



Implementor or facilitator for community management?

Jeremy Ockelford and Vijaya Shrestha, Nepal

IN A PAPER written for WHO, IRC states that “governments have a vital *facilitating* role to play in fostering local management and control of community water sources and supplies” [emphasis added]. It goes on to emphasise partnership with local communities, and the type of decisions communities should be making with support of government agencies. (IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre 1995). But how are government agencies to achieve this? In many places government departments implement projects and programmes with community participation, but this can mean many different things.

The transformation from implementor to facilitator is much more difficult. This paper looks at a case in Nepal where His Majesty’s Government’s Department of Water Supply and Sewerage (DWSS) is making major efforts to achieve this transformation. The start of the process of changing this technical department to undertake the social and community components of rural water supply and sanitation were described by Shrestha and Pyakural (1996).

During the preparation of a major rural water supply and sanitation sector loan project with DWSS and the Asian Development Bank in early 1996, there was a debate in the water and sanitation sector about the respective roles of implementor and facilitator. These terms were not clearly defined but there was an assumption that the DWSS was an implementor, which was a bad thing, and that other groups, particularly NGOs, were facilitators, which was a

good thing. Implementor and facilitator were seen in black and white terms, with an organisation being either one or the other. In fact, further discussion revealed that in many cases, NGOs had taken over the role of implementor instead of facilitating communities to manage the construction, operation and maintenance of their own water supply systems. (Asian Development Bank and Department of Water Supply and Sewerage 1996).

This view of implementor and facilitator is rather simplistic and limiting. There are many steps in a project and in any one of these an agency may be an implementor or a facilitator, or part way between the extremes. To assist the DWSS in its efforts to change its way of working the team of consultants and staff preparing the project developed a table of the extreme definitions for implementor and facilitator in each step of the project, together with the changes needed to move from one to the other. A modified version of this is shown in Table 1 (Asian Development Bank and Department of Water Supply and Sewerage 1996).

The Table does not define the position of any particular agency, but it can be applied to any agency, including NGOs. An agency can be located anywhere at or between the extremes, so it may be a facilitator in some activities and an implementor in others. The DWSS itself was already a facilitator in several of the steps of a project, and was making progress in other steps.

Table 1. Definitions of facilitator and implementor

--

Table 1. continued

Table 1. continued



Progress

The Fourth Loan Project was agreed between the ADB and the Government of Nepal in November 1996, and work started in January 1997. The project is due for completion by mid-2001, with a mid-term review scheduled for the end of 1998.

Progress in the transition by the DWSS from implementor to facilitator includes the appointment of sociologists, the training of technical staff (engineers, overseers and technicians) in PRA methodologies and social preparation, and development of new procedures with information sheets in Nepali for distribution in villages. In addition DWSS has issued a directive that construction cannot be started until the preparation phase is completed. About four months is allowed for this phase, covered by Activities 8 to 12 in Table 1. DWSS has developed a strong support and monitoring programme to ensure that the facilitation process is followed. For the first time a budget allocation for social preparation work is included in the new Ninth Five Year Plan of His Majesty's Government of Nepal.

References

- ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK and DEPARTMENT OF WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE, 1996, *Fourth Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Project: Final Report of the Project Preparation Technical Assistance*, ADB/DWSS (unpublished), Kathmandu.
- IRC INTERNATIONAL WATER AND SANITATION CENTRE, 1995, *The Influence of Technology on Operation and Maintenance of Rural Water Supply Projects*, in *Integrated Rural Water Management*, ed. WHO, Geneva.
- SHRESTHA, V.L., and PYAKURAL, D.C., 1996, *Community management and socialising engineers*, in *Reaching the Unreached: Challenges for the 21st Century*, Proceedings of the 22nd WEDC Conference, ed. Pickford J. *et.al.*, WEDC, Loughborough.

JEREMY OCKELFORD, Independent Consultant.
VIJAYA SHRESTHA, Consultant Social Sciences.
