

EFFECTIVENESS OF PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES IN SUSTAINABLE RURAL
DEVELOPMENT: ANALYZING CASE STUDIES IN UZBEKISTAN

Ulugbek Dedabaev

Corinne Valdivia, Thesis Supervisor

ABSTRACT

Access to quality water is a constraint and a source of waterborne diseases among the rural population of Uzbekistan. To address the need for quality water the government cooperates with many international financial and development organizations to address this problem. “Enhancement of Living Standards in Fergana Valley” is a development program funded by European Union and implemented by UNDP seeking to build capacity in development planning and improvement of living standards by involving local communities in the implementation of development projects.

The focus of this study was to assess how projects that engage local community people in decisions about development fare. It assesses how capacity training and institutions contribute to success water projects, the most common problem prioritized by the majority of targeted communities served by this program.

Elinor Ostrom’s and Manzur Olson’s principles of collective action inform the development of a framework applied to the analysis of water projects implemented by the program in four communities. The purpose is to identify factors that contribute or hinder the success of collective action, and the sustainability of the produced collective

good. Using a multiple-embedded case study design, water development projects are studied in four communities located in four districts of Namangan region of Uzbekistan.

The success of collective action in these projects was determined by the perceived value of clean water among households, and by strength of incentives to get access to the clean drinking water. In addition to these, other factors identified included community involvement in the decision making processes, existing norms and customary institutions, local conditions (such as the existence of alternative water sources), and nature of leadership (engaging the group in decisions, and the training of the leaders). These were important for the initiation of the project and during the process of implementation in the target communities.

Institutions created by the project, such as the Water Committees, ensured the long-term sustainability of projects where collective action was essential. In the other two cases solutions to sustainability depended on existing organizations. The property rights of the collective good was not important during the initiation of the project, nor through the process of the collective action building the water system. However, property rights might be influential for the success and long-endurance of the created institutions (Water Committees). In addition, coercion was used in one start up case, because the group was not part of the decision to engage in the project, and did not value. The group was not aware of the poor quality of the water, which required additional training and group discussions for increasing awareness of people about waterborne diseases.

The findings of the study indicate that it is important to use a polycentric approach while designing intervention methods and approaches of development projects. In order to ensure sustainability of the outcome of the project, where a participatory approach is used, the difference between imposed and voluntary organized collective action has to be recognized. The incentives and involvement of the community in decision making processes can determine the success of the project and ensure long-endurance of the outcome.