



Planning with the doers and users

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THIS PAPER DESCRIBES a new publication, *A Participatory Approach to Planning Integrated Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Programmes: Guidelines and Manual*. These are guidelines to help planners and managers in national governments to develop their own programmes using participatory methods to include all stakeholders in the process. They can also be used by external consultants, and NGOs could adapt them and use the relevant parts for their own programmes.

The programme referred to in the title of the Guidelines is considered in the widest sense of the range of definitions of project and programme. The definition is:

a coherent framework of procedures and activities for co-ordinating and regulating projects within the water and sanitation sector in a defined geographical area.

As it implies, this is intended to enable the appropriate government department to manage the rural water supply and sanitation sector within an administrative region.

The Guidelines have been developed over the past few years through a process of consultation with potential users at workshops alongside WEDC Conferences, field-testing of the conceptual approach in a pilot study in Zimbabwe, and a second pilot study in Zambia to field test a draft version. An early version of the Guidelines was described in a paper to the 24th WEDC conference in Islamabad, but they have been substantially revised since then. The pilot study in Zambia was described in a paper at the 25th WEDC Conference in Addis Ababa.

Two challenges

The Guidelines have been developed to help planners and managers, the practitioners or “doers”, to meet two challenges in rural water supply and sanitation (RWSS).

The first challenge is:

- **how to integrate the different components of RWSS?**

It is now generally accepted that water supply, sanitation and hygiene promotion have to be combined to achieve the maximum potential health benefits. Although this does not necessarily have to be within one project, it should certainly be at programme level. An individual project or agency may concentrate on one component only, but it should do so in a complementary way with other projects or agencies providing the other components. Along with these established components of RWSS, a fourth component is now being considered as important. This is for water resource management, both for the supply of domestic water in relation to other demands on the resource and for

the prevention of pollution of the water resources by domestic sanitation. The challenge is for government managers and planners to integrate these four components, together with the institutional arrangements to provide the services. Up to now there has been a lack of guidance for professionals on how to achieve this integration. Most of the books concentrate on a particular component, and though referring to the others, provide little help on how to combine them in a project or programme. The Guidelines attempt to redress this lack of support.

The second challenge is:

- **how to enable all the people involved in the sector to participate in the planning process?**

These people include the “users”: women and men in the villages and communities to be served, and the “doers”: field staff of implementing and facilitating agencies; the various technical and management staff at district, provincial and central levels; and other organisations. Procedures for involving communities in individual projects or sub-projects are now well established, and field staff are becoming more and more experienced and confident in using participatory processes. For national or regional level planning, however, there is very little experience and guidance. How can ordinary villagers, and especially poor people and women, have a voice in programme planning and policy-making? The importance of this participation was emphasized in a consultation workshop for development of the Guidelines at the WEDC Conference in Durban in 1997.

Concerning the “doers”, how often do the views and experience of the people implementing projects and programmes at district level and in the field get considered in planning their future work? Do senior planners really understand the issues and problems that these people face in their day-to-day work? The Guidelines suggest a process in which representatives of these groups can participate in planning. This should result in a sense of ownership of the resulting programme that should enhance its subsequent implementation.

The Guidelines

The Guidelines are intended to be used for a project to prepare a programme. It is anticipated that this “Preparation Project” would take about six months, depending on the social and physical complexity of the geographic area. The Guidelines suggest how this Preparation Project should be set-up, with a planning team composed of representatives and specialists of the various ministries and departments

involved in the water, sanitation and hygiene promotion sector, from district level up through regional level to central government level as appropriate.

The Guidelines lead the planning team through a process divided into three stages, as shown in Figure 1. Key points from the process include the following.

Information gathering, consultations and surveys at all levels are necessary to understand the whole context of the proposed programme. The type of information to gather in the first stage includes social, economic and health, both quantitative and qualitative, as well as the technical issues of water resources and supply, and sanitation. Although the members of the planning team may be very familiar with their working situation, it can still be very useful for them to step out of their day-to-day work and take a fresh look at the context.

A major and innovative change from the early version of the Guidelines is the introduction of Village Needs Assessment Workshops to enable communities' views on planning for their water supply and sanitation services to be considered. Each village that has been surveyed (using participatory methods and processes) sends two or three representatives, including at least one woman, to this workshop. Together they discuss their issues and problems and define their own solutions. The workshops select participants to represent these views at the Planning Workshop in the second stage.

Following analysis of the information by the planning team in the second stage, the key event of the whole process is the Planning Workshop. This should bring together representatives of the "doers" and "users" to analyze the problems and issues in the rural water supply and sanitation sector in their area, and to develop their own solutions. The representatives of the doers should include staff from each district, staff from the various departments and government offices at regional level and central level, relevant technical specialists and advisors, and the planning team itself. At another workshop the same group of people should review the detailed design prepared in the third stage by the planning team based on the outputs from the Planning Workshop.

The pilot study in Zambia showed the value of involving all these people in planning. It was the first time that most of them had been involved in such an exercise of identifying and analyzing the problems they face in their work, and developing their own solutions to those problems. From this and the subsequent review workshop, it seems that a genuine sense of ownership of the programme proposal

was achieved, thus fulfilling one of the intentions of the guidelines. The workshops were certainly appreciated by the participants.

The product from using the Guidelines should be a programme for managing the domestic water supply and sanitation sector in the area. It would include components for hygiene promotion, water resource management related to RWSS, institutional capacity building and programme management as well as water supply and sanitation.

Representatives of two bilateral donors reviewed the final draft of the Guidelines. These both expressed appreciation of the concept of guidance for programme planning, and considered that they would be very helpful. These reviews, together with the appreciation expressed by the users and others during the pilot study in Zambia, show that the Guidelines address a real need for assistance in planning RWSS programmes.

For further information about the Guidelines, please contact the authors.

References

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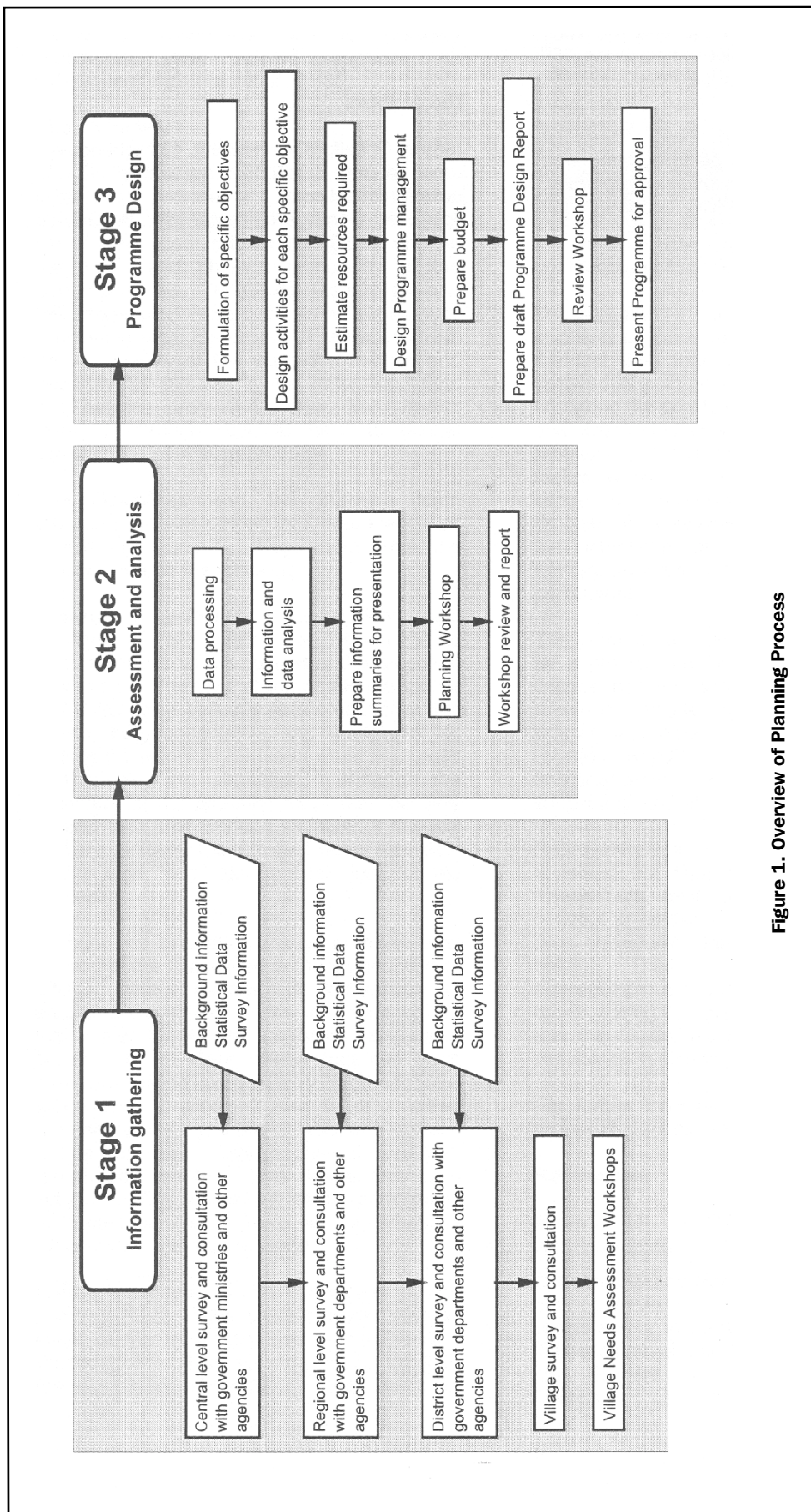


Figure 1. Overview of Planning Process