



Community management and project sustainability – Case Study

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TANZANIA'S 1991 NATIONAL water policy focused on improving the sustainability of water supply by community management of operation and maintenance¹. Subsequent policies have emphasized user-ownership and management, as well as redefining the roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders involved. The government is gradually shifting from its traditional role in the sector as owner, provider and operator to a facilitator, promoter and regulator of water and sanitation development initiatives.

In many cases, the actual involvement of communities in the management of water systems has been poor. Many community-managed projects have suffered setbacks. These are associated with:

- the limited capacity of communities and local governments to fulfill their new roles;
- the fact that implementation, operation and management is largely based on voluntary efforts; and
- the lack of effective procedures for mobilising external support.

Scope

This paper discusses the institutional arrangements for Arumeru West Water and Sanitation Programme, named after the district in which it is found, in the Arusha Region of northern Tanzania. The local population amounts to approximately 40,000 people, most of whom live in villages scattered on the southern slopes of Mt. Meru. The project also includes a number of peri-urban communities at the base of Meru, although these are administratively part of Arusha Municipality.

The paper links issues of community management with the project's longer-term sustainability, highlighting the lessons learnt.

Background

The Arumeru West Water and Sanitation Programme involves more than rural watsan. It aims to contribute towards poverty alleviation through a variety of coordinated interventions. These include: improving access to water and sanitation, health and hygiene education, promoting the empowerment of women, initiating income generation activities and the introduction of low-cost housing.

For generations, the Arumeru West community has struggled to cope with severe health, economic and social problems linked to the lack of safe water. The problem

intensified during in 1980's and early 1990's when the area experienced frequent outbreaks of cholera. In 1996, villagers sought support from Oxfam GB. Through Oxfam's involvement, people began to see that the underlying cause of their problems was not just a lack of safe water, but poverty itself, and associated with this, their lack of knowledge, poor hygiene practices, inadequate sanitation, gender imbalances and weak representative structures.

The resulting programme was implemented by Oxfam with three local NGOs: Community Based Health Care Council (CBHCC), Community Aid and Small Enterprises Consultancy (CASEC) and Women Economic Groups Coordinating Council (WEGCC).³

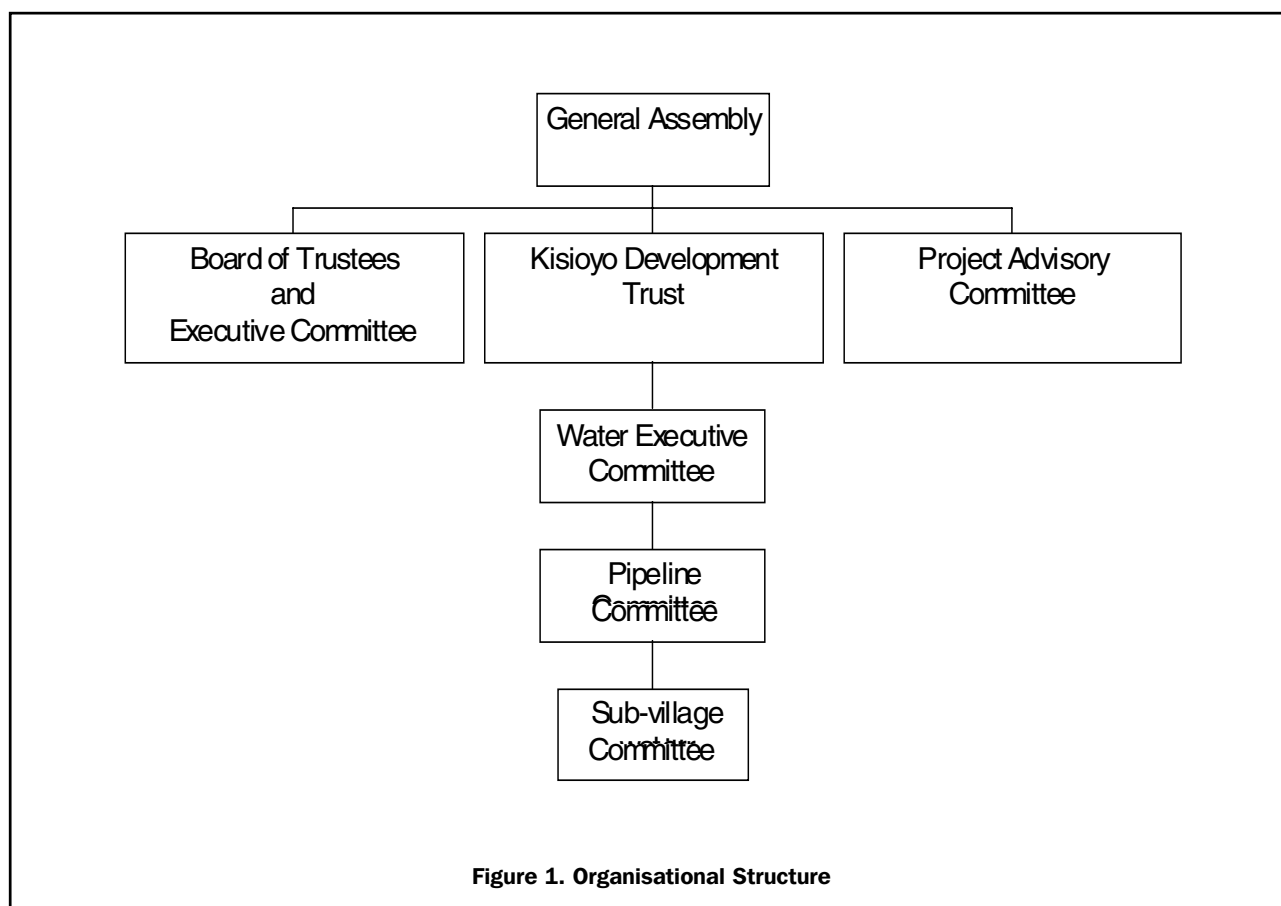
CBHCC was responsible for water supply, sanitation and hygiene education while CASEC was responsible for training and Savings and Credit. WEGCC was responsible for community mobilization and promotion of women development. Later Youth Advisory and Development Council was involved in the formation of youth economic groups.

Management Arrangements

During the programme's implementation, a hierarchical management structure⁴ was created. 42 sub-village and 11 village water committees were established, representing the users themselves. Four pipeline committees were set up to manage the water supplied by each major gravity pipeline. These reported to and were managed by the Joint Area Committee (JAC). This was later superseded by community based organisation, the Kisioyo Development Trust, responsible for managing the entire programme, and its water executive committee.

In organisational terms the project was focused at the community level. Considerable effort was put into strengthening the capacity of communities to manage the project. Central to this effort was the development of the skills of active members of water committees and the JAC itself.

During the mid term review of the project in November 1998, Oxfam advised community representatives that formal managerial arrangements were needed to manage the various components of the programme after the implementing agencies phased out their support in mid 2000. There was a debate as to the type of institution that would best carry the project forward and ensure its sustainability. Community representatives were offered two choices: to contract a private company, or to establish a formal Community Based Organisation.³



It was decided to form a CBO because it was felt that the private sector would involve outsiders who would have no background to the project and who would be more interested in making money rather than looking after the development interests of the community. It was therefore decided to form a CBO in the form of a Trust, to be known as Kisioyo Development Trust (In Swahili, Kisioyo means “we want to develop, so we have to run fast”).

Sub-village Water Committees

In the 12 villages there are 42 sub-villages. However, it should be noted that one particular village gets water from three separate systems. Through organised sub-village meetings six members to the Sub-Village Water Committee (SVWC) were elected. Two of these elected members are women. In addition there were two co-opted members, a scheme attendant and the sub-village chairperson making a total of eight members.

Pipeline Committees

Pipeline Committees were not in the initial project design but because four separate gravity schemes were built it was decided to establish four pipeline committees which is also in line with the National Water Policy (1995). However, the number of members differs from one committee to another. Some members come from the Sub-Village Water Committees.

General assembly

Co-ordinated by the task force (composed of respected members of the community) the General Assembly meeting include all village chairmen, village executive officers, Ward executive officers, the Divisional officer, the District Executive Director, members of sub-village water committees and pipeline committees. Representatives from Village Health Committees, the savings and credit program, and the low-cost housing scheme and from women’s group are also invited.

Water Executive Committee

The Water Executive Committee of KDT should not be confused with the Executive Committee. The WEC is responsible for managing the water systems. The WEC is composed of the chairpersons from the four pipeline committees. It has two roles: (1) administration and finance, (2) Technical and meter reading. The chairman is the same person who is the chairman of the Board of Trustees. The WEC is supposed to meet quarterly.

Project Advisory Committee

This committee was the highest level committee and was chaired by the Regional Commissioner. Other members include the Chairman of the District Council, the District Executive Director, representative from KDT, Oxfam and the implementing agencies. The role of this committee was to formulate policies by which the project would be implemented and to resolve conflicts.

Project Strengths

- Over 70% of all households are using clean and safe water. There are significant changes in people's participation in almost all villages.
- Women were very active in almost all-training sessions.
- The confidence built in the previously marginalized groups (women and youth) has given them new social status. Many women are now active in attending and making constructive contributions to meetings.
- Communities have demonstrated their demand by making efforts to organise and participate in construction and a financial contribution.
- Households are more aware of their systems and more willing to pay the costs of sustaining the facilities provided.
- The project is in line with the national water policy and local government reform.

Project Weaknesses

- Insufficient thought went into how the water project would be managed *after* the infrastructure was completed. This issue was not addressed until too late in the project cycle, when there was not enough time and resources to develop KDT into an effective and efficient organisation. Whilst lower levels of management of the water systems are in place and have been adequately trained, KDT has not been adequately trained and equipped to effectively manage the water project in a sustainable way.
- Sub-village water committees are uncertain of their role under KDT. One member of each sub-village committee sits on the respective pipeline committee. The sub-village committees lack both constitutions and job descriptions for their members.
- A sustainable procedure for receiving outside *technical and management support* for the water committees through KDT has not yet been established. Whilst there had been good relationship with the local government water department during project implementation, developing their capacity to provide regular technical support, and at the same time become regulators and facilitators (as defined by the 1991 Government water policy) will take time.
- There seems to be high demand for house connections. This is expressed more in affluent villages and also by commercial users (such as hotels). This was not considered during the design. Whilst satisfying this demand

may provide opportunities for cross subsidy, it could result in low pressure during peak times.

- Management committee members who are community representatives' work on "*voluntary*" basis. This will obviously create an image of a group of devoted community members volunteering for the benefit of the community as a whole. To weigh the extent of volunteering it is useful to use the perception of the committee members rather than from outsiders. In order to avoid possible suspicions among community members on committee members:
 1. There should be some kind of transparent motivation (e.g. providing meeting and transport allowances)
 2. There should be a system of communication of information to and from the communities (posters, public loudspeakers, etc.)

Lessons

A number of important lessons have been learned concerning community water management and sustainability. These are summarised below.

- Locally appropriate community management models have to be developed to suit a particular context, taking into account existing capacity. A lack of success with poorer communities may be related to the limited time available for social facilitation. More modest targets and a longer timeframe could have increased levels of sustainability of project interventions in such communities.
- More consideration should be given to technology choice, and especially the cost and affordability of operation and maintenance. This may result in more effective. Poverty sensitive projects.
- In most cases 'community managed' water supplies means *management by a committee*. Despite being elected, committees are not always accountable to the community. An effective system of checks and balances, together with systems that guarantee transparency are essential.
- Although village water committees are explicitly mentioned by the 1991 Water Policy, there may be other more appropriate forms of community management. At the same time, a sustainable procedure for requesting and receiving external technical and management support needs to be established. Whilst assistance is offered by local government, formal arrangements must be based on an effective organisation, suitable for assisting a growing number of community based water projects.
- The National Water Policy states that consumers should pay for water collected from improved water sources.^{2, 5} What is not so clear is how to provide systems that people are willing and able to pay for. In Oxfam's experience, pricing models are often based on assumptions about how much water people will consume. In the case of Arumeru West, household consumption has

been estimated as 11 litres per capita per day, a third of the figure used to price water in the first place.³

- Whilst gender balance of committees has been used as an indicator of women's participation, there are question marks as to how effective this is. It is not clear whether 'representation' will translate into tangible benefits. Oxfam's experience is that additional training in decision-making is needed to develop the capacity of women to play an active role. The establishment of women's groups and income-generating activities has led to women participating actively in village meetings.

Conclusion

This case study of the Arumeru West Development Programme has highlighted key issues in relation to community management and sustainability. Experience has shown that a well-constructed water supply system needs proper institutional arrangements to keep it functioning. Locally appropriate systems are required that reflect, amongst other factors, the capacity of potential users to manage a scheme. These arrangements must be considered early on in the project cycle, and not after a project is completed. The supporting role of local government must also be clarified.

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