ABSTRACT. With the onset of the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade (IDWSSD), 1981–1990, global policies and strategies were evolved for the effective planning, implementation and monitoring of water supply and sanitation programmes. In the introduction of IDWSSD policies in water supply programmes, socio-economic aspects have been given equal importance to the hardware aspects. The responsible water bodies and donor countries realised the need for an integrated approach in the water supply sector ultimately. Socio-economic Units in Kerala was conceptually formulated during 1984–85 in order to meet the guidelines under IDWSSD. In 1984 both the governments of the Netherlands and Denmark launched a joint mission to develop a systematic framework for the implementation of three Socio-Economic Units and a Co-ordinating office to work jointly with the Kerala Authority (KWA). The three units are located in the North, Central and Southern parts of Kerala State. Each unit covered a project area which consists of 600000 population. The activities are mainly concentrated in 73 panchayaths, where the 11 bilateral water supply schemes are under implementation. The activities includes community education, community mobilization, inter-sectoral and intra-departmental co-ordination and collaboration, human resources development and institutional development including appropriate training programmes, establishment of viable and realistic management information systems etc. The major thrust of the programme interventions are on developing micro-level planning and implementation systems and procedures at the ward level. The results of these experiments would be available by the end of 1990.

INTRODUCTION

1. Along with the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade (IDWSSD), 1981–1990 global policies and strategies have been evolved in the water supply and sanitation programme. Many countries including India adopted the goals of the IDWSSD and were committed to providing clean water and sanitation to all by the year 1990. Due to practical realisation and for a comprehensive coverage the decade period has been extended beyond 1991. It is not enough to plan for “coverage” of the population with facilities, we must also plan for sustained functioning of the facilities, such as feasible operation and maintenance, cost recovery etc. In providing safe water and improved sanitation facilities to poor rural communities, slum
dwellers and other weaker sections in the urban localities, the so called appropriate facilities such as public standposts, handpumps or public latrines are often specified according to standard designs. Moreover, the community as a whole must be educated to realise that clean water is a scarce and costly commodity for which they are liable to pay for the cost based on the quantity consumed, and that it should be used with little or no waste at all. Further, they must also become conversant with the necessary precautions to avoid pollution of water before use and ways of ensuring protected water supply or safe water for drinking. It has generally been noticed that improvements in water supply and sanitation have a crucial role to play in reducing the high levels of morbidity and mortality that prevail in many poor countries today. It is essential that for the success of the programme (it is imperative that) both the water supply and sanitation activities should implement simultaneously. It is needless to mention that laying emphasis only on hardware part of the programmes will not yield tangible results without giving equal importance to software aspects of the programme. In all the hardware programme minimum 10% of the total budget should be earmarked for software and awareness programme the software activities includes community education, community mobilization, community participation, intersectoral intra-departmental co-ordination and collaboration, human resources development and institutional development including appropriate training programmes, establishment of a viable and realistic management information system etc.

2. For improving the implementation of water supply and sanitation Socio-economic Unit (SEU) have been established as an integral part of the water supply and sanitation programme. In 1984 both the Governments of Netherlands and Denmark launched a joint mission to develop a systematic framework for the implementation of three Socio-economic Units and a Co-ordinating office to work jointly with the Kerala Water Authority (KWA). One unit each is located at the project areas which consists of 600,000 population each. The units are managed by experienced Social Scientists and other supporting staff in the field of community organization, health education, social work etc. The three units are located in the North, Central and Southern parts of Kerala State. The initial duration of the SEU funded by the Dutch and Danish Governments is three years. The chances are that the units will then be integrated KWA to function as a Social wing.