



## Community services – peri-urban Luanda, Angola

*S Ferreira, Angola*

THE CITY OF Luanda is rapidly expanding. About 70% of the population lives on the periphery. These areas lack infrastructures and the reach of public services is limited to health and education. Existing infrastructures are degraded due to a combination of factors such as war, negligence and lack of policies, as well as a lack of expertise in relevant fields. Migration towards cities has led to the creation of heterogeneous neighbourhoods that lack the initiative to organize themselves collectively.

Collective structures are generally in a poor state. In 1991 the Freedom of Association Law came into effect and that has led to the creation of a number of national NGOs and Community-based Organizations. It was in this context that Development Workshop (DW) in partnership with EPAL, Luanda's Water Authority, and DNA, National Water Directorate developed the Water Programme for Luanda's periphery.

### Development workshop in Angola

DW has been operating in Angola since 1981, involved in activities directed towards settling populations. During the last decade DW has developed a number of programmes in areas such as the provision and management of standpipe water, sanitation, building latrines in schools and management of solid waste.

The water and sanitation work is being taken forward by DW through the current *Sustainable Community Services Programme (SCSP)*, a part of the Luanda Urban Poverty Programme, funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID). Models for service-delivery are being further developed, and the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders and partnerships are being more clearly defined. This programme emphasizes development of models for access and provision of community services at low cost, including monitoring systems to facilitate regular analysis for use in replication.

The implementation of this programme is based on providing everyone with a say in the process. The programme also carries out studies to better understand the practice and priorities of beneficiaries. This programme is being implemented in Hoji-ya-Henda, Ngola Kiluanji and Kikolo (in Luanda) and will have an impact in the lives of 80,000 people.

### Key aspects of intervention

Our strategy consists in involving local authorities, the community in general, local groups and institutions in the decision-making process, implementing actions and rein-

forcing ties. We also consider that all technical solutions must conform to reality and the level of service provided does not exceed the economic means of the community. The aim of these programmes is to motivate participation, reinforce partnership and act as a learning process for using and managing these systems. The implementation of monitoring systems has contributed to obtaining valuable information that measures the impact of all initiatives.

Listening to the people concerned; building water standpipes; promoting sanitation and the creation of community groups (water committees, neighbourhood committees); involving local authorities and developing systems of monitoring (databases and cost coverage) - these are just some of the instruments used in this programme that contribute towards the reduction of poverty in urban areas.

### Lessons to be learned

Our experience in community projects indicates there are some basic principles that are essential in order to succeed. These are; to reinforce the capacity of local authorities as regulating bodies; give community groups greater responsibility for the management of service links associated to this; match the service provided to the economic capacity of the local community and the creation of partnerships. In addition it is important to create a culture of participation.

The following key points sum up some valuable lessons that have been learned.

#### Beneficiaries

The level of community engagement determines the outcome of projects whose aim is to create services. It is important to listen to the beneficiaries so that we can understand their perceptions both in terms of technologies, management and willingness to pay for the service. Our experience suggests that a willingness to pay only occurs when the benefits are obvious and also where the contribution will really help to improve the service provided. In the areas concerned it is frequent to see people uniting in order to solve problems such as a lack of water and power.

#### Collective management

Collective management is something new in Angola. The peri-urban population of Luanda is very heterogeneous and lacks the experience of spontaneous initiatives. The creation of water committees to manage standpipes is a recent practice in Angola. These committees are now responsible for managing 220 public standpipes built by DW and all indicators show that the management systems work well when accompanied by experienced social mobilisers.

To increase the representation of women in water committees, to improve the management system, to continue to encourage the participation of local authorities in the solving conflicts and to encourage action in committees when water provision is not regular are just some of the challenges that lie ahead. Residents' committees, elected to represent the community, are voluntary bodies that should be taken into account when considering collective management of services. These committees serve as links between different people and also facilitate the creation of grass root networks. They are however dependent on the initiative of their leaders. The Residents' committees are very close to local administration and therefore they are often instruments of them rather than the community. That diminishes their capacity to represent and create useful information in the decision making process. In general, they depend upon financial contributions to carry out their activities.

Experience suggests that participation can be attained once the services to be implemented correspond to the general interests of the population. This applies particularly in the case of school latrines. The challenge is to develop a strategy that allows wider awareness of residents' committees as representatives of the wider community.

### **The involvement of women**

In Angola 60% of women are involved in the informal sector and are responsible for upkeep of the family. This means that potentially only 40% of women are available to participate in water committees. At present, around 20% of women are involved in the running of water standpipes. This figure has reduced over the last few years.

Water provision influences the participation of women in the committee. This means that if a standpipe is working for over 20 days a month it generates enough income to stimulate the activities of the committee. In this case, benefit for the family is much higher because the women won't need to resort to the water merchants who charge much higher prices. If this is not the case, in their role as heads of family, women will leave the committee so that they can dedicate themselves to other activities. If we consider that only 40% of women are available, participation in the committees is not that low. However, we are aware that the numbers must increase because women are the main users of this service and as such should have an increased share of responsibility in this process.

### **Partnership**

The provision of water and sanitation in the urban periphery is a complex issue that involves a number of different actors. The creation of partnerships has allowed us to create networks. For example, EPAL is a key partner of DW responsible for piped water. Local authorities are also involved in solving conflicts and have a say in identifying suitable locations. These authorities are also responsible for managing the network standpipes. DNA and the Regional Board for Health and Education (DPS/E) are institutional partners responsible for defining the rules for each sector. Both support our strategy.

We are aware that establishing partnerships is a long and slow process. This approach is somewhat recent in Angola. People and institutions lack the experience of working together, particularly where decision-making and the exchange of information are concerned. In this field there are many challenges to be met. We feel that we are on the right path. Establishing partnerships has allowed us an institutional framework as well as making sure we conform to Government policy in these areas.

### **Social Engagement**

Our teams for social engagement promote long term maintenance of infrastructures, as well as links between partners, with a view to future collaboration. Social engagement is a key issue to us. As we have mentioned before, spontaneous collaboration between people living on the periphery does not happen naturally. Therefore it is essential to develop specific methods to help participation in the resolution of common problems. We are also aware that change is a slow and gradual process. This means we have a number of challenges ahead of us.

### **Technology**

The aim of our intervention is to improve access to basic services. We have also been paying particular attention to technology because we know that sustainability depends on the direct benefits, as well as local capacity to operate use and maintain these services. We have evaluated our experiences to adapt technologies to a level compatible with the capacity, understanding and economy of the communities.

### **Information**

Another important aspect to bear in mind is the promotion of successful experiences. We have developed systems to collect and treat information with a view to measure and improve the quality of our interventions.

### **Recovering costs**

Cost recovery for the water company EPAL can be described as experimental. DW continues to be virtually the only organisation with any experience and recorded information with respect to cost recovery from public water stand posts in Luanda. Over the years we have learned that there is a close relationship between cost recovery and quality of service provided. As an example we know that the provision of standpipe water cannot be less than 20 days per month. Lower figures will lead to a lack of motivation therefore putting at risk any process of recovering costs.

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