



WATER, SANITATION, ENVIRONMENT and DEVELOPMENT

Strategies for effective community involvement



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Introduction

Rukwa is one of 25 administrative regions of Tanzania, comprising of three districts – Sumbawanga Rural, Nkansi, and Mpanda; the regional capital Sumbawanga is administered separately as an urban council area. Some 240 of the region's 340 villages had water schemes as of December 1992, representing a population coverage of 69%. NORAD has been the major donor agency supporting the water sector in the region, ever since it funded the preparation of the Regional Water Master Plan in the late 70's. Since 1988, the water programme has been implemented largely as part of the Rukwa Integrated Development Programme (RUDEP), funded by NORAD.

Community Participation (CP) is now recognized as a key element in the water sector programme in Tanzania, being clearly stipulated in the National Water Policy (ministry of Water, 1991). In Rukwa, it was quite early realized that CP was a crucial success factor (Tschanner & Mujwahuzi, 1975). Noting the poor sustainability of schemes, it was seen that the answer was to try and make schemes as self-servicing as possible, involving the people as far as their capacity went (Raidal 1986). Since many villages could not go it alone, the idea of a partnership between the government and villages was proposed (See Figure 1).

Organization

Formal CP activities in water projects in the region started in 1981, the main objective at that time being the mobilization of village labour for schemes selected by the Water Master Plan. Over the years, CP work has been done either by engineers or technicians duly oriented to CP work guidelines, or by a special units. At the beginning, a special unit operating in the NORAD-financed Project Implementation Unit did all the GP work. It was turned into a separate 'Community Participation and Health Education Project' in 1985. The project ended in 1988, after which CP activities were coordinated by a two-person team. Since 1992, CP work has been delegated to the districts, under guidance of the Regional Community Development Officer.

Experience has shown that success of CP has depended on: perceived magnitude of the water problem by the village; timing of activities; status of the village; village leadership, and attitude of technical personnel.

Implementation strategies

Over the years, the regional water department (MAJI) has followed various strategies to improve the effectiveness of CP work; some are outlined below.

Systematic job guide

In order to ensure that there is systematic and uniform implementation, a 15-Step CP Job Guide has been used since 1984. The Job Guide covers three stages: Planning, Construction, and Operation and Maintenance. The steps relate to formal/informal meetings, site visits, discussions with village leaders, scheme attendants, etc. Specific objectives have been defined for each step, together with outcomes, and a listing of required participants. There are special forms to be filled in each step in relation to monitoring, agreements with villages, handing-over process, etc. Appropriate training is given to village leadership, members of Village Water Committees, scheme attendants, etc.

Water committees

All villages with water schemes are required to form Water Committees. This is in line with the national water policy which calls for establishment of water committees at all levels, i.e. from national, regional, district, ward, and village level. Composition of the village water committee should be at least 50% women. Some 225 out of 240 villages have formed the committee. The committee has overall management responsibility over the scheme after it has been formally handed over to the village. So far, some 35% of the village water schemes have been handed over.

Water fund

Efforts for establishing water funds in the region began in 1989, a few villages being chosen as pilot schemes. As of March 1993, some 65% of villages with water schemes have started the Water Fund. In the past, follow-up on the establishment of the funds has not been strong, but in future, this will be made compulsory. The money is to be used as villagers' contribution for planning and construction of the scheme, and, especially, in O&M. Except for a few cases, growth of the funds has been slow in most villages. Major problems facing their growth include lack of a "permanent" modality for collecting contributions, poor economic/financial base of many households, and in some cases, embezzlement of collected funds not yet banked.

District revolving stores

These have been established at District Water Engineers' offices to enable villages obtain spares for effecting repairs on their schemes. Each store is operated in conjunction with a District Water Fund. The stores were initially stocked with materials procured using RUDEP funds. Villages pay for the spares using their Water Funds. As per existing pricing policy, spares costing up to TAS 15000 will be bought at full cost by the villages; materials costing more than this amount will be subsidized by the respective District Council. The Councils or MAJI will also provide assistance with transport where necessary. From the brief experience over the one year during which the stores have been operating, the following problems have been noted:

- some District Councils have not yet contributed their share for establishment of the District Water Fund;
- Many villages have not been able to afford buying the spares, except for the very simple ones e.g. bib cocks;
- District Councils have not been able to subsidize purchases where required.

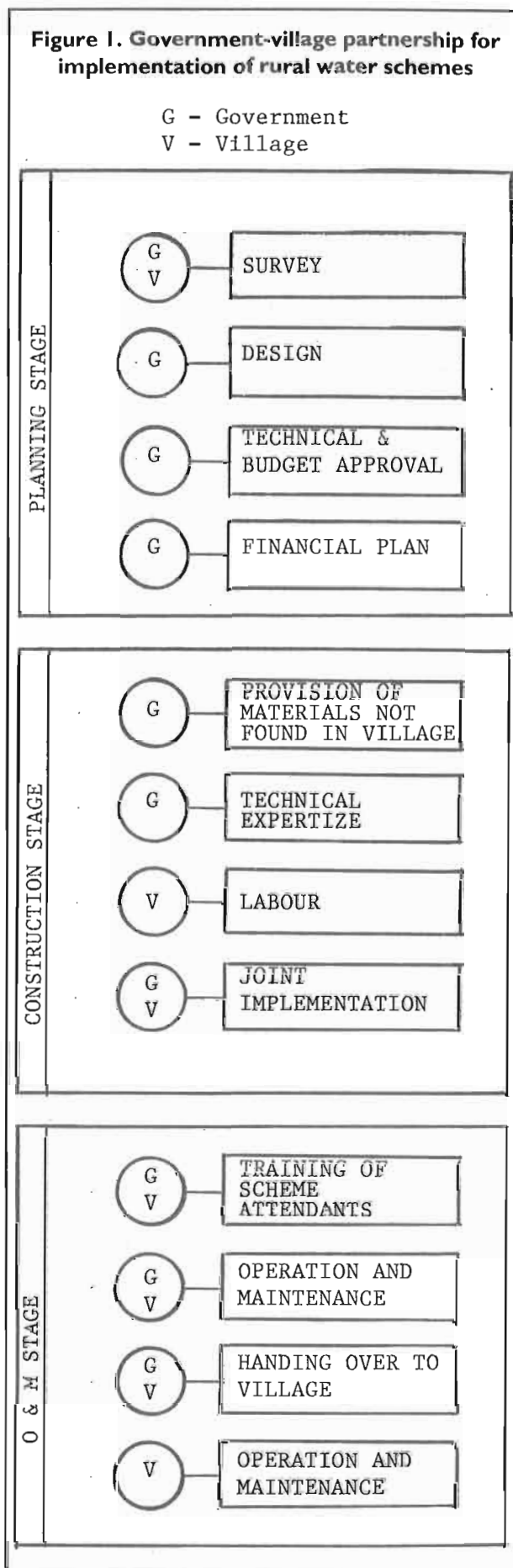
Obviously, additional measures need to be taken to ensure that the Revolving Stores are successful and that the villages buy the spares to repair the schemes.

District focus

In order to bring project activities closer to the villages and enhance beneficiaries' involvement, it has been decided as part of RUDEP policy that all grassroots operations and activities should be implemented at District Water Engineers' offices, rather than at the regional office. This is contrast to the previous practise whereby nearly all project planning and implementation was done by the regional MAJI organization. Specifically, construction of all village water schemes, and O&M issues are to be done at district level, plus all CP work. The water department at regional level will be responsible for overall supervision, plus technical support and back-stopping, and also undertake the specialized technical operations like deep-well drilling and water quality investigations.

Proper choice of technology

From the bad experience of the numerous unfunctioning motorized schemes in the region, every effort is now made to ensure that the technology employed is the most appropriate for the particular village. As per conditions in the region, the first priority is directed towards utilization of shallow ground-water by tubewells, ring wells, springs, and infiltration galleries or kanats as far as possible. Bore-holes and gravity schemes are used only where studies indicate them as the most appropriate solutions. Motorized schemes are discouraged. Choice fo technology is also discussed with the beneficiaries. This use of simple technology is expected to contribute to greater involvement of the beneficiaries, and to scheme sustainability.



Involvement of women

Full involvement of women has been recognized as being crucial for effective CP. As such, deliberate steps are taken to ensure their full participation. Some of the measures taken are as follows:

- Village Water Committees are comprised of at least 50% women;
- Separate meetings are held with women as part and parcel of the community mobilization process;
- The female members of the water committee are the ones who propose the location of water points in the village;
- CP teams in the water department at regional and district levels include several women, and where possible, are led by women.

Achievements and constraints

Successful implementation of the CP activities has shown the following achievements:

- developed sense of ownership over schemes, enhancing the spirit of self-reliance, and reducing cases of vandalism;
- reduced work-load on water department, especially with respect to day-to-day operation and maintenance of schemes;
- developed skills for self-management among beneficiaries, and greater awareness of relevant technology issues.

The following are some of the major constraints noted:

- insufficient allocation of resources to CP staff due to general budget constraints;
- pressures to achieve physical implementation targets, due to strong influence of control-oriented planning and implementation approaches (Therkildsen, 1988);
- "lingering feeling" that water should be a free service – due to past policies.

Future direction

As far as the RUDEP Programme is concerned, CP is considered as a means and as an end. As a means, it is expected to improve the implementation of various development activities. But it is also an end in that it builds up trust and solidarity in communities, giving the people greater control over their lives and the environment. In principle, RUDEP envisages that CP shall be a non-directive programme, not fitted to a strict and suffocating time frame. This is the concept that will guide all RUDEP activities, including the water projects.

While not opposing the present situation whereby villagers are required to participate in development activities

which have actually been pre-selected and pre-defined by government departments, it is envisaged that in future, villagers shall have greater say in deciding their development priorities. Every project shall in future clearly indicate the kind and level of CP aimed for, that is, whether collaborative, capacity-building, empowerment, or involvement via provision of free or paid labour.

Conclusion

The level of community participation is one of many factors affecting success and sustainability of rural water schemes. However, for the CP to be really effective, deliberate strategies are required to ensure that the objectives are attained. Planning and implementation of schemes properly incorporate the specific requirements needed for the community to participate, given the particular conditions obtaining in the village. On the other hand, beneficiaries' capacity for self-management and self-reliance has to be strengthened so that they can in turn better contribute financially or materially in the implementation of the scheme, as well as to its sustainability. Further efforts are required to ensure use of the most appropriate strategies.

References

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