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Factors in community managed watsan programme

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Factors in community managed watsan programme

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THE PHENOMENON 'COMMUNITY' is become a focal issue in recent discourse of development and received worldwide concerns from development sectors. The use of this phenomenon is seen in three major forms which are-community participation, community based and community management. Though participation, basis and management are individual terms but central and functional meaning of these terms is the same. This meaning could be defined as a process whereby specific groups with shared needs living in a defined geographic area actively pursue identification of their needs, take decisions and establish mechanisms to meet these needs [Rifkin, 1988]. The approach 'community management' has raised for sustaining WatSan programme in the community. Some initiatives have been taken in Bangladesh for handing over responsibilities of WatSan programme to the community. Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE) and UNDP jointly started a Community Based Water Supply and Sanitation Project (CWSSP) as a component of sustainable environmental management programme (SEMP) [Ahmed, 1999]. NGO Forum for Drinking Water Supply Sanitation is implementing a community based WatSan programme through its partner NGOs. Other NGOs include WatSan as a vital component with their regular community development projects. The initiative of handing over the responsibilities to the community consists of some institutional processes which are building local functional structure, collaboration with power authority, social mobilisation, building capacity of local stakeholders, building local functional structure, community ownership, etc. But just handing over the responsibilities is not enough, like all human behaviour, what community members do for ensuring water and sanitation for whole community (and why, how, with, whom etc) is influenced by a number of factors. To identify factors, which may positively or negatively influence the dynamism of community managed WatSan programme (CMWP) and determine the achieving objectives of this programme an exploratory study has been conducted in Bangladesh. This paper is a result of this study. Various types of factors were identified by this study which can be categorized in 4 major types- people's points of view, socio-cultural aspects, economic conditions, ecology and natural environment.

People's points of view

Community people have own viewpoints, which are made with the combination of their perception-knowledge, values-behaviour, norms-ethos, life experience, beliefs-ideology, social taboos, rationality, etc [Islam, 1999]. These are

determined by other social institutions and these direct the life style of community members. Receiving (+) or rejecting (-) anything depends on individual points of view. Response to the WatSan programme also depends up on those viewpoints. Like other things the community people of Bangladesh know WatSan with their perception. They have own thinking about WatSan that is conceptualized with their viewpoints. People's opinions, thoughts and intellectual expressions about WatSan can be diversified as follows which indicate their views and rationality-

- Water and sanitation are essential things in their life;
- Sanitation (purification) is a part of *imān* (beliefs);
- Sanitary latrine, tube wells are the symbols of status, but these are costly and installing sanitary latrine, tube well is not possible for poor;
- Ensuring water and sanitation is the duty of Government.

Socio-cultural aspects

This study identified various types of socio-cultural aspects belong to core of the community that is traditionally originated. The identified aspects are power structure, social faction and conflict, stratification, kinship, gender and other interpersonal relations, etc. These institutions play strong role in receiving, accepting and adopting any new technologies [Foster, 1973]. We also got learning from previous experience of implementing some programmes. Yet most national health programmes fail in this respect mainly because of the local socio-cultural factors [Stone, 1986]. National primary health programmes in other Asian countries have made similar mistake. Till now villages of Bangladesh are characterized as the peasant society. Various types of stratification, social hierarchy, interpersonal discriminatory relations belong to here. These characters affect the accessibility of all members to WatSan programme for receiving facilities.

Economic conditions

Through this study some aspects were identified as the influencing factors related with resources and economic conditions. These aspects are entitlement, ownership, market value, land system, distribution system, etc. These aspects determine position and ability of individual/s in community through which s/he can contribute or share in community managed WatSan programme. In this context, one major aspect is community financing. There are various forms of community financing. One form is that community people share by paying the cost of WatSan

facilities, materials and services. But economic conditions affect the ability and mentality of individuals in paying and sharing the cost. On the contrary, economic conditions influence the interpersonal hierarchy, which may affect participation of poor in implementing CMWP.

Ecological and natural environment

Geographic (also natural) condition shapes ecological setting. Ecology indicates the interrelationship of organisms and their environment, including both the physical environment and other living organisms. Human adaptation to the environment involves the sphere of culture e.g. technology, patterns of social organisation which may facilitate or inhibit economic cooperation, community size and the spacing of social units. WatSan and sanitation are not in the outside of the boundary of ecology. Ecology determines that how WatSan system exists and develops in a particular geographic condition.

Cultural adaptation for water and sanitation to nature is related with the characteristics of ecological setting. Ecological setting includes land utilization, habitation, settlement pattern and communication system, etc. although the ultimate causation of these traits can be traced in other factors. These have important adaptive value. Community people take action for exposure for water and sanitation. So the research emphasized on understanding ecological setting of research area as a cultural system which has relation with WatSan system. This study identified some ecological and natural setting and condition, which may affect CMWP in terms of infrastructural development and usage, innovating appropriate technologies, interpersonal communication, using local resources, etc. Identified natural conditions are- habitation and housing settlement, communica-

tion system, land system and soil composition, tree plantation, climate and disaster, etc.

Conclusion

For ensuring active involvement of person of community in community managed WatSan programme development agencies should formulate an appropriate strategy in which above factors could be considered.

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