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Taking the Pulse
for Community Management
in Water and Sanitation

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A Call for Experience

What methods and capacities do communities need for assessing their progress in improving local water supply and sanitation? What goals and measures would lay a sound basis for such evaluation, enabling people to better manage project operations for better results?

These questions recently brought 18 agencies working on water and sanitation in developing countries together in a week-long international workshop. * They shared many revealing experiences and insights and planned to further develop and disseminate available tools and methods. A full report on the workshop will be published by its sponsors, PROWESS/UNDP and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), and be issued from IDRC in Ottawa, Canada.

This brochure is a brief interim report which does not necessarily reflect formal policy of UNDP or other participating organizations. It is part of the continuing search for experience and guidance available on these issues.

To aid in the process of further refinement, readers are invited to share their thoughts by contacting:

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**PROWESS — Promotion of the Role of Women in
Water and Environmental Sanitation Services — is an
interregional programme sponsored by the United Nations
Development Programme (UNDP)**

*Participants in the workshop, held 25 to 29 June 1990 in Geneva and hosted by the World Health Organization (WHO), came from:

- five multilateral organizations — UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), UN Development Programme (UNDP), World Bank and WHO;
- bilateral programmes of six countries — Denmark (DANIDA), Federal Republic of Germany (GTZ), Norway (NORAD), Sweden (SIDA), Switzerland (SDC), and United States (WASH-AID);
- seven non-governmental groups — African Development Foundation (ADF), African Medical and Research Foundation (AMREF), CUSO Canada, Fundacion de Tecnologia (FUNDATEC), International Development Research Centre (IDRC), International Reference Centre for Community Water Supply and Sanitation (IRC), and NORCONSULT.

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Involving People

An Emerging Consensus

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SANITATION (IRC)

During the decade of the 1980s, strategies in the water and sanitation sector were gradually re-oriented. They moved away from central **provision** of services towards central **promotion and support** for community initiatives and decision-making.

Why did this happen? Because it was becoming clear that involvement of users in decision-making, planning, design and management increases chances that water/sanitation facilities will be used fully and looked after properly. This approach heavily depends on building capacity — of individual men and women and of institutions in the community, in local government and at national level.

The challenge is to rethink monitoring and evaluation procedures to support such capacity-building. The problem is that taking the pulse and establishing accountability is easier for building facilities than building capacity. This challenge was the focus of an international workshop in June 1990, which addressed five main issues:

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- Can overall sector objectives be formulated so as to encompass all components, yet be measurable, monitored and evaluated?
 - How can capacity-building and gender concerns be reflected in the overall objectives?
 - Is there a "core set" of indicators common to the community, project/programme, district, national and global levels?
 - Do communities have the capacity to determine indicators and be involved in data collection and analyses? Can some of these data be used at higher levels?
 - How can the existing tools and experiences on indicators for participatory monitoring and evaluation be distilled, disseminated and further developed?

The conclusions and recommendations of the workshop represent an emerging consensus on participatory methods of monitoring and evaluation in water/sanitation. These criteria and tools have been developed and applied in several developing countries since 1983, and continue to be widely tested and adapted.



Measurable Goals and Objectives

Installation of water and sanitation facilities is not an end in itself but a means to improved health and productivity and a better living environment.

However, experience shows that measuring health impact is complex and does not provide guidance to programme managers for operational decision-making. Hence the need for intermediate objectives that go beyond production counts, but stop before trying to measure health impact. There is need to combine the often conflicting goals of production and capacity building into one.

The workshop accepted the following overriding goal for the water and sanitation sector:

To achieve sustainable and effectively used water and sanitation systems through methods that are replicable.

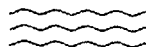
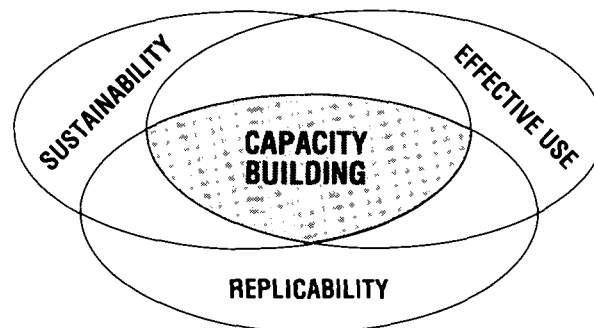
The three goals of sustainability, effective use and replicability should be the main planks of sector strategies.

Sustainability is achieved through building local capacity to anticipate and solve problems. At a minimum, it implies community and agency capacity to keep systems functioning.

Effective use is optimal, hygienic and consistent use of water and sanitation facilities so as to maximize benefits and minimize negative consequences over an extended period of time. Since women are the primary users, focus on use ensures their integration. Effective use is only achieved when people accept new practices and make them part of their everyday behaviour.

Replicability at the community level means that users achieve such a high degree of self-sufficiency that they can expand their efforts to new areas. For the sector agency, replicability means that elements of successful methods and approaches can be transferred to other projects/programmes or new geographical areas.

In practice, there is considerable overlap among these three goals. In particular, capacity-building within the community is the main requirement for progress towards all three goals. Gender analyses are essential throughout to ensure inclusion of women and improvement in the quality of their lives.

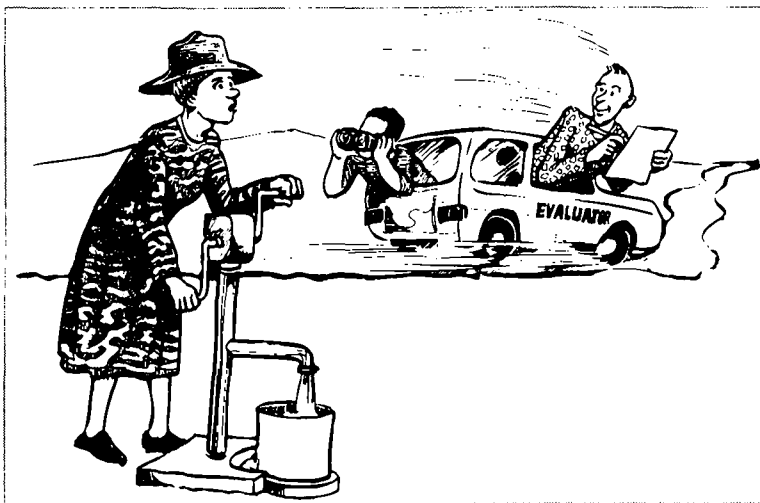


Why Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation?

All development programmes go through the cycle of planning, implementation and evaluation. Local self-sufficiency cannot be achieved by involving people only in planning and implementation but not in monitoring, evaluation and problem-solving.

Participation in decision-making cannot be put on tap, to be turned on and off when desired. For the entire process to succeed, participatory methods must be consistent — and consistently used — throughout the cycle.

Participatory evaluation involves users in collaborative generation of knowledge for purposes of problem-solving. The process leads to corrective action as users at all levels share in decision-making.



Since such evaluations have practical objectives, the methods and techniques are not bound to any one discipline. However, **merely conducting user surveys or asking community people to respond to questionnaires does not qualify as meaningful participation.** External experts are not precluded but they play a facilitating role in partnership with the community and programme staff, rather than the “expert supreme.”

User involvement embraces users at different levels. It includes people at the community level — women, men and children; officials and also project/programme staff; and anyone else affected by decisions made. When users are actively involved in data collection for evaluation, information becomes transformed into knowledge and leads to self-sustained action. Participatory evaluation is thus crucial in local capacity-building.

Findings from participatory evaluation can feed into conventional evaluation exercises required by most agencies at project mid-term and completion. However, their purposes and methodologies are distinct and should not be confused, as summarized in the top box on the next page.



Differences Between Conventional Evaluation and Participatory Evaluation

Who	External experts	Community people, project staff, facilitator
What	Predetermined indicators of success, principally cost and production outputs	People identify their own indicators of success, which may include production outputs
How	Focus on "scientific objectivity"; distancing of evaluators from other participants; uniform, complex procedures; delayed, limited access to results	Self-evaluation; simple methods adapted to local culture; open, immediate sharing of results through local involvement in evaluation processes
When	Usually upon completion; sometimes also mid-term	Merging of monitoring and evaluation; hence frequent small evaluations
Why	Accountability, usually summative, to determine if funding continues	To empower local people to initiate, control and take corrective action

Community Testing, Community Correction

In Kibwezi, Kenya, a community Wells Committee had been building and managing wells since 1984 and decided to evaluate its performance with the assistance of African Medical and Research Foundation (AMREF). This included water quality testing.

After training, Committee members made a sanitary survey of wells, tested water using the Coliform dipslide method, and took photographs to identify possible sources of pollution. High levels of pollution were found in samples taken from households.

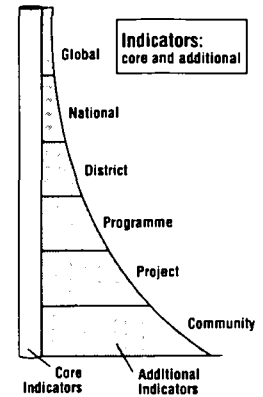
Observing Coliform colonies through magnifying glasses, the Committee correlated these with photographs, inspection of wells and water containers. The Committee developed a plan of corrective action, including repairing lining of wells, education of community members, increased chlorination and further examination of condition, colour and translucency of jerry cans.

Search for Core Indicators

To measure the progress achieved in community-centred development of water and sanitation, the objectives of sustainability, effective use and replicability need to be spelled out in more detail. This is done by (1) identifying the most important elements in these three objectives and (2) breaking down each element into a number of more detailed, measurable indicators.

For example, measuring progress towards hygienic use involves a sequence extending from water collection sites to the home environment and personal hygiene practices. Within this sequence, indicators for measuring hygiene in the home include the availability of cleansing materials, cleanliness of facilities, waste water disposal, provision for latrine emptying, etc.

Specific elements and indicators have been formulated for the three overall objectives (see next page). In different communities, different indicators may be relevant or be applied with varying weight, according to the local context. However, a basic **core** of indicators is considered to have universal application at community, national and global levels.



1. Community and project/programme monitoring

For community management of programmes, both the core indicators and a wide range of additional specific indicators are needed. This is because detailed tracking must be done for all relevant activities and achievements, and for identifying which elements require what kinds of adjustment by which participants.

Communities must be involved in setting objectives and in identifying indicators during the planning phases. The resulting data from multiple communities are then combined into aggregates at project and programme levels which, in addition, will have other specific data needs.

2. National monitoring

National monitoring is the responsibility of governments, which evaluate work in the sector in relation to overall country priorities and resources.

One key input for national monitoring is data aggregated from the use of the core indicators at community levels. This provides information on community concerns, commitments and capacities to help in reshaping national sector planning to support community-centred development.

For national monitoring, several developing countries have adopted PROFILE, a computerized information management system developed by WHO. The system can be easily adapted to country-specific needs and offers a way of standardizing data across countries. This will facilitate information exchange among countries and contribute towards global monitoring.

3. Global monitoring

WHO and UNICEF, together with other external support agencies and developing country representatives, will lead monitoring efforts at the global level. It is both an outgrowth and aggregation of country-level monitoring and a response to sub-regional, regional and global concerns. Fewer items need to be monitored than at national level.



Objectives and Indicators for Community and Project/Programme Level

Objectives	Elements and Indicators
1. Sustainability	
Functioning systems	Quality of water at source Number of facilities in working order Breakdown and repairs
Management and capacity-building	
– Individuals	Management abilities (decision-making) Knowledge and skills Confidence, self/concept
– Local institutions	Autonomy Supportive leadership Systems for learning and problem-solving
Financing and cost-sharing	Community contribution Agency contribution Unit costs
2. Effective use	
Optimal use	Number and characteristics of users Quantity of water used, all purposes Time taken to use facilities Management of water resources
Hygienic use	Water quality at home Water transport and storage practices Home practices to improve water quality Site and home cleanliness Personal hygiene practices
Consistent use	Pattern of daily use Pattern of seasonal use
3. Replicability	
Community ability to expand services	Additional water/latrine facilities built by community Upgrading of existing facilities New development activities undertaken
Transferability of agency methods and strategies	Proportion and role of specialized personnel Established institutional framework Budget size and sheltering Documented planning and implementation procedures

Summarized from **Participatory Evaluation** (draft document), issued by PROWESS/UNDP, WHO, World Bank and UNICEF, May 1990.

Objectives and Indicators for National and Global Level

Objectives	Indicators for monitoring at:	
	National level	Global level
1. Sustainability		
Functioning systems	Percent of facilities in working order Average downtime	Systems/installations functioning, and number of persons they serve
Management and capacity-building	Functional community water supply and sanitation committee Number of committee members trained (male/female) Number of persons served and systems managed by: – communities – private sector/NGOs – government Community ranking of priorities, resources, etc. Availability of two-way reporting/communication channels	Percent of maintenance costs met by communities
Financing and cost-sharing	Share of capital and recurrent costs met by: – community – government – external agencies	Total annual capital investment in sector; percent devoted to low-cost technologies
2. Effective use		
Access	Number of users compared to design population Gender of users (water and latrines)	Systems/installations utilized; number of persons effectively using them
Hygienic use	Protection or treatment of water in household Proportion of water used for personal hygiene	
3. Replicability	New activities initiated by community	



Next Steps

By definition, participatory systems are highly decentralized — and so are decisions and actions to implement them. Each community and each country determines what it needs, wants and can do to set the style and speed and to “take the pulse” of local water supply and sanitation programmes.

National agencies typically need to adjust their roles to support community-centred development, rather than setting targets based only on construction and production.

Community decision-making generates changed priorities and strong feedback. As a result, more flexibility is required in central strategies, programmes, budgets and schedules. The benefits are that community self-sufficiency is increased and scarce central resources can thus be spread wider.

External agencies are helping, as agreed at the Geneva workshop, to widen the use of participatory monitoring and evaluation methods in programmes they support.

In collaboration with national partners, they are contributing towards:

research to improve tools and indicators for measuring sustainability, effective use and replicability, including applied research by developing country institutes (focal point: IDRC);

training of programme staff at workshops organized by national and regional centres including development of interactive training materials;

programming by incorporating participatory evaluation — and regular response to its findings — in their sector policies and guidelines (e.g. UNDP/World Bank Water and Sanitation Programme guidelines);

national planning by encouraging monitoring as a management tool to improve sector performance (focal point: UNICEF). National monitoring is a government activity; WHO will adapt the PROFILE system to respond to government needs. Global monitoring will be a joint effort of WHO and UNICEF with World Bank, UNDP and other agencies;

sharing experience in these fields through the newly created Monitoring/Evaluation Network (focal point: PROWESS/UNDP).

Forthcoming Publications

To help promote wider use of participatory methods, four publications will be issued in late 1990 and 1991:

- A comprehensive treatment for development professionals will be provided in **Participatory Evaluation: Tools for Managing Change in Water and Sanitation**, by D. Narayan-Parker.
- Sharing of experience among 18 international agencies will be reported in **Goals and Indicators for Community Management: State of the Art for Water and Sanitation**.
- Community-level techniques will be discussed and demonstrated in **Field Guide for Extension Workers: Participatory Methods for Monitoring and Evaluation**.
- For help in designing participatory research projects, a **Participatory Research Manual** will be published.

“Community participation in decision-making cannot be put on tap, to be turned on and off when desired. Participatory methods must be consistent — and consistently used — throughout the cycle of planning, implementation and evaluation.”

“The challenge is to rethink monitoring and evaluation to support capacity-building. The problem is that taking the pulse and establishing accountability is easier for building facilities than building capacity.”
