



19th WEDC Conference

ACCRA, Ghana 1993

WATER, SANITATION, ENVIRONMENT and DEVELOPMENT

Training of women for water and sanitation

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Introduction

The involvement of women in the water supply and sanitation sector, has very often remained a theoretical concept in many programmes, much spoken about, but rarely acted on.

This is because to begin with, at the policy stage where initiatives begin, the women often have virtually no one who can speak on their behalf. Thus they are excluded from the initiation and planning stages of programmes.

Even where they are included this often occurs in the later stages of project, where critical decisions have already been taken which have far-reaching consequences.

Where attempts are made to include them by calling meetings at the project preparation stage in the community, women often do not participate significantly due to social taboos, but also their general lack of confidence.

The lack of confidence stems largely from their general lack of knowledge on issues affecting water and sanitation. Furthermore, what they do know they fear might not be relevant.

However, women in Ghana traditionally fetch and carry water. Thus they make decisions about the quantity of water to use, the source of water, implying a decision about quality, and they also decide how the water quality is to be preserved when it is brought home.

It is therefore important that their traditional knowledge is made use of in the design of programmes. Knowledge about nearby sources of water and their characteristics for example is a crucial piece of information which often they alone have.

What is needed is a way of informing women at community level on all aspects of water and sanitation, including Technical, Community Animation and Health Education. This should give women the confidence they require and enable them to be more fully involved in water and sanitation programmes.

This will require the training of trainers at National, Regional and District levels to train women in the communities.

Organization of training

It is proposed that women be trained at National level who will in turn train women at regional level, and these will in turn train women at district level.

This will be done using training materials provided them during their training. At each level there should be at least two representatives from each area.

In Ghana, in March, 1992, a National Workshop was held to train 20 women in water and sanitation.

These people were selected from the Ministry of Health, The Department of Community Development and nominations also came from the National Council for Women and Development.

It is similarly recommended that in the selection of candidates for training, a group of not more than twenty be chosen. Also the selection should be made from the agencies that normally collaborate in water and sanitation including NGO's as well as representatives from the National Women's body. Training programmes for women at local level should be planned for short periods of time, one to three days, to enable the maximum number of participants attend. The aim of the programme should be to animate and educate the women of the community on all aspects of the water and sanitation projects.

A much simplified project specific version of the above syllabus may be used.

Funding for the programme

Funding for the programme may be provided by the government or a non governmental organization. However, as this is an ongoing exercise, it will be better if the Government provides the funding.

Responsibility for the programme

The responsibility for the programme should either be the responsibility of the leading water agency which in the case of Ghana is Ghana Water and Sewerage Corporation, or the National Women's Agency, in this case National Council for Women and Development.

The training programme

The training for National, Regional and District levels should be about two weeks duration.

It is appreciated that this is a long time for most women to do away from home, but it is necessary if they are to be fully grounded in both theory and practicals.

The theoretical sessions should include lessons on Water and Sanitation technology, health Education and Community Management. practical sessions should include one

water and one sanitation technology which are widely used. In the case of the National Women's Workshop held in Ghana in March, 1992, the participants were introduced to the Vonda Rig, a manually operated rig which they then used to sink a well. They also participated in the construction of two Mozambique type VIP latrines.

A detailed syllabus for the theoretical sessions may include:

Water supply

- [1] Main features of the hydrological cycle.
- [2] Groundwater, surface water and rainwater harvesting technologies. (Simple descriptions with diagrams of wells, household rainwater harvesting tanks, household scale sand filtration, slow sand filtration etc)
- [3] Detailed construction procedure for the commonest technology in the area.

Sanitation

- [1] VIP latrines, Vaults, Pour flush latrines and other systems used commonly in rural areas of the country.

One should give constructive details of each, where each system is appropriate for use.

Health education

- [1] Water and sanitation related diseases
- [2] How to prevent water and sanitation related
- [3] How to plan and organize a hygiene education programme

Community Management

- [1] The concept of community management
- [2] Components of community management programmes
- [3] Training for community management
- [4] Resources required for community management
- [5] Advantages of community management

The project cycle

A simple description of the various stages of the project cycle.

Integration of women with ongoing programmes

It will be necessary to integrate the women trained at National, Regional and District levels with programmes in the country. It is suggested that these women could be called upon to carry out animation initially for government funded programmes to being with, where there will be no conditions set by an outside agency. Later, as their effectiveness becomes more widely accepted various programmes may request them. It will be necessary for them to be seconded to the water and sanitation programme. Ideally they could be seconded to, lay a national Water

programme, to carry out the training of women under the programme.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it may be said that the training of women for participation is not an easy task. The important thing is that a strategy must be planned, training began at National level, and modified where necessary for subsequent levels, having regard also to feedback from the participants, and later on, bearing in mind lessons learned from the effects of training at local levels.

Some retraining of participants will be necessary, and for this reason, as well as others, adequate funding for the whole programme, must be stressed. The programme requires commitment from Government and the Water and Sanitation sector. If this commitment is forthcoming, the programme is likely to succeed and achieve its aim.

Reference

Community Management of Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Services - McCommon Warner and Yohalam - UNDP World Bank - Discussion Paper series

"Making the Links" - Guidelines for hygiene education in community water supply and sanitation. International Reference Centre, Occasional Paper series 5.