


WEDC
12th Conference: Water and sanitation at mid-Decade: Calcutta 1986
H M G van Damme
People's water and sanitation Decade


Mr van Damme, in making his valedictory address, stressed that in seeking to attain the objectives of the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade we must not confuse targets with goals.

There were three particular areas where balance in our approach was required without polarisation or over-emphasis on any one aspect of development. The first was with regard to cooperation between the Government, the communities and the special role of women. The second was between the competing needs of water supply, environmental sanitation and hygiene education. The third area where balance was required was in the competing demands for facilities to be constructed, the requirement for effective maintenance as well as the need for the facilities to be properly used.

This balance had to grow out of a 'bottom up' approach with the balance and initiative coming from the people who were going to benefit from the improved water supply and sanitation.

However there were also aspects of the programme which had to come from the 'top down'. Training was absolutely vital for progress to be made through the rest of the Decade - 'We need more trained people'. Information had to be shared around the world, between districts and regions, between countries and even between continents to ensure that the best ideas were being used by all who could benefit from them.

Money was required. It was recognised that more money must come from the consumers but there was still a need for funding to come from external sources. Standardisation was needed to avoid confusion and difficulties both with regard to hardware as well as with regard to sociological methods and survey techniques.

Institutional aspects could never be neglected. The requirements of management, organisational structures, delegation and decentralisation must be considered and made effective if progress was to be made. Privatisation was becoming fashionable and may be useful in certain situations. Finally, rehabilitation was going to be a vital component of all programmes. Attention would have to be given from the highest level in order to ensure that priority

was given to appropriate rehabilitation ahead of replacement works.

In conclusion, Mr van Damme reminded the conference that technology had to be seen in the context of people, it must be a servant of the people rather than a director. We must not see people simply as a means to get our technology functioning. The needs of the Decade remained great but if we kept our eyes on the ultimate target we would succeed.