
- Ensure functionality and sustainability of water supply systems.
- Prepare and fund relevant Total Sanitation and hygiene related activities, aiming to achieve total sanitized status of the RM.
- Prepare and fund relevant sanitation programmes for the public.
- Manage institutional and school sanitation in the RM.
- Prepare targeted programmes for Dignified Menstruation Management, aiming for full coverage in RM.

More detailed role and responsibilities are defined in the RM's Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Management Directive.

5. Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Unit

The WASH Unit works under the supervision of the WASH Management Board as the operative body and secretariat.

Role of the WASH Unit

- Implement and coordinate sanitation, hygiene and dignified menstruation management-related programmes, identified in the annual work plans.
- Monitor, facilitate and supervise assigned individuals, volunteers, schools, youth clubs, mothers' groups, and community-based organisations in WASH management.
- Establish and update RM-level WASH MIS and provide accurate figures for the Board for evidence-based decision making.
- Compile Water Use and Sanitation Committees (WUSCs) functionality status reports with data and proposals submitted by the ward offices. Update these to the MIS and submit summary reports to the Board with proposed action plans. Follow up with wards if the reports are not received.
- Facilitate to form or reshuffle WUSCs and support them to register/renew in the RM.
- Support WUSCs for operation and maintenance management of the schemes and monitor the performance.
- Provide targeted support to passive WUSCs including WUSC reshuffling, WUSC management training, and other actions that can trigger a passive WUSC to be more active.
- Establish periodic monitoring and evaluation system of existing water supply schemes.
- Prepare Annual Report on WASH and submit to the Board.
- Recommend WUSCs for funding of emergency and major repairs to the Board.
- Perform any other activities as decided by the Board for sustainable WASH services for all citizens.
- Carry out administrative work for the Board (minutes, invitations, reports, WUSC registration, etc.)

6. Operation and Maintenance (O&M) Fund Management

Scheme Level O&M Fund

The Users' Committee of each water supply scheme takes care of the active O&M fund. If there is a functional and reliable cooperative in the RM, WUSCs are encouraged to join them as shareholders and deposit their O&M fund with them. Cooperatives can mobilise the O&M fund locally and provide interest to WUSCs. Cooperatives will generate O&M funds from annual income and other sources, aiming for emergency support for scheme maintenance.

If there is no functional and reliable cooperative, WUSCs can mobilize their fund among the users as decided by the WUSCs (though bearing in mind that this has some risks).

Rural Municipality Level O&M Fund

RM level Repair and Maintenance Funds are established in each RM to support the WUSCs in sustainable scheme maintenance. Based on assessments, WASH Management Boards may recommend any of the schemes to the RME for repair and maintenance after ensuring the following pre-conditions:

- WUSC has an O&M Plan and Water Safety Plan, and related O&M regulation is approved and applied at the time of registration and renewal.
- WUSC has registered at RM and registration is renewed annually.
- WUSC has the O&M fund and collects regular water tariff (considering exceptions only for the poor and other who are in a disadvantaged situation).
- WUSC manages tools and spare parts.
- WUSC has appointed a water system maintenance worker.
- WUSC conducts Annual General Meeting and public audit.
- WUSC maintains book-keeping and store records

RM level O&M fund is operated as per the '*RM Level Water Supply and Sanitation Scheme Repair Fund Operation Procedure*' of the RM.

7. Water User and Sanitation Committee Network

There is a WUSC Network in the RM. The Chairperson of the network is nominated as a member of the WASH Management Board. WUSC Networks work as a bridge between WUSCs, the WASH Management Board and other donor institutions. They identify the issues and problems related to the O&M of water supply systems and seek solutions. In particular, the network has an advocacy and supporting role for institutional capacity enhancement of WUSCs and functionality and sustainability management of water supply and sanitation schemes. All the schemes are entitled to be affiliated with the WUSC Network. WUSCs are encouraged to affiliate with viable local cooperative to accumulate O&M fund and to receive other WASH management support services.

Role of the WUSC Network

- a. The WUSC Network primarily:
 - Identifies and communicates WASH sector issues and problems such as those relating to the scheme operation and maintenance and lobbies the Board and the RM for solutions.
 - Facilitates WUSCs for registration and renewal, and related functionality and other status updates.

- Supports the Board for RM level WASH MIS and its updating.
 - Supports and facilitate the Board for monitoring and evaluation of the schemes.
 - Meets regularly and discusses best practices as well as O&M related challenges and potential solutions.
- b. Time and resources permitting, the WUSC Network furthermore:
- Lobbies the RM and donor agencies to solve common issues of O&M.
 - Encourages WUSCs to be affiliated with the viable cooperatives.
 - Ensures that the Annual General Assembly of all WUSCs are held and helps facilitate these if so requested.
 - Actively participates in the events organized by the WASH Management Board.

8. Water Quality Management

A Water Safety Plan must be formulated and implemented in each water supply scheme. The RM establishes a water quality lab at RM level to test water quality of each WASH system, charging a minimum fee.

9. Reporting, Monitoring and Evaluation

WUSCs submit the scheme status report during the first quarter of each fiscal year to the ward office. This report updates any scheme-specific information regarding functionality of the scheme, institutional setup of WUSCs, Total Sanitation status, menstruation management practices (access to toilet and tap during the period) and home garden management. Any proposals for emergency repairs, service level improvements or other support needed from the WASH Unit should be submitted together with the status report. The Ward Office forwards these to the WASH Unit. A copy is submitted to the WUSC Network and affiliated cooperative. The report may include special actions that need to be taken by the Board or WUSC network.

The WASH Board establishes a system for regular monitoring and evaluation to verify the reported data and highlight the possible need for support to WUSCs. Based on the verified data of the WUSC reports, the WASH Unit evaluates the WUSCs. The best performing WUSCs may receive a reward, to be decided by the Board, to encourage them to maintain the WUSC's performance.

10. WASH Management Information System

The WASH Unit is responsible for establishing and updating the RM WASH Management Information System (MIS). The Unit is to provide accurate figures for the Board for evidence-based decision making. The RM WASH MIS is to be linked with the national level WASH MIS (N-WASH MIS).

After receiving reports from the WUSCs through ward offices, the WASH Unit verifies the data by conducting monitoring visits. The verified data is compiled and updated into the RM WASH MIS accordingly.

11. Commitment to Sustainable Development Goals

The WASH Management Board is committed to contribute towards the achievement of the following Sustainable Development Goals:

- Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
- Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
- Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries.

12. Conclusion

The project sees the WASH Management Boards as a crucial step towards sustainable management of the WASH sector, and for the municipalities' ability as a duty bearer to provide services to the citizens as rights holders. The WASH Management Boards bring together relevant stakeholders for integrated management of water resources, and they have both mandate and means to plan, implement, supervise, and monitor the sector in a successful manner. At the same time, the municipalities still need policy development support, institutional capacity development support, and technical training. RVWRMP provides support to all these levels as long as possible to ensure sustainable WASH management in the future.

Local governments are aware of their role to institutionalize the WASH Management Board concept. As annual updating of the WASH MIS and repair and maintenance system, along with institutional capacity enhancement of WUSCs, is provisioned in the WASH Management Board concept, it will support local governments to ensure sustainable WASH services for their citizens.