



Use of guidelines for RWSS programme planning in Zambia

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THE INTEGRATION OF domestic water supply with hygiene promotion and sanitation is now generally accepted in theory but is still proving difficult to achieve in practice. The more recent realisation that domestic water and sanitation has to be integrated within overall water resource management has increased the practical difficulty. To assist government managers and planners in the rural water supply and sanitation sector with these challenges, WEDC and the British Geological Survey (BGS), supported by the Commonwealth Science Council, has developed Guidelines for Planning and Designing Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Programmes. The British Department for International Development (DFID) provided funding under its Knowledge and Research Programme.

The purpose of this paper is to describe an essential part of the process of developing the Guidelines, the pilot testing, and to discuss issues arising from the test.

The guidelines

The purpose of the guidelines is to improve the methodology and practice for the development of sustainable rural water supply and sanitation programmes in groundwater dependent areas. "Programme" is defined in its widest sense as "a coherent framework of procedures and activities for co-ordinating and regulating projects within the water and sanitation sector in a defined geographical area".

Apart from integration, the other principle of the guidelines is that of ownership. The product of the use of the guidelines - the programme - must be owned by the people who have used the tool to design it. The guidelines are to assist planners and managers in national government departments to formulate programmes to organise and co-ordinate the activities of government departments, external support agencies, NGOs and others working in domestic water supply and sanitation in the programme area.

The guidelines are in two parts: simplified guidelines with flow-charts and checklists, cross-referenced to a supporting manual explaining how to carry out the steps in the guidelines, and providing additional information and details. They cover three stages:

- Project set-up - the steps to establish a project to carry out the exercise of preparing a programme. This Preparation Project incorporates Stages 2 and 3 and would take about 6 months to complete, depending on the social and geographical complexity of the programme area.
- Situation assessment and analysis - the steps of: gathering information at central, regional and local government

- level; carrying out sample surveys in villages using participatory methodologies to understand their needs and problems; analysing the data and information; and a participatory planning workshop involving local staff to define the objectives and activities for the programme;
- Design - the detailed design of the programme based on the outputs from the workshop.

The Guidelines were described in more detail in a paper presented at the 24th WEDC Conference in Islamabad, Pakistan (Ockelford and Reed, 1998).

The pilot study

In response to a request by the Commonwealth Science Council, the Water Sector Reform Support Unit (RSU) in Zambia offered to facilitate the arrangements for the second field test of the draft Guidelines in 1998. A first field test had been conducted in Zimbabwe through the National Co-ordination Unit of the National Action Committee in 1997.

The RSU made arrangements for the Study and established a core team with representatives from the Department of Water Affairs in the Ministry of Energy and Water Development, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Community Development and Social Affairs. This core team worked with staff from various departments at provincial and district level during the course of the Study. The team from WEDC and BGS was made up of a water and sanitation engineer, a hygiene education specialist and a hydrogeologist. It was decided to develop a programme for the Northern Province to complement a rural infrastructure programme which was being developed by DFID.

There were two main objectives for the pilot study, one for WEDC and one for GoZ:

- For WEDC it was to field test the revised draft guidelines.
- For GoZ it was to use the draft guidelines to analyse the issues and challenges facing the water and sanitation sector in Northern Province and come up with solutions as part of the development of a rural water supply and sanitation programme for the whole of the Province.

The methodology for the Pilot Study was that sections of the guidelines were handed over to the Zambian core team to use to develop their own programme. The WEDC/BGS team acted as technical advisors to the process. As far as possible they observed the use of the guidelines, and only intervened or provided advice when the guidelines did not provide sufficient guidance, or were misleading the Zambian team, or where there were gaps in the guidelines. This was

in contrast to the first pilot study in Zimbabwe, which was principally to test whether the concept and methodology was feasible. In that study the field work had been led and managed by the UK team.

The Study was undertaken in three parts: the first part was a preparatory visit of one week by the WEDC team leader to Zambia in June, during which Stage 1 of the guidelines was tested. Terms of Reference for the "Preparation Project" were drawn up and the main part of the study planned.

Stage 2 of the guidelines was tested over six weeks in July and August. The first week and a half was spent in Lusaka in preparations and the central level information and data gathering, consultation and survey. Field visits, including consultation and survey at provincial and district levels and participatory information gathering in villages occupied the next two weeks. Luwingu, Chinsali and Isoka Districts were visited, with field work in two villages in each district. For a week back in Lusaka the data was analysed, and then the team flew up to Kasama, the provincial capital, for a week for the planning workshop. For this, two representatives were invited from each district, and representatives from the relevant provincial departments. A total of 35 people attended, including the core team of 4 and the two facilitators from Kasama. During the final week in Lusaka, the output from the planning workshop was written up.

Due to time and budget constraints, for two weeks in October, Stage 3 of the guidelines was used in the UK with the core team leader from Zambia to develop an outline programme design based on the output from the planning workshop. The WEDC team leader made a further visit to Zambia in November. During this the product of the Study, a draft outline provincial programme proposal, was presented in a Review Workshop by the Zambian team Leader. One representative from each district and staff from the relevant departments in Kasama attended the workshop. In addition, there were representatives from central Government Ministries, World Health Organisation and Irish Aid.

Findings and analysis

During the Pilot Study, a number of detailed notes for changes were made directly into the draft guidelines, and some revisions and some additional content were produced for immediate use. The major findings which have been incorporated in the final guidelines are described in the following points.

The overall finding of the Pilot Study is that the guidelines work. The Zambian team was able to work through them, with advice and support as necessary, and produce a draft outline programme proposal. In the Review Workshop this proposal was accepted in principle, subject to a number of recommendations for changes to the detail. The programme has since developed a life of its own, is now being finalised ready for adoption and implementation with support from Irish Aid. Ownership of the programme is clearly with the

provincial and district government staff who worked so long and hard during the planning workshop.

Management and consultants

One of the original concepts behind the guidelines was that governments should be able to design their own programmes without the need for external consultants. The experience from this pilot study shows that this may be too optimistic. The Zambian team clearly had the ability to plan and design a programme - what they lacked was the experience and confidence. The implication of this is that consultants may still be needed for the first use of the guidelines for programme planning and design, but their role should be very different to the traditional one of leading and managing the process. Consultants should be used in a technical advisory capacity, supporting and advising the national team and providing training and facilitation where required. Management and control of the process must be the responsibility of the national team. Having gained experience, the national team should be able to do it again without external assistance.

Cost

The cost of the Preparation Project is likely to be much lower than a similar exercise conducted by external consultants. The pilot study cost approximately £40,000, including the costs of the WEDC/BGS team. With one consultant in an advisory role for three months, the exercise would have cost about £50,000. Alternatively, three months of work by team of consultants could cost up to £100,000.

Choice of Zambia for the pilot study

Zambia proved to be a very good choice of country for the pilot study for several reasons: the government staff showed much interest in the guidelines and the process involved, as well as appreciating the value of the potential product; the issues and problems encountered were realistic and a good test of the guidelines; with English being the official language of the country it was possible for the UK team to follow the process at all levels except in the villages.

Experience of core team members

The Zambian core team was composed of people from three different ministries, from different grades within the government system, and with widely different experience. These differences caused some tension within the team although this was not shown overtly. The grading of the team leader as a professional manager with more than 15 years experience was appropriate. The other members of the team and technical specialists should be from a similar or lower grading. A problem with having someone too senior was the number of other calls on his time, making it difficult to give full time attention to the Preparation Project. All team members should have substantial experience in their professional field, probably not less than 10 years.

Commitment of core team members

There was evidence of a lack of enthusiasm by some members of the core team to the process and methodologies in the guidelines, particularly those intended to involve the communities. There was pressure to cut the time spent in a village from two to one day and there was a lack of interest in following some of the methods proposed. This raises the question of whether governments and their staff are really committed to involving people in their own development, despite the current rhetoric in many countries. In contrast to this, there was real commitment by the other team members.

Abilities in participatory methodologies

It was apparent that the central level staff on the core team lacked the skills and experience of conducting participatory methodologies, particularly focus group discussions. This may have contributed to the problem of low enthusiasm of some team members. The lack of skill was compensated for to a certain extent by the skills and abilities of individuals at district level who joined the team to undertake the village consultation, but it should not be assumed that these skills will be available.

Lack of thoroughness in following the guidelines

Linked to commitment was a lack of thoroughness in following the guidelines. Apart from attitudes, there were several reasons for this: the team did not have the all sections of the guidelines far enough in advance to enable them to understand the process overall; some team members did not read the guidelines properly, and went to the field expecting to carry out the survey according to their normal procedures; and partly the lack of a linking structure in the guidelines. For the last of these, linking between sections had always been intended and is provided in the final version. The other points raised the need for a planning and training session early in the process, which should start team building, promote a common understanding of, and commitment to, the process.

Learning experience for Zambian core team

In the early correspondence to set up the pilot study, one of the benefits suggested for the Zambians would be job guidance and training for the staff involved. This has certainly been fulfilled in the case of the team leader. He appreciated the learning experience, particularly in gaining an insight into the way that consultants think and approach their work. He is keen to repeat the exercise in another province.

Information gathering and survey

One area which needed attention was the interviewing techniques of the core team. The core team experienced

problems in interviews at central level due to the interviewees being much more senior than them. At district level, interviewing on issues and policies which central government had set, the core team uncovered some of the realities of applying these policies. These discussions were sometimes tense and difficult, as well as being an uncomfortable, though valuable, learning experience.

Gender

In two of the districts, the assignment of local female staff to the team made it much easier to conduct the village level processes with women. These included separate focus group discussions for women and men. Six out of the twenty nine participants at the workshop (excluding the core team and facilitators) were women. This is only 20 per cent, which is not ideal but probably reflects the proportion of woman employed in professional positions in the government system at the local and regional level. The main workshop facilitator was female.

Workshop facilitation

The local facilitator from the Provincial Project Unit proved to be very good. She was familiar with the subject matter and experienced with participatory planning techniques, so was able to explain the process very clearly. The fact that the workshop went so well emphasises the importance of having a good facilitator.

Time for workshop

In planning the workshop 6 days were allowed, Tuesday to Sunday. In the event it took 5 days, with Friday afternoon off to enable participants to attend their provincial offices. The actual days were long, with work until 6.00 p.m. and later, with some complaints. Even so, it was impressive the way the participants maintained their enthusiasm and kept working right to the end. 5 to 6 days seems to be the right amount of time for a workshop of this nature.

The value of the workshop

The workshop was certainly appreciated by the participants. This was the first time that most of them had been involved in such an exercise of identifying, analysing and solving the problems they face in their work. From this and the subsequent review workshop, it seems that a genuine sense of ownership of the programme proposal has been, thus fulfilling one of the hopes underpinning the guidelines.

Conclusion

The Guidelines for Planning and Designing Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Programmes offer a feasible way of enabling a government's own staff to prepare a programme for themselves with limited external assistance. This should result in real commitment to solving the actual problems they face and achieving the goals of the sector.

The Guidelines will be available from WEDC towards the end of 1999.

References

OCKELFORD, J., and REED, R.A., 1998, Guidelines for planning and designing RWSS programmes, in Sanitation and Water for All, Proceedings of the 24th WEDC Conference, ed. Pickford J., Loughborough University.

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