

SOCIAL ASPECTS OF WATER SUPPLY

A Guide to Planning Community Participation

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Background

UNICEF, WHO, and the nations represented at the Alma Ata International Conference on Primary Health Care have accepted the position that

"Commitment to Primary Health Care requires that Governments accept the roles of communities in participating in responsibility for their health and well-being."

In a section entitled:

"Participation of and support to the Community"

the

"UNICEF/WHO Joint Study on Water Supply and Sanitation Components of Primary Health Care"

states:

"The term 'Participation' has conventionally focussed on the obligation of communities, and has often been used interchangeably with the term 'self-help'. If water supply and sanitation are to be regarded as components of primary health care, then it is inappropriate to restrict participation to, for example, the contribution of free labour or of cash. Planning for water supply and sanitation without communal participation in the consultation and decision-making process means to risk failure. Knowledge of factors that can be of great relevance to the effectiveness of the projects often exists among community members, especially as this knowledge is based on their own situational experience.

Participation does not mean that programmes should simply be handed over to communities or that communities should be left to maintain projects by themselves. As the majority of communities lack the full technical competence, knowledge, and resources required to improve their own facilities or to maintain them, managerial and institutional infrastructures should be geared to providing the necessary assistance and training. Implementation of water supply and sanitation improvement as components of PHC requires cooperative involvement, or participation, in which national governments and other sources of external assis-

tance provide the necessary support in the form of technicians, educators, and promoters, as well as the structures and resources for material, and financial support and training."

The point is repeatedly made that participation means communities effectively must be assisted in

".....sharing the responsibilities of planning, designing, implementing, evaluating and maintaining development projects."

An Interpretation

The position stated above emerges from the growing recognition that the community's involvement is not just a matter of cheerful philosophy but a crucial technical necessity, if development objectives are to be realised. It can be seen also that community participation cannot be planned merely as an added component to what we already have and the way we already do things. According to our radical declarations, what is required is a community perspective approach which radically permeates our planning, programming and implementation of projects.

Furthermore, peculiarly, community participation is not a manipulative and automatically induced means to our ends, but becomes a development objective in its own right, meeting the community's ends - and these must be intimately related to all technological objectives. Unless we help create, channel and sustain true community participation, the overall development intentions will be defeated.

It means we are not aiming alone for Water Supply/Primary Health Care or other such objective, but are to firmly include in planning and operation the enhancement of each community's capacity to organise itself successfully for future and on-going development efforts. The partnerships worked out in a water project should also provide an experience and a satisfaction in the participatory process which will not only contribute to an objectively measurable achievement, but give

subjectively a real sense of an improved quality of community life. These considerations are inherent, although usually not stated, as part of the formal objectives - but they should be emphasised.

Water Supply as an Aspect of Wider Development

Although in this working paper we shall be considering community participation as it relates to Water Supply programmes, it is important to keep the wider context under attention. UNICEF supports Water Supply programmes in terms of supplying clean drinking water to reduce water-borne diseases and the drudgery that falls upon the children and women as water carriers, and to supply water for improvement of sanitary conditions. However, UNICEF operates within a wider policy base of converging and basic services, which aims at contributing to overall development. In relation to water this is particularly apt, for water means many things to communities: especially in rural areas where water is scarce, animals and irrigation are likely to feature high on the community's list of priorities; and where diesel engines are to be supplied for pumps, electricity for light and power might become an added possibility that communities will come to think about.

Drinking water specifically for health purposes as far as the rural community is concerned is likely not to be too high on their priority list. However, the coming of water is full of drama and very visible. Unlike many development activities, the product, water, is swift to follow the activity; there is the excitement of rigs, strangers, strange noises, sights, smells, and activity, and (God and geology willing) suddenly there is water where there was none (or less) before. The excitement and interest aroused by water and these happenings can and should be the stimulation upon which much else in development can ride. Where there are problems in matching the community's and the planners' priorities (such as is characteristic in public health matters) the drama and obvious utility of water lend themselves to practical "trade-offs" which should be formalised in some kind of contractual arrangement between the appropriate community authority and the technical authorities responsible for the hardware and the skills.

A water supply programme should therefore be seen as a potential spearhead for a whole range of long-term development efforts. Sectorial planners and implementors are repeatedly being urged to integrate/collaborate/cooperate. In practice it is difficult to say exactly what this means, but ultimately integration takes place at the community level, or not at all. Communities can readily understand this, for they see community life as a more or less circumscribed whole and there is a natural tendency for them to see themselves egocentrically as 'us' and to perceive external authorities and sector personnel lumped together as "they" at the periphery. (This is quite the reverse to the way National Planners perceive). We should plan so that whatever community cohesiveness exists will work in favour of participation and rounded development plans.

Community Participation Interactions and Relationships

Community participation implies a constructive two-way set of relationships between "grass-roots" groups and formal organisations. Ordinarily formal organisations are hierarchies with bureaucratised divisions of labour and structured chains of command. Despite the pyramidal shape of such organisations with their wide base, it has been observed that administration rarely operates effectively beyond District levels and that one-way "top-down" is their normal mode of operation. Their interface with communities is usually very fragmentary and in quantity and quality of contacts not nearly as pervasive, important and responsive as planners and those within the hierarchy like to believe.

Generally speaking, the community operates very much separately from governmental activity, and there is a wide gap between top and bottom; the reality that there are limits to a government's or an organisation's ability to determine what will happen locally is often discounted. Certainly this is the case where on-going rather than one-shot activities are concerned. Political and party systems attempt to close the gaps and in some countries Voluntary Organisations emerge to organise communities around specific activities and to forge links with operations initiated at a distance by the government. Community Participation introduces a great emphasis on grass-roots "bottom-up" initiatives and

places the formal governmental role as increasingly "support-down".

Usually this concept presents a very unfamiliar approach philosophically and operationally - especially in traditional and scarce-resource societies.

Therefore two areas are crucial when approaching the matter of participation:

- 1) the distance (in status, perspective and so on) which separates communities from development bodies such as governments and agencies;
- 2) the quality and nature of the behaviour and relationship between governmental "outsiders" and community "insiders".

For a successful outcome of a project in which the community is to truly participate, the distance has to be bridged and reduced, and the partners in development must both be stimulated to initiate, experience and create a new process of relationships and to build institutional forms to maintain them.

The importance of this foundation-laying process cannot be overemphasised. The distance to be bridged is in terms of the political, social and economic structure that exists, the extent of the gap between government and governed, and the quality and reach of social and administrative institutions which allow or impede true participation.

The relationship task has to contend with the prevailing class and caste structures which mutually bind the haves and the have-nots. As much of development planning ostensibly has the have-nots as the targets of development, the means by which the have-nots can have real access to the decision-making processes and become the prime beneficiaries is on the agenda. We should therefore fully appreciate the magnitude of what we are undertaking in attempting to interpret policy and turn brave words into action.

Although these matters are increasingly under examination - "social justice" increasingly appears in preambles to National Plans, and the important "political will" to bring about social change is declared at high levels - yet it remains rare indeed to find community participation spelled out sufficiently in work

plans which establish who is expected to do what with whom; when; what resources in manpower and supply will be required; how much exactly it is to cost; when and from where will the costs be forthcoming; and eventually by what criteria who will judge the results. In short, the details of the "soft ware" in our work plans remain soft indeed compared to the time and effort that more characteristically go into our more familiar and manageable "hardware". One of the signs is that presently Primary Health Care continues to be predominantly planned as an extension of medically oriented services, and that Water Supply plans are dominated by engineering.

It is against this background that this paper is a contribution towards the much detailed work which must go into the provision of guidelines for Programme and Field Officers who will be engaging in planning and implementing Water Supply projects and who will be endeavouring to establish a properly integrated and workable community involvement process (which UNICEF should be able to assist effectively).

Guidelines for Planning Community Participation

In planning a Water Supply project we should proceed from the working out of a realistic, clear scenario and a very detailed description of the necessary activities which will embrace the whole process as it will be perceived and experienced from the community's eye-view.

This scenario and description will require not only a feat of planning imagination but will need to be put to the test in discussion with real communities and eventually tried out, observed and documented before one can expect to get the descriptions sufficiently elaborated for useful model building.

* (This trying out could well be the initial task of those who will become the trainers of community workers, as part of training of trainers projects, i.e., to operationally examine what really does and can happen at the community level - and to realistically describe the process). (See later.)

The scenario should begin from the moment of preliminary (and usually remote) decision-making which will first implicate the community. The description should indicate when and in what way the community will first hear of the proposed programme and how it will be able to react, respond and relate its particular needs and situation to the general policy and programme intention. The descriptions will continue by dealing with the means by which it is proposed that a creative dialogue can be opened up between the community and those externally responsible for the programme. This requires the "contact points" to be fully considered: who on the external side? who on the community side? Bearing in mind the existing inter- and intra-community and external authority organisational and leadership patterns, what would be the desired and achievable arrangement? How might the community assign specific responsibility for the dialogue/negotiations? How does one go about the setting up of community water committees? What should be the committee's terms of reference? How will it keep everyone informed generally? To whom is it responsible specifically? What will be its authority vis-a-vis other community-based authorities? What will its negotiation responsibilities be in relation to external agents and organisations? To whom will it report what, when, for what purpose, and what will then follow?

Self-surveys

The scenario should continue with a description of how the community, through its working committee, might begin to look at itself by stating its present situation; the need as it experiences it; its present resources; the way in which the new resources which the programme might make available will make a difference, and as far as possible spell out these differences in terms of "targets".

Such a piece of work could be in the form of a self-survey and this would require the development of a community-oriented "How to..." guide - in this case a "How to examine your Water Supply and Water-Related Health Needs" guide. The survey should clearly arise directly from the community's need to have information as a preliminary step in more planning. Of course "It has been argued elsewhere that there needs to be a demysti-
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the information can be shared with others but fundamentally should be collected because they need to know and they should be able to see the purpose for each question to be asked. ***

Such a self-survey might be placed in the context of establishing the community's "eligibility" in relation to the policy and priorities which the programme will have determined. This is particularly important where selection of communities is a factor. There are a number of good reasons why community groups should formally apply for inclusion in the programme.

Social Preparedness

The ability and success in conducting the survey could of itself be considered an expression of a community's potential for effective participation and indicate the degree of their social preparedness for engaging in the project - an important prognostic element which should be part of the criteria for the selection of a community for receiving external resources.

In any event, communities will need to understand very clearly what the criteria for selection are, and must have an idea of how the criteria have been arrived at. (The criteria properly explained can have an important part to play in making tangible such a concept as "social justice", i.e., the reasons why one community is justifiably "favoured" with assistance rather than another. ***

* (cont'd.) of planning to make planning such that ordinary people can understand it. Indeed it has been partly demonstrated that planning can become child's play (see David Drucker, Games Tap Children's Skills as Planners, Development Communication Report, Clearinghouse on Development Communication, 1414 22nd Street, N.W., Washington D.C., October 1979.

** An important point, this, for lay and professional alike!

*** It can be seen from the foregoing that a full range of Project Support Communication activities will need to be built into the programme step by step.

The scenario might then spell out how applications will be handled, by whom, and how the selection or rejection (or request for more information) will be managed.

On selection, the community will need to engage in detailed planning, for which an input of assistance and skill will have to become available.

Content of Community-Based Planning

The content of the community-based planning will have to address such matters as:

- Arranging for information and campaigns around the coming of the water supply
- Involving the children at school (Water Curriculum Packages)
- Selection of the optimal site for the well from both the social and technical points of view
- Clearing the site for the drilling operation
- Arranging for unimpeded access of drilling equipment
- Arranging for assistance to the drilling crews:
 - Shelter, food, hospitality,
 - labour, digging of pits,
 - water supply, local materials, etc.
- Informational and educative "entertainment" while the crews and their generators are in the village ("circus" approach to Communications)
- Considering and selecting the possible designs of appropriate:
 - Well platforms
 - Pump houses
 - Storage tanks
 - Distribution points
 - Drainage of water, etc.
- Selection, training arrangements and payment of pump operators

- Securing, payment for and storage of supplies:

- Fuel
 - Spare parts
 - Construction and maintenance
 - Materials

- Routine maintenance and procedures for arranging repairs beyond local expertise
- Inspection and maintenance of facilities
- Sampling for quality of water and arranging for conveying samples for analysis
- All matters related to use of water:

- Drinking - use of safe source year round bathing

- Household- washing clothes preparation and protection of food

- Sanitation campaigns

- Improvements in domestic water usage
 - Latrines
 - Garbage disposal

- Associated Health Education and Public Health measures

- The involvement of the Community Health Worker in planning Primary Health Care campaigns and surveillance

- Associated Agricultural and Animal Husbandry matters

- Irrigation
 - Animals

- Lighting and Power possibilities

- Costing

- Capital, maintenance, operational costs, drilling crew costs, materials, manpower (caretakers), fuel

- Revenue management

Water sales, taxes, subvention
of the poorest

- On-going monitoring, evaluation of
projects and reporting arrangements

etc.

"How to....." Guides

All these items might require simple "How to....." guides, which will tell of the real experience of other communities, what arrangements worked, what problems were run into, and how they were overcome, what to take into account, and advantages and disadvantages of different solutions, checklists. This "How to....." material should be carefully put together, perhaps in comic strip form, but at any event geared to the literacy level and comprehension skills of the community to be assisted. Beginning kits available in a "cafeteria" style (piece by piece to be provided as and when required) could be worked on by the community worker trainers, and skills in using each piece of material developed. As more and more actual experience is accumulated, the materials should be updated and made more effective for each job in hand. Communities should be able to place the sequence of activities, the mobilisation of manpower and resources all within a realistic time frame.

An Aid in Planning with the Community:

One approach which has been used with communities (and has borne in mind the low level of literacy) is to invite large meetings to begin to suggest and list all the things that will have to be done. The emphasis is on action. Someone is invited to do a drawing of each activity (no great artistic skill is necessary, matchstick men and crude representations will do - although it is surprising how often a village artist is discovered!) Each drawing should be pinned on the wall until all the actions have been mentioned and everything seems to have been covered. The activities should then be considered in order of precedence chronologically, clustering the pictures where activities have to be undertaken simultaneously. When the

sequence has now been pinned around the meeting place to everyone's satisfaction, consideration can be given to practicalities such as seasons, wet/dry, sowing/harvest, festivals and so on, so that above the pictures agreed dates for the activity can be placed. (Without talking the language of planning, the community will have produced flow charts and chronological bar chart representations!) How many people, what skills, tools and resources, can be represented under each of the drawings and at some point who exactly will be involved in each activity can be worked out and added.

A useful device can be utilised to deal with costs and book-keeping,* which will clarify matters even for those poorly endowed with numeracy: plastic bags should be placed under each activity and play-money (as in the game of Monopoly) used to count out what each activity is expected to cost.** Where there is to be some revenue, from selling water or something else, a similar estimating and counting out can be enacted and shown against costs. Later, as money is collected or dispersed, it can be shown to be moved from one plastic bag to another. There now exists a very visible representation of the community budgetting for the project and the whole collection of pictures and bags remains in the community publicly displayed and can be used for monitoring and further discussion as the project gets under way and proceeds.***

"Planning-up" Links with "Support-down"

Once the whole picture of the step-by-step development and activities which are necessary at the community level has been laid out, it should then be possible and somewhat more familiar

* Poor attention to such matters has been the curse of development efforts and the failure of many a cooperative.

** Even those who find difficulty in adding up and subtracting have skills in counting out cash.

*** Keith Warren, UNICEF Bangladesh, has probably a written account of this kind of community work.

to work back up the administrative and technical agency structures and to tie into the community timetable and flow of activity the inputs and support from outside, detail by detail. Where there are activities determined by technical and administrative imperatives which cannot neatly gear into the community pace and way of doing things, these points of discord must be given special consideration and a mutually acceptable arrangement be agreed upon and replanned in the community. The range, content and timing of the activities must eventually all lead to a satisfactory and sanitary water supply system for the community - satisfactory, that is, for the community and the authorities, and from the technological point of view.

When these plans have been jointly examined and agreed upon, they should then become the basis for some kind of formal contractual agreement. In skillful hands this planning process at the community level can result in the enhancing of social cohesiveness; much health and development education; the establishment and improvement of community/government operational relationships - all amounting to the essence of practical nation building!

The scenario and descriptions should close beyond the point where on-going maintenance and monitoring matters have been spelled out (all with the social organisation given very much attention) and indicate the way in which as the community evaluates the success of their participation in the outcome of this project, they might begin over and plan to use the organisational experience which they have gained towards the identification and planning of other development projects.

Contractual Agreements

No agreement for providing physical inputs should be forthcoming unless elements of community preparedness with good indications of successful participatory activity are demonstrated, such as the self-survey and planning capacity. The formalisation of application, survey, planning scrutiny, the drawing

up of a contractual agreement. All are steps in emphasising the community's willingness and responsibility in participation. The contractual agreement of course cuts both ways; the external agencies' responsibilities are also listed, planned and expressed in a formal commitment.

As an event in the community's life the agreement should be sealed with some 'ceremonial' occasion. Later appropriate ceremonies should surround the breaking of ground, the finding of water, the 'opening' of the new supply and perhaps an annual reporting session to the community, dealing with water management, problems and progress.

Skilled Manpower

It must be clear from the foregoing that the community will need a great deal of stimulation, assistance and support if they are to be able to mobilise themselves into all this advance thinking, deciding and arranging (planning). It is obvious that this entails much time and skilled work sensitively fed into the community deliberations. Health workers, engineers, bureaucrats or politicians individually might have a feel and a flair for developing this kind of work and skill. However, it must be faced that without manpower in the shape of cadres of workers, specifically trained to undertake this role of bridging, relationship building and assisting in the "planning upwards" at the community level, little will be achieved. What is needed are people with much dedication, with an ability and sensitivity to work with the poor and lowly, self-discipline, able to take considerable responsibility for their own skill development, prepared to be itinerant, often living under difficult conditions, and finding their job satisfaction emerging only after long, often frustrating, hours of work, where they take a secondary and self-effacing role in relation to indigenous leaders.

The community workers must be recruited and with background acceptable to both sides of the bridging operation, and they must have or learn to acquire the knowledge, skills and - most importantly - the attitudes required for the job. It should be obvious that this knowledge, the skills and attitudes are not usually to be found in ordinary courses of training for those in

medicine, engineering or in ordinary managerial professions. However, there is a community development expertise with historical roots extending into the Third World (and with which UNICEF has already had some experience). There has been a previous interest in such fields, largely to be found in Agriculture and Agricultural Extension work. Some countries have Community Development departments, and there is a variety of Voluntary Agencies and Schools of Social Work which have trained and utilised Community Development Workers.

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In planning for these key workers, it will be necessary to assess what manpower resources already exist and can be mobilised. This can be done by examining the "track record" in the country generally. What has been the community development experience to date? Who can be drawn upon to put together and launch this Water Supply-oriented community development work?

Training of Trainers and Training

It will be recognised that the kind of training programme and training of trainers for community work is not the familiar collection of set courses. Training of community workers should be predominantly field-based. It must be training to do, not training about something. In this case the training is to learn to assist communities in establishing the organisations and processes of a development activity around the coming of a new water supply. The training must be built upon what can and has been performed in practice by those who are the trainers and who will be the educational supervisors. The trainers will need to have gone through a process of working with communities, in setting up the development activity, and then must describe their experience, distilling it for content and illustration, producing training materials, identifying the practice skills, and creating the field experience for trainees to learn and improve upon their performance. The pattern should be one of first-hand experience, and ordering the experience into systematic

sequence and content, and one in which a partnership between trainer and trainee is established to seek out jointly the best ways to proceed step by step. Such should be 'caught' as well as taught and should serve to reinforce the experience and idea that working with communities is an activity based on partnership in identifying and solving problems and jointly creating processes to do this, and is not a didactic course of instruction delivered to those who have solid and valuable experience of their own to draw upon.

The training, like community participation itself, should not be just an adjunct to the programme, but must be an integral part of the programme and situated directly in the administrative line of operation.

It is in this spirit that it is recommended that trainers should initially be assigned to sharpen up the scenario and description of activities discussed earlier; in this way they will be testing feasibility, providing feed-back and informing planners and policy makers.

The numbers and the skills of such workers can only be built up gradually and cumulatively, and so expansion and coverage of the water programme will have to take into account this manpower reality.

These considerations must lead us to reexamine our more familiar planning time frames and to make allowance for the time that is by its nature required for creating social skills and bringing about institutional change. Planners will also be faced with making provision to accommodate the particular conditions of work of community workers. Their status, administrative auspices, and the proper linkage to the various sectors will need to be carefully determined. Their recruitment, training, supervision (with its essential educational element), remuneration, expenses payments and career prospects can be expected to pose some difficult questions for which there are no clear-cut precedents.

The training of trainers, the training programme and the phased deployment of the workers, as their skills are developed,

supervised in practice, and as they are gradually prepared for taking on more responsibility, is extremely important and certainly must be part of the planning process for community participation. There has been much work already done in this matter of training community workers and it perhaps warrants a special supplement to this present offering.

To Be Continued...

It is hoped that this working paper will lead to a greater determination to place community participation firmly into UNICEF's planning and support assistance and to point the way in the direction in which this can be done. Only some questions and suggestions have been examined here and it is hoped that Programme and Field Officers will take up the challenge and, despite the very real and daunting local conditions, will call upon each other and the Regional and Headquarters advisers and consultants to assist in the immense amount of work which must go into making community participation a reality in our programmes.