

## DISCUSSION PAPER

TOWARDS TOTAL COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION  
IN RURAL WATER SUPPLY PROJECTS IN ZAMBIA

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## NATIONAL POLICY

The general water supply policy in Zambia ensures the provision of permanent supplies of water of acceptable quality and quantity for the benefit of the target communities. In this respect, the Local Administration Act (1980) and Water Act (1964) spell clearly the responsibilities, powers and obligations of the sector institutes while the latter deals with ownership, control and use of water. The main policy framework for planning, implementation, operation and maintenance of drinking water supply and sanitation facilities in the country is provided for in the Local Administration Act. This calls for community involvement in all stages of the water supply and sanitation projects.

## PLANNING

1. Within district council boundaries, the council has the statutory duties of planning and providing safe water supply and sanitation using its funds and necessary technical manpower, where technical personnel is lacking the Department of Water Affairs may be requested to execute the council's jobs.
2. In rural areas, planning for water supply is done in consultation with the intended beneficiary community. The political and administrative institutions are very much involved in the early stages of project planning and village consultative meetings come later.

## CONSTRUCTION, OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

1. In large urban areas and townships, councils are responsible for the construction, operation and maintenance of water supplies. The communities they serve contribute towards these tasks through payment of water charges. The water tariff policy is such that the consumers are responsible for meeting all or part of the cost of the provision of water supply and sanitation services.
2. In rural areas most projects employ local people who are paid daily fixed wages during the construction stages of the projects. However, after the completion of the projects, say installation of handpumps at a new well, the villagers are left with the responsibilities of looking after their water supply. Under the World Bank and NORAD funded rural water supply projects currently under execution, the villagers form a water committee which mainly consists of women and headed by such local leaders as school teacher, headman, woman political leader or a village clinical officer. This committee's functions among other things is to collect money for minor repairs of their water supply, keep the well surrounding clean and organise transport for a messenger to report to the Department of Water Affairs, the donor's executing agent, in case a major breakdown of their water supply for repairs.

In the pilot piped water supply schemes in Kabwe Rural under study by IRC and St. Joseph Primary School in Ndola Rural monitored by Water Affairs Department, the water committees of these respective schemes are doing well in the operation and maintenance of their supplies. They collect water revenue, issue receipts and bank the money in commercial banks. A treasurer is appointed to look after such matters and he keeps good records. The money collected is used for payments of electricity and minor maintenance and repair charges.

## REALISATION OF COMMUNITY PROJECTS IN ZAMBIA?

There has now come a general awareness among all Zambians that the days of "free services" are over. For example, the casual workers engaged in the World Bank Rural Water Supply Projects (Construction of Wells), volunteer to do maintenance works on the well after the well has been handed over to the village water committee. The same people are even hired by less fortunate villages in the area to construct wells for them if their village wasn't included in the World Bank Programme. With this new development it is hoped that future well construction projects will be initiated by the local people themselves and the Department of Water Affairs to come in later for technical and material assistance at the people's request. The materials the rural communities need are cement, pre-cast concrete liners, windlasses and handpumps.

To increase participation and community responsibility the project executing agents have to:

(i) educate people the need of project maintenance and operation - health aspects;

(ii) educate them to use local skills and materials;

(iii) be prepared to learn the people's way of life and not to antagonize their culture.