

A REVIEW OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE RURAL WATER AND SANITATION SETTING

**Report to the
WATER RESEARCH COMMISSION**

by

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Public participation refers to the ongoing process of interaction between service providers or project implementers and the community with the aim of improving decision making during the planning, design, implementation and evaluation phases of the project. The involvement of all community members including women, youth and the poor is of critical importance in rural water supply and sanitation projects. Project implementers or service providers should consider the views, opinions and perspectives of the community in development projects. Thus, for the project to be sustainable in rural areas, it is imperative that the community is actively involved from the implementation phase of the project to the evaluation phase.

This document explores the nature of public participation. Various definitions of public participation are analysed and discussed with the objective of contextualising what public participation entails in rural water supply and sanitation. The guideline document aims at assisting project implementers and service providers to facilitate effective public participation in rural water supply and sanitation projects. However, the participatory review provided in the document should not be regarded as prescriptive guidelines to project implementers intending to include the public in rural water supply projects. Therefore, aspects highlighted in the document could be modified by project implementers to suit particular circumstances.

The objectives of public participation are to strengthen interpersonal relations, improve decision-making, ensure representation of a diversity of social groups, help clarify and stabilise communication between stakeholders and encourage local ownership and commitment and accountability.

Community participation in rural water supply and sanitation projects provides members of the community the opportunity to influence the decision-making

process. Participation broadens social development ideals as by participating fully in the decision-making process, ordinary people experience fulfilment, which contributes to a heightened sense of community and a strengthening of community needs. As such, to promote public participation it is vital for service providers and project implementers to know the traditions and social customs of the community.

Six principles of public participation have been identified as underpinning public participation process. The principles are: Identifying and supporting effective local organisations, communication, empowerment, opportunities and effective involvement of traditional leaders. These principles would assist project implementers involved in rural water supply and sanitation projects to facilitate effective public participation. Further, any development project is characterised by the following phases: planning, implementation, construction, operation and maintenance phase and the evaluation phase. In all these phases the inclusion of community members in the project is of outmost importance.

There are various tools and methods which can be used to facilitate public participation. Each method has its own characteristics, strengths and weaknesses. No method can therefore be regarded as appropriate to effective community participation. In other words, it is important to use a range of methods in public participation programmes since each method is unique. Public participation methods are: Public meetings, public hearings, open houses, workshops, citizen advisory committee, social surveys, focus groups, news letters and reports.

The literature study revealed that for community participation, it is important for project implementers to take people's aspirations, needs and perceptions into consideration when planning for community water supply and sanitation projects. Thus, public participation should help develop local capacities, which will be important if the project is to be sustainable.

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CHAPTER 1 : ORIENTATION, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1.1 Introduction

Public participation involves a process resulting in improved decision making; a process leading to a joint effort by interested and affected parties, technical specialists, authorities and the proponent who work together to produce better decisions than if they had acted independently. It acts as a means of gaining insights into local conditions and the needs of local people to help identify public preferences correctly. In any development project it is believed that people are more likely to be committed to projects if they are involved in their preparation. It is also considered to be a democratic right that people should be involved in their development.

Different techniques have been developed to assist project implementers in the implementation of effective public participation and public involvement processes. Public participation techniques can be divided into three main groups. The first group of techniques are mainly concerned with dispersing information to the public e.g. detailed reports, specialist reports, leaflets, general publications, press and other media releases. Another set of techniques, include behaviour and attitude surveys, questionnaires, study groups and general comment forms which represent the gathering of public views and opinions. Other methods involve general interaction between providers and the public. These include the existing political structure, community workers and co-option to committees. It is as such important that when selecting methods to involve the public in rural water supply and sanitation projects, project implementers or service providers must select methods and techniques that are appropriate to a particular environment and which are capable of enabling the project implementers to achieve their aims and goals at the end of a project.

The emphasis of this report is primarily to discuss the practical aspects of how to facilitate effective community participation in rural water supply and sanitation projects. Achieving full and effective public participation in water supply projects and activities is difficult and depends on the manner in which members of the community are approached by project implementers, service providers, field staffs or technical consultants. This report therefore, reviews various principles and techniques, which can be employed in public participatory programmes.

1.2 Need for Review on Effective Public Participation

Public participation is the important part of development and can be incorporated at all levels in development projects, but little detailed, strategic guidance has been available to help project managers, engineers, service providers, government authorities and non-governmental organisations, understand when and how to involve the public. The objective of this study was therefore to provide a review for implementing people centred development approaches in rural water supply and sanitation projects. Within this overall objective the study has three aims:

- To investigate public participation in general;
- To identify the different techniques and tools or methods designed to assist service providers or project implementers in ensuring effective public participation and public involvement process;
- To investigate local and international trends in public participation in rural water supply and sanitation projects.

1.3 Methodology

The research methodology employed in this study consisted of the interrogation of public participation through an intensive literature study. The information gathered from the literature study provided insight of what is taking place in terms of public participation with emphasis to rural water supply and sanitation projects.

The report addresses public participation or public involvement in general as well as how members of the public can be effectively involved in rural water supply and sanitation projects.

CHAPTER 2 : PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

2.1 What is public participation?

Public participation is an important part of development projects. Project implementers and service providers should ensure that in development projects such as rural water supply and sanitation, the public or community is involved from the initiation phase of the project to the evaluation phase. To be effective, public participation must be direct and give ultimate control to local communities so that they can themselves decide their own affairs. WHO (2000) states that community participation is essential for people to be able to identify with the project. Therefore, in any development projects, it is important that project implementers or service providers have an in-depth understanding of public participation.

Since the inception of the concept 'public participation', various definitions of public participation have been formulated, but there is no single definition exclusively regarded as appropriate for defining public participation. Fagence (1977) maintains that the term or concept public participation is often fraught with difficulties and has an inexhaustible variety of practical expressions and objectives. The reason being that public participation is a broad concept, which cannot be reduced into a single definition. The way one defines public participation depends on the objectives of the project or what one intends to achieve and also on the degree of participation (Cheetham, 2002). Therefore, when involving the public in development projects, careful consideration should be given to specific modes of involving people in the planning, design, construction, operation and maintenance phases of the project. In this chapter, various definitions of public participation will be discussed and analysed.

Midgley (1986) defines public participation as the creation of opportunities to enable all members of the community to actively contribute to and influence the development process and to share equitably in the fruits of development. He maintains that public participation requires voluntary and democratic involvement of people in contributing to the development effort. This means that without participation, development will be top-down because some members of the community will be excluded. In any development project people can only develop themselves by participating in decision and co-operative activities which affect their well being. Midgley states that participation requires the voluntary and democratic involvement of people in:

- Contributing to the development effort;
- Sharing equitably in the benefits derived from the developments efforts; and
- Decision making in respect of setting goals, formulating policies, planning and implementing economic and social development programmes.

On the other hand, Bergdall and Rubin (1993) has provided the following definitions of participation :

- Participation means in its broadest sense, to sensitise people and, thus to increase the receptivity and ability of rural people to respond to development programmes, as well as to encourage local initiatives;
- Community involvement means that people, who have both the right and duty to participate in solving their own health problems, have greater responsibilities in assessing the health needs, mobilising local resources and suggesting new solutions, as well as creating and maintaining local organisations;
- Participation is an active involvement of people in decision-making process in so far as it effects them; and lastly
- Participation is defined as an active process where the community takes initiatives and asserts its autonomy to do so.

White and White (1978) define public participation by maintaining that public participation at the base or implementation of projects means providing an opportunity for the users to have a voice in selecting the different elements in the facility. Giving the users 'voice' implies providing for:

- A determination of their current preferences;
- An estimate of their current ability to meet their perceived needs;
- An estimate of their capacity to adapt to new facilities; and
- An assessment of the likelihood of them maintaining the system in the face of changing preferences over time.

Kerr (2000) agrees with Midgeley by maintaining that public participation entails enabling people to have a more influential voice in defining factors which they feel to be important in determining community's health. Public participation is considered as an on-going process of capacity building, which requires ongoing changes.

Further, Paul (1988) defines public participation as an active process whereby beneficiaries influence the direction and execution of development projects rather than merely receiving a share of projects benefits. He maintains that public participation is necessary or appropriate where either one of the following conditions are present:

- The objective of the project is empowerment of the people and capacity building;
- The design of the project services call for interaction among beneficiaries as a basis for identifying their needs and preferences;
- The implementation of the project demands frequent dialogue and negotiation among beneficiaries; and
- Users, rather than a weak bureaucracy, are better able to manage part of the project operations.

Hollsteiner (1982a) as cited in (Midgley, 1986) argues that public participation refers not to everyone in an identifiable community, since local elites already have a strong voice in decision making, but rather public participation refers to the poor majority with little access to resources and power. Public participation is also defined as a process resulting in improved decision making. Thus the process leading to a joint effort by interested and affected parties, technical specialists, the authorities and proponents who work together to produce better decisions than if they had acted independently (Grayling and Manyaka, 1999). Public participation act as a means of gaining insights into local conditions and the needs of local people to help identify public preferences correctly.

Oakley et al (1991) argues that public participation includes people's involvement in decision-making process, in implementing programmes, their sharing in the benefits of development programmes and their involvement in effort to evaluate such programmes. He maintains that there is one major form of differentiation which involves distinguishing between participation as a means or an end. Participation as a means implies the use of participation to achieve some predetermined goal or objective. This implies that the local people are involved only for the benefit of the project thus only reaching the goals and objectives of the project by the project implementers or service providers. It may also be a means to improve project effectiveness through the use of local information to correctly specify problems and needs, improve solutions, avoid misunderstandings and enable project implementers to reach more people. Project efficiency may be attained if participation involves the beneficiaries contributing labour and other resources.

On the other hand, participation as an end is essentially a process which unfolds over time and whose purpose is to develop and strengthen the capabilities of the people to intervene more directly in development initiatives. Such a process may not have predetermined measurable objectives or even direction. It may have intrinsic merit, if it increases self-esteem, confidence, and the individual's sense

of power. Participation as an end is an active and dynamic form of participation which enables people to play an increasing role in development activities after a particular project has ceased (Oakley et al, 1991).

Furthermore, Oakley et al (1991) maintains that there are three broad interpretations of participation. Thus:

(a) Participation as contribution

Contribution is a logical means of eliciting community participation since people generally act on the basis of self-interest. Oakley et al (1991) maintains that the “dominant interpretation of public participation in development projects in the Third World sees participation as simply voluntary or other forms of contributions by rural people to predetermined programmes or projects”.

(b) Participation as organisation

This form of participation allows members of the community equal access to the project benefits. Organisation of people is a fundamental element of participation because active involvement of the poor can only be brought about by adequate people’s organisations. Organised structures are regarded as voluntary associations where people organise together in order to mobilise the potential of their collective power (Bergdall et al, 1993).

Therefore, the existence of people organisations in development projects is one of the underlying principles of promoting authentic participation, in that organisations are intended to serve as a mechanism for increasing the voice of rural people.

(c) Participation as empowering

Empowerment is the ability of individuals to influence all decisions taken in all levels and in all spheres which affect their lives and the capacity to initiate action to enhance their quality of life (Wright and Nelson, 1995). On the other hand, Oakley et al (1991) maintains that empowerment is the development of skills and abilities to enable people to manage better, have say in, or negotiate with existing development delivery system. In other words, empowerment involves transfer of power to local people, to decide upon and take action which they believe are essential to their development. Therefore, the process of transfer of power is important in participation because people are directly involved in projects.

The above statements provide a glimpse of the many conflicting values and perspectives within current discussion about public participation. However, in the current study, public participation can be described as the active involvement of the local community members in defining their problems and making decisions concerning the project - its implementation and evaluation. It is an organised involvement of a community in development effort with all major population groups being represented as opposed to person-to-person relationship.

2.2 Degrees of public participation

In public participation different levels or degrees can be identified and distinguished. The levels range from participation as essentially an act of manipulation to a degree of participation in which stakeholders become partners in the development of initiative and begin to assume full responsibility for its management. The following levels or degrees of public participation can be distinguished:

(See Arnstein, 1969, Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF, 2001, and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 1997).

- **Manipulation:** in this level participation is simply pretence, with 'people' representatives on official boards who are unselected and who have no power. Participation within this level is contrived as the opportunity to indoctrinate.
- **Information disclosure:** the objective is to provide the public with balanced and objective information to enable people to understand the problem and solutions or alternatives. The main drawback at this stage is that emphasis is placed on one-way communication, with neither channel for feedback nor power for negotiation.
- **Consultation:** the objective is to obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives, solutions and decisions. Consultation involves acknowledging concerns and providing feedback on how public input has influenced the decision. Local opinions are sought. Project implementers analyse data and decide on the course of action.
- **Consensus building:** at this stage stakeholders interact in order to understand each other and arrive at negotiated positions which are tolerable to the entire group. The only limitation of this level is that vulnerable individuals and groups tend to remain silent.
- **Decision-making:** it is when consensus is acted upon through collective decisions; this marks the initiation of shared responsibilities for outcomes that may result. Negotiations at this stage reflect different degrees of leverage exercised by individuals and groups.
- **Involvement:** the objective is to work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that the public issues and concerns are understood and considered at every stage.
- **Collaboration or partnership:** the objective is to work as partners with the public on each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution. Local people work together with project implementers to determine priorities but

responsibility remains with the project implementers for directing the process. The partnership relationship entails exchange among equals working towards a mutual goal.

- **Empowerment:** the objective is to place final decision making in the hands of the people.
- **Self-management:** it is the pinnacle of participatory efforts, where stakeholders interact in learning processes which optimise the well being of all concerned.

2.3 Who should participate?

All people in the community irrespective of their social status should participate e.g. political parties, women's leagues, youth and traditional organisations and other community-based organisations. It is important for the project implementers to identify, at an early stage, the relationship between the community and the community leaders and the various organisations existing within the community. As such, a reaching out strategy needs to be developed in order to motivate and encourage even the poorest of the poor in the community to participate in development projects such as rural water supply and sanitation. It is crucial that the views of disadvantaged groups are taken into account in order to avoid domination of the elites in water organisations.

2.4 Purposes of public participation

The purpose or objectives of public participation are to:

(a) To strengthen interpersonal relations

Public participation strengthens interpersonal relationships, fosters self-confidence, improves material conditions and reduces feelings of powerlessness and alienation among community members. It empowers the public and helps

them to feel that they can have a positive effect and influence on concrete conditions in their community. Midgley (1986) argues that public participation promotes and broadens social development ideals because by participating fully in decision-making, ordinary people experience fulfilment which contributes to a heightened sense of community and a strengthening of community needs.

(b) To improve decision making

Public participation leads to improved decision making by making the participation process adapted by an initiative which is transparent, inclusive and fair. This creates trust and a shared vision among stakeholders who are then more willing to contribute their ideas, needs, suggestions or information. It also adds to the technical and scientific content of information that informs decision about the initiative. Enhanced content improves decision-making and the goal of public participation in that sense should be to promote diversity of opinion that enriches a project (DWAF, 2001). Public participation creates the opportunity for people to share viewpoints and jointly deliberate the issues at hand. In other words, participation provides members of the community an equal opportunity to influence the decision making process.

(c) To ensure the representation of a diversity of social groups

Public participation ensures representation of a diversity of community or social groups, especially traditionally marginalized groups such as women and cultural minorities. With public participation, projects are tailored to the needs and interests of stakeholders with the intention to construct as wide consensus as possible. The participatory process aims at enhancing mutual understanding among various stakeholders in a particular project (Kapoor, 2000).

(d) To help clarify and stabilise communications and power relations between stakeholders

Public participation encourages local ownership, commitment and accountability. When stakeholders are excluded from project decisions, they will tend to feel removed from the responsibilities for the results. However, the inclusion of local people on the other hand, helps them to show enthusiasm and interest in the project. In addition, public participation empowers citizens and helps them to feel that they can have a positive effect and influence on concrete conditions in their community. Oakley et al (1991) maintains that public participation is a “good thing” in that it breaks away isolation and allows people to have influence on development, independence and control of their own lives.

Thus, public participation gives people a sense of community which gives meaning to human existence and foster social integration. Midgely (1986) argues that public participation not only humanises the bureaucracy but also strengthens the capacities of individuals and communities to mobilise and help themselves.

2.5 Key problems and challenges in implementation

The process of involving the public in development projects is characterised by many problems and challenges, which might hinder effective participation of the public. For example, Potter (1985) has identified the following participation problems:

- In many instances where people have the opportunity, they do not actively participate;
- Not all those with an interest can participate and as a result the issue of representation becomes a major one. He further maintains that it is often those who are educationally, socially and economically better off that tend to participate;

- Communication gap existing between planners and public; and
- Public participation process is time consuming.

Public participation has the potential for building teamwork, but it is a difficult practice and can fail if poorly applied. According to Garcia-Zamor (1985) genuine public participation problems are:

- The dominance of one group over others;
- The lack of interest of potential participants; and
- The lack of sufficient time.

Further, Boule (1987) maintains that where participation is manipulated by the state, hampered by lack of information and informed debate, and subject to ratification or overrule by the executive, it can fail to satisfy any of the democratic or educative objectives claimed for it. DWAF (2001) provides the following challenges for effective public participation:

- Participation is a costly and time consuming process and may necessitate the commitment of a wide range of an organisation's staff or project implementers over a long period of time;
- Due to the unpredictability of human behaviour, problems may develop at any time, despite good planning and intentions;
- Stakeholders may use public participation as a platform to further their own agendas. Therefore, the process of public participation must be flexible in order to adapt to unforeseen circumstances. That is, it is not possible to satisfy everyone. This can result in some people not approving the initiative; and
- Public participation can lead to the realisation that the initiative is not feasible.

Participation in most communities tend to come from the economically and advantaged groups rather than the poor. Worst of all is that in most African cultures; women are usually deprived of the opportunity to voice their opinions in

public. Despite the fact that fetching water is traditionally the women's task, decisions regarding the choice and setting of water schemes are done by men (Srinivasan, 1990). In some cases low-income groups may be reluctant to participate for fear of financial commitment and it is important that project implementers guard against these tendencies. Efforts should be made that all groups in the community are involved.

Srinivasan (1990) maintains that the social problems below might hinder effective public participation:

- Fear of speaking up in groups;
- Low-self esteem;
- Distrust of the motives of those in power;
- Fear of economic consequences or social loss of face;
- Fear of criticism for overstepping customary role;
- Factional differences;
- A sense of powerlessness or fatalism;
- Lack of experience working with groups; and
- Lack of skills in planning and problem solving.

Further, Hlabane (1999) maintains that social challenges such as dependency, poverty, culture and illiteracy which dominate most rural communities are stumbling blocks for effective participation. He maintains that rural people have a mental dependency in a way that is deeply and historically ingrained in their lives. Rural people have been dominated by, and are dependent upon, local elite groups (Oakley et al, 1991). Thus, rural people are accustomed to leaving decisions and initiatives to their leaders. This was due to lack of leadership and organisational skills and experience in running projects, leaving most rural people incapable of responding to demands of participation.

Poverty is another challenge to effective and active participation of rural communities. Poverty implies powerlessness or the inability to exert influence upon the forces, which shapes one's livelihood. Dominance of cultures and illiteracy are problematic to public participation in the sense that people who are not educated cannot question any irregularity in a society. These people feel more comfortable with the status quo than with challenging the leadership. It is important that project implementers or service providers first begin by recognising the powerful, multidimensional and anti participatory forces, which dominate lives of rural people (Midgely, 1986). To ensure that the whole community participates in decision-making for development projects and shares in its benefits equitably, the involvement of the disadvantaged or poor must be actively encouraged. Mathye (1998) also maintains that the following factors may restrict effective public participation in development projects:

- The resistance of the power holders to allow their power to be distributed to the people for fear of losing control;
- The complexities of issues and difficulty in reaching consensus in a diverse society;
- The question of legitimacy of community organisations, and whether or not they reflect the interests of the entire community;
- The general apathy among the public;
- The question of who to involve and when; and
- The effective transmission of information.

CHAPTER 3 : THE INVOLVEMENT OF WOMEN

3.1 Introduction

As the main carriers of water for domestic needs and as the principal moulders of the family's hygienic habits, women's involvement in decision-making in rural water supply projects is of critical importance (Churchill et al, 1987). According to Srinivasan (1990), the concept of community participation in rural water supply processes is not complete unless women play a responsible role in both its planning and management. Women play a central role in local water management, as they are responsible for collecting, monitoring natural water sources and using water in the home. Kanetsi (1994) argues that in rural water supply sustainability is dramatically enhanced when women have key responsibilities because they are the community members responsible for fetching and carrying water.

Therefore, women must participate actively in all stages of the project so that their experience is drawn upon and their needs addressed. For example, if men would be more involved in the project than women, it is likely that they would not position water points close to where people, usually women can fetch water. Churchill et al (1987) states that involving women in water supply projects requires a recognition of their traditional roles and cultural status because in some societies, even with their responsibility for water, women are not allowed by custom to take part in public affairs. The challenge then is to work out practical methods to ensure women's participation in rural water supply projects. This can be achieved by training women in the technical aspects of water management. By doing that, the project implementers will be taking the first step in giving women the confidence they need to participate actively. It is important to target women in rural water supply and sanitation projects because they are usually the most disadvantaged and yet often the most dependable and stable members of

communities and are less likely to move away from the community (Srinivasan, 1990).

Techniques for involving women are house-to-house surveys, meetings exclusively for women and special training to encourage women's participation in community wide assemblies.

3.2 Factors hindering effective participation of rural women

The involvement of rural women in development activities such as water supply processes is particularly difficult to achieve for two reasons: the daily chores leave women little or no time of their own and they have often been culturally excluded from public life. Srinivasan (1990) maintains that the majority of rural women have had no experience in community level decision-making. In addition to poverty, illiteracy, ill health and overwork, rural women are hampered by a whole range of psychosocial barriers to participation. Srinivasan (1990) pointed out that the following factors tend to be ignored because they are intangibles. They include:

- Feelings of dependency;
- Low self-esteem;
- Fear of disapproval of husbands or elders;
- Lack of awareness, common purpose and resources;
- Inability to take economic risks; and
- Fear of tasks that require unfamiliar skills or they may increase their workload.

Kerr (1989) maintains that if women are not included in the planning and implementation of the improved water source, as they have not been in the past for traditional water sources, their motivation to use and maintain the new source will be small. There is a need therefore for project implementers or service providers to learn more about the situation of rural women and their priorities if

women are to be involved in rural water supply and sanitation projects and if the project aims to improve their living conditions and social status. Women's role is vital in the sustainability of the water project. Thus the situation of rural women has to be addressed in an integrated manner and solutions such as simply bringing water closer to home, are by themselves not enough. The training of women in rural water supply should therefore address issues of personal growth and of group strength as priorities. Women need assistance to experience success, to feel differently and more positively about themselves, and to gain credibility in the eyes of the community.

3.3 Ways of ensuring effective participation of women

Effective female participation in rural water supply project can be achieved only if:

- Women are employed as project staff. Men should be able to accept women staff because water is traditionally a women's sphere;
- They are offered same opportunities for training during the project as men are offered;
- They are trained as water minders and pump attendants and their skills are developed in the minding and repairing of water facilities; and
- A group of women have been appointed to act as the caretakers of the water scheme (Mvula Trust, 1997). Kanetsi (1994) maintains that experience has shown that where women are trained to manage and maintain community water systems, they perform better than men.

Varkervisser (1994) argues that women should not be denied to contribute in the decision making process. He further maintains that the commitment of women in family, the land and the community issues, ensures the sustainability of projects and makes them less susceptible to the effects of the migrant labour system in Southern Africa.

CHAPTER 4 : PRINCIPLES & ELEMENTS IN PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

4.1 Introduction

Public participation is fundamental to the process of development. In rural water supply and sanitation, public participation informs the meaning and integrity of the entire process of participation. Public participation is an attitude of openness to the perceptions and feelings of others, it is a concern for what difference a project makes in rural people's lives and it is an awareness of the contributions to what others can bring to an activity (Varkervisser, 1994). In rural water supply and sanitation project implementers should always endeavour to treat the local community as equals and the reward will be trust which is a cornerstone contributing to the successful implementation of the project.

Thus project implementers and service providers should adhere to the following principles for effective community participation:

4.1.1 Identifying and supporting effective local organisations

Most of the communities have local institutions and organisations such church groups and development councils. These social organisations are organised according to locally negotiated rules and regulations. Understanding which organisations exist in a community and how they work is an important part of an initial stage for public participation in rural water supply projects. Before the inception of the project, the project implementer should help the community analyse their own institutions and also give them responsibility for co-ordinating action. This can be done through facilitation of an institutional survey in which community members themselves:

- Identify the institutions operating within the community, whether formal, informal, modern or traditional (Hagmann et al, 1998);

- Discuss between the institutions, the conflicts and alliances and networks which determine how things work; and
- Identify human and materials resources, which could be used in development process.

Before the water supply project can begin, different groups of people need to be interviewed informally e.g. the leaders of the institutions, the members and non-members of the groups. The project implementer should ask the community questions like:

- Which institutions are important in the village?
- What are their roles, functions and mandates in the community?
- What are their activities?
- What are their strengths and weaknesses?
- How could they improve the execution of tasks?

This allows the project implementer to be exposed to many different views held about these institutions, creating a truer picture of the rural community organisation and leadership situation in the village and indicating which institutions have the support of the community and could therefore become partners in the project. However, people only disclose such information if there is trust. Therefore, the project implementer should strive to build trust and good relation with community members in order for the project to be accepted by the community.

4.1.2 Communication

Communication with community members is often the most difficult and something one has to work very hard to achieve. Because of the problems with illiteracy in underdeveloped or rural communities the project implementer has to recognise that the spoken word counts for a tremendous amount (Hlabane, 1999). Therefore, public participation meetings are particularly useful. Radio is

also a useful means of communication in developing communities although it can be expensive. However, the youth from the rural community can also play an important role as literacy educators among the young people. Communication with community members via the schools can also be a very effective means of getting things back to the community as a whole.

When arranging public meeting with community members, the project implementer has to take cognisance of the fact that key decision-makers are often absent during the week and therefore public meetings should be scheduled during the weekends when everybody is available to attend. Pickford et al (1993) maintain that public meetings are one of those “necessary evils” of community participation. They can be extremely difficult to manage but are an essential tool for community involvement in water supply projects.

4.1.3 Empowerment

To achieve empowerment within the community it is important that the project implementer is involved in a process of skills transfer and capacity building throughout the community participation process. However, the latter is a severe constraint in many rural communities due to the political legacy of the past. Therefore, in water supply projects, it is essential, if the project is to be successful, that the rural community wish to be part of the participation process. The project implementer has to acknowledge that the building of capacity within the community is a two way process where both parties have certain well defined responsibilities and tasks to undertake. The community sitting back and letting the project implementer do everything for them does not represent empowerment.

Problem solving is an important part of the learning process of achieving effective community participation in rural water supply projects. It is important to note that participation processes involve negotiation with the community. The important

principle of negotiation in community participation is to recognise that every community is different and as such a flexible approach is thus needed when interacting with the community.

4.1.4 Opportunities

In spite of the many problems that might be experienced by the project implementer/s when introducing the project to the rural communities, there are also opportunities. For example, employment opportunities where members of the community can be employed to work on the project. Pickford et al (1993), suggests that members of the community should be employed in the water supply project, along with the principle of employment of local labour wherever possible and as a minimum for the unskilled work. This policy should be widely accepted by the project implementers. This will then create a potential to develop goodwill amongst the community whilst adding considerably to the potential for the ownership of the project.

It is important to acknowledge that in any community there are people with different skills and as such the project implementer should look at opportunities for promoting entrepreneurship within the community by strategies such as labour only contracts and labour based construction. This ensures continuity and also facilitates ownership of the projects by the community members.

4.1.5 Involving traditional leaders

Traditional leaders or indigenous leaderships structures are found predominantly in the rural areas of South Africa. They are based on hereditary rights and play an important role in ensuring the continuation of customs. These individuals have symbolic and functional status in the community. For example, they play a central role in running community affairs, co-ordinating development activities and settling disputes among community members. That is, in rural water supply

projects the traditional leaders, chief and his councillors should be consulted and involved within the project. They should be offered every opportunity to participate in needs assessment and identification.

The Mvula Trust (1997) suggests that traditional structures must not be viewed as being in competition or conflict with water committees and water committees are not alternative leadership structure. However, the two should be complementary structures which offer mutual support and respect as they share the common objective of improving the life of the community. Therefore, before the project can be implemented, traditional leaders should be consulted and be asked for their blessing of the project. This would encourage more participation from all members of the community.

4.2 Public Participation in Action

A public participation process is divided into various phases namely, the participatory planning phase, implementation phase, operation and maintenance phase and the evaluation phase. In all the phases, community members should be included and various participatory methods should be used in order to effectively involve every one. The guidelines below outline the approach to the public participation process in rural water supply and sanitation. However, it should be borne in mind that there is no model for public participation which is applicable to all situations in rural areas. Participation may take different forms because the social-economic situations of the people differ.

4.2.1 Participatory planning phase

For effective participation in rural water supply projects, key conditions need first to be put in place. These are:

- A real motivation and enthusiasm within the community; and

- Effective community organisations, which can support the process and take it forward.

Hagmann et al (1998) maintain that without these two conditions there is little chance that development activities will be sustained. Therefore, to motivate people to effectively participate and take action, the project implementer has to identify and address the people's key concerns. Only the community can effectively identify, clarify and prioritise their concerns and formulate their needs. What the project implementer or service provider should do is to facilitate peoples' own analysis of their needs and also give them a chance to present them before the project begins. This process will harness their natural energy and the community will become motivated to actively participate, which is a precondition for overcoming feelings of helplessness, powerlessness and apathy for initiating action. The identification of community's needs, problems of different groups and their common vision of development can contribute positively to effective community participation in rural water supply projects.

Thus, a more human approach is imperative in order to foster long-term rapport with the community. Therefore, the participatory planning phase involves consideration of a number of key issues, each discussed individually as follows:

(a) Entering the community and building trust

The first step to be taken for effective community participation in rural water supply projects is to arrange an information meeting with as many local leaders as possible. Within the first meeting with local authorities, the project implementer/s need to explain everything concerning the project to the community. For example, the approaches that the project implementer/s will use to involve the entire community and also to motivate them to participate in a joint learning process.

Hagmann et al (1998) maintain that it is important for the local community to be clear about what the project can or cannot offer to them. The community's role needs to be defined and agreed upon. It is important that the project implementer understands how the community leaders understand the project that has to be implemented in their village as well as the limitations, visions and goals that the community want to achieve. Therefore, a transparent process of public participation is important because it would encourage public scrutiny and more participation. Trust will also develop because the more people are informed and actively engaged in the project, the more they will open up and trust the project implementers (DWAF, 2001).

The first meeting with community leaders is an opportunity for the project implementer to find out more about local institutions or structures and seek partners and responsible representatives within the community with which to work before trying to introduce a process of transformation. It is important that project implementers or service providers collaborate with all levels of community to ensure that all parties are fully aware of the project.

(b) Identifying real community needs

Before any actual work can be started, the project implementer or service provider needs to work with the community to identify in more detail what their needs are and how they can be addressed. However, within many communities there are differences in wealth, status and perceptions of one another and their problems. It is important to understand these differences to ensure that the poor within the community are not further marginalized. This can be done through a needs assessment study to understand the perceptions of different categories of people and their priority needs. Needs assessment is vital in rural water supply and sanitation projects and should be conducted at the inception stage of the project (Mvula Trust, 1997). The needs assessment study should aim at four things:

- It should aim at establishing what skills and knowledge are required by the community for the project sustainability and what will the community be required to do and know?
- It should also aim at establishing what skills and knowledge currently exist in the community?
- In terms of existing skills and knowledge, needs assessment should also aim at establishing what are the objectives of capacity building and training as far as the project is concerned? The objectives should fill the gap between the knowledge and the skills required.

Finally, people need to be allocated responsibility for the tasks that need to be performed in the project (Mvula Trust, 1997).

(c) Socio-Economic survey

In rural water supply and sanitation project it is important that project implementers or service providers undertake a survey in order to assess aspects that may influence the potential success of the project. Although most of the social data may be gathered through group discussions, there is some personal information which could only be gathered at the household level. For example, data concerning water use and practices, income level etc. A combination of group discussions and individual interviews to gather personal information could be used. In this instance, a representative sample of few members of the community could be interviewed to ensure that the following details are established (White, 1986):

- Practices in relation to water, sanitation and health;
- Attitudes towards paying for water;
- Possibility for paying in ways other than in cash, for example assistance in maintenance;
- Levels of education for different gender and age groups; and
- Attitudes and willingness to work together as a group.

Technical considerations may include:

- Available water sources;
- Distance;
- Assessment of technical feasibility of various alternatives; and
- Local technical knowledge, skills and capabilities.

Community members need to be involved in the survey. Their involvement can be in a form of facilitators, particularly from the professional groups such as teachers and health workers. These professional groups are more experienced in working with the community as well as share its culture and know what the leaders are. Varkervisser (1994) maintains that a professional like the teacher has a very important role to play being in the fortunate position to be a respected neutral person in the community who can unlock and secure the communication link to the majority of people through their learners. The involvement of local people as facilitators of the project eliminate suspicion, especially if outsiders undertake survey on their own. At the end of the survey the results should be analysed and interpreted.

(d) Feedback to the community

Whilst the findings of the institutional survey are very important to project implementers to know with whom they are dealing with, they are also relevant for the villagers themselves as they provide an opportunity to raise awareness and reflect about community organisations. Therefore, the project implementers should provide community representatives with the institutional survey results during an informal feedback meeting in an anonymous, and visualised manner. In the feedback meeting, the project implementer should remain neutral and just presents the findings from his/her research. In intense situations he/she can use less conflicting role-plays for presentations. For example, she/he can ask some

community members to play a certain situation and distribute roles and characters. This short drama should be presented and discussed in a community meeting in an impersonal way where everyone would know who the characters are but insults should be avoided. This feedback is the starting point of a process on leadership development and creating accountability. Further, it is important that the water committee is formed. Therefore, the next step is to raise more general awareness of the process within the wider community (Hagmann et al, 1998).

4.2.2 Implementation phase

During the implementation phase, which largely comprises construction of the project amenities, community participation can be in the form of free labour contribution for digging pipeline trenches, the construction of earthworks associated with pump platforms, or installation of public stand posts (Hagmann, 1998). This policy can save costs and it can help to develop a sense of ownership and climate of cooperation amongst the residents, which will lead to responsible use and maintenance of the system. It will also ensure that residents acquire knowledge of the system and many skills, which will help them to participate in maintaining it.

Essential public participation elements to be carried out during the implementation phase include:

(a) Raising awareness

As a follow-up to the feedback meeting the project implementer should help local leaders organise a workshop to which the whole community is invited. The workshop should aim at:

- Motivating the whole community to become involved in an action learning process to improve their livelihoods; and

- Stimulating reflections on a number of issues such as how people see development, how they solve their problems and organise themselves to achieve their goals. If the community is to participate effectively, it has to conceptualise its own issues and develop its own ways of dealing with them. Hagmann et al (1998) suggests that for this to happen there is a need first to strengthen the analytical planning skills of the community. In addition, the strengthening of people's ability to co-operate with each other is crucial. As such, training for transformation is a key methodology for the workshop.

Awareness raising in rural water supply and sanitation projects is important because if people are well aware of what is happening around them, they will be more enthusiastic and may want to become more involved if provided with the opportunity to do so. Thus, awareness is an important component of public participation in rural water supply and sanitation projects.

(b) Good community liaison

In any rural water supply project it is important that there is some form of channel of communication between the project implementers and the community. An important technique for achieving this is through the use of public meetings. According to Pickford et al (1993), public meetings can be frustrating and difficult but they are essential in terms of ensuring some sorts of reasonably democratic contact with the community. They further maintain that they are not a practical means for detailed participation but are extremely useful for feedback to the community when key points in a project are reached and important decisions need to be made.

For effective involvement in decision-making, the project implementer has to work through community structures. If these community structures already exist in the community, it is then important to carry out some discreet enquiries to try

and establish the credibility and support of such structures (Pickford et al, 1993). The structure involved can take the form of a Development Committee, Water Committee or Tribal Authority. However, if no suitable structures exist in the community it is necessary to try and encourage the community to elect a water committee to serve as the liaison body between the project implementers/ service providers and the community throughout the project. Again the most appropriate mechanism for facilitating this is through public meetings. Regular meetings will need to be held with the community committee throughout the project but the frequency would vary depending on the project phase and needs.

Further, it is essential that project implementers devote a great deal of time and patience to the community liaison process. The project implementer therefore needs to have people available who can spend a significant amount of time in the community and who can communicate effectively when interacting with community members. That is, it is important for the project implementer to have people involved who have the right sort of outlook and attitude for liaising with community members (Varkervisser, 1994).

According to Pickford et al (1993), people acting as representatives from the project implementers to interact with community members should have variety of skills for facilitating effective community participation. These include skills such as communication skills, educational skills, development skills, facilitating skills and evaluation skills.

(c) Provision of health education

Throughout the project cycle, health education should be emphasised. Health and hygiene education should be given to as many people in the community as possible. There should be co-operation with local health services and schools. That is, all rural water supply and sanitation projects should contain a health and hygiene promotion and education programme to encourage the change or

modification of locally specific behaviours and practices, which contribute to water related diseases. These types of educational programmes are vital to rural communities as they promote a sanitation project as a means of increasing the health of clean water supply (Mvula Trust, 1997).

4.2.3 Operation and maintenance phase

Operation and maintenance of the rural water supply is a crucial part of the process. Generally, the community is willing to contribute and associate with the system if the service is satisfactory. The community need to have a clear understanding of the contributions expected from it after the completion of the system and of the increased public health benefits from the improved system. Upon completion, formal agreement specifying the community and service providers' responsibilities with respect to operation and maintenance tasks must be established. The routine day-to-day operation and simple maintenance, pump attendants salaries, lubricants and fuel will be the community's responsibility. The community need support to enable it to carry out its part of the work more effectively (WHO, 1991).

Community level operation and maintenance is the most efficient method of ensuring self-sustained projects. It is important that community members be trained on simple maintenance procedures of the project. The following are criteria to consider when selecting people to be trained as operators in the project:

- Level of education;
- Previously related experience or skills;
- Good local standing; and
- Local artisan.

The duties of the local operator of public facility may include the following:

- Undertaking routine maintenance;
- Doing simple repairs;
- Reporting periodically to the water committee; and
- Advising people on correct use of the facility (White, 1986).

Therefore, training of the community members in the operation and maintenance of the water facilities is of outmost important. Community-level training is one of the critical factors required for the successful implementation of rural community water projects. Hagmann (1998) maintains that training for transformation is a practical training for community development and it is based on the pedagogy for liberation, which is a philosophy for empowerment through strengthening peoples' awareness. This will then create a atmosphere conducive for co-operation and for community based learning.

Confidence and competence increases when people gain experience in organisations and management and are able to acquire new knowledge and skills. Training of community members in water projects can either be formal or informal or be offered as a practical experience in problem solving. That is, increasing the ability of an individual to affect change and work through problems can result in the empowerment of that community.

In rural communities, the need of training is indicated when a community or some members of the community lack the knowledge or skills to perform an assigned task to a satisfactory standard. The training programmes to be provided to the community should be characterised by flexible services which address the unique circumstances and needs of the community. This type of training can only be achieved if it is based upon a sound needs assessment, which establishes the specific learning requirements of the community in question. Before training the community, it is important that the project implementers

conduct a skills audit that will identify existing resources and areas where there are gaps (Mvula Trust, 1997). At the same time, general information like the literacy levels among community members should also be surveyed, as it will help the project implementer when arranging training of the community members. It is important that the rural communities and their representatives in any water related supply projects are provided with the knowledge and skills that will enable them to effectively manage the project.

In water supply, it is likely that the focus of any immediate training will be on the members of the community appointed to be part of the water committee and a few community members who are appointed. Therefore, training programmes need to be flexible in order to accommodate variations in literacy among the committees and their appointees.

(a) Aims of training in water supply projects

Training is important because community members will have the skills, ability, confidence and the capacity to take ownership and responsibility for the water project at the conclusion of the training programme. Thus, training allows for the following features:

- Enables the community to manage the implementation, operation and maintenance of the scheme;
- Can promote understanding of water user's responsibilities with regard to the development of water schemes and payment of water services;
- Can promote good hygiene practices; and
- The trainers/facilitators can transfer capacity and skills to the community and the appointed water committee or those individuals associated with the project, which will be useful in future development projects (Mvula Trust, 1997).

(b) Effective training methods in rural water supply projects

For the training of community or community representatives, training methods to be used by training facilitators should have the following components:

- It should be participatory, where the community understands the objectives of the training;
- The facilitator or trainer should appreciate that people learn effectively in a reflective manner or environment than in a situation where they merely receive information or someone else's views (Van der Horst and Macdonald, 1997); and
- Role-playing, problem solving activities, audio and visual aids and other participatory methods should be employed whenever possible.

4.2.4 Evaluation phase

In rural water supply and sanitation projects it is essential that a continuous follow-up be carried out in order to avoid repeating mistakes and to adjust the approach where possible. The community themselves seem to be people who know how the project is functioning. Consequently they can play a vital role in providing feedback and in pinpointing the difficulties and successes of the water supply system for both technical and social aspects. Therefore, evaluation should be an integral part of community water supply and sanitation projects. The rationale for water supply and sanitation evaluation include:

- An assessment of the appropriateness of the technology used as well as the performance of the project;
- A comparison of people's hygiene practices after completion of the project with habits observed prior to implementation;
- An assessment of the attitudes of people towards the project; and
- The determination of the impact of community participations and involvement in the project.

Evaluation can take place while the project is in progress throughout its lifespan. This can be regarded as monitoring where project implementers are able to see if the objectives of the project are being met, problems encountered and changes that are affected. Also, evaluation can be conducted at the end of the project where the overall impacts of the project is being evaluated to establish if the project has accomplished its objectives. The community should be involved in the evaluation of the project. This promotes a transparent and accountable process and commitment.

It is therefore important that from the implementation stage of the project to the evaluation phase, members of the public are involved in order to ensure ownership and sustainability. Projects implementers or service providers should be open and establish a relationship of mutual trust and respect with members of the public. That is, effective community-based water and sanitation supply programmes are totally dependent on the provision and implementation of capacity building and skills training to community members. Depending on the needs of any specific community, long-term sustainability through training and education should be aimed at the provision of knowledge and skills to ensure, inter alia, institution building, basic understanding and competence regarding the technical and technological issues at stake, the requirement of effective operations and maintenance, effective practical utilisation and the provision of ongoing information and communication system.

Education and training should not simply be viewed as supportive additions to development projects but should be viewed as an integral part of these projects. While this may involve additional expenditure at the start of projects, it should be regarded as part of capital expenditure that will ensure long-term sustainability of the project.

CHAPTER 5 : TOOLS IN FACILITATING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

5.1 Introduction

There are different methods of public participation and each method has its particular characteristics, its strengths and weaknesses. It is thus difficult to state whether certain forms or methods of participation are better than others. The best method is the most suitable one, which can only be identified once the objectives of the initiative and the purpose of the participation have been established. Chess (2000) maintains that there is no generally acceptable classification scheme that can predict which participatory method will work in any given situation. In other words, selection of the correct form of participatory method may not be a factor that must shape the outcome of the project. He argues that the outcome results depend on how the project implementers use the methods.

In any public participation process it is important to make use of several methods, each determined by specific objectives. DWAF (2001) states four basic dimensions that should be considered which methods to use in public participation process. The dimensions are:

- Cost effectiveness;
- Breadth of distribution and reach;
- Amount of time available; and
- Approach either interactive or one-way communication.

This chapter will briefly discuss and give examples of some participation methods which can be used by service providers to involve members of the public in rural water supply and sanitation projects, namely:

- Public meetings;
- Public hearings;
- Open Houses;
- Focus Groups;

- Citizen Advisory Committee;
- Workshops;
- Social Surveys; and
- Newsletters and reports.

5.1.1 Public meetings

Public meetings are normally semi-formal or formal sessions at which there are both registered and unregistered presentations. This format can be volatile and may not be appropriate in circumstances where there is significant tension among interests. These are structured opportunities for the general public to hear and make comment. Public groups, service providers and the general public are encouraged to attend, listen, raise questions and make presentations to the chairperson, panel, or facilitator. Public meetings should be well advertised and normally occur in the early stage of a planning process, as part of the preliminary organization assessment stage, or in the later stages of a planning process when a consensus management direction or range of options has been proposed. Such meetings should be held during mid-week evenings or, if appropriate on Saturdays. Public meetings should not normally be scheduled on holidays, during peak vacation periods, or during periods when major portions of local populations may be absent. Public meetings are open to all and therefore should:

- Be chaired by a neutral party. This function should be undertaken by someone who is appropriately skilled and is perceived by the public to be impartial;
- Be advertised two weeks, one week and one day prior to the event in regional and local media; and
- Time has to be allowed to hear from everyone who wishes to speak. Opportunity for rebuttal or reply may be allowed.

In public meetings, it is important that the facilitator/chairperson should produce a summary of the public meeting and this should be widely available to the public.

Comments should be encouraged (Interim Guidelines, 1993). The following points are important in arranging a public meeting.

- Publicity – a letter containing an invitation should be send to every household together with general information about the project;
- Venue of the meeting – the place should be accessible and big enough to accommodate everyone interested in the project;
- Visual Aids – most effective visual aids are colour slides, they should be clearly visible from the back of the room;
- Microphones – at large meetings microphones are helpful for speakers in the body of the hall during discussion period. If not provided the chairman should repeat the speaker's question; and
- The number of speakers – more time needs to be allowed for general discussion than for formal contributions. Number of speakers should be limited and their contributions kept as brief as possible.

Advantages

DWAF (2001) provide the following advantages of public meetings:

- Information is disseminated to large numbers of people;
- Costs are relatively low;
- Meetings are viewed by the public as a legitimate form of communication;
- The public is familiar with the technique and usually willing to be involved; and
- Public meetings expose the views of different stakeholders groups to each other.

Disadvantages

- Large attendance of the public could limit interaction;
- Introverted people are unlikely to contribute;
- May be ineffective when dealing with difficult or contentious issues;
- A vocal minority may dominate;

- The success of the meeting may be measured purely on public turn-out; and
- The onus is on the public to attend at the time specified (DWAF, 2001).

5.1.2 Public hearings

A public hearing is a formal meeting between citizens and project implementers in order to discuss a particular subject. Public hearing meetings are carried out during decision-making process. The objective of public hearing is to promote and facilitate communication between project implementers and the public so that information, opinions or objections expressed by the public are taken into account by the project implementers at the decision-making moment, thereby strengthening the decision.

Advantages

Public hearings have many advantages for both the public and project implementers. Listed below are some examples:

For the public

The community have:

- The opportunity to share their opinions, criticise and influence public decisions;
- The opportunity to learn other people's perspectives that take into account environmental, social or economic considerations;
- The freedom of speech and to be heard; and
- The opportunity to reach consensus.

For project implementers

Project implementers have:

- The opportunity to communicate with a variety of social actors;
- The opportunity to strengthen the quality of their decisions by having them more clearly reflect the claims and aspirations of the addressees;
- The opportunity to access more information; and
- The opportunity to achieve and demonstrate more transparency in the decision-making process.

Disadvantages

- May be dominated by special interests groups;
- Feedback obtained from this format needs to be treated carefully because it may not be representative of the community;
- Does not generate a sense of ownership; and
- Exclude the disadvantaged groups.

5.1.3 Open houses

In open house the public is invited to drop at any time at a set location on a set day or days and times. Open house consists of displays, printed materials and staff to answer questions and to record and discuss issues (DWAF, 2001). That is, the public can speak with the project staff, view the displays set up in the room and break into small discussion groups. Therefore, it is important that the project staff or implementers are trained in facilitating open houses. For example, they should be trained to ensure an accurate recording of issues, concerns, suggestions and contact details and to provide satisfactory responses.

Advantages

Open houses are important in public participation because they:

- Promote a relaxed atmosphere where the public has an opportunity to ask questions related to the project. An opportunity for informal discussions is provided for members of the public;
- Enables staff to tailor responses according to the needs or questions of the public;
- Allows for sensitive topics to be discussed; and
- Visitors or the public can stay in open houses for as long as they want.

Disadvantages

- Display can be expensive (DWAF, 2001);
- Open house have the potential for lack of clarity in purpose;
- Is staff resource intensive; and
- Onus is on the public to attend.

5.1.4 Focus groups

A focus group is a small group discussion with professional leadership. It is a meeting of a carefully selected group of individuals convened to discuss and give opinions on a single topic. Participants in a focus group are selected in two ways; random selection, used to assure representation of all segments of society; and non-random selection which helps elicit a particular position or point of view (Macmillan and Schumacher, 1997). A once off, face-to-face meeting, is structured to be informal to encourage open discussion among the participants.

Advantages

- Successful focus group may lead to consensus and feelings of enrichment among participants;

- Good venue for learning about needs of a particular group;
- Remain largely informal, so participants can discuss issues in a relaxed atmosphere; and
- Is a good way to gauge the opinions of the public.

Disadvantages

- Lack of informed participants produces superficial discussion;
- Potential for revealing and reinforcing social cleavages;
- Selection criteria can create bias in eliciting opinions;
- Limited number of participants limits representativeness of opinions;
- Potential for ideas expressed to be influenced/shaped by interaction/exchange with others (especially those who are dominant); and
- It is resource intensive.

Focus groups can be a tool for encouraging discussion and deliberation, but needs to be used with much caution because of the problems associated with it.

5.1.5 Citizen advisory committee

This is a formal group or committee that is set up specifically to provide direct comment. It is composed of representatives of all resource interests in the plan area who have responsibility to report to their constituencies. The public establishes the public advisory group so that there is consistent public participation throughout the process. A group should be formed before the terms of reference for the public participation process is finalized. Members are representative of all resource values or public interests in the area (Interim Guidelines, 1993).

Advantages

- If the committee is balanced, deliberations can be fruitful;

- Allows two-way exchange of information between the project implementers and the public;
- The committee advises influence decision making process; and
- Produce informed citizens, boost trust in institutions and reduce conflict.

Disadvantages

- Although the community is supposed to represent everybody in the community,
- the group may not be a representative group of people; and
- May be costly in terms of time and resources.

5.1.6 Workshops

Workshops are structured meetings aimed at defining issues, evaluating criteria or creating options. They are designed to produce a group product and are useful for bringing together stakeholders with different values and perspectives. Workshops are best when specific problems need to be resolved, but the success of a workshop relies on its design and management.

Advantages

- Good flow of information may be achieved;
- A group product may be obtained; and
- Solutions to problems may be explored.

Disadvantages

- Needs to be well structures and facilitated;
- Fairly costly; and
- May be time-consuming to organise (DWAF, 2001).

5.1.7 Social surveys

A survey is a system for collecting information to describe, compare, or explain knowledge, attitudes and behaviour. Surveys portray public perception and preferences. They can accurately report on what people know or want to know and can test whether a project is acceptable to the public as it is being developed. Social surveys solicit information from representative sample of citizens and same questions are asked of every individual surveyed (UNDP, 1997).

Advantages

- Can reach large numbers of people; and
- Allow for the most in-depth information.

Disadvantages

- The list may not be representative or comprehensive;
- Questions need to be somewhat simple and straight forward, the information gathered then can be simplistic and superficial;
- Is time consuming;
- Survey results are often not comparable;
- The effectiveness of surveys are affected by the rates of response; and
- Fundamental decisions have to be made before the surveys begins and cannot be changed once survey has been implemented (McMillan and Schumacher, 1997).

5.1.8 Newsletters and reports

Newsletters can be used to give updates on initiatives and encourage stakeholder interest. Therefore, newsletters should deal with important issues,

avoid technical jargon, provide positive and negative facts about the initiative and supply contact details.

Advantages

- Cost effective;
- Can inform a large number of people;
- Provides information and visibility to initiative;
- May enhance initiative's credibility; and
- Allow people to absorb information at their own convenience (DWAF, 2001).

Disadvantages

- Possible misinterpretation of material;
- May only provide basic information;
- Does not allow feedback;
- May be very time consuming; and
- Does not inform the illiterate.

Taking into consideration the range of methods explained above it is important to acknowledge that no single participatory method can be regarded as the only accurate and appropriate method to facilitate public participation programmes. It is therefore important to use a range of methods when involving the public in development programmes since each method is not unique i.e. all has advantages and limitations.

5.2 Skills needed to facilitate public participation

Project implementers promoting public participation in rural water supply and sanitation projects need to be able to facilitate a process, rather than directing it. They need to have genuine confidence in community's members and in their knowledge and should also be willing to seek out local expertise and build on it

while bolstering knowledge and skills as needed. Therefore, key characteristics and skills important to facilitate public participation are: (Cheetham, 2002).

- Commitment to community derived solutions and to community based problems;
- Political, gender and cultural sensitivity;
- Ability to assess, support, and build capacities in the community;
- Confidence in community expertise;
- Ability to facilitate group meetings;
- Ability to communicate well, especially by actively listening; and
- Ability to advocate for and defend community based solutions and approaches.

CHAPTER 6 : CONCLUSION

In rural water supply and sanitation projects, public participation is vital as it ensures that the benefits of development are equitably shared. Members of the community are provided with the opportunity to be involved in decisions that affect their lives. The success of rural water supply and sanitation project depends on the extent to which the community is considered during the planning stages of the project. Thus, the involvement of the community right from the initial stages of the project will ensure sustainability of the project. Keen community participation can play a significant role in developing and increasing awareness, a sense of responsibility and pride of ownership toward the project.

Public participation contributes to sustainable development as it enables decision makers to incorporate the views, opinions and perspectives of the community into the project. Therefore, for effective community participation in rural water supply and sanitation it is important for project implementers or service providers to incorporate the diverse interests and cultures of the community in the participatory process and disengage from support of any effort that is likely to adversely affect the disadvantaged members of the community. People's interests, needs and wishes must be allowed to underpin key decisions and actions relating to the project. Further, participation must empower women. Thus, women should be allowed to take part in the decision making process of the project.

CHAPTER 7 : REFERENCES

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