

## Impactful Activities of User Committee (A Case Study of Dharachaur Drinking Water and Sanitation User Committee)

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### Abstract

*The main objective of this research paper is to explore the impactful activities of the Dharachaur Drinking Water and Sanitation User Committee (DDWASUC). The committee provides clean drinking water twice daily, totaling five hours of service, through 700 taps, two boreholes, two reservoir tanks, and one treatment plant. This innovative infrastructure has eliminated the need for expensive water pumps and other water sources in the designated community, making access to water more efficient and cost-effective for residents. Employing qualitative design, this research integrates key informant interviews, direct observations, and document analysis to comprehensively understand DDWASUC's impactful activities from May to September 2024. Applying Structural Functionalism theory, the research highlights the committee's dual role in providing essential services and fostering social cohesion and collective identity. Beyond infrastructure, DDWASUC enhances community development through diverse initiatives. Recreational Picnic programs have evolved into platforms for social interaction, collaboration, and community bonding. Moreover, DDWASUC has implemented a financial assistance program for bereaved families, which promotes empathy and compassion while reinforcing community ties during challenging times. Additionally, the committee encourages health insurance enrollment among its members to facilitate access to healthcare. It has also introduced a student reward program and a souvenir publishing initiative to support academic achievement. These diverse initiatives underscore DDWASUC's commitment to addressing both the practical and emotional needs of the community, positioning it as a model for sustainable, community-driven change that empowers residents and fosters resilience in the face of challenges.*

**Key words:** DDWASUC, Picnic programs, Group solidarity, Financial assistance, Health insurance.

### Introduction of Dharachaur Drinking Water and Sanitation User Committee

DDWASUC, located in Mahalaxmi Municipality, Ward No. 9, Lalitpur District, Bagmati Province, was established in 2076 B.S. as a continuation of efforts by the Jyagata-Arubot Drinking Water User Committee. In a mass meeting held on June 20, 2075, B.S., representatives from clusters such as Arubot, Jyagata, Dandathoth, Tinchal, Bhaltar, Gahate, and Tripurabasti formed a new user committee to expand previous deep boring initiatives. The new committee, chaired by Bal Krishna Khatri, comprised 11 members, including three women. Despite changes in 2079 B.S., the committee maintained leadership continuity, with the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson retaining their positions (Annual Report, 2079 B.S.).

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The Dharachaur Drinking Water and Sanitation User Committee (DDWASUC) has been instrumental in addressing water scarcity issues in its community. Since July 16, 2021 (Annual Report, 2078 B.S.), DDWASUC has provided clean drinking water to every household within the designated area, marking a significant milestone for a community that had long endured severe water shortages. The project's success stems from the innovative use of sloped and elevated reservoir tanks, which eliminated the need for water pumps, reducing operational costs for residents. This achievement was made possible through the collaborative efforts of local user groups, elected representatives from all three levels of government, and various government offices (Annual Report, 2076 B.S.).

Currently, DDWASUC supplies safe drinking water twice daily, from 5:00 AM to 8:00 AM and 4:00 PM to 6:00 PM, totaling five hours of service each day. This distribution provides approximately 500,000 to 600,000 liters of water daily (Annual Report, 2080 B.S.). To support this system, the committee constructed three boreholes and three large reservoir tanks, each with a combined capacity of 6 million liters. Additionally, 700 taps were installed to serve 700 households, supported by a water treatment plant. These infrastructure developments have drastically improved the quality of life for residents by offering a consistent and reliable water supply (Annual Report, 2080 B.S.).

Beyond addressing water shortages, DDWASUC has implemented numerous community development initiatives that focus on social welfare and solidarity. The committee organized community picnic programs, initially meant for recreation, which have evolved into platforms for social interaction, collaboration, and community bonding. These programs have strengthened unity among diverse community members, fostering a sense of mutual understanding and cooperation.

Furthermore, DDWASUC has established financial assistance programs to support bereaved families, reinforcing social cohesion and promoting empathy among community members. The committee also encourages participation in the Government of Nepal's health insurance program by offering financial aid to water consumers. This initiative contributes to the long-term well-being of the community by ensuring access to essential healthcare services. Additionally, DDWASUC has launched a student reward program, recognizing and encouraging academic excellence among youth. The publication of a community souvenir serves as a cultural milestone, celebrating achievements and providing economic support through its proceeds. Collectively, these efforts underscore DDWASUC's holistic approach to community development by addressing both infrastructural needs and the social well-being of the region.

## **Objectives**

**General Objective:** The general objective of this study is to explore and analyze the impactful activities of the DDWASUC within the community.

## **Methodology**

The researcher employed a convenience sampling technique, a type of non-probability sampling, to select both the study area and respondents. The selection process for participants involved identifying individuals who were accessible and relevant to the study, ensuring a diverse representation of perspectives within the community.

A total of 20 participants were included in the study, comprising: Five members of the DDWASUC, two members from advisory groups linked to the DDWASUC, three ward representatives from Ward

No. 9 of Mahalaxmi Municipality and ten consumers of DDWASUC service areas. This qualitative approach facilitated an in-depth exploration of the experiences and viewpoints of stakeholders involved in water management and the impactful activities of the committee.

The methodology incorporated key informant interviews, observation methods, and document analysis. Direct observation of the infrastructure, facilities, and operations associated with the drinking water project provided contextual insights and complemented the interview data.

By utilizing both primary (interviews and observations) and secondary (document analysis) data sources, the research adopted a triangulation strategy to ensure a rich, holistic understanding of DDWASUC's activities. This mixed-method approach enhanced the study's robustness by improving the validity (accuracy of findings) and reliability (consistency of results).

The research was conducted over a five-month period, from May to September 2024, ensuring adequate time for thorough data collection and analysis.

### **Theoretical Frameworks:**

In this research paper, the Structural Functionalism theory is applied, which posits that society is a system composed of interconnected parts, each playing a role in maintaining social stability and cohesion (Merton, 1968). From this perspective, DDWASUC can be understood as an essential institution within the community, fulfilling key functions necessary for the well-being of its members. This framework emphasizes that institutions like DDWASUC contribute not only to functional services but also to the overall stability and harmony of society.

One of the core functions of the DDWASUC is the provision of clean water, a fundamental service that ensures the well-being of the population. Access to clean water is critical for public health, and by constructing and maintaining water infrastructure, the committee reduces social inequalities associated with disparities in access to basic resources. In this way, DDWASUC contributes to maintaining social stability by addressing a vital community need.

Moreover, the social cohesion fostered through community activities—such as picnic programs, financial support during bereavement, health insurance subsidies, student reward programs, and souvenir publishing—highlights the committee's vital role in reinforcing group solidarity. According to functionalist theory, shared goals and cooperation are crucial for maintaining social equilibrium. Through these activities, the DDWASUC strengthens relationships among community members and fosters a sense of collective identity and purpose, further supporting the overall stability and harmony of the society it serves. Thus, from a structural functionalist viewpoint, DDWASUC functions as an integral part of the community, addressing both practical needs and fostering social cohesion, thereby maintaining the broader social order (Parsons, 1951).

### **Discussion on Impactful Activities**

DDWASUC has significantly contributed to social change in the study area since its establishment by undertaking various impactful activities. One of the primary objectives of the Drinking Water User Committee is to provide clean, safe, and pure drinking water to all beneficiaries within the community.

To achieve this goal, DDWASUC is responsible for overseeing the planning, construction, and maintenance of essential drinking water infrastructure, including boreholes, pipelines, reservoirs, and water distribution networks. This responsibility involves regular inspections, repairs, and upgrades to ensure a continuous supply of clean water to the community (Bhandari, 2019).

In line with its commitment to community health, DDWASUC frequently organizes awareness campaigns emphasizing the importance of safe drinking water and proper hygiene practices. These initiatives often take the form of educational workshops, distribution of informational materials, and community meetings aimed at engaging residents and promoting a culture of health and safety (UNICEF, 2013).

Moreover, DDWASUC's activities can be compared to those of the Melamchi Water Supply Project (MWSP) User Group, which manages water distribution across the Kathmandu Valley. This group focuses on constructing a reliable water supply system that includes diversion tunnels and reservoirs while ensuring equitable water distribution in urban areas. Additionally, the MWSP User Group promotes water conservation practices and collaborates with government bodies to address water leakage issues (Pradhan, 2012).

Furthermore, consumer groups, including DDWASUC, actively engage in water quality testing to ensure the safety and portability of the drinking water supplied to their community. Regular monitoring is essential for identifying contamination issues early, thereby ensuring that residents receive safe drinking water (World Health Organization, 2011).

The DDWASUC has made significant infrastructural improvements to ensure a reliable water supply in the project area. The committee has constructed three boreholes and three reservoir tanks, built a water treatment plant, and installed 700 taps across 700 households of the beneficiaries. Additionally, DDWASUC has managed a three-phase electricity line, with three separate electricity meters installed for the operation of pumps that draw water. As a result, water is distributed for a total of five hours daily (Dharachaur Drinking Water and Sanitation User Committee, 2080).

The Pang Community Water User Group in Myagdi focuses on water source conservation and reforestation. This user group undertakes reforestation efforts to protect catchment areas, ensuring a sustainable water supply (Gurung & Maskey, 2019). DDWASUC has undertaken gully protection activities to safeguard the catchment area. These measures are crucial for extending the lifespan of the boreholes and ensuring the sustainability of the water supply project. By protecting the catchment, DDWASUC helps prevent erosion and sedimentation, which can otherwise damage the boreholes and disrupt water flow. This proactive approach contributes to the long-term success and sustainability of the project, ensuring a reliable water source for the community.

Another crucial function of the Dharachaur Drinking Water and Sanitation User Committee (DDWASUC) is to facilitate community engagement and participation in decision-making processes related to water management (Aryal, 2018). By involving local communities, the DDWASUC ensures that water resources are managed to reflect the needs and priorities of the people, promoting sustainable and equitable solutions. This inclusive approach also fosters a sense of ownership among community members, enhancing cooperation and long-term success in water management projects. The DDWASUC has actively involved people in shaping its structure and collecting funds from beneficiaries. All activities of the DDWASUC are presented at its general assembly each fiscal year.

DDWASUCs are tasked with managing financial resources for water projects, including collecting user fees, seeking funding from government agencies and external donors, and budgeting for infrastructure development and maintenance activities (Shakya & Rasaily, 2018). Additionally, the committee diligently manages the collection of funds from various sectors and utilizes these resources to construct and maintain essential water infrastructure, ensuring a continuous supply of drinking water to the community.

However, the DDWASUC has not limited its activities to just providing drinking water. Throughout its existence, it has been instrumental in fostering community solidarity and social change in the community. By ensuring access to clean drinking water, it has facilitated the creation of a common goal and sense of unity among community members, thereby contributing to group solidarity and change (Tamang & Subba, 2018). Moreover, the committee has recognized the importance of group solidarity and has actively engaged in initiatives designed to enhance the overall well-being and agency of its members. In addition to water management, the committee has supported local development projects, such as improving sanitation and health facilities, which further strengthens community bonds. It has also empowered women and marginalized groups by encouraging their active participation in decision-making processes. Overall, the multifaceted approach adopted by the DDWASUC underscores its commitment to driving sustainable social change and fostering community empowerment in the study area.

The DDWASUC has not only undertaken the monumental task of supplying water but has also been a driving force for social change within the community. By ensuring a regular and sufficient water supply, particularly in severely water-scarce clusters like Jyagata, Dandathoth, Tinchal, Bhaltar, Gahate, and Tripurabasti, the DDWASUC has alleviated one of the most pressing issues faced by the community. The strategic management of natural water resources, including Dhungedharas and Kuwa, and the implementation of structured water systems have transformed the daily lives of residents (Field, 2024).

The introduction of separate water taps for households has revolutionized water access, relieving community members of the physically exhausting and time-consuming task of fetching water. This shift has also fostered a spirit of unity, as community members are no longer competing for limited water sources. Instead, they are working collectively toward the common goal of ensuring sustainable water management. This cooperation has strengthened social bonds, reduced conflicts, and fostered a sense of shared responsibility, leading to broader social cohesion. The DDWASUC's efforts go beyond simply providing water; they have changed the community, reducing the physical and emotional burden of water scarcity and creating opportunities for people to engage in other productive activities. This collective progress has become a catalyst for social change, promoting cooperation, solidarity, and a unified vision for the community's future.

Five key informants from the user group emphasized that the Dharachaur Drinking Water and Sanitation User Committee (DDWASUC) has not only addressed water scarcity but also played a crucial role in fostering social change through its thoughtful and inclusive activities. In addition to providing clean drinking water, the committee actively promotes community solidarity. For instance, community picnics, initially organized for entertainment, have evolved into valuable opportunities for meaningful social interaction. These events bring together men and women from diverse backgrounds, creating a space for sharing experiences, emotions, and insights. Such exchanges

deepen mutual understanding and respect among community members, fostering solidarity and strengthening the collective identity of the community. As people recognize their shared goals and interests, these interactions reinforce a sense of unity and cooperation (Field, 2024).

Moreover, these inclusive activities have become instrumental in bridging social gaps and promoting gender equality by encouraging active participation from both men and women. Informants also highlighted that the sense of belonging fostered through these gatherings has inspired collective efforts toward community development. Consequently, the DDWASUC has contributed not only to improving water access but also to enhancing social harmony and empowerment within the community.

According to a beneficiary of the Dharachaur Drinking Water and Sanitation User Committee (DDWASUC), the **financial support** provided to bereaved families is a commendable and vital action within the community (Field, 2024). Unlike other consumer committees that may require loans for such assistance, DDWASUC utilizes funds collected from beneficiaries to offer direct support. Recognizing the importance of aiding families in times of loss, DDWASUC allocates Rs. 11,000 when a member passes away, consisting of Rs. 10,000 in cash and goods worth Rs. 1,000. This immediate financial aid strengthens the bond between DDWASUC and affected families, offering both relief and a sense of community empowerment.

By providing this support, DDWASUC fosters social cohesion and strengthens ties within the community. In moments of grief, individuals rely on their neighbors for emotional and financial support, and DDWASUC's assistance demonstrates solidarity and compassion. This gesture fosters kinship and mutual assistance, offering comfort to grieving families while cultivating a culture of empathy and reciprocity that is essential for a strong community fabric. The financial support also addresses the socio-economic needs of vulnerable households, promoting empowerment at the grassroots level. By alleviating immediate financial burdens, DDWASUC helps bereaved families maintain dignity and resilience during challenging times, contributing to their long-term well-being. Furthermore, the committee's gestures of condolences and tangible support reflect its commitment to holistic care, reinforcing community values and encouraging collective action.

The initiative taken by the DDWASUC to **promote health insurance** among user groups significantly contributes to community solidarity and social change. By encouraging households to enroll in health insurance schemes and providing a subsidy of Rs. 500 per member upon proof of coverage, the DDWASUC addresses key aspects of community well-being and financial security, as highlighted by a member of the DDWASUC counselor committee (Field, 2080). The committee believes that this program increases beneficiary participation in health insurance, assisting government efforts and ultimately relieving poor households from the financial burden of healthcare costs (DDWASUC, 2024).

Firstly, promoting health insurance enhances access to healthcare services, a crucial element of community solidarity. Four respondents reported that health insurance ensures individuals and families can access necessary medical care without facing financial barriers. By subsidizing 90 percent of health insurance premiums, the DDWASUC enables households to afford healthcare services that they might



The publication of the *Souvenir* community journal by the Dharachaur Drinking Water and Sanitation User Committee (DDWASUC) stands as a significant initiative that fosters both community empowerment and social change. This journal serves as a platform where members of the water user groups can share their thoughts, experiences, and expertise, fostering active participation and promoting a sense of ownership and engagement within the community. By valuing and recognizing the contributions of its members, the journal not only elevates the voices of individuals but also helps them develop confidence and self-esteem, leading to a stronger, more empowered community.

One of the key aspects of the *Souvenir journal* is its role in encouraging active participation. Through inviting articles, personal stories, and expert opinions, the journal provides every member of the water user group an opportunity to be heard, irrespective of their background or status. This inclusivity ensures that individuals who may otherwise remain silent can voice their thoughts and contribute to the broader community dialogue. As their contributions are published, individuals experience a sense of validation and empowerment, knowing that their voices matter. This active participation is critical in driving social change because it shifts the community from a passive to an engaged stance, where members are more likely to take initiative and actively contribute to the improvement of their community.

Additionally, the *Souvenir journal* serves as an essential platform for knowledge-sharing and dissemination. By facilitating the exchange of ideas, information, and best practices, the journal empowers community members to learn from each other's experiences and expertise. This process of knowledge transfers enables individuals to make informed decisions and tackle the various challenges they face more effectively. Whether it is water management practices, health-related information, or local governance issues, the shared knowledge helps foster a more informed and resilient community. According to key informants, this knowledge-sharing aspect is particularly important in driving social change as it equips individuals with the tools and information they need to address pressing community challenges.

Another significant aspect of the *Souvenir journal* is its role in amplifying the voices of marginalized and underrepresented groups within the community. Often, these individuals do not have access to platforms where they can share their perspectives or express their concerns. The journal provides them with a space where their experiences are recognized, fostering inclusivity and social equity. By bringing diverse perspectives to the forefront, the journal ensures that the voices of those who may otherwise remain unheard are amplified. This representation empowers marginalized individuals to advocate for their needs and assert their rights, challenging existing hierarchies and promoting a more just and equitable society.

Moreover, the *Souvenir journal* plays a crucial role in promoting community cohesion and solidarity. Through stories, articles, and reflections, the journal highlights the shared values, goals, and achievements of the community. By celebrating collective successes and resilience, the journal fosters a sense of unity and common purpose among its members. This shared identity promotes collaboration and collective action towards addressing the community's challenges. When community members recognize that they are working towards common goals, they are more likely to come together and engage in collective problem-solving efforts.

In conclusion, the publication of the *Souvenir* community journal by DDWASUC is much more than a communication tool; it is a powerful vehicle for community empowerment and social change. Through its inclusive approach, knowledge-sharing opportunities, amplification of marginalized voices, and promotion of community cohesion, the journal plays a vital role in building stronger, more resilient communities. By empowering individuals, promoting inclusivity, and fostering solidarity, the journal contributes to long-term social transformation, helping the community address its challenges in a collective and informed manner. Ultimately, the *Souvenir* journal serves as an inspiring example of how a simple publication can catalyze significant and lasting social change.

The Drinking Water User Committee (DDWASUC) has introduced the **Student Reward Program**, aimed at fostering social change by recognizing academic achievement among students, particularly those with familial ties to DDWASUC members. Under this program, a total of four students are chosen based on their performance in the Secondary Education Examination (SEE) within a single academic year. These students must be blood relatives or kin of DDWASUC members. Of the four selected students, two students, one boy and one girl, are selected from government schools based on their exceptional performance compared to other students who are closely related to DDWASUC members. Similarly, two students, one boy and one girl, are chosen from private schools for their outstanding academic performance compared to other students with kinship ties to DDWASUC members.

The selection criteria prioritize academic excellence, with the top-scoring students from both government and private schools being recognized. Each of the four selected students, who outshine their peers among the kin of DDWASUC members, is awarded a cash prize of Rs 3,000 and congratulatory gifts (DDWSAUC, 2080).

This equitable reward system ensures that students from both government and private schools are equally motivated and acknowledged for their academic achievements. Furthermore, the Student Congratulatory Program not only encourages academic excellence but also fosters a sense of community and collective responsibility for education and success. By targeting students with familial connections to DDWASUC members, the program strengthens community bonds and encourages the pursuit of higher education. In conclusion, the initiative promotes community empowerment by acknowledging and rewarding academic excellence among students related to DDWASUC members, irrespective of their school backgrounds. This approach contributes to the holistic development of the community by fostering a culture of educational achievement and collective responsibility.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the Dharachaur Drinking Water and Sanitation User Committee (DDWASUC) has made significant contributions to community empowerment and social change through its impactful activities. Beyond merely providing clean drinking water, DDWASUC has actively fostered community solidarity by involving members in decision-making processes, promoting social cohesion, and addressing the needs of marginalized groups. One notable initiative is the annual picnic program, which encourages community bonding and collaboration.

Beneficiaries of DDWASUC have highlighted the importance of the financial support provided to bereaved families, describing it as a commendable and vital action that strengthens community ties.



Additionally, the launch of programs such as the Student Reward Program and health insurance subsidies has further enhanced educational opportunities and healthcare access, thereby empowering community members. The *Souvenir Journal* serves as a crucial platform for knowledge-sharing and dissemination within the community. This journal facilitates the exchange of ideas, information, and best practices, empowering community members to learn from one another's experiences and expertise. The *Souvenir Journal* exemplifies DDWASUC's commitment to amplifying diverse voices and promoting inclusivity within the community.

Overall, DDWASUC's multifaceted approach has not only strengthened social bonds but also created lasting, positive change in the community, showcasing the power of collective action and shared responsibility in addressing local challenges.

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