

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

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Summary

Safe drinking water supply and sanitation services are of prior importance for human's life and the provision of these services should not be compromised. Community based approach is currently widely used to promote the ownership for the programs, which aims global goals for sustainable development. This approach does care for gender equality, and it also hears the voice of poor, which resultantly set value to indigenous technologies used for centuries with sustainable way.

Participatory development has various types and forms. It is developed and used every corner of the world. The core features of the participatory development are 1) Human

resource development, problem solving and regional mobilization are achieved through the active participation of local people, 2) Outsiders only facilitate the participatory processes, 3) Local resources are widely applied based on the indigenous traditions and cultures, and 4) Many stakeholders, especially underprivileged groups, actively drive the project.

Participatory development has several degrees of participation from just information sharing to consultation, partnership, up to self-control by local people. Usually, it does not hurry to jump up to the highest degree, but stepwise approach is preferred.

Participatory approach has great opportunities to mobilize people's capacity to deal with their own problems. But participatory approach also has limitations. One is mainly caused by abuse or misuse of this approach from outsider's viewpoints, which make all processes superficial and discourage people's ownership. The limitations of the participatory approach cannot be eradicated but at least it can be minimized by careful handling and appropriate procedures. The intangible intuition which the participatory approach can yield is an indispensable benefit for sustainable development.

Gender issue, poverty issue and social commons are important viewpoints for water supply and sanitation. All of these issues cannot be solved without restructuring social systems; therefore, community participation is essential to deal with these issues.

1. Introduction

Safe drinking water supply and sanitation services are of prior importance for human's life and the provision of these services should not be compromised. Yet, one-sixth of global population does not have safe drinking water and two-fifth still lives without any kind of improved sanitation services. Water is one of basic human needs (BHN) and all people should have certain level of "water rights". Water supply and sanitation services are also regarded as an important component of Primary Health Care (PHC). Agenda21 adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit) held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil called for a supply of 40 liters of safe water per person per day. It also invoked the establishment of discharge standards for municipal and industrial effluents.

International aid agencies, and of course national authorities, have paid great efforts to improve the water supply and sanitation services, but so far, the achievements are far below the targets. Some blame bureaucratic ineffectiveness and others insist uneven distribution of wealth. In any case, some substantial shift must be done to accelerate these long over-due targets.

Around 1970s, large-scale hardware inputs (waterworks and/or sewerage) were commonly promoted to increase physical coverage. Some worked well but many development projects failed to operate due to the financial deficits. In the next decade, intensive software input, i.e. the development of institutional framework and management skills of both governmental and local levels, were sought. This approach contributed to rehabilitate many ill-operated waterworks and sewerages, and also it improved the quality of services.

Yet, the target was not achieved. The lack of ownership has brought about the dependency to external decision makers. Currently, “self-determination” is one of the key concepts to promote regional development. Identifying stakeholders, summarizing their views, and then facilitating to reach the agreements become the most important tasks for program operators.

Community based approach is currently widely used to promote the ownership for the programs, which aims global goals for sustainable development. This approach does care for gender equality, and it also hears the voice of poor, which resultantly set value to indigenous technologies used for centuries with sustainable way. Therefore, “community participation in water supply and sanitation” should be promoted to achieve Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

2. Participation and Development

2.1. Development Cooperation and Participation

In 1960s, the global trend was to encourage economic growth by enlarging gross national products, foreign trades, investment, etc. This strategy aimed to increase individual dividends by increasing the size of economy. In actual term, however, the result of economic growth went to higher hierarchy and the benefits were not “trickled down” to poor group. Instead, it widened the imparity of income distribution and poverty among poorer groups. The “Failure of conventional development approach” has led the emergence of participatory approach.

The member of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) met on 4 and 5 December 1989, and agreed on the orientation of their development cooperation in the 1990s. In order to break the vicious circle of underdevelopment that links high population growth, poverty, malnutrition, illiteracy and environmental degradation, the needs of broader participation and equitable sharing of the benefits were emphasized. This policy statement has fostered the participatory approach to be one key concept for sustainable development. DAC also stresses the importance of ownership in development processes in “Shaping the 21st Century: The Contribution of Development Cooperation” adopted in May 1996.

Since 1990s, participatory approach has been the mainstream of international cooperation not only at non-governmental grass-root level but also at official development assistance (ODA) in many donor agencies.

2.2. Successful Participatory Development

Participatory development has various types and forms. It is developed and used every corner of the world. Followings are the clarification of core features of the participatory development.

- 1) Human resource development, problem solving and regional mobilization are achieved through the active participation of local people.

- 2) Outsiders only facilitate the participatory processes.
- 3) Local resources are widely applied based on the indigenous traditions and cultures.
- 4) Many stakeholders, especially underprivileged groups, actively drive the project.

It is often said that participatory development is successfully implemented in many countries. The point of “success” may differ whether the participation is the objective of the development or the methodology to achieve some objectives. If the participation is a methodology, the indicators to evaluate the success will be economic parameters, morbidity rate, etc. If the participation itself is the objective of the project, people’s motivation, collaboration, degree of self-determination etc. will be the points to be monitored. For the first step, participation should be put as the objective and after successful development of people’s motivation, and then the participatory approach will be used to implement various development projects.

2.3. Participation in Water Supply and Sanitation Sector

World Bank considers that despite the massive investment in 1980s, the needs of poor people are still largely unmet by public services due to inefficient and unsustainable structure of water agencies that benefit only a small portion of the population. It insists to change the management concept from supply-driven approach to demand-driven approach, and to ensure the services to people’s needs.

PROWESS, the project for the Promotion of the Role of Women in Water and Environmental Sanitation Services supported by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has developed tools for participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation of community water and sanitation facilities.

World Health Organization (WHO) has implemented PHAST, which stands for Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation. This initiative is based on the concept that the introduction of water treatment technology without consideration of the socio-cultural aspects of the community and without behavioral, motivational, educational and participatory activities within the community is unlikely to be successful or sustainable.

3. Possibilities and Limitations of Participatory Approach

3.1. Several Degrees of Participation

Participatory development has several degrees of participation. Usually, it does not hurry to jump up to the highest degree, but stepwise approach is preferred. Followings are an example of the classification of community participation.

1) Control

Substantially no participation is realized. Any project or program is not decided by people in the region, instead, external decision makers direct the implementation without local people.

2) Information sharing

This is the very fundamental level of participation. Information is sent one-way from decision maker to local people. Informed group has no right to discuss or negotiate the issue.

3) Consultation

The communication becomes interactive. Local people have chance to express their views and offers. Yet, the people are excluded from decision.

4) Agreement

All parties with different opinions discuss to reach an agreement, to some extent, which does not necessarily to meet all requirements.

5) Decision making

Once it reaches to agreement, all parties involved in decision have responsibilities of the decision. But the influence and the power to negotiate are not equal among stakeholders.

6) Risk sharing

Accountability to chosen risk is the basic responsibility for stakeholders. Who made decision takes the responsibility of the project accountability.

7) Partnership

Collaborative works are practiced to achieve common objectives among people. The responsibilities and the risks are shared mutually.

8) Self-control

All participants learn each other from their experiences and move toward appreciative results; the ultimate degree of participation.

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Biographical Sketches

Yasumoto Magara is Professor of Engineering at Hokkaido University, where he has been on faculty since 1997. He was admitted to Hokkaido University in 1960 and received the degree of Bachelor of Engineering in Sanitary Engineering in 1964 and Master of Engineering in 1966. After working for the same university for 4 years, he moved to National Institute of Public Health in 1970. He served as the Director of the Institute since 1984 for Department of Sanitary Engineering, then Department of Water Supply Engineering. In the meantime, he was also obtained the Ph.D. in Engineering from Hokkaido University in 1979 and was conferred Honorary Doctoral Degree in Engineering from Chiangmai University in 1994. Since 1964, his research subjects have been in environmental engineering and have included advanced water purification for drinking water, control of hazardous chemicals in drinking water, planning and treatment of domestic waste including human excreta, management of ambient water quality, and mechanisms of biological wastewater treatment system performance. He has also been the member of governmental deliberation councils of several ministries and agencies including Ministry of Health and Welfare, Ministry of Education, Environmental Agency, and National Land Agency. He meanwhile performs the international activities with JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) and World Health Organization. As for academic fields, he plays pivotal role in many associations and societies, and has been Chairman of Japan Society on Water Environment.

Professor Magara has written and edited books on analysis and assessment of drinking water. He has been the author or co-author of more than 100 research articles.

Mitsugu Saito is Technical Manager at Overseas Environmental Cooperation Center, Japan. He was born in 1959 in Sapporo, Japan; grew and was educated there. He was admitted by Architectural Engineering Department, Hokkaido University in 1978 and graduated from it with his graduate thesis on thermal environment. He continued his study at Graduate School of Environmental Science. By his research on thermal waste recovery system from industrial cooling water, he was conferred master degree of environmental science from Hokkaido University in 1984. Then, he worked for a construction company; Obayashi Corporation, from 1984 to 1997 as a mechanical engineer on building service works. In the meantime, he was dispatched to Thailand from 1990 to 1995. Serving as Manager of Mechanical and Electrical Department, he was dedicated to many construction and renovation projects (mainly hi-tech factories). His responsibilities covered air-conditioning, plumbing, water and wastewater treatment, utility supply, and pollution control. From 1997, he enrolled to Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV), one of frameworks of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). He spent two years in Morocco as an urbanist of the municipality of Fès. He was assigned to "Service Nettoyement et Parc Municipal" with

his duty on research and planning of solid waste management system. In 1999, he returned to Japan and resumed his study in Hokkaido University as a PhD student at Environmental Risk Engineering Laboratory, School of Engineering. He obtained PhD in 2003 by his dissertation titled “Appropriate technology of domestic wastewater management for low-income urban communities.” Currently he works for a public cooperation under Ministry of the Environment of Japan. The projects in charge covers from trans-boundary air pollution, wastewater treatment, solid waste management, environmental impact assessment, etc.