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PUBLIC INFORMATION AND PROMOTION: A PROCESS OF COMMUNICATION

MAIN COMPONENTS FOR A STRATEGY IN THE 1990s

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Public Information and
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204.3-91P4-9021

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ISN 9021
204.3 91 PU

**Public Information and Promotion: a Process of Communication
Main Components for a Strategy in the 1990s**

I. BACKGROUND

a. Introduction

This first outline, requested by the Core Group on Public Information and Promotion (PIP), discusses the main components of a strategy for water supply and sanitation promotion. It was compiled by a working group composed of sector staff and information specialists from UNDP, UNICEF, the UNDP/World Bank Program and IRC. The present outline is intended for consideration by the Core Group in its meeting of 20 May as a basis for a public information and promotion strategy to be developed subsequently.

b. Earlier Recommendations

The New Delhi Global Consultation of 1990 was both the culmination of experiences of the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade and a fresh start on unfinished business of national and global water and sanitation programmes.

"The New Delhi Statement" is replete with references to 'changes in attitude and behaviour', the need for emphasis on 'education, social mobilization and community participation' and 'motivated people', as well as for 'information, education and communication strategies to be integrated in human resources policies'. Collection of information for research and 'exchange of information and experience among developing countries' are other priorities cited, and the Collaborative Council is described in the Statement as "a new global forum for the exchange of information and the promotion of the sector."

The Statement's preamble summed up the new emphasis: "Political commitment is essential and must be accompanied by intensive efforts to raise awareness through communication and mobilization of all sectors of society."²

The present outline for a strategy is a response to an extensive and remarkably consistent body of recommendations for strengthening the information and promotion

²) *The New Delhi Statement*

components of water and sanitation programmes. These were made by the Water Supply and Sanitation Steering Committee and various other working groups and consultations during and after the IDWSSD, and particularly in the context of the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council. They were recently endorsed by the New Delhi Consultation.

c. Sector Objectives

"Sector" means part of a whole. Its use to describe public and private water supply and sanitation staff wherever these may be based within the bureaucratic establishment, firmly positions water supply and sanitation as an integral part of the development effort.

There is now a strong consensus that safe and sustainable water supply and environmental sanitation are basic without which economic, health and other social development cannot be fulfilled.

The sector objectives are enshrined in the reports of various regional Decade consultations, as well as in the New Delhi Statement, its four guiding principles and New Delhi working group reports. They grow out of the experience of the past ten years, presented with a forceful new thrust. They respond to realities. To implement these principles, additional resources definitely must be found, by making more efficient use of what we have, and doing the job more effectively are practical ways to approach the goals. So is the call for increased community management and user payment for water and sanitation services, for human resources to be trained, and for greater involvement of women.

New Delhi Guiding Principles

- 1. Protection of the environment and safeguarding of health through the integrated management of water resources and liquid and solid waste.*
- 2. Institutional reforms promoting an integrated approach and including changes in procedures, attitudes and behaviour, and the full participation of women at all levels in sector institutions.*
- 3. Community management of services, backed by measures to strengthen local institutions in implementing and sustaining water and sanitation programmes.*
- 4. Sound financial practices, achieved through better management of existing assets, and widespread use of appropriate technologies.*

The high priority recommended for accelerated water and sanitation programmes by the UN General Assembly and the "Plan of Action" endorsed by 71 political leaders at

the UNICEF-initiated World Summit for Children gives the sector a broad-based and authoritative political mandate for action. This political backing is an important prerequisite in winning the large resources needed for accelerated action.

A public information and promotion strategy should capitalize on this political backing and do everything possible to maintain and enhance it.

II. THE NATURE OF THE STRATEGY

a. Objectives

To make a reality of what is technically feasible requires harnessing the energies and winning the commitment of all those directly and indirectly able to contribute to success. As previous studies have argued, and as the New Delhi Statement makes clear, adequate public information and promotion have so far been missing ingredients in this endeavour.

The overall goal of the strategy is to promote a sustained public awareness of the fundamental place of water supply and sanitation in the development dynamic, optimise the use of resources, and, in due course, to maximise the sense - and the reality - of participation in this challenge.

The strategy should underpin the strategy of the sector at large. It should therefore not only be based on, but in its decentralized participation-centred essence, actually embody the guiding principles of New Delhi. Core messages derived from them should be adapted to target group needs, modified as necessary in the light of feedback and the evolution of the overall effort.

The strategic intent should be to articulate the imperative need for water supply and sanitation and to set out the scope of the new thrust, (and the implications for action at all levels), and to convey the real possibility of a historic development breakthrough. Creating conviction around these central propositions will be essential in mobilizing the required investment in human resources and funds, and in achieving the more efficient and effective use of existing ones.

Experience in the health, family planning and nutrition fields has shown that understanding can be increased and attitudes influenced by targeted communication, a process UNDP applies as "Development Support Communication" and UNICEF calls "Programme Communication".

b. Principles Behind the Strategy

Under the rubric of public information and promotion - terms rightly or wrongly borrowed from earlier recommendations - efforts to communicate and to mobilize involve complex variables. Target groups, messages, actors and approaches vary and while the contribution of individual activities is sometimes difficult to precisely assess, the cumulative effect is undeniable, as the concerted effort to expand immunization coverage testifies.

What ties all these variables into one consolidated and mutually reinforcing package of actions is a communication and mobilization strategy. The ultimate aim of this strategy is to change the way those involved - from policy and decision makers at whatever level to consumers at the community and the household level - think and act. With this in mind, the following principles should guide the strategy:

- 1. Promotion efforts must be conducted in a participatory way: decentralized and community-managed; as dispersed and diverse as the water and sanitation community itself.*
- 2. The strategy must ensure and sustain a common understanding among sector staff at all levels, of the consensus reached at New Delhi and the endorsed guiding principles, and a conviction that these constitute a basis for concerted assault on the challenge of safe water and sanitation for all by the year 2000.*
- 3. Full consideration must be given to the implications of the role communities need to play in water and sanitation in the 1990s. The communication and mobilization strategy must take full account of the communities' perceptions and aspirations, and their needed involvement.*
- 4. There will also be a political dimension. Governments must be thoroughly involved and the participation of leaders and influentials must be ensured.*
- 5. A multidisciplinary approach must be used, involving not only engineers and hydrologists but also health workers, marketing professionals, educators, anthropologists, financial analysts and communication specialists, to secure the diverse skills and technical expertise needed. Also governmental organisations, NGOs, media associations and private agencies need to be enlisted.*
- 6. Compelling evidence must form the spark for action: case studies, persuasive arguments, indicative experiences, trend statistics and other illustrative examples of Decade lessons need to form a resource kit for briefings, training workshops and any other opportunities for advocacy of sector issues.*
- 7. Activities can both stand on their own, and piggyback on special initiatives and programmes of others. Examples are the forthcoming global environment conferences, meetings at regional and national levels, and such efforts as the WHO/ UNESCO/ UNICEF Facts for Life initiative.*

groups are defined, it must be determined who will carry out the strategy. One must begin with the sector because unless the sector is fully motivated and supportive, it will be impossible to mobilise the users and the politicians. Treating the sector as the action group, sub-groups must be defined, together with their role and activities. This must be made part of the strategy development during the coming months.

A definition of the three target groups and a description of each is given below. The action process will then be described as of Chapter III.

1. The Users

The Delhi Statement and guiding principles, integrating the lessons of the recent past make clear the emphasis on community involvement in the management, financing and maintenance of safe water supply and sanitation. Communication will be critical in securing this involvement, in advocating for the establishment of community management mechanisms and for the principle of appropriate cost sharing and in laying the basis for continued and sustained dialogue. It is likely that a new cadre of personnel will be needed to work at community level to facilitate and reinforce the communication process.

Whether it is local village level workers, or whether it is women, men or school children, each user group will require a different approach. Since their present attitudes and reactions may differ considerably from the desired behaviour, and their levels of involvement will differ, messages directed at users will have to be developed as close as possible to the specific user level in a participatory process where communication is based upon equal partnership. The perceptions of the users need to be well understood.

Only then can effective messages, based upon the needs and aspirations of the users, be developed.

By analyzing earlier knowledge, attitude and practice research and by collecting new information, it should be possible to develop suitable message at the local level. Building upon what has already been done and using what is available is not only cost effective but essential.

Training of grass root workers, as is done by PROWWESS is needed to determine village level knowledge and understanding of the key messages and their application. NGOs have an important role to play in that many indigenous groups fully involve local communities and employ staff at the grassroots level.

Information and communication activities must be sustained in order to have an impact. Using multiple channels to reinforce the message is a proven strategy. Forging alliances

The sector strategy for the 1990s provides a practical approach to fulfilment of basic human needs through clean water and sanitation. This will only happen if the sector adapts and effectively internalizes the meaning of the new thrust. At country level, communication must be used with politicians and with communities to develop an understanding of the benefits to be gained from promoting this thrust for the 1990s. For politicians, this means the redeployment of budget allocations and sharing of the financial burden of water supply and sanitation. For the users, a sharing in the management and decision making, as well as the cost advantages which promise benefits in freeing women from drudgery for more productive, even income-generating, employment of their time and in developing community structures for and experiences in, self-management which can be transferred to other aspects of daily life.

c. Messages

Messages on water and sanitation communicated to one group must be consonant with, and indeed reinforce those communicated to another group. They must therefore be internally consistent, as well as clear and well-understood by all who need to use them. Since water supply and sanitation for the most part lack the mass appeal of issues such as the environment, poverty, and children, effort must be made to give them their rightful place and prominence, even if this must be done by alliances with proponents of one of the more popular issues.

It is envisaged that core messages will be developed as a next step of the strategy development to be conducted from May until August.

d. The Target Groups

In order to define which target groups are necessary for the development of an effective public information and promotion strategy, it is essential to look not only at the **sector** itself, but also beyond the sector at other groups that will make decisions and affect the development of policies on water and sanitation within the 1990s. Therefore, in addition to the sector two other broad groups to be targeted were defined: the **users** of water and sanitation facilities and the **politicians**, in both developed and developing countries.

Through these groups, the recipient's needs would be reflected and their support ensured for the overall sector objectives developed over the past years. Through the politicians, pressure can be brought to bear upon governments to cater to the needs of all recipients. In developing countries, this would place emphasis on providing services to the urban poor and rural populations, which are socially relevant and which they can afford.

Each of the three target groups can be divided into separate sub-groups in order to develop suitable messages for each target audience. This can be done between May and August as part of the strategy development. Once nature and needs of each of the three

with organisations which pass water supply and sanitation messages directly to important constituencies such as religious groups, the school system, the health care network, political party cadres among others helps to form influential opinion and establish a change process. The participation of well-known or influential leaders helps to articulate and crystallise this process.

2. The Sector

The sector includes workers at local, national and international level all of whom should understand and support the Delhi philosophies and approaches, support the implications they have for their work, and act upon these in their daily activities, down to the community level.

The major target audiences in the water supply and sanitation sector can be grouped into four levels: local or community (water and sanitation para-professionals, health workers, well drillers, village craftsmen and women or other concerned groups); district (district health workers, sanitarians, engineers and field workers); national (programme planners, health officials, NGOs representatives of UN and bilateral agencies) and international (bilateral donors, UN agencies and other institutions which are members of the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council).

This envisaged approach requires sector personnel to work directly with the users and the politicians. To achieve a consensus around the overall philosophy and direction of the effort requires a lively and sustained process of communication involving all the organisations and levels of the sector. This process is needed both to share experiences and to internalise the lessons of the Decade and the resulting concepts and approaches activated in New Delhi, together with other developments as these emerge.

Only by generating and promoting such exchange and dialogue will the sector fully capitalise on all the hard lessons of the past decade and realise the potential of concerted effort for the current one. It is recognised that the sector is not homogenous and that some organisations already have much experience with knowledge exchange and dissemination, and with communication as a process. The need is to make these aspects more pervasive throughout the sector and, where necessary, to undertake and strengthen training in the fundamentals of communication planning, practice, and management.

As most training will involve staff in developing countries, national capacity for training will have to be created or strengthened. One existing initiative, the UNDP/World Bank Program could make an early start in this through its Regional Water and Sanitation Groups (RWSGs). UNICEF is also preparing communication training modules

for its staff. Such initiatives should be systematically shared within the sector, evaluated and adapted for wider use.

3. The Politicians

The challenge ahead includes such complex issues as broadening water and sanitation coverage, involving communities in management and financing and positioning the sector within the wider context of environment and water resources. To achieve this, water and sanitation must be higher on the political agenda, both in developed and in developing countries. The New Delhi principles require a considerable shift in focus not only within the sector, but also by those commanding resources at national and other levels of government.

The politicians need to have evidence that water supply and sanitation are more important than is often perceived. The politicians are the elected representatives of the communities and societies. Their strength is the ability to speak and act on behalf of their constituents.

Politicians in industrialised countries usually represent the interests of sources of external support. Those in developing countries are directly connected to both the sector and to the users and are vital to the realisation of the Delhi principles.

No strategy which does not fully utilise the support of the politicians can realise the sector goals for the 1990s. Politicians in both the developed and developing world can help the sector mobilise to address the major issues. Their support is vital in also addressing user issues. Without their support, approaching communities on such issues as community management and financing will be more difficult. Discussing these issues with communities is much easier when they have the backing and support of the local politicians. Be it a provincial governor or a local political leader, the most important consideration is their ability to mediate a dialogue with a constituency and to help reach consensus.

Regional and national consultations are powerful ways to influence politicians. One method is to ensure that information and promotion become regular items upon the agenda of these meetings. Part of the strategy should be support for Collaborative Council members and New Delhi Consultation participants in their lobbying of national politicians. Suitable materials for presentations to politicians should be developed and adapted to specific needs.

In most communities, water is the first among felt needs and one to which politicians react promptly, raising questions with the sector and putting pressure upon governments

to provide cost-effective services. Politicians need to be convinced not only of the health, social and economic benefits of water and sanitation but of the importance of convincing communities to modify their existing behaviour and their influential role in this process.

III. THE PROCESS

a. Communication as a Basis

It is understood that public information and promotion for sector activities are not entirely unknown and non-existent. What is needed is a more systematic, approach, building on what exists, making it better, more widely accepted, and more effectively applied. There will be several, perhaps many instances moreover, where fresh starts need to be made.

So, where to start?

We advocate a gradual process in which the actors who are to communicate the lessons of the past Decade as crystallized in New Delhi to the afore-mentioned audiences, are the staff involved in the sector itself. They must become the "wheelhorses" on which all other communication will turn, and therefore will need to be thoroughly versed in the relevant issues and argumentation. Sector staff, in short, need to become the prime communicators.

Communication capacities within the sector, therefore, must be improved and developed widely, as a whole new area, an implicit component of all sector work. This must include training and expertise in interpersonal communication, in working with communities, negotiation and lobbying skills. This conclusion is supported by many findings and, in fact, is hidden in the principles of New Delhi. This is clearly illustrated by the report of one of the New Delhi working groups, which refers to the need for of a 'communication culture'.

b. Alliance Building and Beyond

The process must begin with alliance building. Initially, of course, the Core Group will need to advocate the significance of public information and promotion activities, based on a communication process, to sustain the objectives of the sector. In particular the Core Group has two priority audiences: i) their colleagues of the Collaborative Council, who must launch the process and instruct their staff to carry it further, ii) their superiors and relevant politicians who should give it their blessing and support.

It is absolutely essential that Core Group members be personally involved in this communications process, from the outset, creating an effective and objective lobby for

water and sanitation. Members of the group are leaders of the water supply and sanitation professional network. In conveying the value of communication as a process to their agency colleagues, they are the key actors. Core Group members and their networks also have the experience and the contacts to lobby both with user groups and politicians.

In the next stage, the Collaborative Council members take over as sector 'ambassadors' with their colleagues who participated at the New Delhi Consultation as the next target group. The process will proceed from there, gradually becoming self-sustaining. In order to ensure this, countries may require facilities with the specific responsibility to support alliance building and communication. The members of Core Group and Collaborative Council, and the other participants of the New Delhi Consultation, can play an instrumental role here. Some of the actions such facilities might undertake are listed in Annex 1.

Those Core Group and Collaborative Council members and New Delhi participants from ESAs and NGOs would see it as their responsibility to advance the process in their own circles, particularly their water supply and sanitation project desks. An important group are the consulting firms which execute projects of ESAs at country level.

Obviously, this is a simplified description of the first step in the process. At this stage we have neither dealt with the further detailed roles of staff and other co-actors, nor with the needed information support materials.

c. Central Function

Decentralization notwithstanding, certain activities need to be mounted at the global level, guided by the Core Group. Others may be susceptible to a loose concentration among UN agencies involved. For example, the UNDP Division of Information's global campaign "Safe Water 2000" and its components: *Source* magazine, various videos, annual booklets, media seminars in conjunction with conferences and special events, and special campaigns such as the guineaworm eradication. These are primarily aimed at the general public in donor countries. Those should reinforce local initiatives and may provide models for adaptation.

The same may be said for the 'goodwill ambassador' initiative, for newsletters that spread technical information throughout the sector network, for meetings of ESA information/social mobilization specialists, for production of attractive 'resource packages' and training modules suitable for local adaptation, and for maintaining databases, conducting KAP research to support message design, and for producing special materials in support of sector fund raising. There is a need too, for a central function to service national entities and to collate and redistribute information from different parts of the world.

A central point is needed also for journalists producing stories and features on the international water supply and sanitation effort in major newspapers and periodicals, and radio and TV programmes.

To create political will and generate support for the communication approach in water supply and sanitation policies and programmes, the water supply and sanitation sector needs a voice at the centre. This role could be assumed by the Collaborative Council Chairman and Executive Secretary, assisted perhaps by a 'sectoral ambassador' for added prestige. A central function can also hold high-level meetings with donors, government officials, as well as with NGOs and the private sector, to ensure that the sector's message receives high priority on various agendas.

The Collaborative Council meetings, as well as regional consultations and other major events in the sector where developing countries are involved, will provide the right fora to promulgate and expand upon the New Delhi guiding principles and what they mean 'in action'. The progress in the communication/mobilization efforts should be reviewed at each Collaborative Council meeting.

All these actions need the initiative and backing of communication specialists, with full time responsibility and following a common and agreed strategy. A central function at the global level will provide some sense of coherence and consistency to a gamut of decentralized activities and thus help to strengthen information and promotion efforts at the national levels.

IV. SHORT TERM REQUIREMENTS AND FINANCING

a. Immediate Action

The process described above starts, as we see it, at the time of the meeting of the Collaborative Council in September 1991, which should clearly decide that communication/mobilization actions can provide a strong basis for successful sector activities. The present document should provide the basis for a more elaborated strategy.

From September the members of the Council, if they agree, will be expected to take up the advocacy while communication specialists complete the components of the strategy for improved capacity and action at country level and globally.

The most important preliminary activities to be undertaken before that time are listed in Annex 2. All the activities mentioned there, and perhaps others, are needed to place the envisaged strategies on a sound footing. As members of the Core Group are aware, however, current working group members are regularly assigned to other duties, and are

based in different continents. They cannot continue to pursue working group responsibilities at the expense of their primary obligations. Developing the strategy and carrying out central functions is becoming a fulltime job. Indeed, the importance of the work merits fulltime attention of qualified specialists equipped with an adequate budget.

b. Financing

The Chairman of the Collaborative Council has indicated to the Core Group that "the Council and its membership would be the appropriate body to voice the need for adequate financial means. A need for some funding for the activities mentioned between now and the Council meeting this Fall can be foreseen, however.

As to the costs of communication, community education and involvement in the overall picture, these will have to emerge as a natural part of the process and will vary at different levels and from activity to activity. Much training and building of sector capacity for community level promotion and stimulation should already be part of sector budgeting, or at least foreseen for the near future. Similarly, the increase in sector exchange of experience and dialogue will be an intensification of existing activity, rather than a completely new cost. Moreover, the changes to be introduced will be intimately associated with the securing of additional resources, possibly of large magnitude. The cost to be considered therefore is likely to be the cost of not adopting the communication and mobilization strategy.

Abbreviations

CESI	Country External Support Information
ESA	External Support Agency
ITN	International Training Network
IRC	International Water and Sanitation Centre
KAP	Knowledge, attitude and practice
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
PIP	Public information and promotion
PROWESS	Promotion of the Role of Women in Water and Environmental Sanitation Services
RWSG	Regional Water and Sanitation Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Emergency Fund
WHO	World Health Organisation

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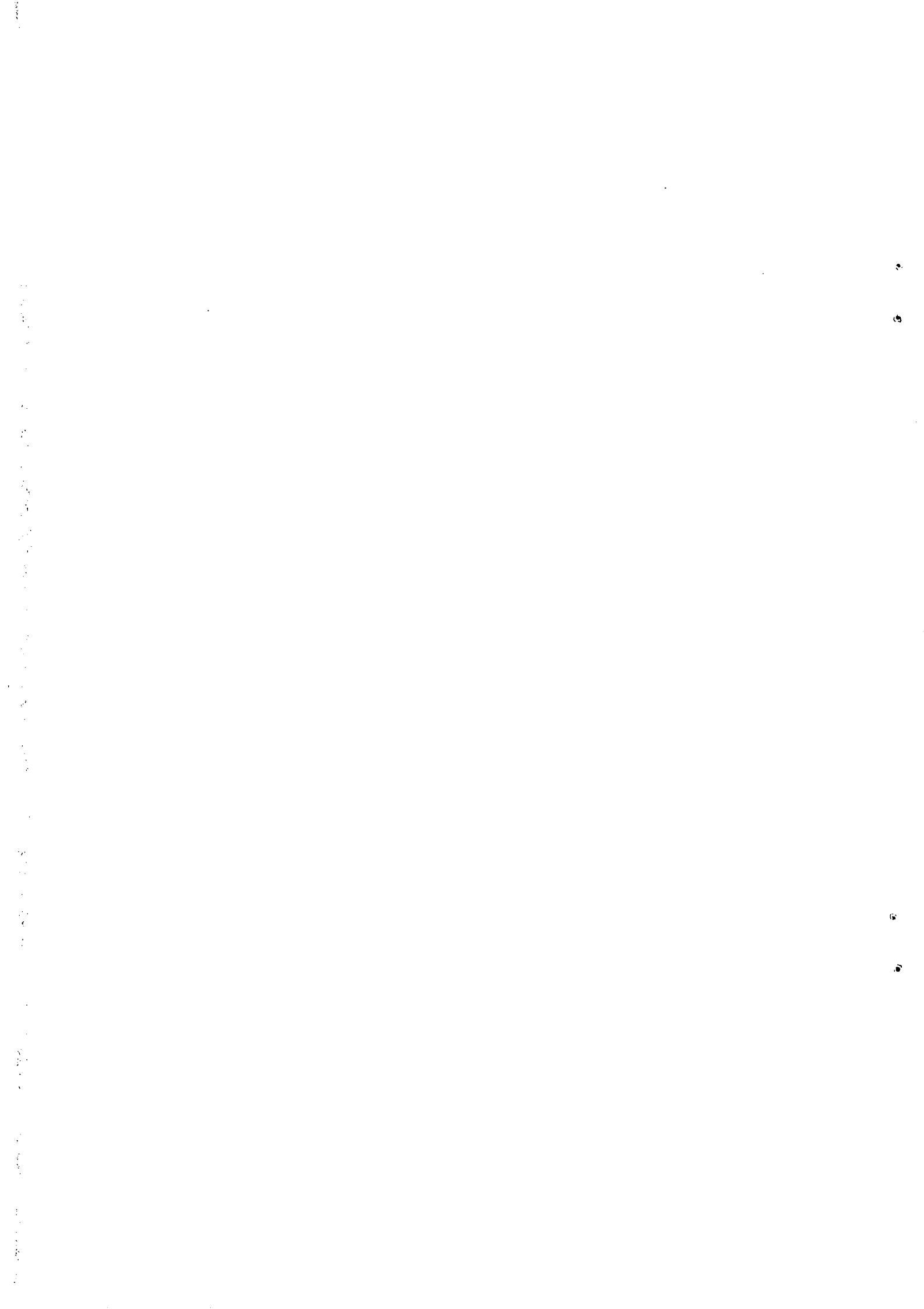
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15/5/91

List of Actions at Country Level

- * Stimulate and support workshops at centres and institutions concerning the combined issue of communication and message exchange. These may be organized in a variety of ways, e.g. through local courses, NGO activities, ITN centres, PROWESS activities, WHO regional centres, CESI programmes, ESA field offices, and so on.
- * Ensure extension and continuation of the process at the community level and stimulate, for this purpose, the incorporation of corresponding budget lines for communication programmes and projects.
- * Initiate training of community workers in communication skills.
- * Contribute to the incorporation of communication as an issue in the curricula of university courses, training courses, and other education and training events.
- * Stimulate the development of promotional materials in vernacular languages for use by community motivators and school teachers.
- * Act as contact point for media centres to be enlisted in the strategy.
- * Compile the evidence regarding water and sanitation interventions.
- * Issue newsletters, brochures, leaflets, etc.
- * Stimulate the use of radio and television, as well as traditional media, including alternative means of communication such as folk theatre.
- * Ensure the reporting of progress on public information and promotion activities in national or regional consultations and other events.



List of Preliminary Actions May - September 1991

1. Sensitize members of the Collaborative Council and stimulate them to incorporate communication and promotion in all planned sector meetings and training programmes.
2. Analyze results of earlier knowledge and attitudes and practice (KAP) research, and couple this with new information on how users perceive water and sanitation and how this is reflected in the New Delhi guiding principles. Not simply the solutions are important, but the process of how we are approaching the communication issue at village level. In this respect the experience of UNDP/PROWESS will be extremely relevant.
3. To confront counter-arguments and present the case generally for the Delhi principles: assemble evidence of the importance of water and sanitation, including compelling case studies, persuasive arguments, indicative experiences, trend statistics, etc. They can become a resource kit for training workshops in the sector, briefings, and any other opportunities for advocacy of sector issues.
4. Make the wealth of information material submitted for the New Delhi meeting accessible for analysis.
5. Compile a set of fundamental sector messages, based on the research under 2 above and the New Delhi guiding principles.
6. Identify ongoing and future promotion campaigns in other areas. Study the opportunities of piggybacking on these.
7. Study the possibilities of linking up with "Facts for Life" campaign at country level. Two of the 'top ten' "Facts for Life" messages relate directly to water supply and sanitation: improved hygiene behaviour and diarrhoeal disease control.
8. List organisations and associations with which cooperative public information and promotion activities can be undertaken.
9. In order to learn from the past, make a short appraisal of the value and effect of various components of the transfer process used in the Decade, including that of the Collaborative Council.
10. Start the development of training curricula with supporting materials and modules as a basis for workshops and other training activities, including participatory training.
11. Develop guidelines, making use of UNICEF, UNDP and others' experiences in enlisting the help of 'goodwill ambassadors' and the necessary supporting preparations and backstopping activities.
12. Develop guidelines for planners and managers, regarding the incorporation of communication/mobilization activities and responsibilities into their

programmes and projects.

13. Develop guidelines for building information and communication capacity at country level.
14. Produce a guidelines on communication for use by sector staff, including interpersonal communication, negotiation and lobbying skills.
15. Produce a series of attractive flyers describing the essence of the New Delhi guiding principles, showing examples of how they can be translated into action.
16. Develop specific strategies, based on the outcome of the May 20 Core Group meeting, directed to the sector internally, and to users and politicians externally.
17. Establish a basis for evaluation to be used once the process has started.