



## Community management of rural water supply



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MALAWI IS ONE of the developing countries with a population of 11 million of which more than 80 per cent lives in rural areas surviving on subsistence farming. It is estimated that the majority of this rural populace are served by groundwater and the minority, about 25 percent with gravity fed piped water schemes. To date there are approximately 15,000 ground water points serving rural communities giving a coverage of about 40 per cent. On the other hand sanitation levels are quite low. Most families have ordinary pit latrines and emphasis is now on coverage and use of improved pit latrines.

During the past years the Water Department of Ministry of Irrigation and Water Development had solely been responsible for the provision and maintenance of water points in the rural areas until late 1970s when the Department started working in partnership with beneficiary communities. Community participation with special focus on women has been on the increase.

The Malawi government has adopted Community Based Management for all rural water points to ensure improved and sustainable supply of safe water. A number of pilot projects were successfully implemented in early 80s. The prerequisite to implementation of Community Based Management has been the standardization of the VLOM pump for Malawi which is the Afridev handpump for deep wells and MALDA pump for shallow wells.

Communities are mobilized and sensitized on project objectives, their role and especially role of women on the project which results in formation of water and health committees. The approach is now nationally adopted by Government and Non Governmental Organizations.

### Objective

The development objective of Community Based Management is to improve production of human population through provision of sustainable safe water supply and use of improved sanitation facilities.

### Policy areas

Current policy with regard to provision of rural water supply is that all water projects should have sanitation component to maximize the impact of safe water supply. The other important policy is to do with maintenance of the water points which promotes training of beneficiary communities on village level operation and maintenance, leadership and hygiene and sanitation promotion.

### Organization of rural water supply and sanitation projects

There are a lot of projects on rural water supply and sanitation being implemented by government, and NGOs assisted by a variety of bilateral and multi-lateral donors. There are several players in the rural sector - these being Government Ministries, NGO's, donors and the private sector to a less extend.

Due to the fragmented nature of the sector, the government of Malawi has adopted a multi-sectral approach to the establishment of community based management of the rural water supply and sanitation. The Ministries involved are:

- Women and Children Affairs, Community Services and Social Welfare responsible for Community Mobilization and Sensitization and Committee Management.
- Ministry of Health and Population responsible for hygiene education and sanitation promotion.
- Ministry of Irrigation and Water Development which is the lead Ministry is responsible for the Water Point Maintenance and Co-ordination of the programme.

This fragmentation of the sector poses challenges and strategies have been adopted to ensure co-ordination and continuity of the programme and also to avoid duplication of efforts.

To avoid duplication of efforts coordination committees have been established with membership of all players at all levels. The Government is considering putting the water and sanitation sector in 1 Ministry to avoid the fragmentation and channelling of resources.

At National level a steering committee comprising of national officers from the three line ministries and representatives from NGOs exists. This committee is responsible for formulation of policies and guidelines for implementation of water and sanitation projects.

The steering committee is replicated at regional level with officers from the 3 line ministries and Non Governmental Organizations working in the region. This committee is responsible for planning and supervision of project activities in the region.

At district level, district officers from government collaborating ministries and Non Governmental Organizations working in a district form a district steering committee. This committee is responsible for training of

extension workers, planning and supervision of project activities in a district.

At local level user communities are assisted by a multisectoral team of extension workers.

Currently beneficiary communities do not make a financial contribution on capital cost of the projects. They only provide unskilled labour, and mobilization and provision of locally available materials for construction of water points. After the construction phase the government is responsible for procurement and distribution of spare parts through local shops for sales to communities. User communities are advised to raise funds and purchase the required parts to enable them carry out repairs on their water points.

We are currently carrying out trainings of advancing existing local pump caretakers to become responsible for complex repairs and also monitoring of the programme activities in a larger catchment area on voluntary basis. These might eventually take over the role of extension workers.

On gravity fed piped water supplies there are committees for each scheme from district to area level and taps. For schemes that cover 2 or more districts there is a main committee represented by members from each district. This committee is responsible for management of the whole scheme. This includes intake of the dam and storage tanks, caretakers for the maintenance and management of these main facilities are paid by the community through the main committee.

Government is coordinating implementation of projects by NGO's. This ensures that needy areas are targeted since some NGOs choose places that are easier for implementation.

Monitoring system which includes beneficiaries and external agencies such as government and NGOs and private sector is being established.

### **Partnership with other agencies**

NGO projects are implemented in partnership with government with the later taking a facilitating role *mainly* through multisectoral teams of extension workers.

### **Successful areas and challenges**

Women are involved in mobilization of locally available materials for construction of water points and also in clearing paths for construction equipment. During Operation and Maintenance phase women after being trained as pump mechanics do carry out routine preven-

tive maintenance, repairs and cleaning of water point surrounding. Women are also involved in fund raising, banking of money and purchasing of spares.

In the committees women are also given important positions such as secretary, chairman and treasurer.

Establishment of a national strategy for implementation of rural water supply and *sanitation* projects.

Standardization of VLOM pumps, Afridev for deep wells and Malda for shallow wells.

Community sense of ownership of projects as communities take the lead in planning, implementation, operation and management of their projects.

Inadequate supervision structures within central government set up mainly at district level resulting in negligence by private sector and NGOs to follow the adopted strategy.

Lack of capacity for local production of handpumps and spare parts is a constraint that needs reviewing.

In adequate privatization of spare parts distribution. The distribution of spareparts for Afridev handpumps is being done by Chipiku Stores. The private sector is being supported by Government with a view of full autonomy when the market proves viable.

Serious consideration is being taken of having locally manufactured spares that are competitive on the international market. The private sector also needs external support to establish the system. This is a very big challenge and is crucial in terms of community based management for sustainability.

### **Conclusions**

Though there is this idea of making a ministry to the sector, it is still proving successful to implement projects at district level. The coordination at national level may be a problem.

However, looking at operation of institutions at local level the Community Based Management approach is the most feasible approach for sustainability of rural water supply.

Now that government and community efforts are being maximized the private sector involvement need to be promoted so that the government remains with a facilitatory role not as an implementer.

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