

## Introduction

Water supplies need looking after, they need to be managed if they are to continue to work over time. Similarly, improved hygiene and sanitation arrangements require regular monitoring and support to encourage a change in behaviour.

A commonly applied arrangement in rural areas is the instalment of a Community Water and Sanitation (WATSAN) Committee.

The NSAs have a responsibility to promote a representative committee with the capacity to implement clearly defined TORs effectively.

## The Community WATSAN Committee

RWSSP considers community WATSAN committees an essential part of the sustainability of project outputs, and we will be working closely with NSAs on issues related to effective community management.

A WATSAN committee usually consists of a number of community members carrying out various tasks on a voluntary basis. These community members may represent individual tap or neighbourhood committees. A water committee may also be a sub-committee of a village development committee. Various water committees dealing with a large system may also form a representative association. Committee members may carry out the management tasks themselves, however, you may also run into a situation whereby for part of the work, for example maintenance of the system, a private entrepreneur from within or from outside the community has been asked to provide services.

There are various models that work, its important that the community, facilitated by the NSA, works out what is most likely to work for them

Components of an effective community management include;

- a committee that represents the many voices of the community. (Therefore having both men and women members.)
- be selected transparently, by the community, according to the skills required (rather than on individuals personalities or status).

- builds on existing structures, processes and capacity where they exist.
- committees with efficient and effective leadership
- meet regularly, record the outcomes of these meetings and make these available to the broader community
- have a process in place for selecting new members.
- involvement by the committee in project planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation
- a committee that is capable of dealing with the social, technical and financial components of management
- investment by the NSA in promoting linkages between the WATSAN and alternative support organisations, such as the private sector, local government, CBOs\*
- clear and transparent bookkeeping
- a clear constitution and operating procedures, rules and regulations (byelaws)
- water and sanitation committees recognised as a legal body with legal authority

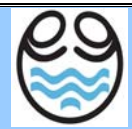
(\* evidence shows that very few WATSAN committees can make it on their own, they nearly always require external support to keep them functioning effectively – even the very best ones!!)



## Role and selection of a water committee

You do not necessarily need to establish a whole new order. Some community management systems may already be in place. These may regulate for example rubbish disposal, water use, sanitation issues. What may be required is a review of whether they are truly representative of

## RWSSP: Technical Advisory Note 2.1 Community Management (Committees)



the community, whether they are shown to be effective and that they are appropriate bodies with the appropriate skills. Find out what processes already exist rather than over riding them.

It is very important that there is clarity on tasks, responsibilities and rights and that there is clarity on how the work is monitored. Once this has been achieved the community is in a position to identify whether existing structures and processes are in place, whether existing arrangements can be modified, or if a new committee needs to be developed. Often, WATSAN committees may start out as Project management committees, with community representatives working with the NSA in order to plan and implement the project – and then develop during the lifecycle of the project into a more specific water and sanitation management committee. If this happens the TORs of the committee should be regularly reviewed to reflect these changing roles and responsibilities.

Suggested roles for the final WATSAN committee include;

- responsible for facilitating community discussions around managing the system
- organise contributions to maintain the water supply and control the finances.
- ensure continued equitable access to water
- promote hygienic and effective use of water facilities
- appoint and monitor staff to maintain the water scheme and oversee the collection of user-payments
- act as a liaison when dealing with other stakeholders
- discuss with agency staff how best rehabilitate or extend the water system to meet the changing needs
- manage procurement during construction of system extension and provide day to day supervision of the construction
- make sure the community is informed
- promote improved hygiene and sanitation activities

When the community comes to select committee members focus first on the Terms of Reference for the committee – what is it supposed to do, then look at the skills needed by individuals to do this

job, then ask who has these skills? This way you stand more chance of attracting the right people. Choosing people with the right skills is a critical step in establishing a management committee. Through their domestic roles women are the key users of water, and play a key role in improved hygiene and sanitation activities. As such women have a crucial role in the management of rural water use and make many decisions relating to appropriate use of different water sources.



The establishment of a WATSAN committee is often done too quickly and the most outspoken or the most powerful community members offer to become members. However, they may not have the skills to do the job, or may not be the best representatives of the community. This can result in an ineffective committee and, in the end, an unsustainable water, sanitation and hygiene programme. Your role is to help the community to clarify roles and responsibilities, to guide it step by step through the selection of committee members and to ensure that the right support (e.g. training) is provided. Ensure that the resulting membership is capable of truly reflecting the needs of all members of the community, not just the elites.

Suitable procedures need to be in place to ensure that the WATSAN members clearly understand what their responsibilities are, have the appropriate authority to implement these, and remain accountable to the community

### **When should the committee be formed**

As has been mentioned, the role of a community water and sanitation committee may change during the lifecycle of the project and beyond. When the committee is formed determines to

## RWSSP: Technical Advisory Note 2.1 Community Management (Committees)



some extent its role. Evidence suggests that in order to develop a committee with sufficient capacity it is best to form it early on, so that you can work closely together during the project cycle. It is impractical for an NSA to deal with the whole community during all of the planning stages. A fledgling committee should be formed to help with the planning process and implementation of the plan. Work with the community to identify the committees tasks, select a committee and then get to work organising the project. A community committee is not a voicepiece for the NSA, a way to get its message across to the broader community. They are an equal partner in planning, implementing and sustaining the project, and as such there needs to be mutual decision making and responsibilities. This may well requires compromise and negotiation, but by doing so you are strengthening the capacity of the committee to make decisions and truly represent the community.

During RWSSP phase 1 an NSA identified and ordered all the parts for a gravity fed water system. When the lorry delivered the parts the community did not know what had been ordered. Unfortunately there were not enough parts to complete the job, so the community accused the NSA of keeping some of the parts back.

The list of parts required should have been discussed with the WATSAN committee and publicised to the community. The ordered parts list should have been left with the committee so that they could check them off the lorry. Then if the project was short of some parts everyone would know that it was a mistake in the planning rather than anyone keeping them back

TAN 1.10 is concerned with Implementation Planning, this should be done with the committee so that tasks can be identified and scheduled appropriately and responsibilities assigned. Later, once a project is approved it could become a project management committee, checking the right materials have been delivered, supervising and monitoring the implementation of the community component of the plan. Finally during the project implementation process it could evolve further into a committee that takes responsibility for managing the community water supply and monitoring

improved hygiene and sanitation. At each stage the NSA has a responsibility to ensure that the committee has the right capacity and resources to complete its role effectively.

Now you know What the committee will do, and Who will do it, you need to facilitate a process that identifies How it will be done. Will the committee develop guidelines? A constitution? How often will it meet? How will it keep records? How will it make these records available? How will new members be selected etc Your task is to facilitate discussions and to help people discover the advantages and disadvantages of various management arrangements.

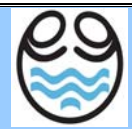
Supporting community management is about facilitating a community dialogue and decision-making processes. Too often we think 'we know better and can do it quicker' and we forget that communities have strengths and capacities that can be built upon, and that each situation, each culture, each village, each experience requires its own answers. The field worker as representative of the NSA has to facilitate within this particular theme of capacity building, much rather than directing or instructing community management

### *Legislation*

Management by communities only works effectively if legal arrangements are put in place. Too often legal backing for a water committee is missing, making these bodies ineffective. If they do not have a legal status, they can not open a bank account or enter into contractual arrangements. They cannot do their work properly and this puts the sustainability of the system at stake.

Management of water supply systems requires frequent decision making, for example about water tariffs, water allocation or sanitary measures to protect water resources. Where more parties are involved, disagreements can affect decisions being taken. It is possible that community members may not follow suggestions or decisions made by the WATSAN committee, some may not pay their maintenance fee, etc. so the committee may require recognition and the legitimate authority to perform their task. You are in a good position to liaise between the community and the local government to find out about the arrangements to be put in place.

## RWSSP: Technical Advisory Note 2.1 Community Management (Committees)



Rules and regulations can be considered an important task of the WATSAN water committee, otherwise the committee might be challenged for not having legal authority, saying they are not valid. Any new regulations would need to consider the rights and obligations of the beneficiaries, and the functions of the committee. These themes deal with sanctions, prohibitions, recommended uses of water, maintenance work patterns, fee payments, etc. Also the functions and roles within the committee, and importantly the tenure of members. Being a legal identity will give the committee added power later on for other development projects and access to bank services. It cannot be stressed enough that facilitators in the field have a crucial role to play when it comes to ensuring transparent and considered decision making. There will certainly be a need for conflict prevention in the life cycle of the committee, and this is something that facilitators will not always be around to facilitate.

### Tariffs

Construction of water supply systems, requiring so-called capital investments, as well as their operation and maintenance require financial resources. RWSSP contributes the bulk of the funds required. However, recurrent costs for operation, maintenance and depreciation need to be covered by community members themselves. Less clarity exists as to who is responsible to cover costs involved in extending or upgrading the system in the case of a growing population or a demand for higher service levels.

The community, facilitated by the NSA and the WATSAN committee, will need to decide how it will raise the necessary funds to support the proposed water supply. Lack of funds for operation and maintenance will lead to systems that fail to function. If depreciation costs are not recovered, any renewal of the system or major repair cannot take place without external funds. Hence the need to help communities develop a sound financial system, and possibly a written agreement between your NSA and the community in which it is clearly indicated who is responsible for what costs.

If community members are to contribute to operation and maintenance, tariffs need to be established and the water committee needs to develop a system for a tariff collection. However, it needs to be clear to all users how tariffs are made

up. Users must see how costs are being minimised without putting quality and service levels at stake. Understanding this motivates people to contribute and offers them opportunities to pose questions and make suggestions that may lead to more realistic tariffs. Where communities believe that water is a god-given 'free' right, it is often easier to motivate people to pay for concrete things such as a salary for a caretaker and spare parts than for water. You may explain to people that payment is not necessarily for the water, but for the service and convenience of having clean and safe water each time they open a tap. It is extremely important that the water committee is transparent about the way the tariff has been set. A message can be translated by the field worker to explain the importance of contributions. Simply put, it is cheaper to pay maintenance than it is to pay recurring health costs that are associated with water related diseases.

### Transparency and financial control

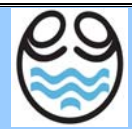
The water committee should keep the larger community informed on what has been decided and how their money is spent.

Transparency makes people feel at ease with the costs they are being asked to pay for their water supply. Suspicion can arise if community members do not know what is decided, why certain decisions are taken and how their financial contribution is used.



Even if lack of transparency is not intended, people may decide to stop paying their financial contributions. This puts the sustainability of the water system at stake.

## RWSSP: Technical Advisory Note 2.1 Community Management (Committees)



Transparency must be ensured. You can assist a water committee to put mechanisms in place to keep the community at large informed and, where needed, involved. Financial management and transparency are among the more problematic aspects of community management.

Some of the more common problems are:

- influential individuals are placed in positions of financial responsibility and run the project without accounting for their actions to the community;
- conflict arises when individuals or groups wish to gain access to the funds by using their influence and power in the community;
- members of the committee who are trained in financial control, might leave the community once they have gained the skills to pursue a more attractive livelihood elsewhere;
- lack of clarity about how money is spent.

A water committee needs a clear structure, policy and control system to ensure that funds are correctly used and accounted for. It must also have a clear understanding of what expenditures may take place, what the costs will be and when payments are required. Helping the committee to draw up a budget will help it to focus on these issues. A budget is used to calculate the expected income and expenditure for a set period of time. It lists all the money the committee expects to receive and when it expects to receive it. It also lists all the goods and services that will need to be paid for.

Once a budget is in place, the water committee needs to keep record of all funds moving into and out of the water committee. Basic bookkeeping techniques, using a cash book and receipt book can be used to record and monitor financial information. A cash book shows all the transactions and the balance at the end of the day. It contains two columns: one for income and another for expenditure. It includes coins, notes, cheques, money deposited into the bank, etc. At the end of the month, if there is a bank account, then the cash book has to be compared with the account statement from the bank. A receipt book carries the receipts that show that a community has paid for particular goods or services. Receipts are numbered and made out in duplicate, with one copy for the payer and one for the treasurer. In this book a record of all income is kept. The number of

the receipt is entered under the appropriate month after payment has been made.

Keeping track of where money is going is an essential part of ensuring that it is being used properly and that future needs for funds can be planned. This will allow actual expenditure and income to be compared with what is stated in the budget. This will also help to identify financial problems quickly. Transparency is about sharing this information by submitting financial reports to the community and allowing community members to ask questions about the figures and how the budget is to be used.



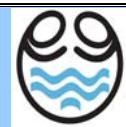
Organising community meetings at certain intervals is a means to report on income and expenditures over the reporting period. Popular theatre can be used to discuss sensitive issues such as transparency.

Training should provide tools to enable the water committee to keep books properly, to ensure transparency for creating trust and confidence in the water committee. Such training may include issues such as tariff setting, users registration, account keeping, auditing.

You can either provide on-the-job training yourself or arrange for training outside the community.

An example of the minimum tasks for the water committee treasurer might be as follows;

- collect contributions
- deliver receipts for money received
- manage the cash book
- pay for contracted services and other expenses
- elaborate financial reports and present to the committee and community



- control committee and community assets
- register and control materials and spare parts in stock

### **Conflict Prevention**

Whilst conflict prevention has its own field of expertise more commonly associated with tribal differences for example, there are lessons that can be drawn and used from those themes in the following ways;

- Liaise with existing village courts and peace good order committee. (If they exist in the community). An understanding should be established so that overlapping of roles and responsibilities are clarified.
- Train the water supply and sanitation committee in proactive conflict prevention and mediation knowledge and skills.
- Conduct awareness raising about the proactive conflict prevention measures
- Inform the community of all consequences of conflicts if not addressed properly.
- Collectively identify all possible areas of conflicts and map out some solutions for the community
- Establish community rapport for their support and participation prior to actual implementation of the project.
- Clearly define roles and responsibilities of the many people in the community to draw community support.
- Try and include all members of the community
- Listen to the community about potential risks

### **Capacity Building of the WATSANS**

WATSAN members need to be equipped with the necessary skills to conduct their work effectively. They should receive support from local government services, implementing NSAs and other development partners in the area. As a minimum, WATSAN members should have skills in:

- Gender awareness
- HIV/AIDs
- Bookeeping
- Operation and Maintenance of water systems (best done on the job when the water supply is being installed.)
- Conflict mediation
- Management: organising and recording meetings, task allocation.

### **Promoting partnerships**

WATSAN committees cannot be expected to work in isolation. Even with motivated and appropriate members, even with the support of the community and a clear constitution, and the necessary technical expertise, even with a clear and transparent cash flow, evidence shows that at some point, and to varying degrees based on their competence, they need assistance from other organisations. This is inevitable until the organisation matures over time. If the NSA does not intend to provide that support over the months and years ahead they need to work closely with other local NSA's, local government bodies and any other appropriate development partner to ensure that once the project is completed the functions of the WATSAN are supported.

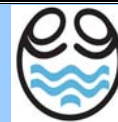


### **Concluding Comments**

Field workers often mistake a lively and positive handover ceremony as an indication of the sustainability of the water supply and sanitation project.

Great words of thanks by community leaders should be echoed by the NSA to the community and committee for managing the planning and implementation of the project. The moment the NSA leaves is likely to be the moment that the committee has taken complete responsibility for the day to day operation and maintenance of the project. It is a mistake for an NSA to hope that at this point the WATSAN committee can function effectively on its own. All field research shows that WATSAN committees need additional outside support if they are to continue to function. The impact survey should highlight not only the improvements in health, but also highlight

## RWSSP: Technical Advisory Note 2.1 Community Management (Committees)



deficiencies or weaknesses in the performance of the committee. At that point, follow-up training and capacity building in community management can be identified.

In relation to water supply and sanitation, communities must solve the problems associated with their water supply to have effective ownership. The committees must have the right people for the relevant roles and responsibilities, so choosing those members at the beginning is important. Facilitating with an appropriate gender approach will be essential to the successful choice of committee members. Tariffs and transparent financial control will be a reoccurring discussion in the community, and will require equitable decisions to be made.



### Reference

This technical advisory note draws from T36\_Keep It Working, which is a training manual written by IRC, Netherlands as well as RWSSP experiences from the field



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