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## WATER, SANITATION, ENVIRONMENT and DEVELOPMENT

### Community relationship in drilling activities



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Uganda, like in most developing countries, social service delivery approach turned the beneficiaries in a passive receiving entity during the 1950's, 1960's and early 1970's. Rural communities were regarded as ignorant, poor and unable; they were not involved and did not contribute in any way. Planners and implementors believed that they know better which services were required, where, when, how and for whom. Services were provided as these "experts" saw fit. The government maintained this approach, and it miserably failed largely because of lack of community involvement. Beneficiaries lacked commitment and had no sense of ownership.

In addition, the government could not afford to provide and maintain all social services, water and environmental sanitation inclusive. With the introduction of boreholes in the 1930's, government instituted centralised maintenance arrangements comprising of fifteen regional borehole maintenance units (BMUs) which were manned, financed, equipped and supervised by the government. By the 1980's however, in the network of 5089 boreholes which were being maintained by this arrangement, 75% of the pumps were not functioning, leaving only 1272. UNICEF then embarked on a project of assisting government with emergency rehabilitation of the pumps and equipping the BMUs that were servicing them. Despite this heavy investment, a similar survey carried out in 1983 revealed 67.8% of all the rehabilitated handpumps were again broken down and still needed further repairs.

Basing on the above reasoning, in 1987 UNICEF entered into agreement with government of Uganda to experiment community involvement approach for social service including Rural Water Supplies. The South West Integrated Project (SWIP), as the resulting programme was called, is implemented in South Western Uganda and aims at establishing among others community management systems for RWS.

### South West Integrated Project (SWIP)

The programme was launched in May, 1987. It covers a population of 4.2 million people. It is jointly funded by Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA), UNICEF & the Government of Uganda. It aims at a sustainable, replicable system of initiating and supporting community based improvements in health, sanitation and

use of safe water supplies integrated into district community structures.

Among others, SWIP is engaged in the provision of safe water facilities through:-

- Drilling new boreholes
- Protection of springs
- Gravity flow schemes
- Replacement of U-I with U-II to the existing dilapidated pumps

This paper is to examine the drilling of new boreholes as one way of providing safe water facilities with community involvement and participation through social mobilisation and training. The community involvement is done with the following in mind:

- Overall management being a responsibility of the communities through their water and sanitation committees (CBWs), local community based workers (CBWs) are selected by the communities and trained and equipped by District/SWIP.
- SWIP's role is to facilitate and support the district and communities by availing them external resources such as physical inputs and skills. This is done through a process that promotes community ownership and self reliance.
- Capacity building of the district level staff, extension staff, community leaders and community based workers is achieved by importing knowledge and skills through social mobilisation, orientation workshops and training to enhance their absorptive capacity.
- Once this capacity has been built to a reasonable degree, direct assistance ceases and communities are left on their own to evolve and grow.

Borehole drilling follows an approach where a minimum pre-drilling social mobilisation package is prescribed because of its high speed, abrupt change in plans due to weather or unanticipated "easy" geological formations and the high cost opportunity lost by keeping equipment and crews idle. This mobilisation is done by District Project Officers (DPOs), District Officials & RCs.

## Roles of implementors and communities in drilling activities SWIP (implementor)

- Developing water development plans
- Social mobilisation and community organisations
- Hydrogeological investigation
- Well/borehole design
- Drilling, pump testing, water quality analysis, hydrofracturing, pump installation
- Orientation of District Officers (political) Administrators and Technical Staff).
- Training of WSC and CBWs
- Follow up support
- 2 sets of bicycles and tools per sub-country
- Operates spares depot

### Communities

#### (1) Community

- Community meetings
- Selection of WSC and CBWS
- Raise funds. (Training fees for CBWs, bicycles maintenance, repair, labour)
- Labour clearing access roads to assist drilling/pump installation crews and CWS
- Site selection and providing local materials

#### (2) Water and sanitation committee

- Resource mobilisation labour, funds and local materials
- Supervision and payment of CBWs
- Organisation of site selection
- Monitoring
- Training (management, community financing, operation)
- Follow up support to communities/CBWs

#### (3) Community Based Workers (CWS)

- 3 weeks training for pump mechanics
- 1 day training for caretakers
- Change agent community health refresher training
- Preventive and breakdown maintenance
- Spares purchase

With the above clear sharing of roles and responsibilities, all changes positive or negative are introduced with fullest concert and participation of those whose daily lives will be affected by the change. SWIP has managed to arrest the high rate of breakdown on boreholes. The annual survey shows that 70% of the water systems are functioning properly.

This experience revealed that communities are very resourceful, productive, with quite a lot of untapped potentials. Communities know better which services they need, where and from whom. The role of the project implementor is to create awareness in the target community, assist them to identify and understand the benefits resulting from the intervention and guide them to make decisions, appropriate plans of action and means of a sustainable maintenance system.

## Borehole maintenance a swip approach

Boreholes are maintained through two sub-country based pump mechanics (PM), selected by the community, trained by SWIP and District staff and their training fees met by the community through their local leaders (RC IIs). The pump mechanics look after a maximum of thirty boreholes each using tool kits and bicycles supplied by SWIP to each sub-country. Each borehole has a user WSC responsible for organising and purchasing of spare parts and a caretaker who is equipped with spanners to tighten external units, greasing and doing general cleaning and other preventive maintenance activities.

### Lessons learnt

In contrast to the previous top to bottom approach of RWS in Uganda it is evident that this community approach gives the community a sense of ownership to the RWS.

This approach helped in:

- mobilising and developing communities into structures that enable the project to implement its programme most effectively through the direct participation of the beneficiaries;
- providing the implementor with better information about the wishes and needs of the people and also avoiding misunderstandings and misconceptions that would have occurred;
- facilitating the teaching and learning process promoting an action kind of learning that is not only more permanent but also more available;
- mobilising of resources from the community, initiative, creativity and self reliance of the individual;
- providing the communities with real facts of the situation thus identifying their most critical problems;
- the community is waded from the dependency syndrome on the government and donors once given a right direction of approach to issues that concern their welfare;
- the benefits of intersectoral collaboration is realised;
- it is away of off-loading the financial burden from the government for provision of social services.