



**Abstract:** First, decentralizing management to the lowest appropriate level, coupled with close community involvement in planning, financing, implementation, and operations provides a good foundation for sustainable services. During past decades, lack of access to potable drinking water in rural areas has prompted the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and other donors to increase user involvement. Users were encouraged to participate in the planning, implementation, and operation and maintenance of rural water supply schemes. However, experience shows that Community Based Organizations (CBOs) are constrained in maintaining the sustainable water system. To understand the challenges facing CBOs a study was undertaken in Sri Lanka where six rural water supply schemes which were implemented ADB funds compared

The schemes are maintaining by CBOs for last seven years. The research had two main interests: 1) to compare CBO management with local authority and National Water board management and 2) whether a CBO can manage over a thousand connections. Results shows that community can manage water supply schemes if provide support to them.

The purpose of the study is to contribute to knowledge to develop an appropriate System of

CBOs to manage water supply schemes. Hence based on theoretical frame work developed,

Frame work was also developed to test selected indicators of sustainable

RWSS. This requires a variety of qualitative and quantitative data. Secondary and primary data were collected from six water supply schemes maintained by CBOs, NWSDB and Local Authority.

Accordingly, the methodology used in this study was mainly three fold and they

## Results and discussion

- It is required to achieve construction standards before handing over the schemes to CBOs and Local Authorities as those institutions lack the capacities to rectify defects during the O&M. From the results analyzed it was observed that construction of treatment plants, metering of service connections and quality control by independent body are the main areas needing attention.
- Mobilization of community using proper training and awareness were the main tools of community development. In respect of sense of ownership, financial transparency, technical knowledge, managerial capacity, women participation, water resource management and hygiene education are key drivers of sustainable rural water supply management.
- CBOs are capable in many O&M activities when compared with Local Authority and NWSDB. However, they do not engage in water quality monitoring, they do not have continuous training and development and they do not have a regular feed back of their work.
- CBOs are capable of managing over 1,000 service connections even though they are not capable of implementing water quality monitoring programs. Where CBOs are not the maintaining authority, it is recommended to involve them as a pressure group for O&M authority.