World Vision

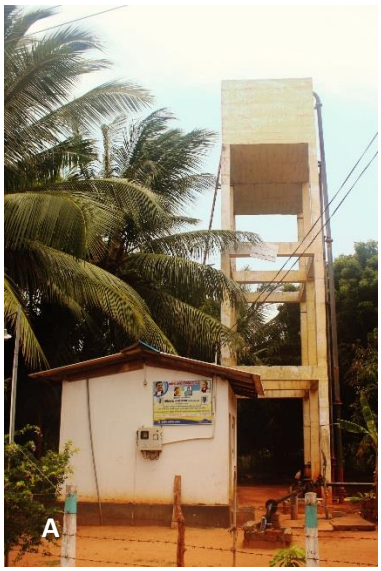
Sustainability in the eye of the beholder

Case Study: Zam-Zam water project

The Zam -Zam water project serves the communities of Karathieuv South, Mahalawilluwa, Karathieuv North, Serakkuliya, and part of Mangalapura, in the Putalam area, Sri Lanka. It started with World Vision building a central tall water tower structure in 2007 and then two years later the Asian Development Bank built on the investment and provided pumps, pipes, and a tank. In 2013 the Water Consumer Society dug a 400-foot-deep pump. In collaboration with the local government the Water Consumers Society (WCS) now also has an office building, which is also used to operate the water station. In 2014 the government provided a third water tank.

This plant serves 1,700 families. A caretaker lives on the premises. The expenses are covered by each family paying for units of water used. If the families use more than 15 units, they have to pay five rupees per unit. The total cost comes to 400-1,200 rupees per family per month. The operating costs are around 100,000 rupees per month.

For several years after construction, the water was used for all purposes. After analysis of the water quality, users are discouraged from drinking the water. The water is used mostly for washing, cooking, and cleaning. Families buy drinking water.



(A) Central tall tower constructed by WV next to the office building constructed by government
(B) Asian Development Bank tank and pipes
(C) Water running on site
(D) Caretakers and evaluators inspecting on site
(E) Operating room / office

QUESTION: Is this project sustainable or not?

Complicated answer: It depends who you ask. For our WASH experts, and some of our fund-raising staff, the answer is **NO**! Afterall, people do not have drinkable water. For our community-led development practitioners, and a few other fundraisers, and the community members themselves (including CBO and local government), the answer is **YES**! That is why local actors kept investing and expanding the operations of the water facility. What's your view?