

State Level Consultation on Municipal Water Supply in Pipariya (Madhya Pradesh)

Background

The water supply scheme implemented in **Pipariya** under Urban Infrastructure Development Scheme in Small and Medium Towns (UIDSSMT) is part of the research and documentation activities undertaken by **Manthan Adhyayan Kendra**, Badwani (MP). At present in Pipariya, 22 borewells supply around 4.5 million liters water per day to a population of 48,000. It comes to average 87 liters per capita per day (LPCD) of water supply. However, only 60% of the town is connected with the distribution pipelines. The per capita water supply in exact terms then goes up accordingly to 148 LPCD which is better than the official standards required for water supply in a small town. However, despite this a new scheme costing Rs 24 crore has been sanctioned under UIDSSMT in Pipariya. Manthan had collected and analysed information related to this project during the past several months. This information was shared during the recently organised consultation in Pipariya with the local people. A short report of the consultation is as follows.

Short Report of the Consultation

The state level interaction on municipal water supply in Pipariya was organised by **Jal Samvad Sanyojan Samiti**, Pipariya and **Manthan Adhyayan Kendra**, Badwani (MP) on 25th December 2014. The consultation was attended by local MLA, newly elected President of Municipal Council, around a dozen local councilors, experts on water issues and a large number of local people. During the discussion the speakers expressed their concerns about privatisation of water and stated that municipal water supply delivery is a responsibility of the municipal body. The discussions were organised in four sessions during the



day which included right to water, privatisation of water resources and services, water laws, status and conservation of water resources, reform based water supply schemes in the state and the process of remunicipalisation of water services globally. At the end of each session as well as during the open session several members of the audience shared their concerns and reactions on the proposed changes and privatisation of water supply schemes in the state. The local citizens stated that such reform schemes are non-participatory and non-transparent and also an impediment to the realisation of right to water. They also stated that there needs to be a wider consultation before undertaking any such reform processed further. The newly elected president of the municipal council also expressed a desire to discuss the scheme in Pipariya with Manthan team members for better understanding.

During the **introduction** session **Shri Rajendra Hardenia**, a senior social activist and associated with a local public water management campaign in Pipariya stated that water is a vital component of life and without it life cannot be imagined. However, there are attempts to control and monopolise water services as well as resources. While sharing his experiences during the World Water Forum in Kyoto (Japan) in 2003, he said that policies are made by the capitalist countries and large private companies the local governments are only used to implement them on their own people.



In the **first** session, well known educationist **Dr Anil Sadgopal** said with regards to privatisation that private capital is not actually private. Industrialists exploit public money with political influence and use it for their own profits. He further emphasized that public private partnerships (PPPs) have no connection with larger public good. It is just an arrangement to deliver private profits. He appealed to the people's representatives to stop PPPs in public welfare projects.

Shri KG Vyas, former advisor Rajiv Gandhi Watershed Mission (Madhya Pradesh) said that under article 21 of the Constitution of India guarantees right to life and that it includes right to water. Hence, water delivery to every citizen of the country should be ensured. He also talked about how the laws governing natural resources like water have been formed since the British period in India.

In the **second** session, **Shri Rehmat** of Manthan Adhyayan Kendra, talked about water supply schemes under UIDSSMT in Madhya Pradesh including in Pipariya. He said that under UIDSSMT, 114 reform based schemes are being implemented in 99 urban local bodies in the state at a cost of Rs 2367 crores. He shared that under the



UIDSSMT reforms agenda water supply tariffs as well as property taxes will be increased to make local bodies financially sustainable and attractive for private companies. He stated that under schemes like UIDSSMT public stand posts will be dismantled and each poor household will be provided an individual connection. He said that under the reforms agenda municipal bodies like Pipariya will have privatise water supply services. An analysis of the information provided by the Pipariya Municipal Council shows that there was no need for the new scheme since the existing

water supply system can supply water to the estimate population of 2024 – 25 based on the water supply standards of the government.

In Madhya Pradesh municipal water supply has already been privatised in Khandwa and Shivpuri towns under UIDSSMT. In Khandwa private contract has been awarded to Vishwa Infrastructures and Services Limited and in Shivpuri Doshian Limited has been awarded the contract for operation and maintenance of water supply for 23 years. In both the towns local communities have not accepted the privatisation contracts and local campaigns are ongoing. **Tarun Mandloi** from Khandwa shared that due to the campaign against private water supply in the town, the state government had to form an independent



committee to investigate the objections against the project. The committee in its recommendation report submitted to the government stated that municipal water supply is a responsibility of the local body and should be privatised. During the recently held municipal elections privatisation of water supply was a major issue and while campaigning the chief minister of Madhya Pradesh had to announce publically that water supply will not be privatised in Khandwa.

In the **third** session, **Gaurav Dwivedi** of Manthan Adhyayan Kendra talked about the process of remunicipalisation in several countries across the world wherein municipal bodies are taking back control of water supply services from the private companies. For instance in Paris and Berlin recently, water supply services have been taken back into public hands and private contracts for water supply have not been renewed. In places like Paris, Berlin, Dar-e-salaam (Tanzania), Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia), Accra (Ghana), Buenos Aires (Argentina), Cochabamba and La Paz (Bolivia) have observed remunicipalisation process. In places like Nagpur (Maharashtra), Khandwa (Madhya Pradesh), Jakarta (Indonesia), Barcelona (Spain), Sophia (Bulgaria) campaigns are ongoing demanding this.



In this session, Shri Ravindra Shukla, senior journalist and author of the recently published book titled “Water Management in Central India: 20 Year Perspective” said that water is available in finite quantity in nature. However, the current model of economic growth and development does not consider this and ignores the prudent use of the resource. He said that water availability needs to be assessed to desire the kind of development that we want. He advocated that schemes should be developed in a decentralised manner to be more effective.

During the open discussion session the local people reacted strongly against such reforms and schemes based on these. They stated that keeping in mind the water supply status in Pipariya there is no need for such an expensive scheme for the town. Senior social activist

Shri Gopal Rathi said that the politics behind this expensive scheme needs to be understood. He pointed out that recovery of operations and maintenance cost of this expensive scheme will be difficult and raising tariffs will increase the problems faced by low income and marginalised groups. People's representative Shri Ummaid sing Patel said that commercialisation of water is a concern and we need to protect water resources from pollution. Retired officer of Prasar Bharti Shri Qamar Ahmad said that ignoring local water resources and transporting water from far-off is not understandable. Former President of Janpad Shri Shailendra Rai said that use of public money for private gain needs to be condemned. Local journalist Shri Prakash Mandloi claimed that action should be taken against people who have prepared the scheme. Local councilor Harish Beman said that a way should be found to operate this scheme with low maintenance cost.

The discussion during the open session was summarised in the end and it was a general consensus that the consultation has brought useful insights about the project in public domain. It is a concern that water resources will not be in control of the local people. An awareness program should be undertaken upto ward level to keep these in public hands. People also need to talk to the municipal body in this regard so that the cost burden over the people is less. After the meeting the president of the municipal council of Pipariya expressed his desire to speak to team members of Manthan and further understand the issues and impacts of the scheme. Manthan is currently working on organising more such meetings and consultations with local people and groups across the state on water issues.