

## **Abstract**

This paper reports the main findings from a multi-country research project designed to develop a better understanding of the performance of community-managed rural water supply systems in developing countries. Data was collected from households, village water committees, focus groups of village residents, system operators, and key informants in 400 rural communities in Peru, Bolivia, and Ghana. Our findings suggest that the demand-driven, community management model, coupled with access to spare parts and some technical expertise, has come a long way toward unravelling the puzzle of how to best design and implement rural water supply programs in developing countries. In all three countries, rural water supply projects were “working”. Among the households included in our sample in Peru and Bolivia, 95 percent had operational taps at the time of our field visit. In 90 percent of the villages in Ghana, all project boreholes were still working. Not only were the rural water systems not broken down, but almost all the households in these communities were using at least some of their water from the systems. However, some households were also still using water from other sources. In Ghana, 38 percent of households still reported using water from unprotected sources (e.g. springs, rivers and open wells) for drinking and/or cooking. Another troublesome finding is that rural households in the sample villages are paying very little for the improved water services, and, as a result, the finances of many village water committees are in poor shape.

**Keywords:** Rural water supply, community management, post-construction support, Bolivia, Peru, Ghana.