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COMMUNICATION OF INFORMATION

Water Supply and Sanitation

Beyond 1990

Public Information and Promotion

Consultant Report
by
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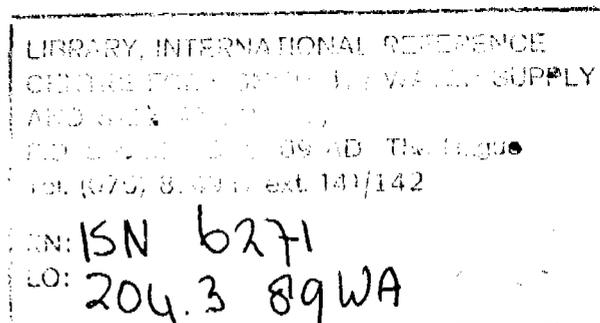
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INTRODUCTION

The overwhelming need to accelerate Water Supply and Sanitation (WSS) beyond 1990 --based on health, life and human rights considerations-- requires no elaboration here. The central issue which has occupied the attention of the Temporary Working Group on Information (TWG-INFO) in Public Information and Promotion (PIP) is an effective strategy to communicate relevant information to various segments of the public with long-term benefits. The assignment called for an analysis of public information and promotion (PIP) problems and needs and an outline of options for a future promotional strategy in the form of a supplement to the TWG-INFO report. The author accepted the one-week assignment on the understanding that time constraint would not allow a comprehensive review of the problem and needs, nor a strategic plan of action with details.

The report consists of five sections:

1. General comments on PIP issues raised by the TWG-INFO
2. Options for initial steps
3. Options for implementation: some illustrative actions in major areas of concern for PIP
4. Commitment of resources
4. A chart: time frames for actions.

The author met with a number of WSS officials in UNDP, UNICEF and World Bank, who provided valuable information and suggestions in the course of the preparation of the report. More specifically, he was indebted to Mr. Hans Van Damme of IRC, Chairman of TWG-INFO, Luis Rivera and Tony Hewett of UNICEF and Frank Hartvelt and David Kinley of UNDP for their important input, patience and time. It is hoped that the 1990 committee will find enough in the report to take some decisions to continue the process of strategic development for PIP.

1. General Comments

The Process of Communication

Communication is a complicated process of human action, reaction and interaction, in which there are unfortunately more variables than the social and behavioral scientists have been able to identify. These many variables are what make us human and unpredictable; they also play havoc even with the best planned and carefully targeted communication efforts. Sporadic efforts at

communication, however skillfully executed, often bring no more than flashes of attention-getting fireworks that soon disappear in a dark sky.

Effective communication that leads to behavioral changes involves multiple channels of information dissemination; it requires interpersonal follow up and dialogue, the involvement of individuals concerned, often skill acquisition, and reinforcement from various sources. For these reasons, it is preferable to approach development activities with the perspective of a continuum of communication activities evolving around a constant core message for adaption to specific audiences, ranging from advocacy at one end to community education at the other.

It is now acknowledged that the U.N. Water Decade has not devoted sufficient attention to the broad area of communication. Along with the physical inputs of drilling for water, installation of pumps and the building of latrines and other waste disposal facilities, many WSS managers accept that the information and education inputs are equally important in the attainment of the goals of WSS. In fact, these efforts pose bigger challenges, as they involve not only diffusion of knowledge but also changing attitudes and habits. The critical role of communication for such inputs is self-evident.

A Broad Communication Perspective

The TWG-INFO report dealt with various types of information activities at national, regional and international levels: public information and promotion, technical information exchange, project and sector information and management information, and recognized the linkages among these types of information work. It considered only partly an integrated operation covering all information work. The author believes fervently that an integrated plan of information dissemination targeting specific audiences, focused on clear objectives, will offer two advantages. It would provide an effective managerial framework and help clarify the functions of data collection as well as the benefits of dissemination. This is applicable to information dissemination to top management for planning purposes, to project personnel for operational purposes, or to the public groups for social mobilization. All information work, including technical data distribution, can benefit from more focused presentation.

Community Education and Involvement

The report referred to the need of training community workers in communication skills and equipping them with information and materials to motivate community members through a process of involvement. This, in effect, deals with the critical part of hygiene education at the community level, a vital area of work which will ultimately make an break WSS in the 1990s. Some WSS

staff consider the task of educating the public through community efforts a part of human resources developing and training. However, such training aims at influencing ways of living and effectuating behavioral changes; it involves a two-way dialogue with the community and a process of learning, somewhat more complex than the usual training methods for technicians and artisans engaged in WSS work --captive audiences who are assumed to be already motivated.

Strong Corporate Image

The desire expressed in the report of the TWG, to have a strong corporate image for WSS is understandable, especially if Beyond 1990 aims to accelerate the momentum. However, WSS is part of development, and water and sanitation is but one of many priority areas that the participating agencies are concerned with. If one pushes too hard for a strong, independent image, one may give the impression of a vertical thrust, when the development community, in general, has been emphasizing the horizontal approach.

Moreover, the new development thrusts for the 1990s appear to be environment (Brundtland Report--Our Common Future) and education (Basic Education for All conference in Bangkok 1990). In addition, WHO's Health for All by the year 2000 movement has another decade to go and is the natural developmental context for water and sanitation. It would be prudent, therefore, to try to work for higher visibility but shy away from any appearance of an independent development objective. WSS should claim a part of the environment thrust and the education front (through school health education on water and sanitation). Going it alone without the development context is probably neither possible nor desirable.

Commitment at the Highest Level

Higher visibility and a clearer image for WSS require more than promotional activities by professionals; it must have the policy commitment at the highest level and the personal involvement of top management, which sets the pace for the rank and file. Furthermore, decisions on programme substance have communication implications; even programme goals should be considered in light of public credibility and acceptability. It is no accident that major corporations assign communication responsibilities to a senior vice president or executive vice president, i.e. a member of the highest policy groups.

Begin with Candor

Bureaucratic whitewash is a standard practice when a task is not completed. Many find excuses in describing a half empty glass as half full, and consider such tactics good public relations. For WSS Beyond 1990, the author proposes the opposite. Given the odds and constraints, the Decade achievements may be indeed

commendable. There is no denying, however, that the goals of the Decade will not be made by the end of 1990. Since Beyond 1990 represents both a continuation and an acceleration, it must take account of past failures and achievements, state clearly the present situation and hammer on the overwhelming needs made more urgent where rapid population growth outpaces expanding WSS work. Chronicling failures that yield useful lessons should be a legitimate part of public information output, it goes without saying that real success stories should be disseminated for replication and inspiration.

A Single Command for PIP

The unusual camaraderie of the WSS technical staff is refreshing and represents an important asset for Beyond 1990. It means the group can take joint decisions and act in concert. However, for Beyond 1990 to succeed in the communication area, each agency will have to agree to give up some of its autonomy, so that joint actions under one single command are possible. This does not mean an authoritarian line of actions by an interagency group or a designated lead agency for PIP tasks; this means a unified command for action, once a process of consultation has been completed and a consensus reached.

Maturity and Readiness for Joint Actions

There is a consensus among WSS managers that the development system in 1990 is ready for the Water Decade which began 10 years earlier. The cohesiveness of the WSS managers at the technical level is commendable, and the technicians individually and as a group represent a credible force to influence their respective policy people on commitment of resources and adoption of new policies. They now share a broad consensus on the technical front, a deeper understanding for the need of software, and the recognition of the role of communication. The cost-effectiveness of simple and inexpensive WSS technologies and the improved managerial capacity mean that the WSS people are now poised to undertake the accelerated work.

But the perception of WSS, even among development workers, let alone the public, is somewhat at variance with the positive views shared by WSS managers. Some analysis of the facts and fallacies about the perception of the various segments of the public about different aspects of WSS work may be needed; such material can be made into slide sets or videos to correct misconceptions, remove doubts and generate greater support, including financial support. In this connection, there is need to reduce the massive data on WSS to a dozen or so meaningful and easily digestible statistics, including some on cost and benefit, presented in a simple leaflet or slide set, for advocacy work at the international, regional and national levels.

2. Options for initial steps

Goal

The goal is to promote a sustained public awareness of the urgent need for WSS, to maximize the utilization of resources, and, in due course, to encourage additional resources to meet vast unmet needs. With the close of the Water Decade at hand, it cannot be assumed that public interest and financial support will continue, without a planned programme of communication. It is axiomatic that a PIP programme should be designed to support national efforts in the developing countries, which ultimately decide whether the programme is of benefit to them and, how they wish to implement the programme. It cannot be overemphasized that all WSS activities beyond 1990 should be seen in the context of development, and wherever possible, that WSS work be integrated with other aspects of development.

A common concept

In order to sustain interest in WSS work beyond 1990, the TWG-INFO recommended a stronger WSS image perhaps by the adoption of a clear message, a simple logo and descriptive materials. Before undertaking the design of a new logo, which should be a major instrument for more visibility, it might be worthwhile to review existing surveys on public perception of water and sanitation. This could be achieved by a search of the current literature on the subject by a graduate scholar. The development of slogans, logo and other descriptive materials could be entrusted to a commercial marketing firm; surveys and focus groups could help provide valuable information and insights about the type of designs and materials that would best appeal to the public. It is clear, however, that the designer should bear in mind the need for simplicity, visual attraction, language and cultural considerations, relevance to the subject matter and easy identification with the problem, and compatibility with broad development objectives. Questions such as the need to have sanitation as part of the slogan, whether cleanliness would be more easily understood than sanitation, and the linkage of water with nature and environment might be raised.

Organizational Framework

To implement a PIP programme, a small core group is needed. The unit should employ two or three professionals to stimulate and initiate action at the international level and to support regional and national efforts. This group should be given the necessary authority and resources and should have sufficient professional capacity to play the lead role in PIP work and operate with flexibility and dynamism. Since the PIP programme should be an integral part of the WSS Beyond 1990 strategy, the

unit should be closely linked with the secretariat of the Collaborative Council. One of the major UN agencies (e.g. UNDP) may assume the functions of the unit, but given the complexibility of the system, a non-UN agency with close link with UNDP and other participating agencies can also play this critical role, using a mix of centralized command and decentralized operation. Funding can be shared or a special effort can be made to secure financial support from different sources.

The core unit works with and supports a network of regional and national media centers. The latter centers, however, should determine whether and how they would choose to implement the proposed programme. After consultation with agencies and units concerned, the core unit should take on the responsibility of implementation with the necessary authority and resources in order to effectuate the maximum degree of cohesiveness.

Network of Media Centers

The TWG-INFO report specifically called for a network of regional and national media centers, which are vital for the PIP programme. However, existing centers that can perform such tasks must first be identified. Since they represent the backbone for PIP activities at the country level where it matters, the search should have the highest priority of the PIP programme. Criteria for such centers are: A. they must possess professional communication capacities; b. that should be able to work with WSS technicians so that their output will be accurate and true to science; and c. they must be, within each country, closely linked with the national committee for WSS. PIP activities in the countries should be the prerogative of the national media centers. The importance of this principle cannot be overemphasized, as national WSS committees decide their own priorities and, moreover, country circumstances for WSS, in general, and PIP work, in particular, very.

Regional centers of this kind do exist. For instance, the Communication Foundation of Asia, the Inter Press Service, CEPI in the Americas, URTNA in Africa, etc. There may also be many regional technical WSS centers with communication capacity. It is important to bear in mind that PIP tasks require professional communication skills.

3. Options for implementation

Suggestions for Launch or Activation Beyond 1990

Before the end of 1990, two events stand out as possible occasions for informing the public about the status of WSS and the international community's resolve to press forward with accelerating WSS work. The first is the proposed international

meeting in September 1990 in Calcutta, and the second the scheduled one-day session on the UN Water Decade at the UN General Assembly sometime in November 1990. In light of the advantage of universality, the UN GA may be the most suitable forum for the launch. On the other hand, the Calcutta meeting will be more focused for the purpose of WSS. In addition, the opening of the La Villete Exposition, Water and Life, in Paris, will be an important event for WSS work, if it should be held in the summer of 1990, it could be a useful event to stir up broader public interest.

Special events with ceremonies and activities get media coverage. However, getting the information media to help the public to include WSS in it's agenda required tailored materials for various mass media outlets. A well research and prepared media kit, released globally, would provide substantive information on WSS. Beyond 1990 to back up the ceremony. The kit should contain well-written news releases, features and other editorial materials about the successes and failures of the Water Decade, the current state of the world's water and sanitation, and the plan to accelerate the work in the face of overwhelming needs. Audio visuals (film or video clips, pictures, voice tapes etc.) for television and radio use, and pictures for magazine spreads, etc. should also be included. Lead time is essential for the preparation of the kit, which can be produced on contract by such groups as the New Internationalist, Press Foundation of Asia, etc.

A powerful film by a world renowned director could galvanize public opinion. The release of such a film, independently produced and financed, could be a very effective PIP tool.

Keeping Up with Momentum

A launch must be followed by a series of special efforts scheduled through the 1990s to sustain the momentum. For instance, WHO may commit its 1992 World Health Day on the subject of WSS; UNEP may be asked to focus on water in 1994; UNICEF may choose water and sanitation as its theme in its 1995 State of the Children's Report, and so on. As the decade unfolds, other developmental thrusts will provide opportunities for WSS work to be featured. The core unit should identify such opportunities and take appropriate actions.

Publications

The existing IRC Newsletter and Waterlines do provide a link among WSS technical people worldwide. The proposed UNDP magazine specifically devoted to the work concerned with WSS issues for the next decade. However, reaching the various key segments of the public calls for placement of important articles in influential journals and periodicals; this would be one of the

many tasks of the core unit and the media centers.

Mobilizing WSS People

Visibility of WSS work should be the concern of not only top management and the communication specialists. The managers at the district levels and the rank and file can all play a role. Unfortunately, technicians and artisans tend to be shy with the public and often avoid media contacts. A programme of orientation/training courses, similar to WHO's "Meet the Media" seminars to encourage and prepare WSS people to interact with media representatives and to generate public interest will not only help PIP but also animate and motivate WSS staff.

Working through educational institutions

The expanding network of schools and the growing number of teachers represent potent partners for WSS Beyond 1990, especially in hygiene education. A more systematic effort should be made to include water and sanitation in health and nutrition curriculum. The school compound with adequate WSS facilities, where teachers serve as guides and pupils as participants, is arguably a better entry point than the community center for community education for WSS. Parents are generally willing to contribute to the improvements of the schools where their children are getting an education. Pupils through the child-to-child approach are good conduits for WSS education to their family and community.

Working with media professionals

Few media organizations, even at international level, have specialists to cover the water and sanitation "beat". Orienting the media towards WSS issues periodically will foster a sense of partnership between media and WSS. UNESCO, WHO and UNICEF with Norwegian development funds (NORAD) have organized such workshops with some success. When a given situation warrants it, media tours can be organized to acquaint key press and broadcast representatives with potential WSS success stories. UNICEF, UNDP and the World Bank have undertaken such missions with good results. The PIP core unit can provide guidance and support for such efforts at regional and national levels.

In many developing countries, radio is still the most universal information delivery system, and television is gaining increasing importance as an instrument of public education. Moreover, not enough attention is given to the influence of entertainment programmes in the broadcast media as well as through traditional and folk art channels.

Partnership with others

Similar orientation and tours at district, provincial, national and international levels can be organized for key NGOs, labour and farm groups, parliamentarians, those concerned with financial support for WSS, and other policy/decision makers. At the national and community levels, the establishment of advisory council for WSS, with membership participation from other sectors, can be a way to tap resources and to develop a broad alliance for Beyond 1990. Guidelines may be provided by the core PIP-unit.

Public personalities

The TWG-INFO's call for prominent personages who can serve as effective protagonists for WSS is well taken. The Committee may wish to consider two types of representatives:

- a. Substantive, politically savvy spokesman or spokeswoman for WSS Beyond 1990. He or she can call on top government figures to press the case for WSS. Someone with the stature and commitment of Mr. Arthur Brown (UNDP Deputy Administrator, soon to retire) may be considered.
- b. Popular figures, who are magnets of media attention and able to translate and simplify WSS issues and messages for general public consumption. People such as John Denver and Robert Redford who are interested in ecology and environment are possible goodwill ambassadors,

However, such work at the international and national levels requires elaborate staff preparation and backup. The small core PIP unit cannot handle such work. It may be possible to persuade UNICEF to take this assignment as its contribution to WSS PIP. UNICEF has a special event unit and has a field network to provide the necessary field support.

WSS spokespersons can also be identified at the district and provincial levels. They can be respected personages in the fields of religion, sports, fine art as well as performing art.

Training community workers

This is an important function which PIP and/or HRD should take on. Hygiene education is the weak link in WSS. It is that makes villagers and urban slum dwellers use WSS facilities and adopt health behavior, the ultimate payoff of WSS work. Once again, a distinction should be made between training WSS technicians and artisans and the public, who are users of WSS facilities. The communication component for the latter is more critical.

4. Commitment of resources

No overall figure now

The TWG-INFO made a strong case for adequate financial commitment for PIP work. Its report asked for some indications of PIP costs. Since a comprehensive plan requires much more work, no overall figure can now be given.

Initial steps

However, some ballpark estimates are possible for some of the activities suggested. For instance, the research and design of a concept and logo by a commercial firm can run from \$ 50,000 to \$ 100,000 exclusive of production. A search of existing materials on public perception of water and sanitation can be done for as little as \$ 5,000, if someone associated with a university research library agrees to take on the task. The media kit suggested for the launch would probably cost around \$ 150,000 to \$ 200,000, depending to some extent on the time required to collect material for the interesting WSS stories and on how far one wishes to go for audio-visuals.

Core unit and training/orientation costs

The cost of the core unit with two or three professionals, if established independently, could easily be calculated but would vary somewhat, depending on the locale. If the unit can be hosted by a participating agency, some office costs may be absorbed.

Training and orientation

Costs of programmes of training and orientation at regional and country levels will again depend on the sizes, frequencies, locations and travel distances.

Spokespersons

Public personalities may contribute their time free, but travel and hotel expenses at the level they are accustomed to, and staff support can cost \$ 10,000 to \$ 15,000 a mission, again depending upon distances and duration of the tour and whether media production is contemplated during the mission.

Context of total WSS investment

These sums may be large to those accustomed to information dissemination costs calculated in terms of physical distribution. But PIP is concerned with the complex process of human communication and is in the business of change. To be realistic in the highly competitive area of public attention, PIP expenses

should be gauged in the context of the total WSS investment worldwide. The one lesson from the Water Decade that seems to still elude many is: communication and involvement. The 1990 Committee has apparently identified the gap; it must take action to fill the gap.

Percentage of total

Perhaps a more rational way of estimating communication costs for WSS Beyond 1990 is to look at percentage of total cost. If community education and involvement is included in the broad PIP programme, then a 25 to 30% of the total is probably within the reasonable range. Many development programmes in the health field, such as the Global AIDS Programme, the family planning programmes and the more successful projects in the Control of Diarrhoea Diseases have devoted more than such percentage to communication activities.

5. Chart and time frames for action

The following chart depicts how the options can be further developed, implemented and assessed. It extends over a time frame of 36 months and includes the following stages:

- a. Research and development
- b. Special Activation Event or PIP Launch beyond 1990
- c. Implementation (1990-1991)
- d. Assessment and review (1992)

The options and their activities cover a matrix of objectives and target audiences, as indicated and identified at the two meetings of the TWG-INFO. The objectives and audiences and the process to be followed are depicted in the next page.

Objectives

Image (I)
 Policy (P)
 Resources (R)
 Support (S)
 Action (A)

Demand (D)

Target audiences

Opinion leaders (OL)
 Policy makers (PM)
 Donors (DN)
 Technocrats (TC)
 Bureaucrats (BC)

Social organizations-NGOs (SO)
 General public (GP)
 External support agencies (ESA)

	I P R S A D		Sustained efforts	
OL PM DN TC BC SO GP ESA	PIP Options WSS Package Org. Framework Resources	Launch or >>>Activation>>> effort	Implementation of PIP strategy integrated into the WSS package consisting of: Technologies, Services Education, Promotion (Communication)	Assess- ment and >>review

Research and
development

Events to
activate or
launch

Implementation stage

June-December 1989

Jan. 1990 ———December 1991

Jan.-June 1992