



Mozambique — Low cost sanitation programme

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FOLLOWING MOZAMBIQUE'S INDEPENDENCE in 1975 the Government identified sanitation as one of the key components in improving health conditions in the country. As such, in 1976 the Ministry of Health launched an intensive national campaign for the self-help construction of latrines. Many thousands of latrines were constructed during a relatively short period.

However there were numerous problems with the approach taken, including insufficient awareness about environmental conditions, a lack of technical guidance in latrine design and construction, and shortages of critical building materials. Consequently, many of the latrines became structurally unsafe and unusable, as well as presenting health hazards to the user communities.

In response to this situation, a research project was initiated in 1979 by the National Directorate of Housing and the National Directorate of Preventive Medicine, with financial support from SIDA, UNDP and IDRC. The project was intended broadly to "identify and develop a suitable technology and method for large scale implementation of improved sanitation in peri-urban areas". The result was the development and successful pilot-testing of an appropriate and cost-effective technology, based on the concept of a simple unreinforced concrete slab, to be placed over a lined pit.

In 1985 the LCSP are created with funds from the Government and donors. UNDP was the main funding agency at this early stage. However, in latter years the number of donors (including NGO's) supporting the programme has increased.

The expansion of programme financing - both from donor and Government sources became even more critical following the introduction of the Economic Rehabilitation Programme in the late 1980. A combination of factors, including serious currency devaluations and a dramatic rise in the price of cement, resulted in an acceptance by devaluations and a dramatic rise in the price of cement, resulted in an acceptance by Government of the need to introduce direct subsidies to the LCSP to sustain its activities.

From 1979 to 1994 the LCSP estimates that 135.000 improved latrines have been produced implies that over 810.000 people in peri-urban areas are benefiting from safer sanitation. However the real health and social benefits of such a programme are extremely difficult to measure, since sanitation is only one component of a more complex combination of factors including: safe water, health education and community empowerment -

critical to the sustained improvement of health and quality of life of poor Communities.

Sustainability of the programme

Notwithstanding the fact that the programme has geared its activities towards the production and sale of constructive components of single-family latrines in the peri-urban areas of the cities, a lack of attention to key issues, which allow for the development of the sector and for attending to population with a low income, was noted. The absence of a national policy for the sanitation sector was identified as one of the limitations, as well as the need for an adequate institutional integration of the sector in the long term.

The re-dimensioning of the economic and political situation in the country has reflected itself in internal modifications, country-wide.

In view of this fact, and given the uncertainty as to whether donor and government funds will continue to be available for the operation of the programme, discussions concerning the sustainability of the National Programme for Low-Cost Sanitation were initiated. In July 1994, these discussions resulted in the preparation of a sustainability study which recommended the following:

- The attribution of government subsidies should be given priority.
- Inter-sectorial coordination should be strengthened.
- Gradual decentralization of the productive sector should be promoted.
- The educational component of the programme should be strengthened.

Masterplan 1995-2000

The Master Plan for Low-Cost Sanitation for the next five years was drawn up as a result of the recommendations formulated by the sustainability study and in accordance with the political and/economic transformations in the country, which aim at progressively decentralizing the authority of the State and its resources through institutional strengthening and capacity building of local governing structures. The Master Plan will serve as a basis for the implementation of the national policy of low cost sanitation in the whole country.

The Master Plan for 1995-2000 focuses on:

- Gradual involvement of the Municipalities in the supervision of the productive sector.
- Integration in the private sector.

- Expansion of the National Programme to new district villages and urbanized rural areas.

Means of promoting sustainability

In compliance with the general guidelines of the sustainability study and the Master Plan for 1995-2000, a number of activities were already launched which aim at promoting the self-sufficiency of the provincial Improved Latrine Projects. Emphasis will hence be placed on:

Institutionalization of the sector

From an institutional perspective, the National Programme for Low-Cost Sanitation has, to date, not been integrated in the sector of Water and Sanitation. In order to coordinate and make compatible the activities of water and sanitation, efforts are currently being made to integrate the National Programme in the National Directorate for Water/Department of Water and Sanitation, which is under the tutelage of the Ministry of Public Health and Sanitation. As the component is multi-sectorial, a planning and coordination entity for the environmental sanitation activities was established, which is composed of the Ministries of Health, of Coordination for Environmental Action, of Coordination of Social Action and State Administration (local authorities) of Public works and Housing as well as the National Institute for Physical Planning.

National policy for low cost sanitation

Until recently, the national policy for water and sanitation in the country was still very much unclear. Very recently, and within the framework of the institutional restructuring of the sector, a document was drafted, concluded and disseminated, which defines the sectorial policy in general terms in order to allow for a harmonious and coordinated approach to the Sector for Low-Cost Sanitation.

Decentralization of activities

The process of progressive decentralization of the programme proposes that the government be responsible for the organizational and normative activities, while the programme and implementation activities should be gradually transferred to the Municipal Councils and to the private sector. A pilot experience in this area is already on-going in one city (Maputo).

Involvement of the private sector

The National Programme for Low-Cost Sanitation needs to extend the coverage of sanitation facilities to population groups with a low income, which are located in areas with a high epidemic risk. However, the existing and foreseen scarcity of human and financial resources, impedes this expansion to a certain extent. Hence, and in order to allow for a greater coverage, it is fundamental that the private and informal sector be stimulated to involve itself in the activities of the Programme, while the role of the Government would be to inspect the progress of the activities.

Technical improvements

Mapping of the cities

One of the recommendations of the sustainability study was to attribute latrines to families in accordance with the natural conditions of the plots where they live (to economize on the existing natural resources). The attribution of the subsidies in accordance with the natural soil conditions is only possible once the city has been more or less divided into areas of different latrines types in accordance with the soil type of each area.

Mobile units

The programme foresees the introduction of mobile units (made of metal containers) in order to guarantee a greater coverage of the communities with sanitation facilities. In comparison to the construction of a standard production unit, these mobile units allow for a greater flexibility in carrying out activities and economize on expenses. On the other hand, once the area is "saturated", the transference of the unit to other priority areas can take place more efficiently.

Financial autonomy of the productive units

The preparation of an annual budget allows the production units to improve the planning of their revenue, expenses and distribution of profits. The National Programme for Low-Cost Sanitation will supervise the expenditure of the funds of the production unit in accordance with that which was planned for the year (Budgetary Plan).

Stratification of subsidies

Currently, the government attributes 2 kinds of subsidies. One is for population groups whose income is below the survival line, in which 100% of the total cost is subsidized. The second form of subsidy, which covers 50% of the cost, is provided to the population in general and the community pays the difference. In view of the new economic changes in the Country, it has become necessary to review "who should pay more and who should pay less". It is only in this manner that Government funds will be distributed more realistically. It is hoped that a social-economic study, to be carried out in the near future 1995, will lead to the definition of 4 different levels of subsidy.

Conclusions and recommendations

As the Programme is currently undergoing changes, it is rather premature to present final conclusions. It is, however, possible to outline the results obtained during 1994 and the first few months (1995).

- There exists a greater awareness on the part of the government of the problem of sanitation (attribution of subsidies).
- A policy document has already been prepared which guides the activities of the sector.
- There are already private operators who are interested in investing in the sector.
- Donors see the future of the Programme in brighter terms.