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Community management in Bushenyi



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Introductory background

Community Management, (CM) of rural water supply (RWS) is not new in Bushenyi as in other parts of Uganda. From time immemorial communities through local leadership (chiefs, village headmen), have always been responsible for the care and maintenance of their water supply. These water sources were mainly water holes or streams, the former excavated into the ground and water drawn by use of bucket and rope. Law enforcement combined with taboos (harsh retribution from gods) kept water points in reasonable good conditions.

With the introduction of sophisticated RWS systems in form of hand pumps in 1930, in order to get the communities more safe and reliable WS, marked the beginning of centralised management arrangements through establishing regional borehole maintenance units (BMUs). The BMUs were financed, manned, equipped and supervised by central government. By 1980, Uganda had over 5089 hand pumps and a survey revealed that 75 out of every 100 were not functioning.¹ The problems accounting for this included inadequate and late release of funds from an already limited budget. Lack of morale of staff due to poor remuneration and inadequate logistical support. The BMUs were then re-equipped and trained and boreholes rehabilitated. Despite this heavy investment, three years later in 1983, a follow-up survey revealed that 67.5% were again broken down.²

In 1986, CM started on pilot basis through UNICEF support in the war devastated Luwero district and has since expanded and been accepted almost over the entire country.

Community management systems in Bushenyi district

Bushenyi district lies in the Southwestern region of Uganda. It is bound by Mbarara, Kasese, Rukungiri and Kabale districts. It also shares international borders with Rwanda, in the South and Zaire in the Northwest. It covers a total area of 5396 sq. km. but with a land area of 4905 sq. km. It has a total population of 736000 people with a population density of 150 persons per sq. km.

The CM in Bushenyi is supported by Southwest Integrated Health and Water Programme (SWIP) a UNICEF/Government of Uganda Programme. The philosophy behind CM strategy in Bushenyi is in line with the current government

policy of self reliance which ensures community involvement, sustainability, responsible use and community ownership.

Implementation strategy

In order to ensure a sustainable CM of RWS in Bushenyi, the following approaches are used.

Social Mobilisation and training of user communities to initiate and support CM.

Building and strengthening district institution and infrastructures for increased support to CBMS and delivery of resources which are external to the community.

Advocacy to creation of an enabling environment for CM in the district.

Present situation in the district

District authorities, executive and legislature, are mobilised for supportive attitudes to CM through their involvement in drawing up and review of district workplans, budgets and reports in the district Programme Implementation Committee (PIC).

- Since 1991, the district budget estimates caters for over US\$2390 for RWS and CM which hitherto was not catered for (estimates file 92/93).
- Powerful allies in community mobilisation. District authorities and political leaders are promoting CM in their day to day interaction with communities.
- Supportive CM legislation and policies have been enacted and are in force.
- The authorities respond faster to issues requiring decisions.

The district administration staff are enabled to improve their management capacity mainly through training in various skills. The enablement of this category is important for sustainability of CM systems for efficient delivery of Community external resources (organisational) skills to water and sanitation committees WSC and community based workers (CBWs), spare parts especially after SWIP assistance.

Establishment of infrastructure for procurement, storage, supply and delivery of physical external inputs like spare parts and tools. A district spare sales depot is in place and so is a bank account operated for replenishment of these spares.

Within user communities social mobilisation is promoted where CM supportive attitudes and demand for services is created.

The overall management responsibility rests with communities through their WSC. The CBWs are selected, trained and equipped by the District Administration and SWIP following CM supportive procedures.

Women involvement through creation of a gender sensitive environment during social mobilisation.

Financing of CM

In CM, funds are needed for:

- purchase of spare parts, tools and other consumables like grease for hand pumps.
- allowances for CBWs.
- operation of district depot.

The mode of collection and management of these funds is entirely the decision of the WSC and user communities. The role of SWIP and district is to guide the planning, "budgeting", proper book keeping, accountability etc.

- It is difficult to come out with a detailed cost of CM. This is probably due to problems associated with costing community inputs. A recent unpublished paper in Luwero district found annual maintenance cost for a hand pump in terms of spare parts to be approximately US\$ 5 (Sebunya K. L. March/April 1992).

Monitoring and evaluation

Bushenyi district like other districts that are supported by SWIP has a technical PIC chaired by District Executive Secretary (DES). PIC is responsible for drawing up quarterly workplans, review reports of previous quarter and address implementation issues. SWIP staff through supervisory field visits, monitor progress.

Annual Water Surveys are conducted to check on the status of RWS. Several questions are used and major findings include:

- over 80% of RWS operational
- downtime ranges from 7 to 10 days
- low level of women involvement
- CBWs retained knowledge on Basic Health messages but were not transmitting it to users.

Conclusion and lessons learnt

- Sustainable CM built on basis of voluntarism for WSC and CBWs assumes that people can volunteer permanently. Voluntary commitment is neither lower costed nor quantifiable. The longer term CM input from this assumed pool of volunteers is likely to be affected by effectiveness of the structures and institutions for com-

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munity organisation, cooperation and how valuable the use and CM of the safe water supply is to these people.

- It is equally affected by inputs that are external to the community such as a dependable and speedy supply and delivery system of spare parts; availability of extension staff to carry out follow up support training of CBWs and WSC in relevant CM skills.
- The supply of spare parts within government system may not be very flexible, being part of a larger bureaucracy³ (Maire July 1990) This involves problems of reliable supply of these inputs at district level. The other option is to use free market (privatisation). This is being looked into in SWIP area.

¹ Uganda Country Programme, UNICEF 1985-1990

² Ndiku John, May 1989, Safe Water Survey in Bushenyi and Mbarara districts, SWIP

³ Maire N. Chionna & Linda Mauluka, Community Based Water Maintenance system experience in Malawi (unpublished paper July 1990)