

5687/79

2 3 2 . 2

8 8 S T

**A STUDY OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF
WOMEN HANDPUMP CARETAKERS PROGRAMME
IN BAGEPALLI TALUK, KOLAR DISTRICT**

LIBRARY
STATE DEPARTMENT
FOR COMMUNITY WATER SUPPLY AND
SANITATION (DCO)

By

Shamala Devi L.N.
(Consultant to DANIDA)

August 20, 1988

c o n t e n t s

	PREFACE	
	SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS	1
	RECOMMENDATIONS	5
I.	INTRODUCTION	8
II.	THE STUDY	11
	A. Methodology	12
	B. Sampling Procedures	13
	C. Survey Instruments	14
	D. Field Constraints	15
III	SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF CARETAKERS	16
	A. Age and Marital Status	16
	B. Education & Occupation	17
	C. Caste	18
IV.	INPUTS PROCESS	20
	A. Identification, Selection, and Development	20
	B. Motivation to undergo training	22
V	PERFORMANCE OF CARETAKERS	23
	A. Knowledge acquired in the training program	23
	B. Maintenance of handpumps by caretakers	27
	C. Frequency of specific tasks carried out	30
	D. Communication with people	33

contents (ii)

V.	E	Mode of communication with the users	36
	F	Aspects discussed with people	38
	G	Support from the community	40
	H	Community participation in the program	43
VI		COMMUNITY PERCEPTION OF HANDPUMP CARETAKERS	49
	A	Problems of caretakers in dealing with people	54
	B	Some 'secrets' of success	60
	C	The caretaking and the 'women' question	61
	D	Community attitude towards the suitability of women as caretakers	64
VII		JOB SATISFACTION OF THE CARETAKERS	67

ISBN 5687
232.2 88ST

PREFACE

There has been a realisation that mere provision of public utility systems such as handpumps and the like, per se, would not ensure optimum utilisation of such facilities. As a corollary, it is also found that community involvement and participation in protecting such vital facilities is of paramount importance, indicating the need for incorporating this component in these programmes. An important effort on these lines is the programme of women handpump caretakers. Under this scheme, rural women volunteer to work as caretakers of handpumps installed in their respective villages. These women are trained accordingly. Their responsibilities include ensuring proper use of the facility by people, regular maintenance of the system and, important, educating users and the community to participate in the programme/under the aegis of Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) by Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) of the Government of Karnataka.

The Scheme
carried out

In the body of this report, we present the findings of a study of the effectiveness of women handpump caretakers programme in Bagepalli Taluk of Kolar District. The results and conclusions drawn are based on the author's field visits in the area and discussions with the caretakers and community members as also talks with officials administering the programme.

The author is grateful to the caretakers and the users, the major respondents, who aired their views with the author in a frank manner. The author would like to thank Mr. Finn Hessel Krog, Advisor-Training and Monitoring DANIDA for his discussions with her. Mr. C Ramanna who accompanied the author during the field work, was quite helpful. Timely and able support of computational assistants during data processing work is thankfully acknowledged.

It is hoped that the findings and conclusions drawn thereof would provide an idea of the programme's current state as also assist in future actions contemplated.

SHAMALA DEVI.L.N

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

1. At the outset, our study has shown that the caretakers are carrying on their work quite efficiently though certain problems are encountered. However, these problems mostly emanate out of inadequacies at the level of project planning and formulation which have reflected at the operational level. Efforts appear to be lacking at the conception of the programme in identifying critical socio-economic and cultural determinants influencing active community involvement and participation. This lacuna has constricted the scope of incorporating such factors at the implementational levels. Specifically, the programme has not made sufficient efforts to include and integrate the 'community' at these levels effectively, leading to non-recognition and non-acceptance of the performing caretaker by the people.
2. The caretakers, it was found, have been very effective communicators with regard to maintaining the cleanliness of the handpump and its surroundings and smooth handling of the instrument. To this extent, the programme of caretakers' training has been quite successful.
3. The programme has not made special efforts to involve the community in the total conduct of the programme. Thus, people's participation and a sense of belonging needs to be created with regard to the handpump and its maintenance.
4. An important finding of our study is that the caretakers do not have specific problems emanating out of their

being women, in discharging their responsibilities of care-taking the handpump. However, the problems of caretakers are mainly related to involve the users and people in actual maintenance of the facility. The people's non-cooperation in this regard has resulted in some dissatisfaction among caretakers and has also affected proper maintenance of some of the handpumps.

5. Our study has also revealed that caretakers utterly lack support from users, people and even the departmental officials. As isolated workers in the community, they are put to a good amount of hardships while confronting people and users to prevent misuse of handpump and protect it. This has also reflected in their job performance and satisfaction.

6. It is, however, interesting to note that inspite of such hardships and other problems faced, the caretakers expressed their willingness to continue on this job as they feel that they are happy to do this service to the people.

7. The two day training programme has been quite effective in making the trainees understand the programme components and the job expectation of the caretaker. An overwhelming majority of the caretakers interviewed were able to report fluently the topics dealt in the training programme.

8. Our study has shown that within the duration of a year after receiving training, the caretakers have been able to create awareness among the people and users effectively.

However, with enough additional inputs, the programme efficacy could be increased.

9. An overwhelming majority of the caretakers meet the users on a daily basis as they themselves are regular users of the facility and take this opportunity of discussing with people and educating them on proper use and caring of the facility.

10. The important factors contributing to the success of the programme appears to be support from village leaders/ elders and people's active cooperation in the maintenance of the pump and homogenous characteristics of the population, among others.

11. Both caretakers and people at large felt that women are more suitable vis-a-vis men for the job of caretaker of handpump and gave various reasons in support of their views.

12. The community participation in the programme appears to be ab^snormal. The major reasons for such a situation are programme's inability to incorporate people in the caretaking tasks without emphasis on this aspect at the planning and operational levels, the general psyche of the people in considering the facility as a public property to be cared by the department and not people, and the all pervading carelessness and lack of awareness of hygiene and the role of clean water in arresting infectious diseases.

13. Problems of maintenance of cleanliness around the pump were reported which were due to improper locations and lack of efforts on the part of the department to plan beforehand to combat or circumvent such constraints. Compost pits traditionally used for generations by the people were found enveloping the handpump in some villages of our visit. The department in this respect has not taken steps to initiate remedial measures.

14. There appears to be an absence of regular functional link between any level of the department and the caretakers. It is learnt that even the mobile team which visit the village to attend to repairs do not consider the caretaker as a part of the team in maintaining the handpump. Further, there appears to be an urgent need to follow the caretakers work by the department on a regular basis to keep a tab on their performance as also attend to any difficulty encountered, such as replenishing the kit provided to caretaker, providing additional items such as grease/oil, etc. and liaising with the users and people to extend support.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There is an immediate need for incorporating social inputs at various levels of the programme. Concrete steps in this respect and the modalities involved need to be looked into carefully by the project planners and implementors. We recommend that the local administration of the programme be invested with wider scope to identify various factors, social, economic, cultural and others and take appropriate steps. Corresponding arrangements may be made to achieve this end at project formulation and administrative levels in terms of (a) Finance, (b) Manpower, (c) Logistic Support, (d) Monitoring and (e) Evaluation. These exercises should ultimately lead to active cooperation and participation of ~~of~~ people in the programme.
2. There is an urgent need to employ effective mass media in publicising the programme which is at present lacking. Special efforts in this respect are needed to emphasise the caretaker's responsibilities and her state of voluntary incumbancy.
3. We strongly feel that an effort be made to collectivize the task of handpump caretaking by training more people in this, drawn from various sections of the population.
4. It would be a good idea to include the caretaker in the village administrative councils, at least as ex-officio members. This would at least provide a semblance of formal capacity

for caretaker as well as users.

5. We strongly recommend that a village level committee be formed comprising of village leaders, teachers, members of Mahila Mandals, Youth Clubs, Health Workers, and other local level officials and activists who could take collective as well as individual responsibility in caring the handpumps and support the caretaker and also publicise the programme widely.

6. The mobile team during its visit to villages could make it a point to explain and demonstrate before the caretaker the problem of the pump and involve her in the repair work. This would help increase her technical knowledge as well as provide scope for healthy interaction with the caretaker.

7. It is essential to involve the community during (a) installation of the facility, (b) selection of the location of pump, (c) selection of caretakers to ensure support and participation in the programme, and (d) during shifting of debris and other tasks. Involving children could create wonders in this.

8. It would be appropriate to initiate some deterrent measures at times when the facilities are misused or deliberately sabotaged by miscreants. Mandal/ZP could evolve an appropriate system in this regard.

9. With more than one caretaker per unit, the tasks would be assigned in a systematic manner on a rotational basis.

10. Serious efforts are needed to make the job of caretaking more attractive. While the step of absorbing caretakers into the department may prove to be difficult, efforts to provide incentives could be actively contemplated. These incentives might include among others -

- a) Gifts for good maintenance;
- b) Preference to caretakers in extending facilities under IRDP, advancing loans and other fruits of development projects.

11. Children in schools and elsewhere be actively involved at all levels of handpump use and maintenance, and educate them on these lines. The role of teachers and parents in this regard cannot be overestimated.

12. As mentioned elsewhere, the caretakers have not received any stock of grease/oil though they were promised earlier. Further, they were also assured that tree saplings would be provided to be planted in the water flowing areas. However, until now none have received this. Action in this regard need to be expedited. All the caretakers preferred coconut saplings than other species.

I. INTRODUCTION

Availability of safe potable water is a vital need for a healthy population, irrespective of the location, culture and socio-economic characteristics of the people. However, this life giving requisite has not been fully made available to the people who are direly in need of pure and safe drinking water in our country. As a consequence, there has been a high rate of incidence of water-borne diseases reaching epidemic proportions claiming great many lives, young and old. The problem appears to be extremely acute in rural areas where consumption of unsafe water along with abominal sanitary conditions and practices, have contributed significantly to a high rate of acute gastro-interstinal illnesses, among others. In order to combat this problem, as also provide adequate disease-free water for consumption, a variety of programmes have been launched both at national and state levels. One of such projects is the installation of community handpumps for use of the people in rural areas. Under this scheme at least one borewell connected with a handpump is installed in every village for public use.

The drilling of borewells was initiated with the assistance of Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) and since then, the project is administered by PHED in coordination with DANIDA*.

* The DANIDA assisted Drinking Water Scheme covers the districts of Bijapur, Chitradurga, Gulbarada and Kolar.

With the launching of the handpump project, a large number of villages were covered in the scheme. The Department of Public Health Engineering (PHED) was entrusted with the task of implementing the project and monitoring the use of installed handpumps. In the State of Karnataka a total of about 1,20,000 handpumps were installed spread over the State's length and breadth.

It was, however, observed that many installed handpumps were not functioning satisfactorily due to a variety of reasons. These include, among others:

- a) improper use of handpumps by the users;
- b) unclean surroundings;
- c) lack of maintenance of the components;
- d) difficulty in regular supervision by departmental officials due to dispersed locations resulting in problem of physical access; and, importantly,
- e) absence of community participation in the entire scheme.

Having identified the inadequacies in the functioning of the scheme, it was strongly felt that there should be a person who could keep a constant watch on the handpumps installed and undertake maintenance of the instrument on a regular basis and promptly communicate with departmental officials for any major repairs, to facilitate uninterrupted water availability. Accordingly, a new scheme was drawn within the handpump project, with the following salient features :

1. Identifying women from among the villagers where handpumps are installed;
2. Training them in the proper maintenance of handpumps including minor repairs;
3. Deploying them to their respective villages to take care of the handpumps as trained;
4. Maintain regular contact with the women caretakers, to attend to any problems encountered.

On their part, the trained women caretakers are responsible for :

1. Caring the handpumps as trained;
2. Regular contact with the departmental officials;
3. Publicise the importance of proper use of handpumps among the people;
4. Train users on the proper handling of the instrument and maintenance of cleanliness around the installation;
5. Elicit support from the community in protecting and proper use of the instrument.

The women so selected are trained for two days. The job of a caretaker is purely voluntary. Nevertheless, they are provided with a kit which contains some basic tools and a manual of handpump caretaking procedures.

In the body of this report, an attempt is made to study the functioning of the handpump caretakers in Bagepalli Taluk of Kolar District.

II. THE STUDY

The present study aims to understand the effectiveness of the scheme of handpump caretakers, in terms of the caretakers' performance as also community participation in the scheme. The following are the specific objectives of the study:

1. To study the socio-economic background of the handpump caretakers;
2. Training status and the extent of awareness and understanding of training contents;
3. To understand the job expectation and responsibilities of the caretakers;
4. To examine the process of dissemination of knowledge about handpumps to users;
5. To find out the methods used by caretakers to communicate with the users and their efficacy in terms of (a) frequency of contact, (b) aspects discussed, (c) feedback received for further action;
6. To study the follow-up services provided by departmental officials;
7. To assess the extent of community support and participation in the activities of caretakers;
8. To understand the problems of caretakers as women with reference to -
 - a) Maintenance of handpumps.

- b) Interaction with people with regard to proper use of the instrument, publicising the need for safe drinking water, and mustering public cooperation in the smooth functioning of the scheme.
 - c) Interaction with officials.
9. To gather opinions of caretakers as well as community members regarding ways of improving the scheme in terms of -
- a) Supportive services.
 - b) Additional components in the scheme.
 - c) Specific roles of departmental and community any inadequacies identified in the conduct of the scheme.
 - d) Need for incentives.
10. Concluding remarks and recommendations.

II A METHODOLOGY

In order to accomplish the objectives mentioned in the previous section, it was decided to collect the requisite information through following methods :

- a) Field visits to the area of operation of the scheme and holding interviews with the caretakers;
- b) Carrying out informal interviews and discussions with the handpump users and village opinion leaders;

- c) Spot observation of the use of handpump;
- d) File study of the project documents and other documents.

II B SAMPLING PROCEDURES

All the Mandal divisions of Bagepalli taluk of Kolar district were included in the sampling frame for the study. Care has been taken to provide proportional representation to each Mandal on the basis of the number of caretakers working. The selection of villages were based on the relative distance from the taluk headquarters, i.e., Bagepalli. Further, in each of the Mandals, villages were selected, keeping in view the location based on people's access to public transport.

The following table presents the distribution of caretakers according to Mandals and the number of caretakers sampled for the study.

SAMPLE DISTRIBUTION ACCORDING TO MANDALS

Mandals	No. of care-takers trained	No. of villages selected	No. of care-takers sampled	% of total care-takers
1. Gulure	51	8	9	17.64
2. Thipalli	61	11	13	21.31
3. Billure	53	8	10	18.86
4. Chakivelu	67	4	15	7.46
5. Chelur	73	11	16	21.91
6. Pathapalya	71	8	11	15.49
7. Julpalya	45	7	8	17.77
8. Mitemari	53	12	13	24.52
9. Devaragudipalli	69	11	14	20.28
10. Guntawampalli	69	12	19	27.53
	612	92*	118	19.28

* In the remaining 26 villages caretakers were not available during our visits.

In all, 118 villages were visited to contact 118 caretakers who formed nearly one-fifth (19.28%) of the total number of caretakers functioning in the taluka. However, it should be mentioned that in 26 villages, where visits were made, caretakers were not available during the time of investigation. Nevertheless, interviews and discussions were carried out with the people in these villages regarding the functioning of caretakers covering them. Thus, in effect, 118 villages were visited out of a total of 390 in the taluk where the scheme of caretakers of handpumps is functioning, thereby covering one-third (33.05%) of the village sample frame,

II C SURVEY INSTRUMENTS

After completing the sampling procedures, a semi-structured interview schedule was designed covering various aspects of handpump caretaking. The components of this schedule were in conformity with the objective of the study. However, a pilot study was carried out with this schedule in order to achieve clarity and relevance of the aspects sought, as also the general format. The schedule, then, was accordingly edited and the definitive survey launched.

Even though discussions with users and the community leaders were planned to be informal, care was taken to conduct these with a pre-designed interview guide.

II D FIELD CONSTRAINTS

In our survey of this type covering a large number of villages with short time at our disposal, following constraints were encountered.

- a) As the villages were unduly scattered a good amount of time was spent on travelling and reaching these villages.
- b) The timing of our visits to many villages posed constraints for meeting the respondents who were very busy in sowing and other agricultural operations. Thus, we had to wait for them or meet them in their work spot to carry out interviews.
- c) In 26 of the villages selected, it was not possible to meet caretakers at all due to reasons mentioned above, among others. However, contacts were made in these villages with people and informal talks held.
- d) Due to limitation of time, it was not possible to carry out indepth interviews with respondents, much as we wished to do so.

III. SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF CARETAKERS

In the following paragraphs, we present the socio-economic background of caretakers, besides some basic demographic findings.

III A AGE AND MARITAL STATUS

An overwhelming majority of the caretakers covered in the survey were married (81.5%) and were in the age group of 17-36 completed years. Table 1 gives details of the age distribution of caretakers according to marital status.

Table 1 - Age Distribution of Caretakers According to Marital Status

Age Groups	Unmarried/ Single	Married	Widowed	Sepa- rated	Total
17-24	10 (72.2)	22 (22.9)	-	-	32 (27.1)
25-31	3 (27.8)	43 (44.7)	2 (25.0)	1 (100)	49 (41.5)
32-36	-	14 (14.7)	-	-	14 (11.9)
37-41	-	9 (9.3)	-	-	9 (7.6)
42-46	-	3 (3.1)	-	-	3 (2.5)
47-51	-	4 (4.1)	3 (37.5)	-	7 (5.9)
Above 52	-	1 (1.0)	3 (37.5)	-	4 (3.4)
Total	13 (100.0)	96 (100)	8 (100)	1 (100)	118 (100)

While 13 caretakers who form roughly one-tenth (11.0%) of the interviewed, were unmarried, the remaining 9 caretakers were either widowed or separated. Further, a significant proportion of married caretakers were aged less than 31 years (68%).

III B EDUCATION AND OCCUPATION

The distribution of caretakers according to their educational status and occupation presents certain interesting results. The details in this regard are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 - Primary Occupation of Caretakers According to Their Educational Status

Educational Status	Occupational Category				Total
	Cultivator	Agricultural Labourer	Teacher	Housewife	
Illiterate	44(74.6)	27(93.1)	-	4(44.4)	75(63.6)
Primary	2 (3.4)	1(3.4)	-	2(22.2)	5(4.2)
Middle	7(11.9)	-	2(9.5)	-	9(7.6)
High School	6(10.1)	1(3.5)	19(90.5)	3(33.3)	29(24.6)
Total	59(100)	29(100)	21(100)	9(100)	118(100)

Note: The occupational categories of 'cultivator' and 'Agricultural labourer' are made with the former as a land owner while the latter does not own any land but works purely for wages. However, many a times the cultivators too work as wage labourers in order to supplement their income.

Table 2 clearly reveals that a majority (63.6%) of the caretakers are illiterates while nearly a quarter of the interviewed (24.6%) had had high school education. A further break-up reveals that an overwhelming majority of illiterate caretakers were in the occupational category of cultivator/Agricultural labourers (80.6%). Interestingly, 21 caretakers forming more than ^{one} ~~two~~ sixth of the respondents covered (17.8%) had had schooling upto high school and many in this group worked as

teachers in Anganwadis (Government-run Nurseries for pre-school-children). These teachers, besides having received training in borewell caretaking, are also trained under the Anganwadi Teachers Training Scheme. 14 caretakers or nearly one eighth (11.8%) of the interviewed had had either primary or middle level schooling.

A further probe into the category of illiterate caretakers revealed that they were unable to write their names.

III C. CASTE

The caste distribution of the caretakers contacted for the survey reveals that a significant majority belong to middle and lower castes. The details in this regard are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 - Caste Distribution of the Caretakers Interviewed

Castes	No. of caretakers
Brahmin	7 (5.9)
Intermediary castes	61 (51.77)
SC	30 (25.4)
ST	20 (16.9)
Total	118 (100)

Note: Intermediary castes comprise Vokkaliga, Reddy, Balajiga, Kuruba, Blacksmiths, Vaishya, Golla, etc.

It is interesting to observe that 50 or a little more than two fifths of the caretakers interviewed (42.4%) belonged to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes while 61% or over half

of the interviewed (51.7%) were in the middle level castes. Brahmins, the high caste group in the social hierarchy were a minority, accounting for about 6 per cent of the caretakers covered in the study. The low representation of Brahmins can be attributed to the fact that, by and large, they form a miniscule proportion of the population in the villages covered in our survey. On the other hand, Vokkaligas, Reddys, and other middle level caste groups claim a major chunk of the population as also muster consider economic and political influence in the community. The category of Scheduled Castes and Tribes in our study has received fair representation. However, the striking feature observed during our visits is that they form distinct clusters of settlements separated from the main village, with names such as SC Colony, Bovi Colony, Lambani Tandas and so on. Apparently borewells in these colonies are cared by women caretakers living in these settlements and are exclusively used by people of these caste groups.

IV. INPUTS PROCESS

IV.D Identification, Selection and Development

The programme of HP caretakers was launched in the year 1987 under the aegis of DANIDA and PHED. As mentioned elsewhere, the task of initiating and administering the programme was entrusted to Public Health Engineering Department (PHED). The following guidelines were kept in view to initiate identification, selection and training, and deployment of caretakers.

1. The caretakers should be women
2. They must be permanent users of the borewells
3. Each caretaker should reside closest to the HP installation
4. They should enjoy respect in the community
5. They should be preferably aged around 20 years
6. They should have had some schooling, able to read and write.
7. They should have their own means of livelihood and be willing to take up the caretaking work purely on an honorary basis.

Our talks with the departmental officials revealed that identification and selection of women who fulfilled the criteria laid down in the guidelines posed various constraints. The normal procedures in this regard involved contacting members of Mandal Panchayats and village elders and publicise the project, who in turn would suggest potential candidates. The officials reported that initially there were apprehensions among women and their families regarding the

nature of work, the job constraints, their future career, ²¹ possibility of regular income etc. Ultimately, the selection criteria was relaxed to include women who were willing to work as HP caretakers but unable to fulfil every criteria laid down in the guideline for selection.

The so identified and selected women were imparted with a two-day training programme which covered the (a) structure and functions of handpump installation, (b) their proper use, and maintenance, (c) the need for cleanliness around the installation to prevent infectious diseases, (d) judicious use of water by the community, (e) initiating community participation in the caring of the facility, (f) prompt communication to departmental officials to initiate major repairs if any, (g) the need to protect the facility from abuse and destruction, and (h) educating the people regarding the importance of pure water for consumption and the role of BW in providing it to them.

The job of caretaker is fully voluntary and as such she receives no remuneration. Further, she is a link between the community and the maintenance crew stationed at the taluk headquarters.

At the end of the training, each participant is provided with a kit consisting of (a) some basic tools for maintaining handpump, (b) manual for HP maintenance, in the local language, (c) literature on the importance of HP in preventing

water borne diseases, (d) pre-paid post cards to facilitate the caretaker for communication with departmental officials.

IV A MOTIVATION TO UNDERGO TRAINING

The concept of a voluntary sentinel for a public utility system is quite unique at least in India. Such an effort was first started by UNICEF elsewhere. However, as far as Handpump caretakers are concerned, the sources of motivation for these women to undergo training are not many. Our talks with the caretakers revealed that 95 of them or four-fifths of the interviewed (80.5%) were motivated to undergo training by the officials of PHED, while 16 (13.5%) were motivated by members of Mandal Panchayat and other villagers. 7 caretakers reported that their family members advised them to undergo training. On their part, the Anganwadi teachers had received official circulars from their department to avail this training facility, besides the efforts of PHED officials who had contacted these women to use this opportunity to learn more about handpumps and caring them.

V. PERFORMANCE OF CARETAKERS

In this chapter we make an attempt to assess, on the basis of the findings of our study, the performance levels of caretakers as against their job expectations and training received. The parameters considered in this exercise include -

- a) Knowledge acquired in the training
- b) Extent and mode of communication with people as well as officials
- c) Frequency and ways of maintenance of HP including -
 - i) Ensuring proper handling of the instrument
 - ii) Cleanliness of the surroundings
 - iii) Periodical greasing of the components
 - iv) Tightening of the nuts
 - v) Conduct of minor repairs
 - vi) Contact with department when the instrument needs major repairs
 - vii) Protection from abuse of the instrument
- d) Efforts to educate women and other users of the facility and the degree of cooperation and support received.

V A KNOWLEDGE ACQUIRED IN THE TRAINING PROGRAMME

The extent to which the caretakers have understood the contents of training received is an important factor in performing their responsibilities effectively. Difficulties encountered in assimilating the knowledge imparted in the training would reflect in not only the performance of the job but also affect clarity and skills of communicating with people

and users to seek their support and participation in an effective manner.

When asked about what they have learnt about handpumps in the training received by them, the caretakers reported the four major responsibilities expected of them. The details in this respect according to the educational status of the caretakers are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 - Responses regarding aspects learnt in the Training Programme According to Education

Educational Status	Proper use of hand-pumps	To keep the surroundings clean	To undertake minor repairs	Contact department for failure or major repairs
Illiterate	50(66.6)	70(93.3)	20(26.7)	64(85.3)
Primary	5(100)	4(80.0)	2(40.0)	3(60.0)
Middle	4(44.4)	7(77.8)	3(33.3)	7(77.7)
High School	20(69.0)	26(80.0)	13(44.8)	16(55.1)
Total	79	107	38	90
% to total respondents	(66.9%)	(90.6)	(32.2)	(76.2)

It is interesting to observe that exactly two-thirds from among the illiterate caretakers (66.6%) mentioned that proper use of the handpump was taught. The corresponding figures with regard to caretakers with primary, middle and high school education works out to 4(80%), 4(44.4%) and 20(69%) respectively. Besides proper use of the handpump,

many of the caretakers in this group, notwithstanding their educational status, reported that they were taught the need for periodical greasing of the components of the instrument, in addition to removing the dirt collected. However, they are not provided with any stock of grease/oil for this purpose despite such a promise was made during training period, they reported. Thus, over time, since receiving training, a few respondents could remember the topic of greasing taught in the course. Further, a majority of these caretakers remember that they were told the structure and function of the instrument and that the effective use of it would depend on smooth handling.

An overwhelming majority of caretakers - 107 or 90.6% of the interviewed reported that maintenance of cleanliness around the handpump was discussed. A further breakup according to their educational status reveals a similar finding, i.e., more than four fifths of the caretakers falling into each of the educational group, named this aspect as a course content in the training programme. On further probe, most of the caretakers were able to tell the author how the cess collected around handpump could seep into the well thereby making the water contaminated and people using the handpump would contract diseases. Further, they reported that cess would attract flies and other disease vectors causing infections to consumers. Furthermore, all these caretakers disclosed

how to keep the surroundings clean by not allowing cattle and other animals in the vicinity by telling people not to wash clothes, utensils, etc., ~~and~~ⁱⁿ and around the location of the installation. A majority of the caretakers in this category further reported that they were informed of ways by which the used water issuing out of the handpump could be re-used to grow trees. They reported that they would be distributed with some tree saplings for this purpose but are yet to receive the same.

With respect to undertaking minor repairs, relatively lesser number of our respondents mentioned having received instruction. Table 4 reveals that 38, or nearly one third of the interviewed (32.2%) reported they were taught the way of tightening of bolts. Within this group, a further break-up reveals that a little over a quarter of the illiterates covered (26.6%) in the study gave this response while the corresponding figures with respect to those who have had primary, middle and high school education works out to 2(40%), 3(33.3%) and 13(44.8%) respectively. The differences do not appear to be very significant though roughly half of high school educated caretakers reported to have received training in this aspect. By and large, respondents in this group reported they are yet to get an opportunity to undertake these repairs as the handpump under their care are currently working well.

More than three fourths of the caretakers interviewed (76.2%) reported that prompt contact with the officials was another item discussed in the training programme. A further break up according to educational status does not appear to show any significant difference except that relatively lesser number of high school educated caretakers (55.1%) remembered this aspect being discussed in the training curriculum.

Almost all reported that they did not face any difficulty as far as the medium of instruction was concerned. They said that they were taught in Kannada and Telugu, the local languages of the region.

V B MAINTENANCE OF HANDPUMPS BY CARETAKERS

In this section, we discuss the actual work carried out by the caretakers with respect to the maintenance of the handpumps under their care. This exercise would provide an insight into the work performance vis-a-vis the training received by them as also the extent of involvement in the scheme.

Our interviews with the respondents in this regard revealed certain interesting results. The findings are presented in Table 5.

Table 5 - Activities Carried Out by the Caretakers

Activities	No. of care-takers responding
1. Greasing only	2 (1.7)
2. Cleanliness of the surrounding only	30 (25.4)
3. Cleanliness of the surrounding and tightening of bolts	24 (20.3)
4. Cleanliness and informing officials for repairs	31 (26.3)
5. Cleanliness + tightening of bolts + oiling + informing officials for repairs	12 (10.2)
6. Periodical tightening + informing officials for repairs	2 (1.7)
7. Not involved in actual work	15 (12.7)

As can be seen that a significant majority of our respondents, nearly 90 per-cent, reported that maintaining cleanliness in and around the handpump was one of the major activities undertaken by them. While 30 caretakers, accounting for over a quarter of the interviewed (25.4%), exclusively undertook this task, the remaining respondents combined this with other activities. On probe, the former group of those who only cleaned the surroundings, reported that the hand-pumps under their care are functioning well and hence no need was yet felt to tighten the bolts or informing officials for any repair.

Interestingly two caretakers reported that they greased the equipment. As mentioned elsewhere, caretakers are not provided with grease to use. However, our talks with these

two caretakers revealed that they had obtained the item on their own and are using it.

About one fifth of the caretakers (20.3%) said that they undertook periodical tightening of bolts, besides cleaning the surroundings. 12 caretakers or 10 per cent of the interviewed said that they regularly carried out the tasks of tightening the bolts, oiling and cleaning the heads, and informing the officials for repairs in addition to maintaining the cleanliness of the surroundings. Two caretakers said that until now they had only tightened the bolts and informed officials for repairs.

15 caretakers or one eighth of the respondents covered in our survey (12.7%) reported that they do not personally carry out the tasks expected of them. Our talks with this group revealed that they educate people on the importance of the handpump in the community and the role of people in protecting and maintaining it efficiently. A further analysis of this category showed that some of them were Anganwadi teachers who had not received the kit after attending the training programme. The remaining caretakers belonged to higher castes and more affluent sections of the community. The reasons for their non-involvement in personally caring the handpumps appears to be based on social prestige, maintenance of social distance with other lower class users and the impression that handpump caretaking is a menial job.

As a respondent said ,

"Is that my private tap? All Harijans and other low class people use it. Let me tell you, we are Brahmins and expect cleanliness. So I pay some fifty paise to young boys around and get the place cleaned now and then."

By and large, we could notice that the aspect of cleanliness has been seriously considered by the respondents and most of them involve personally in this task.

V C FREQUENCY OF SPECIFIC TASKS CARRIED OUT

The number of times the caretaker is engaged in each of the specific tasks expected of her provides an indication of the extent of involvement. This would also facilitate to a realistic assessment of the performance of each of the respondent. However, during our discussions with the caretakers, we realised that it was not possible for them to report the exact number of times they undertook each task since their completion of training about an year back. Nevertheless, we were able to elicit the approximate frequency of each task of the caretakers. We present the details in this regard in the following table.

Table 6 - Approximate Frequency of the Tasks Undertaken by Caretakers According to Type of Tasks (N = 118)

Type of Tasks	F r e q u e n c y				
	Once	Twice	Thrice	More than thrice	None
1. Cleaning of the surroundings	2(1.7)	10(8.5)	20(16.9)	71(60.2)	15(12.7)
2. Periodical cleaning, oiling and greasing	25(21.2)	40(33.9)	20(16.9)	18(15.2)	15(12.7)
3. Informing officials for repairs	43(36.4)	9(7.6)	-	-	66(55.9)

It should be mentioned here that all the caretakers covered by our survey were trained more or less at the same time, and are working since one year. This has facilitated direct comparisons among all the respondents with respect to their job performance. From among 118 respondents interviewed, one can observe that 71 caretakers, or three fifth (60.2%) had cleaned the surroundings several times since their training, while 20 (16.9%) reported that they had cleaned only three times until the time of investigation. 10 respondents (8.5%) were engaged in this task two times while 2 (1.7%) had done so only once until now. Thus, it is clear that the cleaning aspect has been understood by a good proportion of the caretakers. Our further enquiries with these respondents revealed that the task involved clearing the drainage for free flow of water, spreading sand,

soil and small stones around the platform to keep the area dry and so on. We could observe that soakpits had been built only in few places and in majority of cases, the used water was allowed to flow into nearby fields and spaces.

As regards cleaning inner components of the handpump, a majority of the caretakers had undertaken the task at least once. However, the frequency of performance ^{of} this task appears to be less, compared to that of cleaning the surroundings. Our study reveals that 25 respondents forming over one-fifth of the interviewed (21.2%) had undertaken this, 40 or one-third (33.9%) had done so twice, while 20 caretakers accounting for 16.9% of the interviewed had performed this task three times. Only 18 respondents forming 15.2% had done so far more than three times. It has to be mentioned here that cleaning, greasing and tightening of the bolts requires opening of the head cap, removal of dirt and other grime deposits and application of oil/grease to the components. After this operation the head cap has to be promptly replaced. These tasks are done only when the handpump malfunctions. By and large, many respondents reported that the handpumps under their care are working well and hence have not yet got the opportunity to undertake this task.

With respect to the important duty of prompt communication to officials for major repairs, our study shows that more than half, i.e., 66 caretakers forming 55.9% had not done

this even once. As mentioned elsewhere, these respondents report that the situation does not warrant such an action as the handpumps are functioning satisfactorily. However, 43 caretakers accounting for 36.4% of the sample, reported that they had informed the officials once for repairs, while 9 (7.6%) had done so twice. It has to be mentioned here that all of our respondents were able to remember exactly the number of times they had written letters to officials (provided in the kit) for correcting any malfunctions in the pump. During our interviews with the caretakers in this category, many reported that the cards they had posted had returned. However, they had personally requested people travelling to B^agegalli from their villages to contact the PHED officials there to attend to the repairs. It was also reported that some men contact the officials on their own interest and inform the condition of the handpumps. We could notice during our visits that several instruments had problems such as damaged platforms, problems related to washer, erection of pipe, etc. On probe as to whether they had informed officials to attend to these, many caretakers said that they had requested the officials many times and so far no action has been taken.

V D COMMUNICATION WITH PEOPLE

One of the major functions of a caretaker is to educate users and people at large on the vital need for protecting the handpump from abuse and ^{the} ~~an~~ important role of safe drinking

water in maintaining good health of the population. Further, the caretaker is expected to ensure that water is used judiciously with minimum wastage and most important, involve the community and elicit its support in discharging her duties effectively. An important tool to accomplish this task is skill in communicating her ideas to the users in an effective and convincing manner. In this section, we discuss our findings with respect to the extent and mode of contact and interaction with the users of handpump by the caretakers interviewed.

In the first place, efforts were made to find out the frequency of use of handpump by the caretaker herself in order to assess the extent of opportunity available for them to meet other users and discuss with them. In this regard, our study reveals that 49 caretakers forming over two-fifths of the interviewed (41.25%) exclusively collect water from the handpump for their household use, while more than half, i.e., 64 respondents accounting for 54.2% reported that they as well as their family members fetch water from the handpump. Only five caretakers reportedly did not ~~personally~~ fetch water from the pump under their care. Incidentally, these five respondents were either economically affluent enough to employ household servants to fetch water, or belong to large families where enough members were available to take up this chore.

The frequency of use of handpump by caretakers varied according to many factors. These include, among others, the following :

- a) Size of the family
- b) Quantity of water requirement
- c) Occasion (festivals, etc.)
- d) Caste
- e) Health condition
- f) Facility for storage
- g) Bathing and other practices related to water use.

Thus, if the size of the family is large the requirement of water too would be correspondingly large, thereby increasing the frequency of fetching water. Further, the social, economic and cultural background of the caretaker would influence the quantity of water consumption by way of bathing, washing and cleaning practices. Likewise, more water would be required by the household during festivals and other occasions when guests are entertained. During such times the frequency of use of handpumps would increase. However, our talks with caretakers revealed that availability or facility for storing water is an important factor influencing use of handpumps. Thus, many who did not have storing facility would increase their frequency of visits to handpump. This frequency ranged from two to six times in a day. Yet some caretakers reported that they use handpump more frequently because of its proximity

to their residence. However, during peak agricultural seasons, they would be quite busy in the farms and during such times they would get water from the pump only twice in a day. When asked whether they visit the handpump area for reasons other than fetching water, many caretakers said they do especially when they hear the sound of the handle being hit hard. They would warn such users to handle the facility in smooth manner. However, this job would be easier if the caretaker's residence is very closely located to the site of the facility in which case, she does not make special efforts to reach the handpump.

V.E Mode of communication with the users

Efforts were made in our study to find out the method adopted by caretakers to contact users and ways of interaction with them. The details in this respect is presented in Table-7.

Table 7 : MODE OF COMMUNICATION

Meeting place	Mode of communication		
	Talks only	Talks & demonstration	Total
1. At the handpump	3 (27.3)	96 (89.7)	99 (83.9)
2. At the handpump and at the house	- - -	5 (4.7)	5 (4.2)
3. Handpump + users' house + other places	8 (72.7)	6 (5.6)	14 (11.9)
Total	11 (100.0)	107 (100.0)	118 (100.0)

The above table clearly shows that an overwhelming majority of caretakers meet the users at the handpump for obvious reasons. Besides handpump, a little less than one-sixth of the interviewed (16.1%) said that they meet their clients at the latter's houses and other places. With respect to the mode of communication while 107 respondents forming 90.6% reported that they talk with the users as well as demonstrate various aspects of handpump maintenance, only 11 caretakers accounting for less than a tenth of the interviewed (9.3%) said that they only talk with the users. The high incidence of caretakers meeting other users at the handpump could be easily related to the fact that a significant majority of the caretakers draw water from the handpump under their care, for their household use regularly. This is a nice opportunity to meet other users and discuss with them, and perform demonstrations. Our talk with the caretakers reporting other places as meeting grounds further revealed that they were mainly Anganwadi teachers who are expected to make house visits as well as organise 'mothers meetings' as part of their job. These opportunities are used to convey the importance of handpumps to the users as well as to the people at large. Our efforts to relate the mode of communication with the educational status of the caretakers did not reveal any significant association. This is presented in Table 8. As can be seen, a majority proportion of the caretakers talked and demonstrated irrespective of their educational status.

Table 8 : EDUCATIONAL STATUS &
MODE OF COMMUNICATIONS

Educational status	Mode of communication		
	Talks and demonstration	Talks only	Total
Illiterate	70 (93.3)	5 (6.7)	75 (100.0)
Primary	5 (100.0)	- -	5 (100.0)
Middle	6 (66.7)	3 (33.3)	9 (100.0)
High school	26 (80.9)	3 (19.1)	29 (100.0)
Total	107 (90.7)	11 (9.3)	118 (100.0)

When asked what specific aspects were demonstrated these caretakers reported that they showed how to handle the handpumps smoothly. Whenever they observe a user rough handling, the pump, they would ask the user to standby and the caretaker would personally pump the water and ask the user to return demonstration. Further, the caretakers would involve users and others in draining the water, upkeeping the platform and reuse the waste water for growing trees.

V.F ASPECTS DISCUSSED WITH PEOPLE

The subjects discussed between caretakers and users provide an idea of the caretakers' perception of handpump caretaking as well as priorities, as felt by them, set to convey the salient features of users' and community's responsibilities. Our talks in this regard revealed interesting findings. We present this in the following table (Table 9).

Table 5 : ASPECTS DISCUSSED WITH THE
HANDPUMP USERS

Aspects discussed with users	No. responding	Percentage to total respondents
1. Cleanliness of the surrounding and smooth handling	118	100.0
2. Misuse and wastage of water	90	76.3
3. Importance of handpump in the maintenance of health in the community	40	33.8

It is evident that keeping the vicinity of the hand-pump clean and smooth handling was discussed by all the caretakers covered in the survey. On further probe as to what they meant by keeping the surroundings clean and handling the instrument smoothly, all of them could explain the following aspects:

- a. Not to wash clothes, utensiles and cattle;
- b. Not to allow children to play with the pump and dirty the surroundings;
- c. Not to permit water to collect in the platform;
- d. To keep the surroundings dry by spreading sand;
- e. Ensure that used water foows away from the pump;
- f. To ensure that the platform and the pipe does not get rusted or attacked by fungal growth.

With regard to proper handling of the pump, the caretakers reported that they constantly tell the users not to rough handle the pump by hitting hard on either sides. Further, that the handle should be moved vertically and not sideways and that the handle should be worked only by a single person at a time. It is interesting to note that all the caretakers interviewed could tell these aspects spontaneously.

Ninety caretakers or a little more than three-fourth of the interviewed (76.3%), added another aspect discussed with people besides cleanliness, viz., not to misuse water, while four^{ty} caretakers forming 33.8% reported that they discussed in addition to the above two aspects, the need to recognise the importance of handpumps in providing disease-free water and thereby help arrest illness among the members of the community.

V. G SUPPORT FROM THE COMMUNITY

The important role of people's involvement in many development project cannot be overestimated. The success or otherwise of any development venture depends to a great extent on the level of community support and participation in such projects, notwithstanding efficient planning and administration. In order to assess the extent of such a support from the users and people in the caretaking of handpumps, the caretakers were asked to mention the type

of support received from the community. Specifically, efforts were made to find out the levels from which cooperation was forthcoming, the extent of participation, the socio-economic characteristics of the people involving in the project and so on. We present the findings in this regard in the following table.

Table 10 : THE EXTENT OF COOPERATION RECEIVED
BY THE CARETAKERS FROM THE COMMUNITY

Extent of cooperation received	No. of caretakers responding	Percentage responding
"None of the users follow my instructions"	20	16.9
"Only some of the users follow my instructions"	40	33.9
"Majority of the people follow my instructions"	25	21.2
"Except small children, all follow my instructions"	15	12.7
"All follow my instructions"	18	15.3
Total	118	100.0

The views expressed by the caretakers reflect among others, the following issues:

- a. The ability of caretakers to assess the extent of support by the community;
- b. Who actually needs to be told more about the importance of handpump?;
- c. What are the levels from which cooperation is lacking? and what are the reasons for such non-cooperation; and
- d. What is to be done to motivate people to actively participate in the program?

In this context, the table above provides caretakers' version of the extent to which users comply with the farmers' instructions in using and maintaining the facility under their care. It is interesting to note that nearly half of the respondents covered (49.2%) reported that, by and large, they did not encounter any major difficulty in seeking users' cooperation in following their instructions. Our talks with this group revealed that a majority of the users are quite receptive to the activities of caretakers and comply with their instructions regarding cleanliness of the area, not engaging in washing clothes, vessels and cattle. Some of these caretakers reported that they have problems with young children who do not listen to the former's advice on using the pump smoothly, and maintaining the surroundings clean. Often, these children were sent by their mothers to attend these chores and the caretakers have a good amount of talking with the mothers of these children not to allow them. Fifteen caretakers reported that almost all the users listened to their instructions and followed them and that not much difficulty was faced in this respect.

Twenty caretakers accounting for one-sixth of the interviewed (16.9%) reported that none of the users of the facility under their care listened to them or followed their instructions in the proper maintenance of the pump. They were of the opinion that their role as caretakers is hopeless as they have not been able

to involve community members in the program successfully. Another forty respondents forming about one-third of the sample covered (33.9%) disclosed that not all users offered cooperation in extending support and participate in the program.

V. H COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN THE PROGRAM

The support from the users of handpump in the program does not appear to be very disheartening in the light of the fact that by and large people are not averse to comply with caretakers' instructions in protecting and maintaining the pump properly. However, efforts were further made to elicit more information regarding the actual participation of people in the maintenance of the facility. This was resorted to in order to assess the extent of people's attitude towards protection of a community's vital utility system being manned by a trained but voluntary caretaker. In the following table we present information regarding the relationship of caretakers with the community members involving in certain specific tasks of handpump caretaking.

The table reveals that as far as cleanliness of the surroundings are concerned, 60 caretakers or over half of the sample covered reported that no member of the community is involved in the activity. The respondents in this

Table 11 : COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN THE PROGRAM

Community members in- volving in the program	Tasks in the caring of pumps		
	Maintaining cleanliness around the pump	Periodical tightening of bolts	Communicat- ing Depart- mental people for repairs
1. No community in- volvement - care- taker is on her own	60 (50.8)	20 (16.9)	6 (5.1)
2. Husband/family members of the caretaker	40 (33.9)	52 (44.0)	20 (16.9)
3. Village leaders	- -	- -	30 (25.4)
4. Other fellow villagers	7 (6.0)	46 (39.0)	62 (52.5)
5. Others	11 (9.0)	- -	- -
Total	118 (100.0)	118 (100.0)	118 (100.0)

category said that they do make efforts to involve people in this activity. However, no one comes forward. Our talks with many of these caretakers revealed that people consider the maintenance of handpump as a responsibility of the caretaker alone and people cannot involve in such activities. As a respondent said in disgust -

"Why do they help us? At the outset they make our jobs difficult by not cooperating. Then they create mess around the handpump themselves. And they do not care when their children play havoc with the pump!"

However, about one-third of the sample (33.9%) reported that their husbands and other family members help in this chore. Further, it was noticed that if the size of

the family is big it was a big support for the caretaker not only in performing this task but assist in keeping a contact watch over the use of Handpump by the people.

Seven caretakers said that they receive support from other village members in maintaining the cleanliness. However, we were told that a majority of the users refuse to participate in this task. Nevertheless, our respondents report that some users are nice to them, who come and assist the caretaker in keeping the pump clean. Our talks with the caretakers in this respect further revealed that people's involvement in the program is directly related to the following factors:

- a. Caste of the caretaker and user;
- b. Economic background of the caretaker as well as the user;
- c. Support from the village leaders;
- d. Size of the village; and
- e. Presence of rivalries among various social groups in the community.

To illustrate these, in many parts of Bagepalli Taluk the village settlements are small with some having as less as 20 households. Further many of these settlements are mono-caste villages, with all the households in each village traceable to a single lineage. However, over time,

due to property sharing at the time of inheritance smaller families within the unit have come out and settled as independent families. However, the family ties, socio-cultural characteristics continue to be more or less stable. In such a set up, the caretakers have little difficulty in mustering public support and active participation by the people in not only maintaining cleanliness but also in other tasks of handpump caretaking. In other words, socio-cultural alignment of the caretaker with that of the community appears to play a very significant role in the active support and participation in the program. In fact this factor transcends to other development projects as well.

Eleven caretakers, or about one-tenth of the sample (9.3%) reported that they are able to involve other people in the cleanliness of the pump. On probe, we were able to find out that these caretakers are relatively affluent and wield considerable influence at least on some sections of the community. Perhaps these villagers work as caretakers, farm labourers, or depend on her financial and other help.

As far as the involvement of people in periodical tightening of the bolts and related tasks is concerned, we have interesting findings. While 20 caretakers (16.9%) report that people do not involve in this task and that they do not have difficulty in carrying out this independently.

fifty-two caretakers (44.0%) said that either their husband or other male members helped in tightening bolts and cleaning the components. When asked whether the caretakers could do this independently, many said that when men are around who volunteer to do it why not utilise their support? However, it does not mean that the caretakers are unable to perform independently this task. Interestingly 46 caretakers or nearly two-fifths of the interviewed said that other fellow villagers participate in this task of removing the bolts and nuts and replacing it back after cleaning and oiling. Most of these persons are male youths. It should be mentioned that the traditional sexual division of labour has had its impact on the specific tasks in the maintenance of handpump. While cleaning the surrounding of handpump, fetching water for household use are carried out by women users and caretakers, the task of dismantling the cap and other components and cleaning the mechanism and other handling of the instrument's parts appear to be male prerogative. The male members of the community would rather volunteer to hold and work spanners and other tools, than help in the 'dirty' and female oriented jobs like cleaning the platform, removing the dirt from the surroundings, etc.

A similar finding is observed as regards the people's participation in informing officials in case of major repairs. Six caretakers (5.1%) reported that they personally inform the officials. These respondents, it was found, were

literates and worked as Anganwadi Teachers who attend regular meetings in the Taluk headquarters at Bagepalli. Further, twenty respondents forming 16.9 percent of the sample covered in the study, report that either their husbands or other adult male members in the family helped in this. This specially so due to the mobility enjoyed by men in the society. Further, this would also be an opportunity for men to enjoy movies and other town attractions. As a woman retorted -

"Do you think they would allow us to go to Bagepalli? Impossible! Going to town and spending money and enjoying is only their right."

Thirty respondents reported that the village leaders and other prominent persons helped in writing letters or personally visiting the officials to inform of the repairs needed. These leaders, we were told, are politically and otherwise quite influential and have constant contact with the Taluk headquarters.

Sixty-two caretakers or over half of the interviewed (52.5%) informed that other fellow villagers obliged in conveying message to departmental officials and request for their services. These, again, are mostly men who go to Bagepalli for personal or business errands.

VI. COMMUNITY PERCEPTION OF HANDPUMP CARETAKERS

Efficient maintenance and proper utilisation of any public facility, be it a handpump, community radio, etc. depends to a great extent on the people's perceptions and attitudes regarding the recognition of the very need for such systems, as felt by the community. This further gains special weight when use of such a facility is watched constantly by a person from the community who volunteers to take this responsibility and is trained in this. In this light it would be interesting to study the outlook of the people at large, with respect to -

- a. Their responsibility towards maintaining the handpump;
- b. Their expectations regarding caretakers' duties; and
- c. Their own role in providing support and participate in the program.

During our field visits to all the villages covered in the study we were able to contact and discuss with people and users in order to assess the aspect mentioned above. Our respondents in this respect were village leaders, users who were mostly women, and other fellow villagers. We discuss in this chapter, their perceptions of the roles and functions of the caretakers as also the community's attitudes and responsibilities in caring and protecting the facility. However, it would be pertinent to briefly discuss here the

progress of the program in the Taluk since its inception in order to understand the historical background and circumstances leading to the present state of affairs.

The installation of handpumps in Bagepalli Taluk was taken up during 1964 though in a modest way. However, the project was intensified in the latter part of 1975 in a phased manner. By the year 1985, a decade later, almost every village in the Taluk was covered by the project, thereby accomplishing an important task. However, as mentioned earlier, the installed pumps were not functioning to the expectations of the implementing agency, with frequent breakdowns and in some instances total failure. In this light the program of handpump caretakers was initiated as late as 1987. This period of time, since the inception of installing handpump to the introduction of the caretakers, provides an idea of people's perception regarding the programme and the attitudes towards integrating the caretaker component into it. It has to be further mentioned that Bagepalli Taluk is one of the severely drought hit areas of Kolar District the latter covered by the Drought Prone Area Program (DPAP). People suffer from acute drinking water scarcity with traditional open wells and village tanks unable to retain enough water. The main source of water for agriculture; the major occupation of the population is rains which are extremely uncertain and scanty. Sericulture (Cocoon production) is confined to rich farmers who could afford wells, and,

have access to other sources for irrigation and investment.

The main crops grown include groundnut, ragi, maize and some paddy, besides a limited amount of vegetables and pulses.

Women, form an important part of the work force. They involve very actively in almost all agricultural operations besides tending cattle, fetching water, cooking, attending to other domestic chores, caring children and general family management.

In this context, it would be interesting to study how people, who have stood the hard times at the mercy of the elements, regard a vital facility and a person who looks it after. During our visits, we encountered different cross sections of the community who expressed varied feelings regarding the handpump caretakers. However, every passer-by the author talked to was able to identify the "woman who had received training in handpump caretaking," and guide her (the author) to the caretaker, or send words that someone has come to visit her. This strategy of assessing people's awareness about the existence of a caretaker was used to know more about their perception regarding the role of caretakers as felt by them. This also was an occasion when villagers gather around and curiously watch the author, which is quite common in rural areas.

Our talks with these people were quite revealing. Almost all the villagers the author talked to, irrespective of sex, caste, economic background and to some extent age, expressed the importance of handpump and its proper maintenance. The complaint, however, was against people in general and women in particular, who did not follow the caretaker's instructions. Many respondents sympathised with that women caretaker and cursed ignorant people. Some of them even showed the author how cess was created around the pump and some other defects. When asked about what aspects did the caretaker discuss with them, a majority of my respondents reported to have received two important instructions, viz.,

- a. To keep the surroundings clean by not washing clothes, cattle, utensiles, etc., and
- b. Not to hard hit the handle but work it smoothly and by one person at a time.

On our further enquiries, many of the respondents, could explain that dirt and impurities collected around the pump could contaminate the water thereby leading to health hazards and that careless handling would result in frequent breakdown. Many of the pumps, during our visits, were not properly maintained. When asked the people why despite their awareness of proper maintenance such things have occurred, everyone replied that it was bad and 'people are careless.'

Everybody in the village use the handpump for one purpose or other at some time. While women use the facility

for all household purposes, men, it was found, use hand-pump water for washing bullocks, feeding them with water, and for construction purposes. However, an overwhelming majority of the villages covered, women appear to be predominant users of the facility.

During the author's interview with the people, it was noticed that there has been a general feeling that the caretaker is expected to guard the facility physically at all the times in a day. When asked to explain the job of a caretaker, the following were reported:

- a. She should be at the pump always;
- b. She should control people from misusing it;
- c. She should properly maintain the facility and keep it clean;
- d. She should educate people in proper caring of the facility; and
- e. She should contact the authorities for any repairs and other supportive services.

Further, there has been a widespread feeling that caretakers are paid by the Government and in lieu of this it is their duty to perform all the tasks expected of them. In fact, in most villages, the caretakers requested the author to convince the people that theirs' (caretakers') is a purely voluntary work and that they receive no salary whatsoever. The author did explain this to her respondents and that caretaker is a person working for the welfare of the community who anticipates wholehearted support.

VI. A PROBLEMS OF CARETAKERS IN DEALING WITH PEOPLE

The caretaker is bound to encounter a variety of problems when any or all the following situations occur:

- a. problems in communicating with people;
- b. Problems in involving people;
- c. Problems in performance; and
- d. Non-acceptability of the caretaker by the community.

Such problems would have adverse impact on the caretakers day-to-day functioning and reduce her job satisfaction drastically.

It would be appropriate to mention here that the entire program of handpump caretakers has not taken into serious consideration the aspect of involving community as an integral part of the caretaker-user-department complex. Secondly, social acceptance of a person, that too a woman, to guide the people for maintaining the pump efficiently has not been conceived and developed in the planning components of the program. Further, if we go back a little in the time scale, we find that 'community' never figures at the time of sinking the well and installing the pump. Thus, the facility was more or less 'dropped' from 'outside' as a gesture of Government benevolence. This readymade 'gift' is after all a Government property, which, people feel, everybody has the right to use it but none is responsible to care for it. This psyche which pervades the general public specially in rural areas perhaps has

had considerable impact on the functioning of the caretaker at the time of interacting with users and others. The caretakers report that the users when told about the proper maintenance appear to understand at the time of discussion. However, most of them do not think about at the time of using the pump. Further, many caretakers said that users do not seem to understand the logic of use of handpump as having association with the health of the community. Many users argue with the caretaker that she is neither a Doctor nor a Health Worker but an ordinary person as good as themselves and to desist from advising on such matters. While some more caretakers reported that when they explain in detail about the health hazards of unclean management of the pump such as contamination which would result in catching diseases, their respondents would laugh at her and refuse to believe that such things could ever occur. However, some would listen to caretakers patiently. But then, as most caretakers report, bringing them to action level is quite a task.

Most of the caretakers disclosed that they do not know how to control the users from abusing the handpump. As one said,

"If we tell them safety, they ignore and continue to abuse the pump. If I go a step further and physically remove clothes, vessels, etc. and try to be terse, I will have to indulge in a brawl which does not fetch me anything. Tell me, why I fight with my people? Moreover, I am alone. In the beginning my family members used to support me. Now, they discourage me to fight with the users and incur their displeasure. Now no one support me, even village leaders and departmental officials, what should I do?"

When asked about what they perceive as reasons for apathy and non-cooperation in the proper maintenance of the handpump and the entire program, the caretakers reported the following:

- a. People are generally ignorant;
- b. Users are stubborn and refuse to listen to a person who does not have any locus standi to instruct them;
- c. The standard of hygiene of the people is, by and large, quite low and traditional as they are, refuse to change;
- d. Many of the users are jealous about caretakers who are assigned to control people;
- e. As the facility is a public property and the caretaker does not have any formal powers, users question her authority vehemently;
- f. Rough handling is resorted to by the users to save time and in this process, not only that that cleanliness is forgotten but a good amount of water is wasted; and
- g. Generally, people think that as the pump is a government property, correction and repair of any damage to it is government's responsibility and they should take suitable steps in this respect. Why should we the people take such a burden?

Thus, social non-acceptance appears to be major bottleneck in the smooth functioning of the caretaker. As almost all the caretakers said, the first reaction of people, specially users, when the former talked of handpump is "Who are you? Why should we listen to you? Is the handpump your personal property? It is ours as much as

it is yours and we have every right to use it as we please. How can you come all of a sudden and teach us about how to use and maintain it? " This, perhaps, is a strong indication of one of the major inadequacy of the program - absence of efforts to emphasise the role of community in recognising the caretaker as an important person and prepare the community in extending all out support to her in providing safe drinking water without interruption. It has to be stressed here that the caretaker cannot function as an isolated worker but in fact a part and parcel of the community who volunteers to undertake this vital task. This element appears to be missing at the planning and implementation levels vis-a-vis efforts to integrate the community in the program. As a result, the functionaries encounter a variety of problems while dealing with users.

We could observe during our visit that many handpumps were located in sites surrounded by traditional compost pits, presenting difficulty in maintaining the cleanliness of pump vicinity. Our enquiries revealed that these pits have been present since generations, and it was not considered at the time of sinking the well and installing the handpump by the officials, to clear the areas of debris. However,

since the inception of caretakers, many of these pits have been shifted. But in this process, huge ditches have formed, as deep as 8 feet, and during rains, storm-water and other impurities collect in these, creating problems. The caretakers of such pumps report that they do not receive any support from people or any official-body, PHED including, in shifting the manure and filling the ditches with sand. If the filling requires a few basket full of sand, there would be no problem, but it requires in cart-loads, who will support us? the caretaker said. Further more, there is no guarantee that people would maintain the surroundings after completing this task. In all probability, we would come back to square one. The caretakers further reported that they are also quite busy in agricultural operations, domestic chores, and in earning their livelihoods. This would take a good amount of their time and are unable to contribute to caretaking in a big way. And whatever time they spends in this task of caretaking does not workout to be fruitful but result in unpleasant tiffs with users, they said with dismay.

Another important aspect to be dealt here is that the caretaker's jobs does not entail any financial

remuneration or compensation at times when she spends on the repairs and maintenance. Most of these women are agricultural labourers who are busy for most part of the day to earn a living. However, there has been a widespread rumour that they would be eventually absorbed in the department and would receive regular salary. This has created a good amount of expectation among the caretakers. However, this also has created an impression among people that as caretakers are being paid, it is their (caretakers') sole responsibility to care the handpump and that people need not worry about involving in this task. In this context it would be appropriate to understand the limitations of the caretakers vis-a-vis following factors:

- a. The nature and conditions of work of caretaking;
- b. The task of educating people about handpump maintenance;
and
- c. Attempting to involve people in the process and get support from them.

VI B SOME 'SECRETS' OF SUCCESS

During our visits, we could make an observation of the working conditions of the handpumps and find out the social reasons for good as well as bad maintenance of the facility. While some pumps were excellently maintained, some were not at all looked after well. The following attributes were found to be very influential in better management of the pump.

- a) A powerful caretaker who wields considerable influence in the community by virtue of her economic and political background.
- b) Majority of the people are aware of the importance of handpump and extend cooperation and support to the caretaker.
- c) The village is small with more or less homogeneous social and cultural characteristics such as mono-caste villages or tribal settlements. In fact, handpumps in Lambani Tandas were very well kept.
- d) Caretakers are personally very much interested and involved regularly in the maintenance.
- e) Handpumps are located slightly away from the centre of the village, compared to those in the midst of the village which is congested and without adequate sanitary facilities.
- f) Important village leaders and elders take keen interest in supporting the caretaker and her job.

- g) Location of the site of handpump is in an elevated area and the settlement is located in relatively lower level, thereby avoiding collection of cess and other refuse around the facility.

VI C THE CARETAKING AND THE 'WOMEN' QUESTION

Time and again, issues are raised regarding the suitability and capability of women workers in discharging key roles in the economy as a whole. More often than not the general impression is to the disadvantage of women notwithstanding a recent realisation that women are an important force to reckon with and should be integrated into the mainstream of development not only as a "beneficiary" but also as a group who could take important decisions and work as efficient managers. As a result of this disadvantage, women are generally pushed into low-paid, unskilled and unorganised sectors of the economy, thereby deprived of voicing their opinions and assert their rights. The societal view too, as everywhere, is biased to the advantage of men and consequently men take on the roles of managing, various day-to-day affairs with women assisting them and not assuming these responsibilities independently. In this light, efforts were made in our study to find out the nature and extent to which the caretakers encounter problems in lieu of their being women. In order to assess this, we had detailed discussions with the caretakers as well as the community members to assess the following :

- a) Caretakers' and community's view of the suitability of women as caretaker vis-a-vis men in that role.
- b) Problems faced by women caretakers as women workers in the existing social milieu.

It is interesting to note that every one of the caretakers interviewed in our study gave the opinion that only women are suitable to work as handpump caretaker. When probed as to why they felt so, they gave a variety of reasons as presented in the following table.

Reasons	No. of care-takers res-ponding	Percentage to total
1. Women are the major users of the pump and only women caretakers could interact with them.	42	35.6
2. Men do not have enough patience to educate women users in the use of the facility.	27	22.9
3. Men never use handpump and are always mobile and do not stay in the village constantly.	13	11.0
4. Women are good communicators	20	16.9
5. Men cannot handle women	16	13.6
Total	118	100.0

The above table is self-explanatory. The responses, while reinforcing the suitability of women in caretaking the handpump, also make an indirect comment on the roles of men defined by

the social set up. As many caretakers held, after all it is not the responsibility of men to fetch water and involve in domestic chores. Thus, they cannot understand women's vital role of supplying drinking water to the family, despite knowing well that water is a pre-requisite for survival. In this situation how can they take up the responsibility of caretaking effectively? they queried. Further, interaction between women - caretakers and users - despite frequent confrontations, is generally accepted in the village community and normally do not reach alarming proportions. But such instances between men and women could be serious and result in fights and skirmishes reaching to higher levels.

The table above also reveals that men are more mobile and that women constantly stay in the village and use the pump as a daily chore, and hence are more suitable for the job of caretaking. As a caretaker said forcefully -

"Our men! Do you know in what state they are? They do not even care their families and you expect them to take care of the pump! You can never think of it."

Interestingly, some caretakers (16.9%) had the opinion that women are good communicators. They said that, being women, a "communication network" is already existing which is used for various activities in the daily routine. They do not find any need to establish a new arrangement for explaining about handpump use and maintenance unlike in a

situation wherein men have to break into the domain of women and face the resultant problems.

All the 118 caretakers interviewed said that they do not have any specific problems in view of their sex regarding the task of caring the handpump. By and large, they could convince men users who reportedly are more cooperative than women users. Men users generally draw water from the pump to feed bullocks, and bathe them. Moreover, men do not frequent the handpump as often as women. In fact, a caretaker said that men could support the programme by educating their wives and other users in the family. But by and large, they do not, as they feel it very inimportant.

VI D COMMUNITY ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE SUITABILITY OF WOMEN AS CARETAKERS

As mentioned elsewhere, the social values and norms attached to women and work is based on the traditional division of labour based on sex. In other words, the suitability of women's work is governed by the traditional social demands and reflect the status of women in general irrespective of their capacity to take those roles. In the last section an attempt is made to present the caretakers' view of the suitability of women in this job. Now we turn to the version of community as expressed by people and users we contacted. The findings are revealing enough. Our talks with young and literate men revealed that women are not suited to maintain the handpump. The reasons putforth were,

in the first place, women are not technically qualified to handle machines and tools, for example, a spanner. Secondly, men can take these roles efficiently as by and large they are literates and have natural inclination to mechanical work. However, during the course of discussion, when they realised that caretaking involves very less technical work and the major thrust of the programme is on the cleanliness and proper use, they agreed that women could take these tasks well (!) At this juncture certain inferences could be drawn.

- a) There is a tendency that women are incapable of taking technical jobs and such areas are men's domain.
- b) There is the general belief that cleaning work and similar tasks are considered menial and below the prestige of men.

In fact, some male respondents were ready to take up only the technical part of the job and let women confine themselves to other responsibilities. In this context, it is necessary for the programme implementing agency to take cognizance of the attitudinal aspects influencing men-women relationships in a rural set-up. Currently there is a strong tendency among people in general to relegate women to unskilled, less important sectors. In this light, the question of suitability of women as caretakers was thrown open to the congregation of people, by the author. We

could observe two distinct groups putting forth their views in an open but very friendly dialogue. It was interesting, even amusing, to observe this taté-e-teté. As a woman aroused laughingly -

"We women know how men can do this job (of caretaking). You do not clean your own house, clothes, dishes, and you claim cleaning the handpump! Ultimately you turn to us and issue orders. We do the actual work and you get the name!"

Another added -

"Men spend all their times in smoking beedi, going to town to watch movies, and frolic around. If they are given this job that will be the end of handpump!"

However, while men generally felt that women are quite suitable for this job, they also said that they could take on this provided they are paid and absorbed in the department as regular employees with other benefits enjoyed by a government employee. A majority of men and women we talked to felt that women are the best choice as their relationship with the handpump is that of survival of the family rather than a job.

VII. JOB SATISFACTION OF THE CARETAKERS

The caretaking of handpump, as mentioned elsewhere, does not entail monetary remunerations but is a voluntary work. However, every caretaker naturally expects some returns from her job either material or non-material and realisation of such expectations would indicate the level of job satisfaction. Thus, in this perspective satisfaction with the caretakers' duties is experienced by the value attached to the job by the incumbent. Our talks with the caretakers in this regard revealed that their job is quite important and thereby contribute to the welfare of the community. In our visits, we could observe that by and large, caretakers have very well understood the significance of safe water and the important part played by the handpump in providing it. However, a corresponding awareness in this respect among the people and users appears to be utterly lacking.

While almost all the caretakers reported that their job is very essential, many of them expressed their dissatisfaction due to absence of any financial remuneration for the work they undertake. However, they also reported that they are not bent upon receiving such a remuneration in a vociferous manner.

Further, most of the caretakers replied in affirmative to our question whether they find it difficult to perform well

as caretakers, and added that it is difficult to convince people who are indifferent and ignorant. But on our further enquiry as to whether they have plans of discontinuing from this responsibility due to the problems mentioned, 90 per cent of the caretakers reported that they do not have such plans but are happy to continue as caretakers inspite of the difficulties faced. They further added that the situation is very slowly improving because of their repeated advice and contact with the users as well as constant watch on the pumps. However, all the caretakers expressed the need for some authorisation of their jobs in an official mode for eliciting support from users. In other words, the need for recognition of caretaker by the users was emphasised.

