



Rural development through water supply

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VARIOUS MODELS HAVE been proposed all attempting to provide ways of initiating and sustaining rural development. Though many of these models initially showed promising results they could not be sustained for many reasons. In this paper, we present yet another model based on water supply, which has been field and time, tested. That, rural water supply can be used as a process to initiate and cause transformation in human lives and communities. Its capacity to foster change and promote development has been found to be enduring.

World Vision International Ghana (WVIG), was established in June 1979. A severe drought in Ghana during 1982-83 revealed one vital element that was lacking in World Vision's development programme – clean water. Therefore in 1985 the World Vision Ghana Rural Water Project (WVI-GRWP) was set-up as a direct response to provide potable water for World Vision assisted communities.

Prior to World Vision's entry to the Greater Afram Plains of Ghana (its current operations area), stark underdevelopment was prevalent. The rural populace faced the gruelling chore of aggressively searching for water in the dry season. Water-borne diseases including guinea worm and diarrhoeal diseases incapacitated, and debilitated many, particularly the work-force and young children. The lack of water thus disorientated communities and there were no conscious efforts at community organisation for change to ensure the progressive improvement in human lives. Despite the fact that the rural economy was basically agrarian inhabitants could not achieve their potential due to the lack of good water. Other programmes such as education, health, environmental sanitation and conservation, could not be carried-out because communities did not have the mind-set for organising and the capacity for resource mobilisation for sustained development.

The basis and theory of transformational development

Transformational Development (TD) can be technically defined as a process of evolving and improving the value and quality of human life. It implies change which enhances human welfare, improvement upon old ways of doing things, a proactive attitude to everyday living which overrides parochialism, inertia and apathy, with the ultimate goal of moving a people forward in attaining their hopes and aspirations.

World Vision's philosophy on Transformational Rural Development (TRD) is based on the principle that through

the provision of potable water, everyday life for the rural poor, the needy, the marginalised and oppressed women would take a new turn and change for the better. Simultaneously, communities held in bondage of cyclical underdevelopment are totally liberated. The provision of water using this model therefore helps to facilitate and generate the process for sustained rural development.

Strategies of the transformational model

WVI-GRWP's strategies for holistic transformational development through water supply are based on the following cardinal principles of community –based development:

- Participation of people in their own development and local ownership of the decision-making process.
- Commitment of local resources to the community development process.
- Role of outside agents as sensitizers and facilitators of change.
- Valuing people's indigenous knowledge and belief in people's innate capacity to effect change.
- The need to transform limiting structures that impede local initiative.
- Emphasis on "process" rather than "projects".
- Collaboration with stakeholders and Partner Organisations and Community ownership of projects.

The key focus of World Vision's water supply programme (through borehole drilling and other alternate sources), which ensures transformation of human lives and communities and the sustainability of interventions, are strategies which involve the following three principal phases of project intervention:

Preparatory phase:

- Communities are entered and animated. Their collaboration is sought for development through their traditional rulers, other community leaders, local change agents and existing community development committees. Awareness creation is promoted through community meetings, baseline data collection and project start-up workshops. This results in community acceptance and willingness to participate in the program.
- Communities are also organised to participate actively in project planning. These include community needs assessment, development of strategies for interventions, mobilization of human and material resources. The people are thus mobilised to participate fully in all stages of the programme. The aim of this participatory approach is to ensure that the beneficiary communities

acquire enough skills to continue with the programme when World Vision activities end.

Implementation phase:

This phase involves collaboration, intersectoral and multidisciplinary approach, institutional development, and local human capacity development.

- The intersectoral and multidisciplinary approach to development with its focus on community mobilisation and participation are linked to Government's developmental schemes through District Assemblies and various Management Committees such as the Water and Sanitation (WATSAN) Committees in each community, Zonal Committees and District Coordinating Committees at the district level. By organising various workshops, World Vision Ghana gained the support and understanding of government sector ministries, regional and district administrations, district assemblies, traditional rulers, and other non-governmental organisations.
- Local people (community volunteers) are trained in the construction of water, health and sanitation facilities and the operation and maintenance of these facilities. Establishing such links between communities and Government and empowering communities to assist in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of project activities helps to promote community ownership and management. The ultimate objective is to strengthen their capacity to sustain the benefits of the project interventions in the long term.
- Hand in hand with the provision of potable water is an intensive community education programme on health, personal hygiene, and importance of the use of clean water, environmental resource management and sanitation.

Management for Sustainability phase:

Members of institutions formed are trained for the sustainable management, empowerment and community ownership of projects.

- In each of the Districts where World Vision operates, the project facilitates the development of Local Change Agents (LCA'S) and provides support (e.g. transport) where necessary. These LCA's have the following characteristics:
They are highly qualified para-professionals with a variety of skills. They have lived and worked among the District for significant periods of time, have good knowledge of the rural communities and are well accepted there. They have received community animation facilitation skills to enable them to empower the rural communities to initiate self-sustaining development programmes.

This approach seeks to empower local communities to transform their lives through sustainable community – based interventions. The emphasis in these strategies is to prepare communities to receive the wells drilled, own

the water supply systems, regard them as their own and train local volunteers in the repair and maintenance of the water facilities. Thus through facilitation, communities are sensitised and empowered through building local human and institutional capacity to the stage where the community members eventually pass-out and become independent of World Vision International.

- Funds for infrastructure sustainability: Another important thing the people have learnt is local fund-raising and financial management. The people themselves deposit regular contributions from community members with Rural Banks. This enables them to purchase spare parts to repair the pumps.
- Field Coordinators: To produce the desired successful and fruitful results however, the expertise of Field Coordinators who are well trained and understand well project goals and objectives, are self-motivated, skilled and tactful are required. The Coordinator's role in local resources (physical/human) mobilisation and development is central and indispensable for successful project implementation.

The lessons and challenges emerging as a result of operating with this model of rural development in our peculiar task environment

During the past 7 years, rural water supply has been used to initiate change that has transformed lives and communities. The major impact is the significant and sustained improvement in the quality of life of the inhabitants of the Greater Afram Plains of Ghana. Many lessons have been learnt from the programme among which are:

- Programmes designed as interventions must be seen as a process towards developing community capacity for sustainable transformation over time.
- Development dynamics – the ever changing and emerging scenarios and stark challenges as a result of providing water in relation to population numbers and their stability or re-location, education (in terms of the abysmally low levels of literacy to be raised), health issues and agriculture and the environment are significant variables that cannot be over-looked in project interventions. Together they determine the quality of the human experience over time and provide the basic indices for measuring human development and the satisfaction of basic human aspirations in life.
- Community attitude, level of preparedness and beneficiaries' acceptance of interventions to meet their needs is very crucial to successful programme implementation. Programmes would not be sustained if communities are apathetic and do not seem to be in need of them, and are also not ready to contribute resources for the implementation of such programmes. Involvement with the people through community organisation, mobilisation, and sensitisation created a wealth of goodwill in the communities to promote development activities.

When development is human-centered, whereby people are animated and made to appreciate that the process being facilitated is for their ultimate well-being, they do respond to any heights of call and give of their best to bring about that change.

- There are costs to development in terms of transforming human lives and communities. Budgeted costs and unanticipated costs because we are constantly dealing with the dynamic and ever-changing scenarios of human lives. In trying to help put value on and quality into human life, costs are incurred as a catalyst for accelerated development.
- The prime need for survival drives people to put all disharmony aside to achieve the common goal. At such a critical stage, if well sensitised, organised and mobilised communities would do almost anything to achieve set objectives.
- Localisation of the water supply programme in the Greater Afram Plains of Ghana has facilitated a cross-fertilization of knowledge and experience which has promoted rapid rural development.

The impact of the practical application of the model

Formerly, the lack of water adversely affected farming activities and triggered-off annual relocation of settlements in search for stable water sources. From 1990 to 1995 however, the World Vision International, Ghana Rural Water Project (WVI-GRWP) with donor funding from the CONRAD N. HILTON FUND and World Vision U.S.A. provided 529 drilled wells in 300 communities in the Greater Afram Plains (GAP) portion of rural Ghana. The GAP spans certain terrain with the same geographical and geological features in three regions of Ghana. The program has since been extended for another six years from 1996 – 2001 to provide additional 600 drilled wells for the people in the GAP.

Lack of water tends to limit efforts at rural development but through its water programme, World Vision has been able to facilitate a viable process, which reverses underdevelopment. To date, the scourge of debilitating diseases such as malaria, diarrhoea, dracunculiasis (guinea worm) and schistosomiasis have been drastically mitigated. Unstable populations and non-permanent settlements which hitherto were prevalent in the GAP are now becoming issues of the past as WVI-GRWP continues to provide potable water for the inhabitants of the GAP.

- Human lives have been dramatically transformed physically, socially and economically. Combating the scourge of guinea worm with water from drilled wells has led to a new lease of life and the release from the vicious cycle of poverty. The result is a demonstration effect whereby quality of life has improved. Micro - enterprise development is growing with the ability to hire labour for farm work. There is now farm expansion, purchase of maize-mills, bicycles, clothing, and the building of new houses.

School fees are now affordable, children now attend school regularly and are punctual. Teacher's turnover, which was very high, has now reduced as teachers now accept posting to these remote rural areas, and as a result, now there is improvement in children's school results. Access roads have now been constructed by the Government to communities, which some few years back were unknown and unheard-of.

- There has been dramatic improvement in social life as women and school children spend less time searching for water. Women in communities now live in peace and no more fight over water. Socio-cultural transformations (though slow) are emerging, fostering healthier social harmony for peaceful co-existence among the diverse ethnic groups inhabiting the operations area – the Greater Afram Plains (GAP) of Ghana.
- Evidence of Project sustainability are showing as artisans trained for community health and sanitation infrastructure are putting their skills acquired to good use to serve their communities. Locally trained pump maintenance volunteers are also servicing handpumps by themselves.

Replicability of the model: Factors to be taken into consideration

There should always be a Mission Statement and work ethos to guide programme implementation. Through such a guide, rural development programmes as designed, would set out to tackle challenges, whilst goals aimed at transformation and sustainability can be realised at all cost.

- The Mission Statement should be specific, time-bound and achievable.
- Capacity development of project staff for project success and efficient performance is a "sine qua-non". Efficient, reliable, selfless and self-motivated Project staff and local change agents who can carry along the vision of the desired transformation and change in the communities is essential. As such, there must be a total commitment to human capacity development in order for any Organisation to perform and practicalise its vision and actualise its Mission Statement.
- Effective Project monitoring for cost effectiveness, eliminating waste and checking human weaknesses are priority issues that need be handled for efficiency.
- Sound knowledge of the local task environment is quite essential, in terms of its population base and characteristics, resources, constraints, community's organisational structure and the power base of civil organisations.
- Project sustainability: Capacity development of Institutions/structures, as well as local human capacity building for the sustainable management and maintenance of the programmes under a Project should not be compromised because sustainability would be the yardstick of assessing project success or failure.
- Community Support Base: For programmes to transform human lives and communities, a Project should be

a prime need such that communities have virtually no other options than to pool their resources together for the desired transformation to occur.

- Collaboration: There should be collaboration with all stakeholders in mobilising funds and other resources-in-kind for project implementation. In as much as this may help to spread project costs resistance can emerge, especially when partner organisations are not going through the same development growth experience. This however must not cloud-out the project's goal to be accomplished.

Conclusion

- Considering all the strategies mentioned in the above exposition, development in the rural milieu can be seen as an amalgamation of a chain of processes leading to gradual but irreversible change for human and community transformation. Within this context of rural development therefore, collaboration instead of paternalism or dependency is promoted, all stakeholders are consid-

ered as key partners in development, each with some invaluable contribution to offer.

Given the right modern technology, innovative adoption of strategies for programme implementation, having project personnel who carry ahead the vision of objectives to be fulfilled, and coming into partnership with stakeholders and needy communities who are ready to collaborate, no challenge would seem to be insurmountable in efforts to bring about transformed and enduring change in communities, and in a people who have hitherto resigned their fate to the inclement dictates of the physical environment.

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