



Photo: Harhar Sapkota

## SAVING TIME AND IMPROVING HEALTH

### **Participatory Impact Assessment of the Nepal WARM-P project**

Participatory Impact Assessment (PIA), also known as Beneficiary Assessment, is an approach in which the evaluation is conducted by primary stakeholders themselves. A PIA was conducted in 2013 on the Helvetas Water Resources Management Programme (WARM-P) in Nepal. It gave us access to the real perspectives of community members on the impact of the programme, and it identified where WARM-P could be improved. In household and group discussions, people described how they saved hours fetching water, took up new economic activities, and improved their hygiene as a result of project activities.

## CONTEXT OF THE WARM-P PIA

The main goal of WARM-P is to improve well-being of rural communities through equitable and efficient sharing of water resources and improved sanitation. It does this through: strengthened capacity of key local actors to implement and operate water resources services, and; improved access to water and sanitation through sustained community-managed water resources for the poor and excluded. Project staff were planning the next phase of the project, and the time was ripe to solicit the beneficiaries' views on results and changes due to the intervention.

## HOW WAS THE PIA ORGANISED?

The guiding principle was to select and train a representative group of community members so they had the capacities to interview others about their perception of changes in the community, to facilitate Focus Group Discussions with other peers and to report on findings. These Citizen Observers (COs) developed and tested the semi-structured questionnaire and were then taken to other communities than their own in order to do the real thing.

From the selection of districts in the project area, through the identification of specific water and sanitation schemes where the research would be conducted, to the identification of Citizen Observers, the principle of representativeness was pursued throughout the WARM-P PIA.

Photo: Ramesh Bohara



Rain Water Harvesting tank in Dailekh

Other features of the PIA approach include:

- Peer-review principle, e.g. water and sanitation service users assess perceptions of other users
- Exclusion of project staff in the field phase in order to minimize bias
- Perceptions of the population on results instead of quantitative data related to the planning matrix
- Participatory Rural Appraisal methods and triangulation
- People can freely express their views and are listened to
- Validation of findings with the community

## WARM-P working districts





## FALENI WATER SUPPLY AND

### SANITATION SCHEME

Before construction of the drinking water scheme there was no practice of vegetable production in Sushila's village. Since construction of the scheme supported by WARM-P/HELVETAS, Sushila uses waste water from the tap to irrigate her land for production of different types of vegetables. She sells vegetables, mainly tomato, pumpkin, bittergourd and beans and makes about Rs. 150,000 per year. Her husband is fully engaged in vegetable cultivation.

The work of Sushila attracted her neighbours and they also started cultivating vegetables. Nowadays, one can see a caravan of villagers every morning with vegetable products going to Khalanga bazaar (district headquarters of Jajarkot) to sell. Because of the lucrative income from vegetable production, the number of vegetable growers in Sushila's village and in neighbouring villages has been going up every year. Savings in time made

Photo: Harihar Sapkota



Sushila Rokaya, Jajarkot

due to the coming of a piped water system near their homes is the main contributing factor in this regard. Sushila is of the very firm opinion that seasonal migration from the area to India for earning has been gradually going down due to increases in household income from vegetable sales.

The participatory nature of the PIA provided opportunities and development of skills to which the vast majority of COs had never been exposed. At the same time, communities, through their more intimate connection with the process (interacting with peers, participating in community meetings) had a much richer and more direct experience of the impact assessment process than they would have had under other circumstances.

### KEY ROLES IN THE WARM-P PIA

As it was an unfamiliar approach, a team from Helvetas Switzerland with PIA experience supported a National Facilitator and co-Facilitator to lead the process. He coordinated the whole PIA, including liaison with local counterparts around community, household and CO selection, playing a lead role during the initial workshop to identify the assessment framework and train COs, supporting COs to conduct and interpret the field research, and was also lead author on the final report. Not only did the National Facilitator have strong capacities around organising a research team, he was equally comfortable communicating respectfully with a wide variety of people from community level to district administration level, and beyond.

An equally important role in the PIA was that of Citizen Observer. As the field researchers – and main contributors to the initial processing of results (through debriefing meetings at the end of each day of interviews) – COs were crucial to the entire process. They are peers

of those being interviewed in households and in focus group discussions, they help to interpret ideas that may be expressed in complicated or obscure ways and they provide a bridge between the communities being asked to provide their views and the National Facilitator(s) who is orchestrating the overall PIA.

Having a strong National Facilitator and a competent set of COs were key enablers to ending up with a meaningful and actionable result, including a sense of satisfaction on the part of all stakeholder groups in the process.

Two other important players in the WARM-P PIA were Project Staff and Implementing Partners. They had a less intensive, but still important and more delicate role. Because the work of project staff and implementing partners is part of what was being assessed, they had to be kept at arms length from most aspects of the assessment, especially during the field research. However, they were also in the best position to help identify HHs (because of the demographic data they manage) and COs (because of their relationships with local authorities, who can often identify COs in the local community). So, they were not able to contribute to the interviews or group discussions, but they did have a chance to share their insights and experiences at the Validation Workshop, which took place when the final draft of the PIA was completed.



Household interview, Dailekh

## KEY FINDINGS

- Clients of water supply services reported improvement in water quality and time savings (ranging from 1 hour to more than two hours per day)
- More than 80 percent of the households have a toilet and use it. A similar trend is noticed for hand-washing with soap
- Remarkably, almost all Focus Group participants indicated no discrimination based on the caste and economic hierarchy
- There is a need to strengthen the behaviour change element of hygiene and sanitation as well as ongoing capacity building for the local government bodies and committees in order to ensure adequate use and maintenance of WASH systems over time
- Stakeholders appreciate the project's overall participatory approach of identifying WASH priorities and using them for local planning

The PIA strongly validated the project's approach involving a multi-stakeholder process of identifying WASH priorities and using them to inform local planning and implementation. In addition, the PIA clearly indicated a need to strengthen the behaviour change element of hygiene and sanitation (despite achieving near-universal coverage in terms of latrines and many communities being declared Open Defecation Free). Finally, it illustrated the need for ongoing capacity building support for local government bodies and their associated water sanitation and hygiene committees in order to ensure adequate use and maintenance of WASH systems over time, and to effectively conduct the multi-stakeholder planning process that is key to the overall project approach.

## STAKEHOLDER VIEWS OF THE

## PIA PROCESS

At the Validation Workshop where results of the WARM-P PIA were presented, representatives of all main stakeholders had a chance to see and discuss the results. In interviews at the conclusion of the workshop, several shared their perspectives on how this approach gave them a direct picture of community perspectives on project implementation. For example, Kali Badahur Pun, Chairperson of the Kanda Water Users & Sanitation Committee, Jajarkot District, Nepal, described the CO role in this way:

"With this new method we go to people in small groups and we talk to them as friends. We go from place to place and speak separately with men and women. As a result of building trust, people are more open with us and speak about many things happening in their community."

## VIDEO



Link to the video:  
[www.poverty-wellbeing.net/en/Home/Addressing\\_Poverty\\_in\\_Practice/Beneficiary\\_Assessment/Video\\_Interviews\\_on\\_BA](http://www.poverty-wellbeing.net/en/Home/Addressing_Poverty_in_Practice/Beneficiary_Assessment/Video_Interviews_on_BA)