PARTICIPATORY MONITORING FOR IMPROVED SUSTAINABILITY

Sharing experience from rural drinking water supplies project in Kyrgyzstan

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1 ABSTRACT
The road to rural drinking water supply projects in developing and transition economies is often lined with broken pumps, pipes and storage systems and frequented by women and children tracking water from distant or polluted sources. Sustainability remains low.

The objective of this paper is to share experience how a participatory monitoring mechanism with self-monitoring and planning tools contributed to improved sustainability of community owned rural water supply installations (sub-projects) rehabilitated and constructed with support of the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project in Kyrgyzstan (RWSSP).

The project attached high priority to monitoring sustainability of the sub-projects. Conventional approaches and methods did not meet the specific requirements of the project but their elements were used to design a participatory monitoring mechanism with self-monitoring tool — a sustainability check list at its core to extract information on likely sustainability1 from the communities which were involved in shaping the mechanism. By maintaining an ongoing dialogue and providing feedback to the communities, the mechanism also contributed to their empowerment.

The sustainability check list includes indicators and scores for sustainability factors that could be influenced by the project and communities: Economic, organizational and cooperation with partners. Scores indicate the level of risk and need for action. The check list offers: easy-to-use and understandable structure; application in modules allowing focus on critical factors; numeric scores to enter in Management Information System (MIS) for planning and reporting; it can be completed within 1 hour including discussion and consensus seeking.

Use of the mechanism demonstrated how monitoring can in addition to generating information on sustainability also contribute to its strengthening by fostering the link between monitoring and interventions as well as by increasing local awareness of risk factors and capacity to identify and to address them. Transferring ownership to the local levels contributed to their empowerment and changed perception. Monitoring was no longer perceived as an examination imposed by outsiders. It was recognized that there is no need to pretend better results because realistic results help to see the problems and look for solutions; self-monitoring itself motivated to actions and to improved sustainability.

2 THE PROJECT
The Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project (RWSSP) supported by the World Bank (18 million USD) and DFID (grant to support community development and capacity building) worked in three provinces (“oblasts”), with the objective to rehabilitate/construct 170 drinking water supplies in rural communities (overall 203 villages). Selection was demand driven: Communities submitted applications and the Project Management Unit and the Project Management Consultant (PMC) prepared a shortlist. Final selection was concluded after interviews with relevant authorities, PMU and PMC using a scoring system. Criteria included priority need, poverty, history of communal activities, willingness to pay and feasibility of solutions.

The project attached a high priority to sustainability and allocated resources for continued monitoring over a period of six years (2003-2008). First assessment was done by PMC in 2003 using questionnaires. Communities viewed it as additional work load and the results as PMC property with which they had nothing to do. There was very little, if any, impact on their pro-active attitude to sustainability issues. It was agreed that self-monitoring would be a better approach to facilitating dialogue, empowering the communities, improving governance, and strengthening ownership. This was particularly important in a situation where rural water supplies were privatized, people were used from the Soviet era to be provided with services free of charge and the Department for Rural Water Supplies (DRWS) had no outreach to the villages. In consultation with the communities, a new approach has been gradually developed that allowed for self-assessment and facilitated planning and interventions by the communities. Emphasis was on increasing sustainability rather than on high reliability and validity that could be achieved with conventional methods and on measuring and monitoring process.

Results from the first assessment looked pretty bleak with only 12 % of sub-projects assessed as likely to sustain. After some deliberations, the PMC decided to go public with the results taking the opportunity to sensitize partners to the issue of sustainability and to the need for interventions. The reaction was positive. Subsequently, a sustainability monitoring cell was established in the community development

1 Likelihood of sustainability has been assessed before, during and after construction.
section of the PMC; monitoring, IEC and capacity building went side by side. A participatory monitoring mechanism was developed and implemented. At the end of the project in October 2008, 34% of sub-projects were assessed as likely to sustain, other 51% likely to sustain with additional support that could be provided by local partners and peers. 15% were considered a failure.

**Figure 2.1: Project structure**

3 COMPONENTS OF THE PARTICIPATORY MONITORING MECHANISM

The purpose of the monitoring mechanism was not just to produce data, but to use the documented perceptions of the local communities and MIS to formulate and introduce interventions for mitigating threats and building local capacities. Implementation of the mechanism facilitated ongoing dialogue and improved relevance of interventions. The mechanism comprised the following components:

- Community generated sustainability check lists
- Community action plans for follow up on critical sustainability issues
- Rolling province action plans and project MIS- linking monitoring to planning and implementation

**Figure 3.1: Monitoring and planning process in the RWSSP project**

4 STAGES IN IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PARTICIPATORY MONITORING MECHANISM

Implementation of the participatory monitoring mechanism required considerable preparatory groundwork, capacity building and follow up to meet its intended purpose - facilitating dialogue, empowering the communities, improving governance\(^2\) and strengthening ownership. The process can be divided into four key stages: (i) Designing and introducing sustainability check list; (ii) designing and introducing rolling community action plan; (iii) processing information for project MIS; (iv) capacity building and training.

4.1 Designing and introducing self-monitoring check lists

The check list was designed as tool for self-assessment of sustainability by the communities to provide an “early warning” by identifying major threats.

*Agreement on sustainability factors to be monitored.* Four factors were agreed upon that (i) have strong influence on sustainability and (ii) can be influenced by the project and/or the communities:

\(^2\) *Governance* here means the way in which CDWUU s elected by the water users to manage the water sources exercise their power. The rules were laid down in the bylaws. It encompasses *transparency* in management of finances and information; *participation* – water users participate in making decisions and solving issues, decisions are based on consensus; *accountability* to the water users for the status of the services.
3. Each factor formed a separate module that could be used independently. After initial assessments, the communities could focus on factors with major weaknesses, thus saving time and increasing participation.

**Identification of phases in the sub-project requiring modification of indicators in the check list:**
- Phase I: Community mobilization for 5% contribution, final design (water users form Community Drinking Water Users’ Unions (CDWUUs), pay contributions; begin to take ownership)
- Phase II: Tendering, preparation and construction, technical checking (trust in getting water should increase sense of ownership and responsibility)
- Phase III: After technical checking (systems are providing water and are formally handed over to the users – communities should resume full ownership)

**Indicators:** The PMC team defined for each module the first set of indicators, means of verification and dimensions with scores, aiming at maximum 10 indicators for each factor. Each indicator had three dimensions/scores. The guiding principles were simplicity and minimum time requirements to increase participation. The indicators were reflecting specificities of each sub-project cycle.

**Table 4.1: Example of check list module for economic sustainability in the third phase**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Means of verification</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Marks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Tariff for current year approved before the end of last year</td>
<td>Minutes from general assembly (GA), approved tariff</td>
<td>Before the end of last year</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>January of this year</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Later than January this year</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Contracts between water users and CDWUU signed/revised within a month after approval of tariff</td>
<td>Contracts</td>
<td>Yes, 100%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>80 - 99%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&lt; 80%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Regular payment of full tariffs by all water users</td>
<td>Account books, announcement board</td>
<td>All pay in time (100%)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>90 – 99% pay in time</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&lt; 90% pay in time</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Effective measures for defaulters in place and applied</td>
<td>Discussion with CDWUU and AO</td>
<td>Yes and work (examples)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ideas, not convincing examples</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Approved tariff covers all cost: spare parts, chlorine, electricity, credit, taxes, salaries, reserve fund</td>
<td>Comparing tariffs with cost of the items</td>
<td>Covers all cost</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not covering reserve fund, credit</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not covering other cost</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Share of tariff paid in kind</td>
<td>Account books, announcement board</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1- 50%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>51- 100%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Tariff paid in kind during harvest paid for 12 months in advance</td>
<td>Discussion with CDWUU, accounts</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>80% - 99%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&lt; 80%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Monthly income covers all monthly expenses, all expenses paid in time</td>
<td>Comparing cash flow with expenses due</td>
<td>Fully correspond</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Deficit &lt; 10%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Deficit 10% or more</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Arrangements for liquidation of in-kind payments in place</td>
<td>Plans and budgets for monetization of in kind payments</td>
<td>Yes, realistic operational plan</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Partial plan</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No arrangements</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. CDWUU fund raising (rented productive land, organized technical service etc.)</td>
<td>At least one project/activity</td>
<td>Yes and brings income</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not profitable</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Distance between standpipes and households</td>
<td>Final design and variation orders</td>
<td>&gt; 95% &lt;= 250 m</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>90- 95% &lt;= 250 m</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&lt; 90% &lt;= 250 m</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 Technical factor replaced “need for water” in 2008 after a correlation analysis established that there is no clear link between need and the other three factors, possibly because need was one of the selection criteria and retained more or less constant values.

4 Participation here means: (i) physical presence; (ii) mental presence; and (iii) taking part in discussion and consensus building and decision making. Involving the “silent majority” was one of the tasks of facilitation and capacity building activities.
Interpreting results: After giving marks for each indicator, sum was made for each factor by simply adding the marks and dividing them by the number of indicators in the respective category. Decimals were rounded up or down. For example 2.3 was counted as 2, 2.6 as 3. Subsequently, marks were added for all four factors with the following interpretation: 4-7 unlikely to sustain; 8-10 may sustain with additional support; 11-12 likely to sustain.

Frequency and scope: Monitoring covered all sub-projects. The fact that they were selected and implemented in stages offered an opportunity to use experience for fine-tuning the mechanism and capacity building. The communities were asked to make assessments not less than twice a year. During the first years an intensive facilitation by PCM staff was required. Gradually some stronger communities particularly in second and third phases of the sub-project cycle completed check-lists and plans without support, and PMC could focus resources on weakest sub-projects to try to prevent their failure.

Define individuals and groups to implement the check lists. First assessments were completed by CDWUUs facilitated by project staff. With time it was recognized that a wider participation contributes to awareness, sensitizes to critical issues, brings more ideas for solutions for the action plans (see below) and augments support for remedial actions and mobilizing the community for tariff collection and dealing with defaulters. The “standpipe leaders”\(^5\), representatives of local self-government and government institutions, CBOs (including emerging formal and informal associations of CDWUUs), traditional leaders as well as trained members from other CDWUUs participated in varying degrees.

Introducing check lists included explaining and discussing their design and purpose: (i) identification of threats to sustainability and (ii) using results to discuss and agree on remedial actions. PMC staff may have facilitated the process of discussions and completion and questioned some scores, but the final decision on scores and major threats rested with the community.

Modifying check lists: Feedback from communities revealed need for additional clarifications and training and provided ideas for modifications to make the tool more appropriate. While there was a common understanding of the factors, communities sometimes did not understand what exactly are some indicators are supposed to measure, how the dimensions were arrived at and how to use means of verifications. They also complained that the check lists are too long. Subsequent modifications included: Using one indicator instead of two measuring similar variables. Adjusting formulations to local “language”. Encouraging physical review of the bookkeeping and accounting before giving scores.\(^6\) The limits for highest score on tariff collection (100%) remained subject for discussions until the end of the project with opponents pointing out that a move from 0 to say 60% is significant and deserves full score and proponents insisting that all items on the tariff need to be paid else the system will not be sustainable.\(^7\)

4.2 Designing and introducing community action plans

The process of seeking user’s perception alone would not be fully productive without asking the communities to come up with its own set of agreed measures for improvements. The format followed conventional action plans. Information on actual number of users was included for calculations of tariff and possible technical modifications. The plan was usually completed after completion of the check list or its module(s), by the same participants.

Selecting critical issues. Only most critical issues were selected for follow up, focusing on indicators with mark 1 from factors with total marks 1-2. Larger focus would decrease participation and water down the important attention on the most serious threats. Check lists served as basis for determining priority issues. Conclusions from discussions were noted on a blackboard or whatever was available to make them visible to all participants who could further discuss and modify them. Wider participation helped in identifying solutions and bringing innovative ideas such as: collecting tariffs from pensioners by the post office. Electing stand pipe leaders to delegate some responsibilities from the CDWUUs such as tariff collection or dealing with misuse (this was particularly effective in larger communities). Introducing

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\(^5\) Representatives of households living near a standpipe elected 2 individuals (usually 1 man and 1 woman) as leaders, responsible for the operation and management of their standpipe. The standpipe leaders were introduced in 2006 on the initiative of the PMC in consultation with the communities as a mean to improve sustainability.

\(^6\) This was sometimes difficult since the required documents were not always available and the person who had the keys not present. Spot check inspections revealed that documents and receipts were often incomplete or missing. The project introduced a separate monitoring of the communities MIS system and additional training of the chairpersons and accountants.

\(^7\) These discussions lead to reviews of the tariffs (set by the communities) to see whether and what items could be decreased. The controversial 100% remained – by a decision of the PMC.
different tariffs for institutions. Finding solutions for families who could not afford to pay. Calling village assembly to deal with contractors or to replace members from CDWUUS whose performance was not satisfactory.

The planning process was in the hands of the communities - present PMC staff intervened only to keep the process on track. Feedback from the sessions revealed need for additional clarifications and training on issues such as: (i) Defining action in specific terms; (ii) defining specific person responsible for follow up; (iii) defining realistic time frame; (iv) repeating actions that did not lead to solution; (v) understanding the difference between “activities implemented” and “issue resolved”. Most communities needed facilitation in completing the action plans until the end of the project.

4.3 Processing and using information

Rolling action plans: Copies of the community action plans (originals remained with the communities) were submitted to the Province offices for consolidation in province “rolling action plans”. The “rolling” plans included updated basic information on each sub-project and the history of assessments and plans.

The Province staff submitted the latest version of the community action plans to the PMC Head Office. District project staff received printouts for their respective districts for sharing with the communities and to facilitate and monitor, together with the province staff, follow up. The district staff found the plans useful as record and memory prop.
Using information. Scores for individual factors and the total scores were entered in the project database. This statistical information, together with “history” of each scheme recorded in the plans and anecdotal information gained from discussions with oblast and rayon PMC staff and partners was used to identify threats specific for certain types of sub-projects (two or more communities sharing common water source), compare geographical areas or localities with different farming systems and sources of income and design appropriate interventions.

Examples of interventions by the project:

- **Continued building of organizational capacity** of CDWUUs in management, operation and maintenance: Assisting with designing formats for different agreements (with water users, with contractors, guards, technicians, standpipe leaders). Supporting community representatives during tender openings, in contract negotiations and in signing contracts and hand-over agreements.

- **Support with technical issues** (manual for and training in basic operation and maintenance, negotiating with defaulting contractors, monitoring quality of materials and works). Planning contributions to construction jointly with communities and contractors. Consultation with the communities during preparation and approval of preliminary design. Mentoring for working commission and Government commission (final acceptance). Training in water quality control.

- **Support in developing and maintaining partnerships** (facilitating meetings with local self-government and institutions. Support to networking by exchange visits, support to formal and informal associations.

- **Support with improving economic sustainability**: Tariffs were approved by general assembly of the water users. Monitoring revealed that the weakest factor for most installations is economic sustainability due to low (expected or actual) tariff collection.

**Textbox 4.1: Improving tariff collection**

A tariff study was conducted to provide basis for reviewing strategy for tariff collection and to define effective interventions:

- A separate monitoring system for tariff collection was introduced with the project province and head office finance sections where information on tariff collection was recorded for each CDWUU. Results were distributed and findings presented at all project levels.

- Tariff Collection Training Module was designed and piloted by the community development section. Province and district staff was trained as trainers for the communities.

- Support to networking to share experiences with approaches to collecting tariffs and dealing with defaulters was intensified where collections were lowest.

- A workshop with 17 CDWUUs from Issyk-Kul province was designed and implemented to encourage sharing of experience and good practice.

Improving Tariff Collection rates takes time. However, the Impact Study conducted at the end of the project showed that villagers do value clean water and are willing to pay for it. Tariff Collection rates in the 21 sub-projects that participated in the Tariff Collection Study and where reliable baseline data was available have reportedly increased their collection rates in some cases quite significantly. These findings suggest that a concerted strategy works.
Capacity building in self-monitoring: The project trained 43 potential trainers - competent CDWUU Board members and representatives from CDWUU networks. Their skills including using the methodological tools, proficiency in sub-project MIS, ability to facilitate discussions without becoming part of it, conflict resolution skills, ability to keep focus as well as relating results to the previous assessments were tested in classroom as well as in the field on other sub-projects in phases II or III. 15 were awarded certificates. Most trainees grasped the methodology quickly and appreciate it as a useful tool. Some continued supporting other sub-projects and conducted self-assessments of the own. This augmented the limited project capacities and created hope for continuation of self monitoring, probably in a simplified manner, after the project completion.

5 LESSONS LEARNT

Use of the mechanism demonstrated how monitoring can in addition to generating information on sustainability contribute to its strengthening by focusing attention on the question "How many person years of clean water supply did project help to provide" rather than "how many people or villages are covered". What else have we learnt in the project?

5.1 Participatory monitoring contributed to improved sustainability

- Providing continued and updated information on major threats and trends in likelihood of sustainability and mitigating measures to partner institutions and organization increased awareness of the importance to sustain the water installations and helped to augment support. Expenses for medicines necessary to cure diseases due to poor quality of water drastically decreased (as reported by households thru the Impact Assessment Study), proving the effectiveness of the rehabilitated systems. Women particularly experienced a better livelihood. Their children were healthy and loosing no time to collect water from unsafe water sources, women reported.

- Results from the first assessment in May 2004 looked pretty bleak with only 12 % of sub-projects assessed as "likely to sustain". At the end of the project in October 2008, this figure increased to 34% sub-projects assessed as likely to sustain, other 51% assessed as "may sustain with additional support". Taken together, this represents 144 schemes providing clear drinking water to some 289,000 people. 15% of the sub-projects were considered a failure. The success may seem low, but it can also be considered an excellent result in comparison with other community based services projects in the region.

The actual sustainability can only be assessed by ex-post evaluation and the effectiveness of the investment may never be known

5.2 Self-monitoring and planning contributed to empowerment of the communities

- The process of transferring ownership of monitoring and planning to the communities contributed to their empowerment, increased ownership and sense of responsibility and lead to changing of perceptions: Gradually, communities saw the benefit of having a prop (in the form of check list) for identifying issues that they need to address if they want to keep the water running. Role of the project transformed from an outside examiner and provider to one of a partner who supports and assists. Respect for the rights and views of the owners/communities within the project increased; it has been recognized that local people are experts capable of identifying and measuring issues and planning follow up.

- Many communities realized that problems can and need to be addressed openly; pretending better results and hiding issues does not help in solving them. Self-monitoring contributed to pro-active attitude and improved sustainability. It has been observed that CDWUUUs who graduated to self-monitoring ranked typically higher in likelihood of sustainability. This shows that pro-active attitude (or good potential to develop one) is not only an important indicator for organizational sustainability but needs to be taken into consideration when selecting communities for support with self managed and self-finances water supplies and other services and should remain a focus of community development activities.

- Payment of tariffs was the most critical issue. Reasons included: (i) A normal human behavior: wait and see what happens if you do not pay. This is perpetuated by the habit of not paying for services. (ii) Clean drinking water is not a top priority because people have private wells or streams pass thru their village. (iii) People contributed to the investment cost but the system does not extend to their area. (iv) Frequent break downs; water supply is limited or unreliable. (v) The community does not have an effective system for tariff collection. It is important to properly
understand the reasons as well as the willingness and limitations of the communities to address and to solve them. The Tariff Study was implemented to get deeper understanding of the reasons and background to design measures focused on solving the project specific reasons. Such measures were introduced at the PCM level (monitoring of tariff payments) as well as in the communities who designed and implemented measures against defaulters, decentralized tariff collection to the standpipe committees, involved local partners for support.

- Improvements were also observed in governance and cooperation with partners including contractors. Communities demanded greater transparency and accountability from CDWUUUS and replaced members of management if they were considered ineffective or corrupt. They pursued measures against contractors who supplied second hand materials, unduly delayed works or left the site without completing works during the maintenance period.

5.3 Integrating monitoring and community development activities improved effectiveness

- Monitoring, Information Education Communication (IEC) activities and capacity building side by side created synergy, facilitated ongoing dialogue, improved mutual understanding and helped to jointly identify, to discuss and to agree on mitigation measures in a holistic approach increasing relevance and effectiveness of interventions. For example, community technicians could maintain broken parts because they were trained, equipped with manual, employed by the CDWUUUS and paid from fees. CDWUUUs learned to calculated tariff and discussed the draft in the public because they understood that if the community does not agree the likelihood of payments decreases.

5.4 Assumptions and Limitations

- Adoption and implementation of the participatory monitoring mechanism was only possible because: (i) The project had strong and competent leadership and both the donors and the consultant were committed to sustainable results. (ii) The project had competent and dedicated staff able to develop and adopt the concept, to work as a team and to translate the principles in to real life action. (ii) Education levels and literacy rates in the project area were relatively high.

- Looking at the improvements achieved in the course of five years, with more funds available additional resources could have been allocated and existing resources (gradually phased out at the end of the project) retained for community development and participatory monitoring, it is believed that the likelihood of sustainability could have been further increased.

- Self-monitoring was a novelty in the project area. The time for awareness raising and capacity building was too short and the momentum gained could not be utilized to its full potential. Two to three more years of interventions focused on self-monitoring and community planning would further strengthen local capacities and some of the 51% assessed as “may sustain with additional support” could have moved in the “likely to sustain” category. It would also allow continuing dialogue on and fine-tuning of the methodology that some communities considered too time consuming and may have abandoned it because of that.

5.5 Replicability

- Strengthening local capacities in monitoring and planning equipped project staff and the communities with skills that they can continue using for their own installations and replicate after completion of the project.

- Currently 16 remote villages in the project area are supported by the Kyrgyz Alliance for Water and Sanitation (KAWS) under the “Sustainable ecological sanitation project in the rural areas”. KAWS is using the CDWUUUs and their three associations initiated during RWSSP as entry points; the organization has adopted the participatory and holistic approach to community development and self-monitoring developed under the RWSSP and engages community members trained and certified in the self-monitoring and planning methodology.

5.6 Some lessons for the future

- Government commitment is an important pre-requisite for sustainability. The participatory monitoring mechanism was presented to the DRWS on several occasions and training in sustainability self-monitoring was provided to their staff in February 2007. Until now the Department has not commented on or adopted any of the methodological tools. In such situations, outsourcing these tasks to a NSA may be an option.
• Although the communities were the owners, managers and financiers of the rehabilitated or newly constructed water supplies, there was no legal basis for community organizations such as the CDWUUs. This created complications (such as unclear taxation, legal formalization of ownership of the water installations and the land they occupied) and weakened organizational sustainability. The project drafted proposed amended legislation but the final decision and solution lied with the State. A sound legal basis is one of the pre-requisites for sustainable management of community owned assets.

• The communities were not aware of the need to cover the full cost of services related to provision of clean drinking water. It is important to start payment of essential items including remuneration of the key management and technical staff (chairperson, accountant and technician) from the very beginning. The demands on the CDWUUs have been considerable and competent people trained by the project often left because the only benefit they may have received was respect by the community. They also got the blame when things went wrong. Sustainability of family was more important…

• Associations need to grow naturally, as a result of genuine needs of the water users and their unions. If they are established in a top-down manner, they are not sustainable, partly because the water users do not finance them, partly because they have not grown from within the system and are not considered its integral part. Sometimes proper associations may not develop during a lifetime of a project. The RWSSP facilitated and supported three associations. One has disintegrated and two continued more or less functioning by the time the project ended.

• Particularly in remote rural areas, supply of spare parts and access to qualified technical services remained a problem. The government institutions, NGOs, associations or the private sector can play an important role here. The administration can for example register the water supplies and include them in their maintenance roster. If their outreach is limited (as was the case in our project) and the private sector not developed or not interested, associations may be the best option. The project can provide tool kit for maintenance, training, manual, on-the-job mentoring; it can also help to facilitate linkages with potential providers of technical support services to strengthen technical sustainability.

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