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# Report of the Operation and Maintenance Working Group Meeting

New Delhi, 23-24 September 1996



Geneva, January 1997

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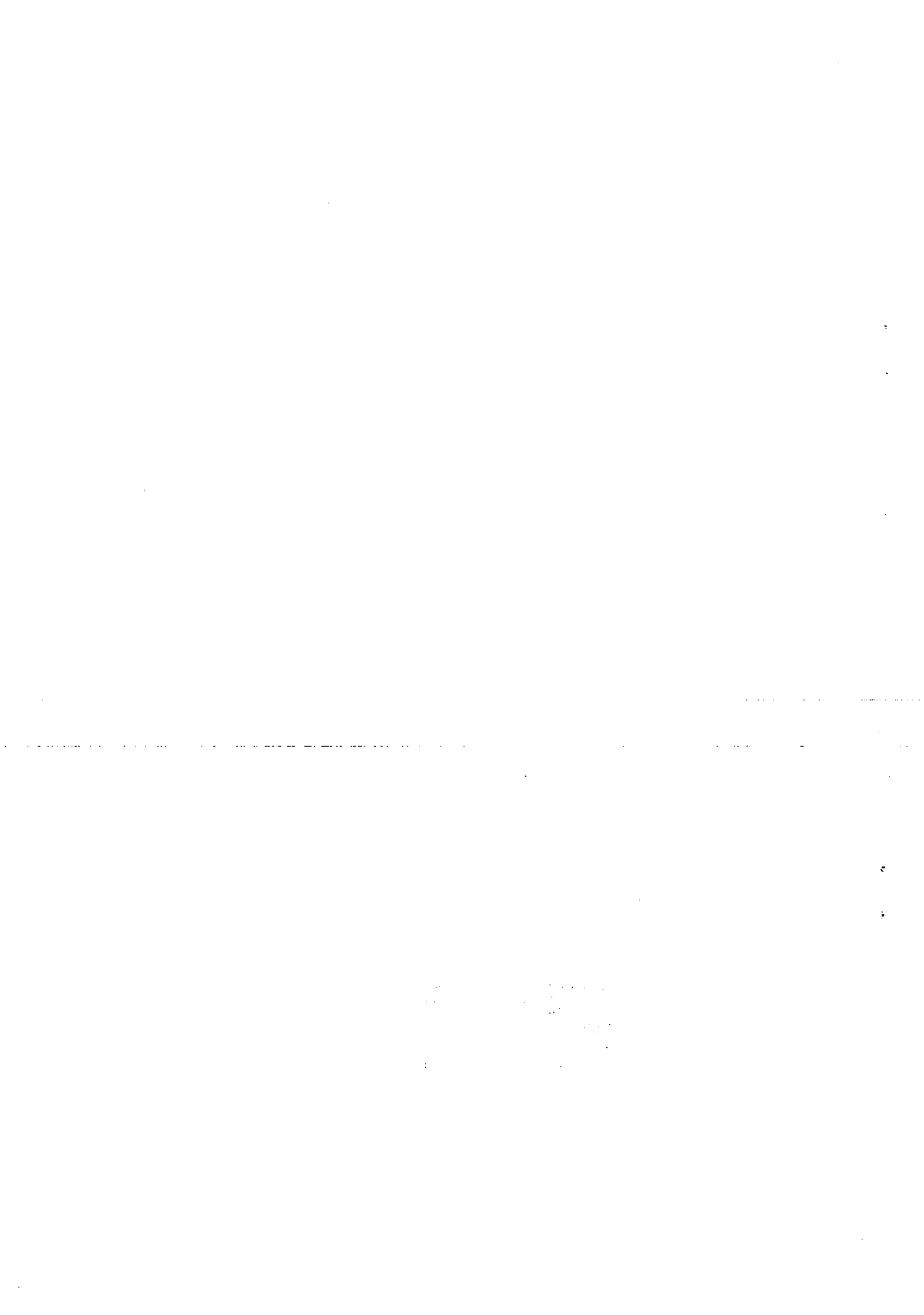
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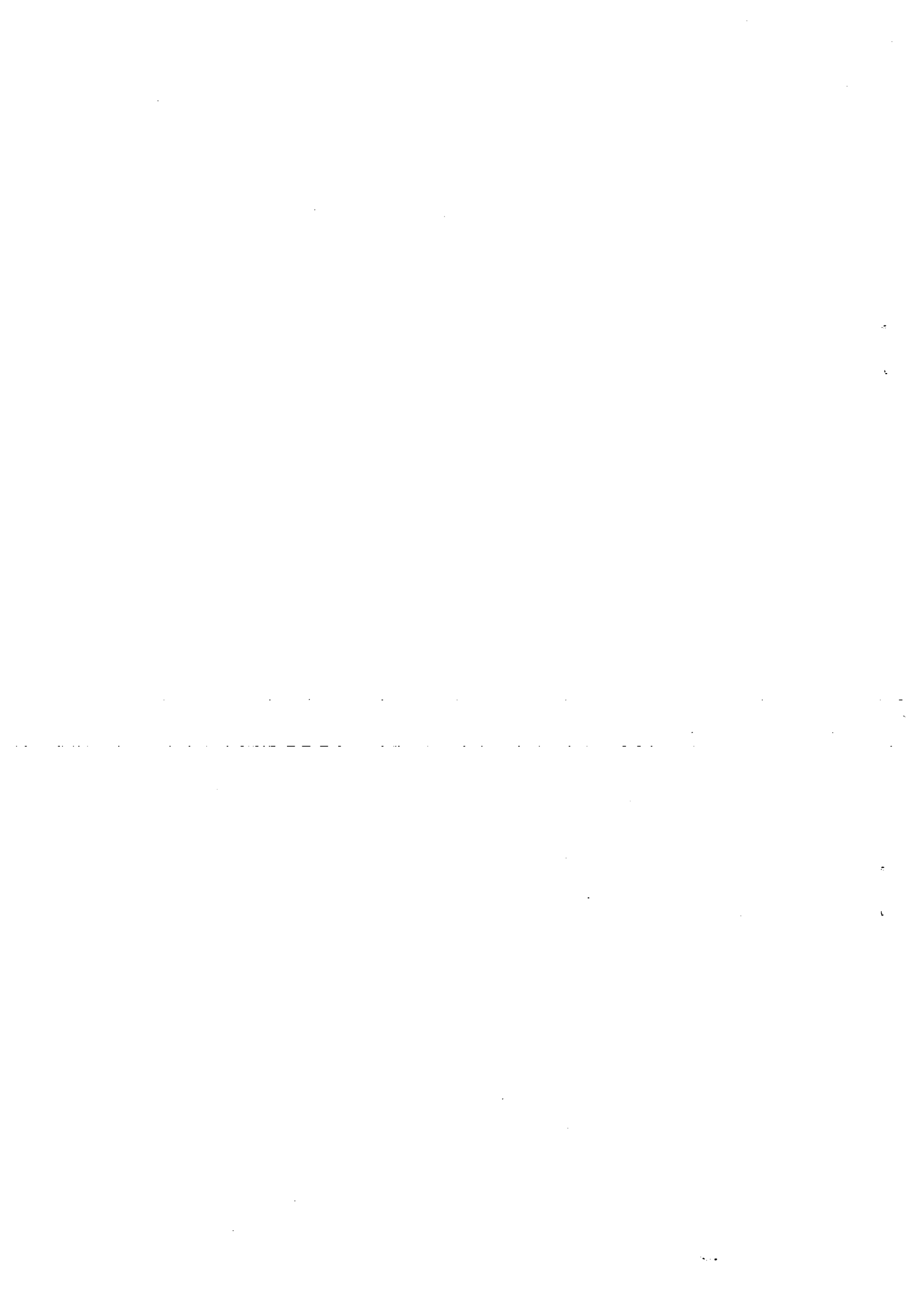
## Foreword

The Operation and Maintenance Working Group of the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council has fully achieved most of its objectives and targets over the past years. The work of the Group has been focused primarily on both the promotion of operation and maintenance and the development of tools covering different aspects of optimization and sustainability of water supply and sanitation facilities.

The Group is now seeking strategies and mechanisms to further promote these tools and have them extensively used by ESAs and water supply and sanitation agencies. The discussion on this issue at the Group meeting led to two major lines of action. First, it was decided that an assessment of performance of the Operation and Maintenance Working should be conducted with a view to optimizing its operations and making the most of resources available within and without the Group. Secondly, the Group should orient its future work through a decentralized framework where key regional or subregional agencies would play a major role in disseminating and applying O&M tools. Sound recommendations were formulated by the meeting with regard to the foregoing topics, which will be submitted to the Manila meeting of the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council.

On another note, it is important to highlight the success of the new Group's strategy where meetings are now organized back-to-back with national or regional O&M workshops. With this new approach, the momentum created by an Operation and Maintenance Working Group meeting is used to launch a major national or regional initiative on this issue. The National Workshop on Operation and Maintenance of Urban and Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Systems held in New Delhi from 25 to 27 September 1996 is a very successful example of this new strategy.

Finally, the work of all those who contributed to the success of this meeting should be acknowledged. Special thanks should be given to: the Government of India through Mr B.S. Minhas, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Urban Affairs & Employment and Mr Palat Mohandas, Joint Secretary & Mission Director, Ministry of Rural Areas & Employment and their staff for providing the facilities and logistical support to the meeting and for contributing substantially to the attainment of the objectives of the event; the Swiss Development Corporation for providing the facilitator of the meeting, Mr Tonino Zellweger, whose techniques and presence at the meeting were very effective and useful; Mr Ranjith Wirasinha, Executive Secretary of the WSSCC for his continued support to this process and relevant inputs to the meeting; members of the organizing committee including Mr John Pospisilik, WHO, Dr Robert Boydell, UNDP/WB, Mr Rupert Talbot, UNICEF; and, to the various representatives of the Government of India at the organizing committee, including Mr D.K. Bhalla, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Rural Areas & Employment and Dr S.R. Shukla, Advisor, Ministry of Urban Affairs & Employment. Many thanks to the members of the Operation and Maintenance Working Group for their valuable inputs not only to this meeting, but for their continued support to this process which has led to the current success of the Group. The hard work of the Group's members is the main driving force leading to substantial and relevant inputs into the water supply and sanitation sector over the past years.



## Objectives of the meeting

The objectives of the meeting were to enable members to:

- Receive presentations of global, regional, and country-level activities.
- Receive progress reports on the operation and maintenance tools, which are being continuously reviewed and updated, and report on their status of implementation.
- Review the draft terms of reference for the assessment of the Operation and Maintenance Working Group's (OMWG) performance, and provide inputs on how to operationalize the assessment, I.e. assess and learn from the Group's achievements to greater effectiveness.
- Collect ideas and visions for the decentralization of the Group's operations, to make implementation more effective.
- Define the activities and next steps in the decentralization process.

Professional facilitators were appointed to help conduct the sessions in order to make the process towards achieving the objectives more effective.

## Background and activities of the Group

### Activities and tools

Mr Hueb gave a presentation on the priority objectives and work of the Group and an overview of the tools. Group members presented progress reports on each tool. All presentations emphasized the need to promote the tools and implement them.

In the discussion, it was agreed that the national workshop following the Working Group meeting would be an ideal vehicle to begin the process of promotion and implementation of the tools in Asia. It was also agreed that decentralization was an important next step for dissemination of the tools, and the Group should take advantage of the presence of a large number of External Support Agencies (ESA) representatives at the meeting and arrange details of implementation.

Plans to hold several African national workshops in the near future, in Ghana, Kenya and Zimbabwe, were noted.

Dr Hoque suggested that a further tool was needed to address community involvement in the urban sector. She agreed to initiate this, using experiences from Bangladesh.

## **National activities**

Members of the Group illustrated their experiences of key operation and maintenance issues. Papers presented included:

- "Experiences of operation and maintenance in the Indian sub-continent (Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka)" by Dr Mohan.
- "Linking technology choice: a description of the fact sheets contained in one of the new OMWG tools" by Mr Werhle.
- "Initiatives from the World Bank and other agencies in developing a water utility partnership" by Mr Filali.
- "Dutch experiences of operation and maintenance in the Indian subcontinent" by Mr van Schaik.
- "Private sector participation in West Africa: the experiences of AQUANET" by Mr van Gastel.
- "New operation and maintenance tool on handpumps" by Mr Baumann.

## **The operation and maintenance network**

Mr Costantini gave a presentation on the role of CERFE in promoting the operation and maintenance network.

The main goal of the network is to extend OMWG membership. In this first phase, CERFE has four main tasks:

- To provide a computer-based information system covering members of the consultative group, the Working Group, and experts.
- To issue registration forms.
  - To create a database and keep it updated.
- To provide the Working Group coordinator with the data and updates.

Future tasks will include collection, analysis, supply and dissemination of information to support the dissemination and implementation of tools.



## Promotion of operation and maintenance

A draft advocacy paper had been circulated to members. A poster which had been produced by WHO was issued to members at the meeting. A draft second poster, illustrating a patched up leak, was circulated. Comments are requested on both the advocacy paper and on the second poster.

## Terms of reference for the assessment of the operation and maintenance working group

### Framework for discussion

A draft document on guidelines for the assessment, produced by Professor Kerri, had been circulated to members. Using this document as a basis, a framework of relevant questions for addressing the **impact**, the **effectiveness**, and the **efficiency** of the OMWG and its outputs was drawn up by the facilitator, as follows:

- What is the overall goal? *Sustainable drinking water supply and sanitation systems.*
- What are the objectives (direct effects)? *Promotion and support of improvement of operation and maintenance.*
- What results have been obtained or are expected? *For example:*
  - *good understanding of operation and maintenance;*
  - *profile has been raised;*
  - *toolkits developed;*
  - *training packages developed and applied;*
  - *practitioners guided in the application of tools;*
  - *netorking encouraged and promotion of tools started;*
  - *studies supported;*
  - *response of the OMWG to demand.*
- What measures have been taken?

A second framework of questions to address how the assessment would be **implemented** was suggested, as follows:

- What is the time schedule?
- Who will do it?

- In what form should the assessment be presented, and to whom?
- How will the assessment be financed?
- Who are the beneficiaries, partners, and mandators to be contacted?

## **The working groups**

Participants were divided into three discussion groups, comprising: OMWG members; representatives of External Support Agencies and international and national observers. This division ensured that comments were received from the providers of the tools as well as from the market side, i.e. the promoters and users of the tools.

The tasks of the discussion groups were to:

- Define the aims of the assessment; review the terms of reference; confirm the aims already identified; and identify any further aims.
- Consider background information; recall the lessons to be learned from the preceding presentations on operation and maintenance experiences, and include their own experiences, so as to be in a position to assess to what extent the work of the OMWG is relevant to each country's projects and activities, and the constraints to be overcome.
- Define the relevant questions to be answered; for example:
  - To what extent are the tools produced by the OMWG relevant to each country's activities and projects?
  - What support should evolve from the Working Group so that members can benefit?
  - How can the implementation and reporting of the assessment proceed?

## **Feedback from discussion groups and plenary sessions**

The salient points made, both in the discussion groups and in the plenary sessions, are summarized below.

**The main aims of the assessment are justification, clarification, and information, i.e.:**

- To provide justification for the continuance of the OMWG and to assess the implications of it stopping.

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- To clarify its mechanisms, including its structure, scope of work and workplan.
- To decide its future direction.
- To provide useful guidance to the Working Group.
- To increase understanding of the work of the Group.
- To document its usefulness.
- To provide External Support Agencies with evidence of its results.

Questions to assess the **process and activities** are:

- How has the demand for tools been assessed and met?
- how is the Working Group perceived by other professionals?

Questions to assess the **strategy** are:

- How were the target groups for the tools decided?
- What kind of interaction has been developed between North and South?
- What have been the bottlenecks in the implementation of the strategy?
- Is WHO the right host for operation and maintenance?
- Is the present status of the Working group adequate?
- What can be learned from other WHO initiatives?

Questions to assess **impact** are:

- Do the findings of the WorkingGroup have an impact on the policies of other institutions?
- In how many countries has operation and maintenance been improved by the input of the Group?
- What hard facts prove the effectiveness of operation and maintenance?
- What has been the impact on health?
- How is the Group perceived by the outside world?

Questions to assess **efficiency** are:

- What are the performance indicators, and have they been assessed?
- What is the cost effectiveness of the Working Group compared to its output?
- How do the supply mechanisms work?
- Are the tools relevant in terms of quality, and are they applicable?

**Questions to assess effectiveness are:**

- Are the objectives of operation and maintenance still relevant?
- Are there enough resources to meet the set objectives?
- Are the activities coherent with the objectives and the means?
- How many agencies have used the tools after a national workshop?
- How many agencies have reported back to the Working group?
- What is the level of coverage of the tools as compared to the priority objectives?
- Have the tools been modified, and, if so, how?
- Who is using the tools and which are used most?
- Which skill groups have used the tools?
- What other tools can be developed or used?

**Questions which relate to the constitution and activities of the Operation and Maintenance Working Group itself are:**

- Who are the actors involved in the activities of the Working Group?
- Does the Group take full advantage of its position?
- Does the Working Group promote operation and maintenance or the Group itself?
- How does the Group complement other activities of the operation and maintenance sector?
- Does the Group respond to the demands of the sector?
- How are the developing countries represented in the Group?
- Is the organizational framework of the Group appropriate?
- Is the existing structure the best one to achieve the Group's objectives?
- Do the members of the group represent a sufficient range of experience?
- What is the relationship between the Group and External Support Agencies?
- Does the Group complement and liaise with other actors in the sector, e.g., other working groups, both within and outside the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council?
- Is the Group unbiased, i.e. does the Group serve as a neutral platform for operation and maintenance, and is it achieving this neutrality?
- Is WHO the best choice of organization to lead the Group?

**Questions concerning implementation of the assessment are:**

- Where will the finance come from?
- Who will do the assessment, an internal task force or an external agency? *This is linked to budget - an external agency would be expensive. One solution would be an internal task force with an external facilitator.*

- What is the time schedule? *At least 6 months - a final document is needed for the Manila meeting of the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council?*
- In what form should the final presentation be? *Report plus workshop to gain more feedback, which could then be fed into the planning for the second phase of the Operation and Maintenance Working Group.*
- To whom should it be directed, i.e. who are the beneficiaries and partners?

Specific comments from the discussion group included:

#### External Support Agencies

- Many members had only heard of the tools at this workshop, but understood their importance. They would like to have the tools to assess their quality and effectiveness.
- Dissemination is clearly a crucial issue.
- Ownership should be via governments or State level training organizations, which should take the lead in dissemination.
- Tools should be adapted to local needs.
- Sanitation issues have not been addressed properly.

The observer discussion group commented, in particular, as follows:

- The work of the Operation and Maintenance Working Group has so far been useful and productive. It should now be adapted to different social, cultural and political situations.
- Tools and manuals should be formulated in and translated into local languages.
- The OMWG has to incorporate more feedback from the field and ESAs and donors should share experiences of their respective projects.
- The primary concern is how to measure operation and maintenance performance. Some suggestions for developing unified measurement criteria, which could be used in the assessment, were:
  - reliability of supply;
  - service level, per capita cost, cost recovery;

- identification of personnel involved and their responsibilities (from ministers to mechanics);
- level of community participation and management at all stages from planning to monitoring;
- transformation of hardcore technocrats to social engineers;
- quality of surveillance.

## Decentralization

### Framework for discussion

Members of the Operation and Maintenance Working Group were asked to consider the following three options.

**Option 1** - The present setup. This is a centralized system with WHO headquarters as the core. All activities are organized and controlled by the Operation and Maintenance Working Group and its secretariat in Geneva. The Group and its secretariat disseminate tools to regional training centres, and initiate implementation of projects at country level (Figure 1).

**Option 2** - One activity per site. Professor Kerri had produced a draft document outlining an option for decentralizing the Group activities by forming a centralized activity centre for each activity, with Geneva as the administrative core. Each activity centre could be located anywhere in the world (Figure 2). This option was modified during discussion (Figure 3).

**Option 3** - Task forces at several regional sites, each to cover a range of activities. A second document, produced by Mr Wehrle and circulated at the meeting, discussed a further option, which would retain a strong Group secretariat at the core, but not necessarily in Geneva, with regional centres and resource centres radiating from the hub. There would be an initial stage and a final stage, during which strong links between the regional centres and with the resource centres would be increasingly forged (Figures 4 and 5).

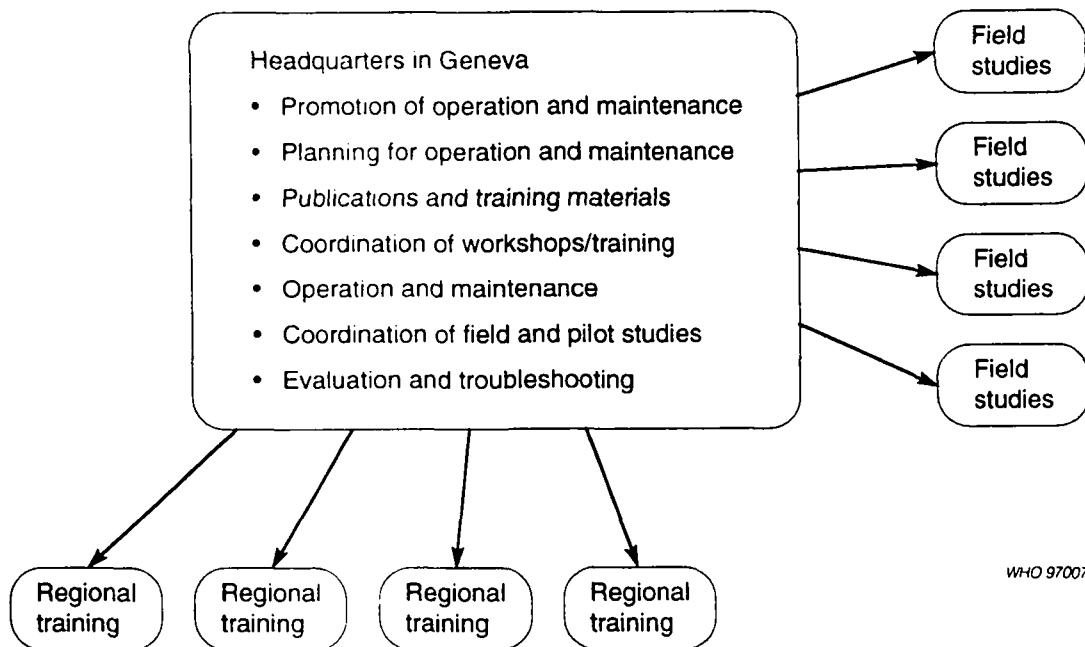
The general aim of the discussion was to ensure the sustainability of the OMWG to reach its set objectives. The question put to the Group was - is sustainability best achieved by decentralizing or not decentralizing, and if by decentralizing, what is organizational structure for the best option? The specific task of the meeting was to identify the selection criteria for choosing the best option.

Members formed into three working groups and were asked to consider one of the three options. The tasks of each working group were to:

- specify advantages and disadvantages of each option

- identify aspects of each option to be considered (e.g financial, political)
- add proposals for modification
- produce a layout of the favoured design

**Option 1 - The present setup.**



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Figure 1. Option 1 - The present setup.

The advantages of the present system are:

- its simplicity and informality;
- little bureaucracy;
- no need to increase capacity;

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- low risk of institutional failure;
- relatively low cost;
- easier to find funding;
- global vision.

The disadvantages are:

- remoteness from the action;
- low visibility;
- lack of understanding of country/local needs;
- incapacity to perceive local innovations and experiences;
- lack of feedback on the use of tools;
- low capacity for interaction with field experiences;
- lack of involvement of experts from developing countries;
- lack of ownership by, and participation of, beneficiaries;
- progressive reduction of the central role.

Some suggested proposals for modification of the present setup are:

- involve local networks which are already established;
- establish local centres on the basis of demand;
- improve communication with grassroots organisations;
- improve links with users;
- establish local and national bodies for adaptation of tools and their dissemination;
- improve the operation and maintenance message;
- improve the working mechanism, with better information collection and dissemination;
- consider rotating the position of core group leader.

The present system is low risk but has low potential. Decentralization would result in high risk but high potential.



**Option 2 - One activity per site, with the Operation and Maintenance Working group in a central role**

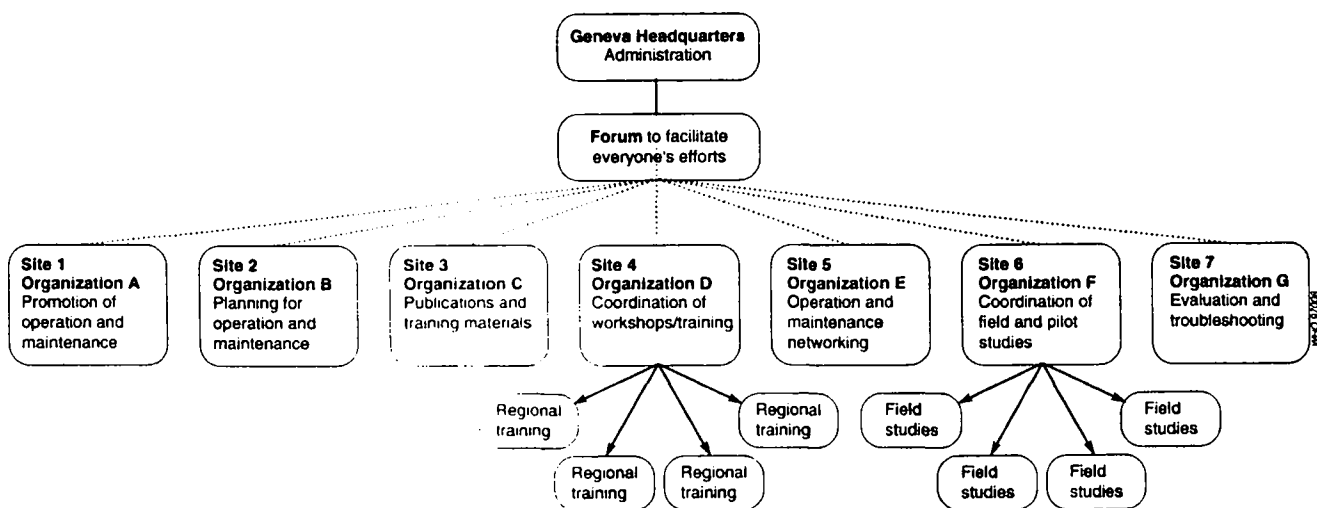
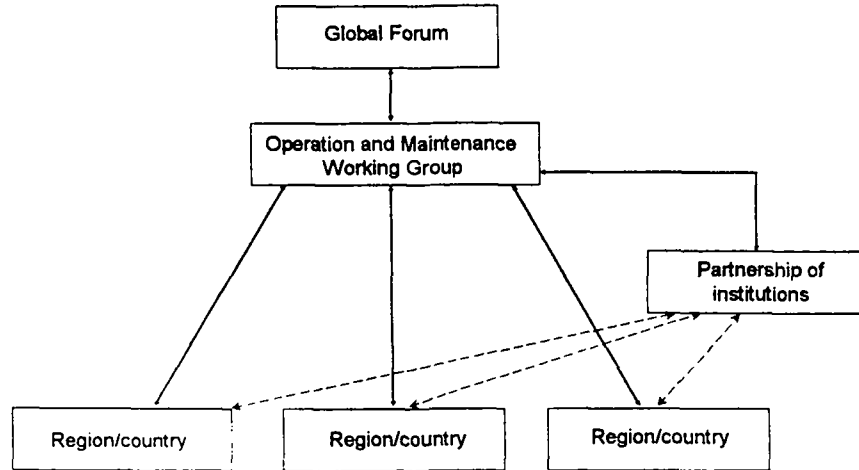


Figure 2. Option 2

The discussion group assessing this option found it to be unworkable, and suggested a modified Option 2 (Figure 3). It suggested a global forum at the highest level, which would monitor, give feedback to and receive feedback from, a central Operation and Maintenance Working group. The Group would retain the existing secretariat, which would have a strong facilitating role with a number of regional and country partners. A further tier would be a partnership of institutions, each partner holding the Group's products and tools. These institutions would be responsible for supplying existing tools to regional and country partners, and also for receiving feedback and requests for development of other tools. They would also maintain close links with the Group for tool development.



**Figure 3. Option 2 (modified)**

The role of the global forum would be to:

- feed back sector needs to the Operation and Maintenance Working Group.

The role and specific tasks of the Operation and Maintenance Working Group would be to:

- provide a secretariat and facilities;
- organize workshops to promote operation and maintenance;
- identify, prepare and test new tools and gather case study material;
- disseminate tools

The tasks of the regional and country partners would be:

- tailoring tools to local needs, testing and implementing them;
- collecting case study material;
- identifying needs for new tools.
- financing;
- feedback, planning and promotion.

The tasks of the partnership of institutions would be to:

- supply the Group's products and tools;
- respond to demand from regional and country partners;
- liaise with the Group and other partners to produce new tools

**Option 3 - Task forces and resource centres at several regional sites, with the Operation and Maintenance Working Group at the hub**

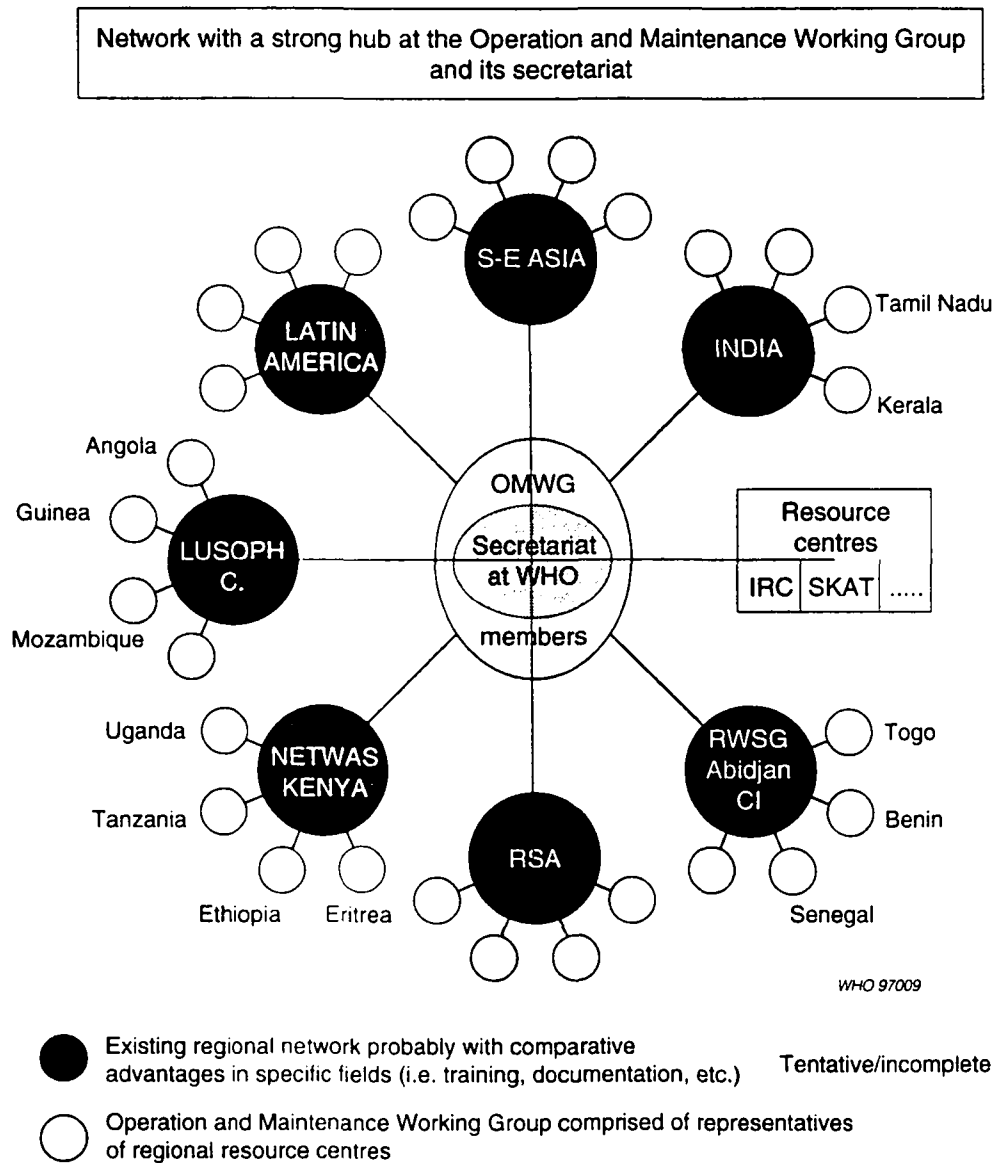


Figure 4. Operation and Maintenance Working Group network development: initial phase.

The aim of Option 3 is the formation of a number of decentralized institutions, each responsible for product delivery, forming a bridge between WHO headquarters and country level activities (Figure 4). The following aspects of

organization need to be considered.

The new setup should be:

- utilize existing setups and links;
- acknowledge the autonomy of network partners;
- apply horizontal and vertical linkages;
- be demand driven;
- maintain the momentum of operation and maintenance; complement and be compatible with other working groups;
- encourage the commitment of partners.

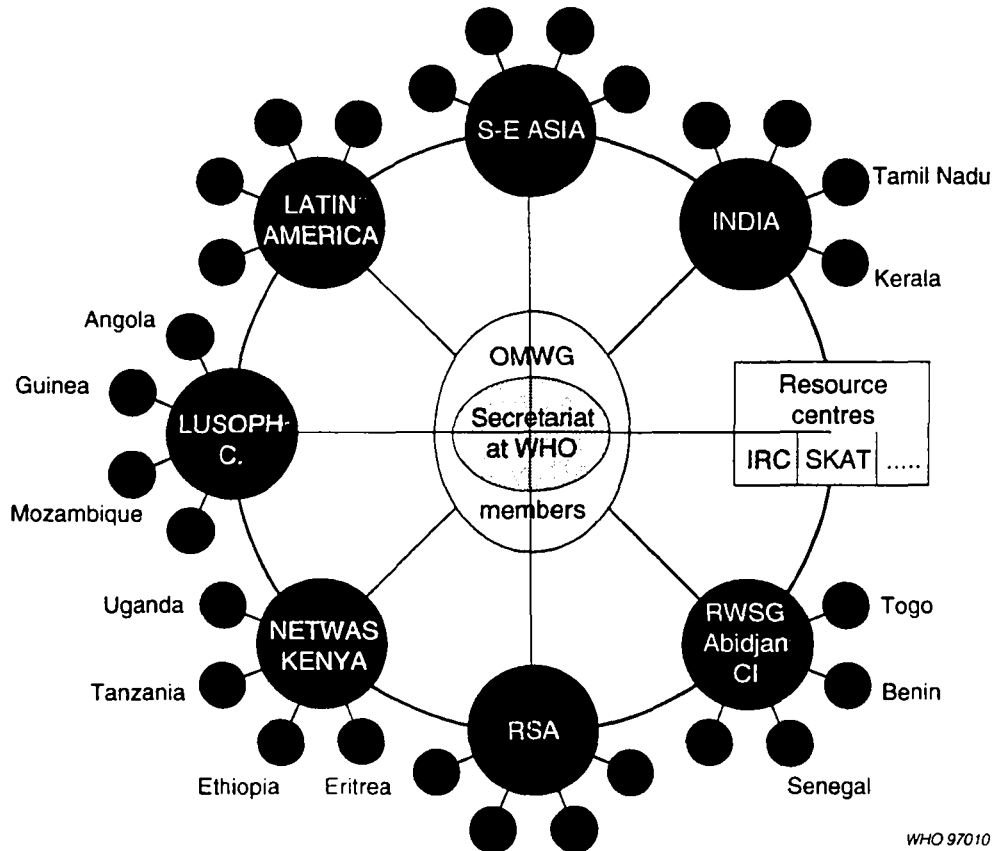
Task forces should be set up based on demand, for the transition stage of decentralization. They would be composed of professionals, from regional level, who would be responsible for introducing the tools. Implementation of tools would be at national level.

Suggestions for guidance of the network include:

- governance should be by a forum
- leadership should be by core group (frequency of meetings to be addressed)
- facilitation of linkage and administration should be by a secretariat
- technical assistance should be via resource centres (e.g IRC, SKAT)

Next steps, leading towards the final phase (Figure 5), should include:

Network with a strong rim/networking among regional and national centres  
Secretariat = Facilitator



- Existing regional network probably with comparative advantages in specific fields (i.e. training, documentation, etc.) Tentative/incomplete
- Operation and Maintenance Working Group comprised of representatives of regional resource centres

Figure 5. Operation and Maintenance Working Group network development: final phase.

- making use of the results of the assessment of the Operation and Maintenance Working Group;
- identification of task forces;
- identification of O&M centres;
- clarification of the role of the resource centres

## **Conclusions concerning decentralization**

The results and conclusions from each discussion group would be used by Mr Hueb to write a proposal, which would be circulated as a discussion paper to members of the Operation and Maintenance Working Group-.

The coordination of the Group's activities with those of other working groups is important.. Representatives of working groups are expected to participate in the meetings of the other working groups, and there is a forum whereby coordinators can exchange views. The next meeting is a mid-term review meeting, to be held in November 1997. The draft agenda for the first day includes a meeting of coordinators with members of the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council.. The next steps for implementing the tools, the role of the Operation and Maintenance Working Group in doing so, and the matter of decentralization will be discussed.

## **List of participants of the o&m working group meeting Vigyan Bhavan: 23-24 September 1996**

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