



Area-wide Rural Water Supply and Services (ARWSS)

SNV's Area-wide Rural Water Supply Services (ARWSS) approach supports local governments to realise the human right to water. Through ARWSS, we strengthen linkages and accountability across local governments, communities, private sector, civil society and rights holder groups. Together we work on water supply innovations that raise the quality of service provision and leave no-one behind while embedding these in local government systems and sound water resource management. ARWSS components include water supply management, construction quality control, monitoring, post-construction support, social inclusion and hygiene behaviours.

The challenge

Despite the 20% increase in rural water supply coverage between 2000 and 2017 (from 61% to 81%), disparities in access between urban and rural, and richer and poorer populations are growing. A significant part of rural water supply infrastructure is old. Many operate beyond their lifespan and/or design capacity. Management of rural water supply is often weak, while support and oversight are under-resourced.

Moreover, rural realities are constantly changing. Better connected through roads and advancements in telecommunication and information systems, service level aspirations of

communities are increasing. Out-migration of youth and in some contexts, the influx of migrants and refugees, are leading to significant demographic changes, higher pollution levels and resource pressures.

Climate change effects are further heightening competition for already strained resources. As a result, rural households return to unsafe sources.

Vulnerable groups are most at risk as they do not have the capacity and capability to cope and adapt to extreme climate events.



Photo: Building a community water supply tower in Mozambique (SNV/PRONASAR).

Our approach

SNV's work in WASH starts from the recognition that access to water and sanitation is a human right, and that governments are the duty-bearers of the progressive realisation of this right in their area.

Therefore, we work with local governments to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy for sustainable and inclusive rural water services in their jurisdiction. This means supporting local authorities to perform their roles in, for example:

- developing area-wide water supply plans,
- strengthening oversight responsibilities, and/or
- improving investment and management arrangements that cater to the changing needs of communities and diverse population segments.

Our ARWSS approach builds capacity for sustainable service delivery at different levels in the system: user, operator, service provider, local government and regulator. Specific attention is

Highlights (2014-2020)



Supported district-wide planning of water supply in over 40 districts



Introduced innovative management models in six countries



Professionalised maintenance and repair services in four countries



Reduced break down time from months to days in all interventions

placed in the development of skills, leadership and voice of rights holder groups, women, socially excluded groups, and people with disability.

Although new management models exist, community-based management of water supply remains widespread. We help professionalise post-construction support services and operations and promote the use of performance standards for water operators – irrespective of whether they are private-, public- or community-run. Further, our ARWSS approach strengthens behavioural change communication efforts in safe water use and consumer willingness to pay.

Water security is at the centre of ARWSS. This means that our approach goes beyond realising improvements in water quality, quantity, accessibility and reliability. It also measures the resilience of service delivery models and embed these in broader water resource governance contexts.

Water scarcity has physical, economic and social dimensions. While physical scarcity may translate into water resource competition or water quality-

related conflicts, economic water scarcity is related to investment choices of decision-makers at different levels.

Last but not least, social water scarcity involves the multiple processes of exclusion that deter people from enjoying equal access to safely managed drinking water.

An estimated 40% of rural water supply schemes/ points now operate beyond their lifespan. Many countries face an urgent need to upgrade or replace infrastructure to meet growing demands. Our team works with agencies and local governments responsible for the development of investment strategies, including strategies for improved performance and transparency in construction.

Our experience

Inclusive and sustainable rural water supply services in Nepal | 2018-2022 | € 2.7M | DFAT

As Nepal moves to a fully functioning federal state, the project works together with district stakeholders in Dailekh (gravity-fed systems mainly) and Sarlahi (ground-water systems mainly) to develop (decentralised) models for inclusive, district-wide rural water supply services that are: sustainable, offer resilient water supply services, and incorporate hygiene behaviour change communications in development strategies for households, schools and health care facilities.

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Inspiring water entrepreneurship in Tigray | Ethiopia | 2017-2022 | € 5M | AFAS Foundation

As partner in this five-year project to upscale the project, Restoring and Sustaining Water Functionality in Tigray, SNV successfully set-up youth-led private local service providers (PLSPs) to provide spare parts and repair services to water committees in the 12 woredas. Additionally, with government and private sector, we are clarifying stakeholder roles and responsibilities and improving mutual accountability. Governments now allocate budget for PLSP roll-out and training, while MFI provides PLSPs with financing to kick-start spare part shops.

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Strengthening operation and maintenance to improve functionality of rural water supply in Northern Uganda | 2019-2022 | € 650K | ADA

Our introduction of an O&M model – supported by a Sub-Country Water Supply and Sanitation Board – was awarded a second phase for upscaling across four districts in Northern Uganda. Recognised nationally as effective in sustaining functionality and protecting water sources from climate change effects, the model is supported by an efficient fund collection and management process to finance high-quality maintenance.

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Our experience

Sustainable water services for rural Mali (UDUMA) | 2017-2022 | € 5M | RVO-DGIS

Uduma is a joint effort by Vergnet-Hydro with SNV, Aqua for All, AKVO and Practica to rehabilitate and operate 1,400 handpumps across 30 communes in the Sikasso region of Mali. The partnership introduced an electronic card billing system and a more efficient repair response system. With repair guaranteed within 48 hours, 22 communes have already signed up. Of the pumps being operated under the new model, 53% are managed by women.

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Climate Resilience Water Services (CREWS) | Kenya | 2016-2019 | € 3.4M | UKAID

In partnership with county governments and water utilities, CREWS designed and tested public private (community) partnership models to manage rural water supply in Bungoma, Homabay, Kakamega and Kisumu. The country's regulator, WASREB adopted our successes in the national guidelines on provision of water and sanitation services in rural areas publication.

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SNV is a not-for-profit international development organisation that makes a lasting difference in the lives of people living in poverty by helping them raise incomes and access basic services. We focus on three sectors and have a long-term, local presence in over 25 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Our team of more than 1,300 staff is the backbone of SNV.

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