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Provision of water for communities

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PROVISION OF WATER FOR COMMUNITIES

INTRODUCTION:

Most Ugandans live in rural areas and are confronted with high morbidity and mortality rate due to diseases derived from unsafe water, improper sanitation and immunisable diseases.

Uganda like the rest of the developing World put in efforts in improving the quality of life for its citizens by participating in the Global declared "Water Decade" of the eighties and "Health for all by the year 2000".

The Government of Uganda allowed a number of Developmental Agencies/Non Governmental Organisations(NGO's) working within the framework of water and Sanitation improvement to operate within the Country alongside the Water Development Department(W.D.D) the Department in the Ministry of Lands, surveys, mineral and water resources responsible for the provision of clean water in rural and semi-urban areas of Uganda.

Past experience has shown that for a community to really achieve the full benefits of an improved water and sanitation system they must participate actively in its making, so as to ensure maximum sustainability, once the Implementing Agencies handover the completed installations to them.

Donor Agencies are accountable to people, church groups etc. back at home, who raise the funds that they use for their work; hence they need to give periodic progress reports to the funders. On receiving the reports, the donors are very much interested to know figures of numbers of completed water/sanitation installations completed within a specified time frame. Therefore the funders squeeze the Agencies for the results and these in turn pass on the pressures to the intended beneficiaries of the Project, the Community.

The community, more than often have their own other pressures that at times, leading to a low performance and are perceived to be not active as far as Community Participation is concerned. This creates a negative

Image on the community by the Donor Agencies and so in the long run projects are cancelled or done alone by the Agencies with a very little minimum of community involvement which might result to long term disastrous effects.

During the 1980's, the provision of safe drinking water within 500 metres was the primary goal of the Uganda Government and many NGO's working in the Water Sector. A number of Government Ministries, Departments, Religious Organisation and NGO's, conducted mass mobilisation campaigns and Health Education sessions in rural and semi-urban areas in order to sensitise communities, to know and appreciate their new roles in planning, putting into place and maintenance of improved Communal water projects.

The popularly elected Resistance Councils (R.C's) from Village to District level, were very instrumental right from the mid-eighties for community mobilisation.

The Government and NGO's trained their field extension workers in Community Mobilisation Skills and were equipped with facilities i.e bicycles, motorbikes, boots etc. to motivate them in the facilitation exercise of the campaign. Hence the communities were mobilised and encouraged to set up water committees, spring/well committees, borehole user committees etc, to oversee and generally supervise community participation in all stages of the project cycle.

The National Resistance Movement (NRM) also encouraged R.C's to include on their agenda for periodic meetings, water improvement and Sanitation issues, in their areas. Communities elected people for training by

the WDD and NGO's in the basic technical skills of construction and repair of the water installations. The area was now all set for Government and NGO's to assist Communities alleviate their water problems.

From the mid-Seventies to the mid eighties, Uganda was hit by a wave of political changes which were very disastrous to her economy.

In Mubende district, Action Aid operates a Multi-sectoral development programme in two locations namely: Mityana and Buwekula. The latter is situated in the mid Western part of the Country, and the target area covers two subcounties with an estimated population of 62,380. People in this area, are of two Categories; about 75% are the cultivators and 25% the pastoralists.

A baseline Survey conducted in the area in 1988 reveals that the water/sanitation situation in Buwekula County is critical. The major sources of water are Man-made pools or natural depressions filled by rain water or unprotected springs. The few existing dams and boreholes which were constructed between 1950 - 1960, as a means of attracting settlers from other parts of Uganda, are now in a state of disrepair, due to neglect and lack of maintenance. The tables below, show the state of Water and Sanitation in Buwekula:

Table 1(a) Water Sources¹

Source	Frequency	%
Pools	730	66.7
Un protected Spring	201	18.3
Dam	58	5.3
Swamp/river	96	8.7
Hand pump	8	0.7
Protected Spring	1	0.1
Banana Stem	1	0.1
Total	1,096	100.0%

Table 1(b) Sanitation¹

Condition of latrine	Number	%
Good	13	1.2
Fair	208	19.0
Poor	335	30.6
None	540	49.2
Total	1,096	100.0%

1. Action Aid Uganda-Baseline Survey Report - 1988.

The civil strife reduced most of the Country's Socio-economic infrastructure to pieces. About the same time, the world was experiencing a general Global Economic recession which mainly hit the developing countries of Africa Asia and latin America. This was another nail into the coffin for Uganda, Consequently, she found herself being grouped amongst the World's 10 least developed nations.

With the provision of safe water within a short walkable distance, Action Aid is involved the following activities:

Boreholes- Action Aid owns no drilling equipment but has sponsored Community training programmes conducted with the allowances for facilitation in seminars and for the repair of each boreholes. 28 boreholes have been repaired but continued to break down regularly due to overload. A programme for drilling more boreholes in the whole district sponsored by the Italian Government has been launched. It is hoped that this will reduce the tension and that communities will manage the installations themselves.

Springs/Wells: In areas which are well endowed with natural springs, the major activity is protection of those Springs and wells where the terrain does not allow the free flow of water. This is a cheaper was of providing safe water for communities but does not go unchallenged;

- In most cases materials provided by Communities are of low grade and not suitable for the protection work. For quality and durability bricklining of wells has been replaced by use of concrete culverts.
- Lifting water from wells is done by the traditional bucket and rope, so wells are left open and run a greater risk of getting contaminated if not used carefully.
- Accessibility - Most Springs are found on slopes below the villages therefore, protection of these springs may provide clean water for the people but will not solve the problem of distance from homes. Hand drilling and use of the bucket pump is being tested in the target area and if successful will solve the accessibility quize.
- Rain Water harvesting: has been another alternative considered for small communities

like schools, dispensaries and for places where natural springs are sparse. Four brick lined water tanks have been constructed on schools with iron roofs to store water collected from the roofs. Another cheaper tank made of a woven basket and three coats of plaster has been tried on one school and has so far proved successful. This will save the community a lot of expense because they are only required to provide the basket, sand and stones.

• Surface Water ponds:

Excavation of surface water pools with an attached watering trough for cattle constructed of non-porous earth is a traditional technology of the pastoralists, who live in the drier parts of the target area. These ponds are the only sources of water and usually dry up during the dry seasons. The seasonality of these ponds is the main reason for the nomadic way of life for the pastoralists, and is a big set back in developing these areas. ActionAid has intervened in assisting these people to enlarge their ponds by provision of implements like hoes, spades, wheelbarrows etc. A local consultant recommended a reservoir of size 100' X 200' X 15' deep (commonly known as a valley tank) which can hold at least 2M gallons of water enough for both human and livestock annual requirements. Currently ActionAid is assisting Communities to pay 75% of labour costs for construction of ponds of 'size 100' x 50' x 15' and the community are supposed to meet the rest. This is still a fresh initiative and no results have been recorded yet but two projects have taken off. Other than water improvement, there were many other problems facing the communities. Parents wanted their children to attain some good levels of Basic Education, improved Rural roads for the promotion of market for their Agricultural produce which was the main stay of their economic income. Health facilities which had collapsed were also ranked high on the priority list.

Government could not meet all these demands alone. A member of friendly countries NGO's World Bank and the IMF, to mention a few, come in to the rescue. Tough Austerity measures were announced and Ugandans were told that they had to physically participate in the rebuilding of all the dilapidated sectors of their strattered Economy.

The cost of living for the average person was so high yet he was required to in addition to supporting his family contribute to nation reconstruction in usually either one or two forms i.e physically participation or through taxation. So with all the featuring highly as priorities and all within one another, the question now was how much community participation would be taken to be ideal for Ugandans against a back load of many other Domestic problems. It is true that for the promotion of a well sustained water system the Beneficiaries must be involved right from inception of the project through the planning implimentation and mantainance stages. Many NGO's in Uganda emphasis the community's Participation so as for communities to qualify for material assistance for the improvement of water resources. They Commonly forget that the community has so many other pressures arising from other problems, which problems, are at times difficult to prioritise and often requires working out within the same period of time. This make the community so committed with many problems and are unable to meet all the demands which are pre-requiste for them to qualify for the assistance that they are so much in need of.

Given below are figures relating to community verses Action Aid contributions for classroom construction.

Table II(a)

Classroom Construction - Community Vs Action Aid Contribution

ACTION AID CONTRIBUTION ITEM	QUALITY	TOTAL COST (U SHILLINGS)
C152m	21 pcs	49539
C152.5	21 pcs	62034
Ridges	5 pcs	7910
Cement	33 bags	380000
Wire nails 5"	6 Kg	1638
Wirenails 4"	5 Kg	1365
Wirenails 3"	4 Kg	1092
Wire nails 7"	1 kg	273
Roofing nails	8 kg	4648
Timber Window frames	3 pcs	4500
Timber shutters	10 pcs	20000
Hinges	10 pairs	5000
Total ActionAid Contribution		490,999

1. REMMY TWINOMUJUNI: Costing Action Aid (£351).

Uganda's Subsidy 1990. (A report)

TABLE II(b)
Community Contribution^I

ITEM	QUANTITY	TOTAL CONT
Bricks	4000 pcs	80,000
Lake sand	3trips	120,000
River sand	3 trips	75,000
Timber 3"x2"x14"	60 pcs	60,000
Timber 4"x2"x14"	60 pcs	72,000
Timber 4"x3"x14"	20 pcs	30,000
Stones aggregates	3	90,000
Labour	-	250,000
Total Community contribution		777,000 (E555)
Total cost of putting up a classroom		1,267,999 (E905)

Note: Average Income per capita in Uganda is US\$260 p.a.

The statistics in tables II(a) and (b) indicate that community contributions amounts to significant percentages and constitute a significant socio-economic factor to the success of the projects. It is worthwhile to note that there are also other activities in which Community participation cannot be directly valued eg. meetings, awareness raising, Courses etc. Agencies should not wait for communities to be ready with the often called "local materials" before their intervention. Assistance should

be extended to include transportation of bulk local materials to the site in cases where they are not within reasonable distance. At times these materials may not be available community cannot abandon work on their farm to go in search of these materials NGO's could assist to identify some of these materials and in case they are being sold help to buy and transport them to sites. To appreciate the Community's involvement in the implementation of projects, an understanding of the local socio-economic environment of the area is required on part of the implementing agencies so that they fully know and appreciate the factors responsible for the slow pace of the community. This is better done by having field staff of the Agencies living with communities in areas of operation. Some communities may be willing to participate but may lack the resources that are expected of them. This problem could be quite easily detected and

solutions worked out. In such cases, it would be proper if the Agency reviewed and adjusted its level of subsidy to the communities, but mindful not to totally sink the community's participation Spirit. Except in very critical situations, a reasonable absolute minimum in a water project would be 25% input from Community against 75% from Agency/NGO.

CONCLUSION: With the end of the Water Decade, countries and Developmental Agencies that have been involved in provision of water to Communities need to assess and evaluate the results of their work. In Uganda, lower targets than expected were recorded due to Political turmoils in targetted areas, World Wide economic recession, causing increasing world market prices and Iflation. Participation by the communities which often gave the pace of operation of the projects was observed to be generally low. The communities were well educated on the benefits of an improved water source in the preliminary stages, but of locally available materials within reasonable distance in some areas, contributed to some of the major factors to the low targets. For some of those projects which were completed communities have had problems with the maintainance especially where the spare parts are not locally available some of the spares have to be purchased abroad. Therefore countries and Development Agencies should now re-address their focus of attention to means of subsidising on their Inputs to support to communities that have been had by the economic recession. Ways of assisting those communities who can not avail local materials for construction must be sought so as to encourage them continue with the project. On the maintenance, training of the community, mechanic and Caretaker alone is not enough. Investigations should be undertaken to study the possibilities of extending the assistance to cover the setting up of Industries/factories to fabricate essential parts/spares required for the continued running of the water system. With all these factors thought through, there may be chance of hitting targets in the "Health for all by the year '2000", as far as provision of Water for Communities is concerned.