

PN-AAZ-330

54868



WATER AND SANITATION
FOR HEALTH PROJECT

Operated by
CDM and Associates

Sponsored by the U.S. Agency
for International Development

1611 N. Kent Street, Room 1002
Arlington, VA 22209-2111 USA

Telephone: (703) 243-8200
Telex No. WUI 64552
Cable Address WASHAID

THE MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAM FOR THE NATIONAL
WATER SUPPLY AND DRAINAGE BOARD
OF SRI LANKA

WASH FIELD REPORT NO. 230

FEBRUARY 1988

The WASH Project is managed
by Camp Dresser & McKee
International Inc. Principal
cooperating institutions and
subcontractors are: Associates
in Rural Development, Inc.;
International Science and
Technology Institute, Inc.;
Research Triangle Institute;
Draming Resources Group;
University of North Carolina
At Chapel Hill

Prepared for
the Office of Health,
Bureau for Science and Technology,
U.S. Agency for International Development
and the USAID Mission to Sri Lanka
WASH Activity No. 253

WASH Field Report No. 230

**THE MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM
FOR THE NATIONAL WATER SUPPLY AND DRAINAGE BOARD
OF
SRI LANKA**

Prepared for the Office of Health,
Bureau for Science and Technology,
U.S. Agency for International Development
and
the USAID Mission to Sri Lanka
under WASH Activity Number 253

by

Daniel B. Edwards
and
Ed Salt

February 1988

Water and Sanitation for Health Project
Contract No. 5942-C-00-4085-00, Project No. 936-5942
is sponsored by the Office of Health, Bureau for Science and Technology
U.S. Agency for International Development
Washington, DC 20523

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
1	INTRODUCTION	1
1.1	Background	1
1.2	The Request for WASH Services	1
2	PROGRAM OVERVIEW	3
2.1	The Program Development Process	3
2.1.1	Needs Assessment	3
2.1.2	Findings: Management Profile of NWSDB	3
2.2	Overview of the Program Design	6
2.3	Methodology	9
3	RESULTS	11
4	CONCLUSIONS	15
4.1	Lessons Learned	15
4.2	Conclusion	18

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In August 1984, the USAID Mission to Sri Lanka began a four-year institutional improvement project with the National Water Supply and Drainage Board (NWSDB) of Sri Lanka. NWSDB is the primary agency in the water sector in Sri Lanka. In 1984 it was responsible for the operation and maintenance of 161 water schemes including the system in Colombo which has a population of over 1.5 million. Its primary focus was the planning, design, and construction of all of the urban water systems and most of the rural systems, both piped and non-piped. Since its creation in 1975, NWSDB has grown from 1,600 to more than 6,000 employees.

The USAID project was designed as an integrated, systems-wide development intervention. The project goal was to move a centralized, non-consumer, non-commercially oriented bureaucracy towards improved water services for consumers and increasing institutional, financial, and organizational self-sufficiency. To reach these goals, a strategy was devised to carry out major organizational change. This required series of activities designed to strengthen the organization and included technical assistance, commodities, and systems and procedures development.

Development of a consumer orientation and institutional self-sufficiency required a restructuring of major parts of the NWSDB. Weak or poorly functioning units needed to be reformed. New units and reporting relationships needed to be organized. New regional service centers were to be set up for major geographic areas and consumer service facilities (billing, collections, and response) established in Colombo, the largest urban system.

In an overall sense, the project was designed as a training project. The technically oriented NWSDB had to learn modern utility management. This required commitment and decisions leading to sustained institutional learning and improvement.

The management development program, which is the subject of this report, was conceived as an integral part of the project and an important supporting element of the overall strategy. It was designed to provide important skills and develop a core of leadership committed to sustaining organizational improvements.

1.2 The Request for WASH Services

The Water and Sanitation for Health (WASH) Project supported USAID/Sri Lanka in initial project design for the institutional improvement project. WASH also conducted a project start-up workshop. In addition, WASH was requested to provide annual project monitoring and technical assistance and to develop and

carry out the management development component. A long-term contractor provided a resident technical assistance team to work with the project on a daily basis. WASH services were to be intermittent and coordinated by the resident technical assistance team leader.

The specific request to WASH was to design and conduct an executive development program for the 30 upper and mid-level managers of the NWSDB. The program was to be conducted in three phases six months apart. Each phase included some needs assessment activities, a training workshop of from five to nine days, and on-the-job follow-up supported by the resident technical assistance team. The scope of work allowed the program to be designed based upon a thorough needs assessment. Each phase was to be designed with input from the resident technical assistance team based on the project monitoring work which WASH was providing. The scope of work required that WASH develop a design which addressed actual work-place needs and incorporate modern management concepts.

This report documents the management development program which was carried out by the WASH consultants in Sri Lanka from September 1986 through September 1987. It is hoped that others in the Agency for International Development and those outside the agency interested in how management development efforts can successively support institutional development will benefit from the Sri Lanka experience.

This report describes:

- The program development process
- An overview of the program design
- Training methods used in the program
- Results brought about by the program
- Lessons learned along the way.

A companion document provides guidance for trainers in designing and conducting management training in water and sanitation institutions and is based on the work in Sri Lanka.

Chapter 2

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

2.1 The Program Development Process

2.1.1 Needs Assessment

At the time the training program was designed in the summer of 1986, the WASH team had a great deal of information about the NWSDB. The needs assessment for the training program had been going on for over a year using a variety of methods and information sources. One member of the design team for the training program had designed and conducted the project start-up workshop in March 1985. He also monitored the project at the end of the first project year in May 1986. As part of the monitoring activities, more than 60 NWSDB staff members were interviewed at least twice by the WASH consultant. These staff members had also attended two four-day project monitoring workshops conducted by the WASH consultant.

In addition, in May 1986 a questionnaire was completed by the prospective training program candidates which asked them to describe what they hoped to gain from a management development program. Before the first workshop in September 1986, and prior to each workshop in the program, a cross-section of course attendees and their supervisors was interviewed again by the WASH consultants to collect anecdotal data and assess the extent of application of skills and concepts.

2.1.2 Findings: Management Profile of NWSDB

Based upon the needs assessment data available in the summer of 1986, the WASH consultants were able to develop a set of characteristics which described the managerial climate of NWSDB. It should be noted that the profile was not atypical of many organizations in the sector in need of institutional strengthening. These difficulties experienced by NWSDB presented a challenge to both the WASH consultants and to NWSDB managers.

Some of the characteristics of the way NWSDB was managed included:

- Decision-Making: The organization had developed a pattern of decision-making characterized by an unwillingness of managers to make decisions. Almost any decision regarding resources, staff, new ideas, emergencies, project implementation, disciplining, signing of routine vouchers, etc. was, as a matter of normal procedure, passed up the line for the General Manager or the Chairman of the Board to make. Their office routine typically involved stacks of paper to review and sign, leaving them little time to focus on strategic and policy issues.

- Power and Influence: Historically, NWSDB had developed from a small engineering design section of Public Works (of the Ministry of Local Government) to a large service-providing water utility with a national mandate. The organization grew first by adding a large construction division and (with World Bank funding) focused on building a great many large and small water systems. The last functions added to the organization were operations and maintenance of water plants, billing, collecting, and commercial/consumer relations. The most influential group, in terms of skills, salary, decision-making, resources availability, the ability to provide direction, and informal power were the engineers. The operations and maintenance, commercial, financial, and administrative staff were considered less important and had little access to real decision-making. The personnel structure promoted the interests of this group by requiring seniority and engineering grades for most jobs.
- Attitudes Towards Change: At the beginning of the project, a variety of seemingly contradictory attitudes towards change could be seen among NWSDB managers. In interviews, most of those in management ranks expressed a sense of powerlessness. This was typified by such statements as "those on top must do something;" "you can't get anything done around here;" "the best people are leaving;" "you see the conditions we work under, why can't the consultants do something about it;" "no matter what is done, nothing will change at NWSDB."

At the same time, there was a generalized resistance to the consultants in the USAID project, especially during the first year. Initially it was not believed that the WASH consultants for the management development program would be able to make a difference. Their contribution was considered tenuous; there was a certain "show me" attitude prior to the start of the program.

Finally, there was considerable pressure within the government and from the Ministry of Local Government itself as a result of public complaints about water service to make NWSDB a more responsive, service-oriented organization. The need to make changes in the organization was not only apparent to outsiders, but was also keenly felt by key managers at NWSDB.

- Communication Patterns: Communication in meetings followed two extremes. Either individuals tried to dominate by talking over each other (interrupting, not listening, conducting side conversations), or they were totally passive and silent. The only meetings generally took place with the top two managers presiding over a large group with a few individuals talking. Units and sections rarely, if ever, held meetings. Meetings were primarily a forum for organizational control at the top where managers were called to task or asked to explain progress in front of the full group. Many detailed operational decisions were made by the top managers in these meetings. Few managers demonstrated the necessary communication and group management skills to conduct productive meetings.

- Lack of Initiative and Accountability: Most managers expressed a sense of real fear that "someone will do something to you if you stick your neck out." In confidential interviews managers would give examples of individuals who just did their jobs and were punished for contravening powerful interests both outside and inside the water board. A characteristic quote was "no work means no problem; more work, more problems." This attitude engendered a pattern in which managers seemed unwilling to take the responsibility for supervision or to be accountable for getting work done. Managers were very reluctant to follow up on tasks assigned or work with staff to improve performance.
- Strong Self Criticism: There was a great deal of generalized complaining about working at NWSDB. This took the form of blaming others (those on top, other work units). At the same time, this dissatisfaction carried with it a positive side: most managers had a strong sense of how "things should be" and a high level of commitment to both NWSDB and the engineering profession.
- Lack of basic management systems: Effective management was further weakened by the lack of even basic management systems. While data on system performance were collected, it was disjointed, inconsistent among regions and within reporting periods, and was not used in a systematic way as a basis for management planning or decision-making. The project had identified a need for a management information system. There were no agreed upon standards for unit or individual performance and few consistently applied measures of individual or unit performance.

NWSDB did not have a real budget until the second year of the project, and even then, upper and mid-level managers had very little to contribute. This was especially critical in that NWSDB was facing a continuous series of budget crises which had a direct impact on NWSDB work. The inability of managers to understand budget issues and to explain them to other staff contributed to staff demoralization.

Not only were basic management systems lacking, there was little awareness of how these tools (such as management information systems, performance measures and standards, and budgets) could be used to improve performance.

These organizational characteristics, the problems related to them, and the skills needed to address them were the basic elements which the management training program was designed to address.

2.2 Overview of the Program Design

The design challenge, given this climate, was to develop a management training program that would demonstrate some immediate results while developing a foundation of skills and concepts for long-range improvements consistent with the project goals. It was also important to allow enough flexibility in the training program design, especially in the second and third phases, to integrate those issues which emerged from the work within the project and from the annual project monitoring activities.

The program was designed to occur in three phases. Each phase included some needs assessment activities, a training workshop of from five to nine days, and follow-up on-the-job tasks monitored and assisted by the resident technical assistance team. The thematic flow from the first to the third workshop was:

- Phase I: Overall functions and skills of a manager within a specified vision of the whole water authority.
- Phase II: Improving the performance of the work unit.
- Phase III: Improving the performance of individuals.

Phase I

The first workshop was held from September 19-27, 1986, for the 34 people of the NWSDB top management team. The content and skills for the first workshop were organized as follows:

Thematic Area

Content and Skills

The role and functions of a manager

Making the transition from technician to manager. Defining management's role as getting results by working with and through people within a consistent framework of specified values while maintaining a clear sense of agenda or direction that is consistent with an overall organizational vision. Defining the following management functions: Decision-making, communication, collaborative work organization, monitoring/performance feedback, problem solving/conflict management, technical leadership, unit representation, staff development, and team effectiveness.

Thematic Area

Content and Skills

Developing a vision for NWSDB

Comparison of performance standards and measures of excellence from water authorities in Brazil and Malaysia. Developing a first set of priorities for NWSDB as an organization.

The manager as communicator

Introduction of communication skills: listening, paraphrasing, and summarizing.

Getting people to work together

How to run meetings effectively. How to manage conflict and differences among work units. Defining roles and responsibilities for units within the organization.

Self improvement and self awareness

Assessing strengths and weaknesses as a manager; developing an individual strategy for self improvement.

At the conclusion of this workshop, each manager developed a personal and work unit action/learning program based on skills learned in the workshop which he would use at work. Small discussion groups of managers were formed (called "skill improvement groups") which were to meet periodically to review progress. A consultant from the USAID resident technical assistance team worked with and monitored each group.

After two months, each course participant received a follow-up workbook. The book consisted of a summary of the concepts introduced in the course for quick reference. In addition, a copy of the worksheets that each participant had filled out for on-the-job application was mailed with the workbook as a reminder.

Phase II

The second phase of the program consisted of a five-day workshop and similar on-the-job follow-up. The second phase was designed to (1) review skills from the first course, look at a few of them in a more advanced way, and discuss difficulties and successes related to making changes in management style, and (2) focus on issues related to performance within the unit by introducing two new management tools--mission statements and performance standards.

First, a case study was used to examine what is involved in changing the way one "manages" people followed by discussion of each participant's experience in trying out new management skills. Then the skills and themes from the first workshop were reviewed comprehensively. In addition to reviewing the principles of situational leadership, collaborative work organization, monitoring and performance feedback, new principles were introduced related to coaching, staff development, and motivation. Four "critical incidents" were developed based on interview data.

Secondly, new material was added on improving unit performance. This consisted of developing unit mission statements followed by the development of a series of measurable performance standards for each section of NWSDB. These were produced in draft form by each manager. They were then reviewed by top management. The managers followed up on these performance standards by communicating them to subordinates, trying them out over the next six months, and refining them as needed. A review committee with advisors from the resident technical assistance team assisted managers in reviewing, using, and revising performance standards.

After several months, the participants again received a follow-up workbook which reviewed the concepts of the second phase and prepared them for participation in the last workshop.

Phase III

The thematic focus of the third phase workshop was "the manager working with the individual subordinate to improve performance." The third workshop was designed to reinforce skills learned in the first two workshops and to respond to the issues which managers were facing as they attempted to apply these concepts in the "real" world of NWSDB.

The third phase workshop built on skills learned in the first two workshops and utilized data from the second project monitoring report and from discussions with NWSDB managers while they were in Washington on a field trip. This additional information helped clarify the focus of this third workshop which was described as "getting people to do the most important things."

A review of the results of the first two phases indicated that the attitudes of managers were changing. Managers were increasingly involving others and developing work plans collaboratively. Some managers had, in fact, developed and worked with performance indicators, while some had not. Meetings had become a great deal more effective. However, the skills related to holding staff accountable for results, reviewing performance, and giving performance feedback were still weak areas for most managers.

The content of the third phase workshop was woven around "seven steps to get people to do the most important things" which integrated prior themes in a common framework. The design of the workshop provided for specific skill practice for each of the steps. The seven steps were:

1. Know where you want to go and let your staff know (communicating vision)
2. Work together with your staff to set goals and performance standards (using performance standards as a tool)
3. Decide what the most important things are and actively communicate them to others including your boss (setting and communicating priorities)

4. Hold regular meetings to plan the work at hand. Make sure each person knows what performance is expected (involving staff in work planning and clarification)
5. Follow up regularly, check progress, talk with your staff; use your performance indicators to determine if there are problems and follow up to solve them (using performance indicators as a monitoring device)
6. Give staff regular feedback on their performance. Reward good performance. Evaluate performance at least once a year (conducting performance reviews)
7. Have sufficient resources to achieve your goals (using budgeting and budget management)

The course ended by relating course themes to specific improvements that participants had accomplished in the operations of NWSDB over the past year. Individuals made plans to continue learning about management.

2.3 Methodology

Developing a training design that is focused on helping an organization solve a specific set of organizational problems, such as the work with NWSDB, involved careful consideration of the training methods to be used. Several considerations were particularly important in choosing methods which forcefully supported the course objectives:

- The overriding goal in the methodology of the management training program was to make the material relevant and immediately applicable to the work at NWSDB. There was a strong effort to use case materials and exercises taken from actual work problems at NWSDB. This was, of course, facilitated by the extensive data available from project monitoring and other interviews conducted by the WASH consultants.
- Most of the concepts were a synthesis of recent management literature and the experiences of the WASH consultants in water and sanitation institutions and other government and private agencies. These concepts were adapted to local conditions, and participant experiences were often used to make examples culturally relevant and topical.
- The WASH consultants attempted to use a wide variety of participatory training approaches including case studies (written for NWSDB using current workplace problems), role plays, critical incidents, interactive lecturettes with flipcharts, simulations with video tape, participant presentation, small group discussion and tasks, reading materials, and individual written tasks. The workshops intentionally avoided long lectures or reading assignments.

- Descriptions of performance standards from water utilities in other developing countries were used to stimulate new ideas. The WASH publication, Guidelines for Institutional Assessment, Water and Wastewater Institutions (WASH Technical Report #37), was used extensively to present standards of excellence for water authorities. Sri Lankan managers used the standards taken from this research as a point of comparison in developing their own vision for the NWSDB.
- Another significant training method was using the participants as training resources. Each workshop gave them an opportunity to work in small groups and report their conclusions to the large group. Particularly during the last workshop, participants were asked to review their own experiences and make presentations which reviewed course concepts as well as to make presentations on financial management and performance standards. Presentations were evaluated and "feedback" given to allow participants to increase their public speaking and presentation skills.
- Achieving the course objectives required careful thinking about training methods which tied in-class training experiences to back home work experience. A variety of approaches to structuring follow-up activities were used. For example, following the first phase workshop, "skill improvement groups" of from six to eight participants were formed and charged with meeting during the following six months before the second workshop to review course principles and discuss experiences. Following the second workshop, smaller groups of three were formed to do the same thing. About three months after each workshop, participants received a workbook which included a review of key concepts and a set of questions to be completed prior to the next workshop. The design of the last workshop made the most extensive "back-home" connections. In morning sessions, participants were given assignments (e.g., conduct a particular kind of meeting) to complete with their staff in the afternoon. These "real" experiences were then discussed in the next morning session.

Follow-up to the training was greatly assisted by the involvement of the resident technical assistance team consultants.

- An effort was made throughout the training process to challenge assumptions and encourage critical thinking. Statements like "you can't do that here" were answered with "how many private sector organizations in Sri Lanka are currently conducting performance review?"

Chapter 3

RESULTS

Important Themes and the Resulting Changes

Carrying out three short-term workshops with the same audience over a one-year period gave the trainers an opportunity to watch numerous changes in individual and organizational behavior. While some of this may have been changes in individual behavior in the classroom, real and significant differences in the way NWSDB is managed were discussed during pre-course interviews, observed during the periodic project monitoring activities, and cited by the resident technical assistance team.

This change in management behavior over the year from September 1986 to September 1987 resulted from many factors and certainly cannot be attributed solely to the management development program. During the same time, a new general manager with a different managerial style was appointed, and the already difficult political environment became more complex as fighting in the north tightened competition for limited government funds. Activities carried out by the resident technical assistance team to support overall project goals were also intensifying.

Over the year then, the training program helped bring about change in the way the organization was managed and also responded to these changes as the course went on to support the goals of the project. Some of the most significant changes in the behavior of the top management team at NWSDB over this year were as follows:

- NWSDB management has an increased sense of ownership of the organization and an enhanced set of skills to exercise management responsibilities. During the year there was considerable movement away from the attitude, "I'm a good bus driver, but I'm not driving the bus" toward "This organization is ours."

An example of this change could be seen in the final course as a cross-disciplinary team developed board-wide performance standards with specific technical, financial, and commercial components. A year earlier it would have been unlikely that such a group could have worked together and, even if it had, it probably would have pointed to some external body--"the politicians," "the chairman," "the GM"--as the cause of all problems and left it at that. As this task was carried out in the course, participants demonstrated key skills, a belief in the importance of performance standards and an openness to each other's points of view, all of which were facilitated by the course.

The training course provided a wide variety of tools and frameworks with which to look at the job of the manager. One of the most important for the future of the Water Board is the ability to develop standards and to measure performance as an organization and as managers.

Many managers are actively using performance standards in their own units. Some regional managers are initiating review of staffing levels in their own organizations and proposing reductions in unnecessary staff. Most participants in the last course were not only accepting responsibility for unit-level budgeting but actively seeking it. Managers have a greater awareness of the tools available to them and are using them to take responsibility for managing the board.

- A much improved ability to use meetings for problem solving and decision-making. Through the course, managers have gained an understanding of the role meetings play in the operation of NWSDB and the skills needed to plan and conduct meetings.

In discussions during the first workshop, participants realized that the meeting structure and process then used at NWSDB--large monthly meetings with all levels represented--had a very strong effect on decision-making. Middle management was pre-empted from problem solving and there was a tendency to push decisions and problems to the top--"why should we make decisions and communicate with our people when top management is going to make them anyway."

Participants began to see how changing the way meetings worked could affect the organization and their own power and influence in running it. Improved meeting skills gave them the opportunity to enter the arena of decision-making.

When the course began, very few managers held meetings in their own work units. As a result of the activities in the training program this changed dramatically, and managers initiated a wide variety of actions for improving meeting effectiveness. These included posting publicly the "Guidelines for Conducting Meetings" introduced in the course; restructuring the general manager's and chairman's meetings to deal more directly and exclusively with division managers; giving each other feedback on meetings; having meeting "monitors"; in some cases, actually holding regular staff meetings; and opening up communication across sections by holding meetings designed to share information.

- A greater willingness and ability to make decisions at appropriate management levels in the organization. Meetings and how they are now used are one element of how decision-making has changed, but in a general way, decision-making has gradually shifted towards more responsibility at lower levels. Managers who, in the past, might have passed a decision up the line without thinking are now clearer about what authority has been delegated to them and are more willing to act within that authority.

For example, staff in the central commercial unit are regularly reviewing performance data and making decisions to vigorously go after debtors. In the regions, where the operations and maintenance staff have commercial responsibilities, strong moves are being initiated to collect debt and issue cut-off orders. Operations staff are refusing to accept substandard construction work and fighting the whole system, if necessary, to uphold quality standards.

- Currently, there is a much greater likelihood that staff at lower levels in the organization will be involved in collaboratively planning the work that they are doing. Needs assessment data collected prior to the course indicated a widespread lack of accountability and reluctance to follow up on assigned work. After the course, managers better understand and have developed the skills to clarify what it is they are delegating. They are more likely to monitor the performance of a particular task in a timely way, and they understand the importance of taking appropriate corrective action.

For example, regional managers now routinely get together at their own initiative to review issues of common concern. There is a much tighter collaboration between support functions, especially personnel and budgets, and other units, as there is with the commercial, operations and maintenance, and construction units.

Many of the most important results of the course are changes in individual behavior as, for example, in how one individual regional manager now goes about doing his work. In fact, much of the impact of this training program will be from the lifelong contribution of the eight or ten most active participants who might be working at relatively lower levels in the organization. Certainly there are still those who act no differently than when they first began the course, although even the least active (and sometimes most resistant) have a much higher level of interest and participation in project activities.

- A much greater tendency to think of oneself and act as a "manager" rather than as a technician. One of the strongest impacts of the course has been on changing participants' self concept from being an engineer or personnel "technician" to that of being a manager. Through the three sessions, participants increasingly spoke of themselves as managers and had a sense of what they meant by that! The group increasingly considered things from the perspective of a manager--results, performance, working with people, a vision of what the Water Board should be --instead of looking only at technical data or considering a question from a narrow disciplinary focus.
- More "management" is going on at the regional level. The training program strongly supported the project goal of decentralization to regional centers. During the year, the project focused on increasing regional autonomy and requiring decision-making of regional managers.

Some regional managers have had more success in this area than others. In one region, the manager has set up a system of weekly staff meetings with all regional senior staff. At this meeting problems are identified and tasks are defined and followed up. This has allowed this region to increase its effectiveness significantly in jointly defining strategies for increasing collections and improving services.

Many observers commented that progress in this area was significantly helped as a result of the improved management skills of the regional managers.

- Those who belong to "top management" now function as a team. The course provided the structured time, the sense of selves as managers, and the perspective and skills to help this group develop and function as a team.

In the first workshop, there was a very strong sense of "us" and "them"--the engineers and the others. There was a question about whether key financial management staff would even attend. A number of "support" function managers remained quiet.

Over the year, a dramatic change took place. As the group members increasingly understood and accepted their roles as managers, financial, commercial, personnel and other roles have been incorporated as an important part of the team. The team itself has changed including recognition of who are its important players and what are the important issues which need to be discussed.

- People in this group communicate with each other more effectively. Quite often training courses can make only a small difference in the way that individuals communicate with each other. This course was an exception in that it made a clear and observable difference in helping people become better at listening, talking in turn without interrupting, talking with confidence in front of the group, and in "summarizing" what someone had said before leaping to the attack or defense.

Participants openly talk about each other's communication patterns with skill and good humor!

Chapter 4

CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Lessons Learned

Those who have been involved in this program including USAID Mission staff, NWSDB participants, the resident technical assistance team, and other outside observers have considered it to be very successful in reaching its objectives and in assisting in the achievement of the overall project goals.

Some of the lessons learned from planning and conducting a program like this are probably unique to the Water Board in Sri Lanka, but there are a number of generalizations which could be made which could be of benefit to others who are designing similar management development programs in water and sanitation institutions.

Some of the considerations which helped make this program a success include the following:

- It is important to carefully look at the organization and tailor the management development program to real and specific issues faced by that organization. This training program had extraordinary opportunities for assessing the organization and its performance including instructor involvement in the design and delivery of the project start-up workshop and in two of the periodic project monitoring activities. The instructors also interviewed participants prior to each course session and one instructor facilitated a special retreat for key top management staff.

The training program was conceived as one that could take advantage of these opportunities. The overall framework for the three sessions was designed prior to the first session, but the second and third courses particularly were developed to address topical management issues and how to make the skills and concepts work in the Water Board.

While others contemplating the development of management training programs may not have the same kinds of opportunities to assess needs, this experience demonstrates that those designing management training programs should take full advantage of all opportunities to assess the organization and its real operational problems. This effort not only provides essential data but generates credibility for the program.

- In order to be successful, training programs like this need time. A truism? Yes, but easy to forget. The WASH consultants were involved in project start-up activities and project monitoring for over a year before the first workshop took place.

It took time for the Water Board to be "ready" for a management training program and it took a serious commitment in order to get the 30 top managers out of this organization for periods of five and seven days at a stretch. About 20 days of classroom training were provided, but it took 2-1/2 years and a considerable amount of work to achieve the results observed at the final workshop.

- The training methodology must be appropriate to the participants' interests and needs. The participants in the course saw the materials and methods as being relevant to their needs. The approaches used in the course engaged them and seemed to make sense for their situations.

For example, in the first workshop, a progressive case study of a manager of a water board was developed and used throughout the ten days. It seemed real to people. It worked as a case, and it built credibility. It really came home to participants when the next chapter of the case introduced the second workshop--what happened to this imaginary manager when he returned home after he attended a management workshop! His trials and tribulations, of course, mirrored those of the participants in the room and generated extensive and real discussion about what it means to change the way you manage.

The course relied to some extent on theories and frameworks provided in short lectures, but its most significant impact came from specific job-related exercises. A typical example of this approach is from the second workshop, when mission statements and performance standards were introduced. The concept of unit mission statements and performance standards was presented in a short lecturette. Examples from SANEPAR in Brazil were provided in handouts and discussed. Individual work units developed their own mission statement which were discussed and commented on by others. Then work unit groups were asked to develop 12 to 15 performance indicators for their own organizations. Reports out in the large group provided opportunity for a group critique on whether indicators to measure cost effectiveness, internal unit efficiency, and service to consumers had been developed.

After this discussion, several steps were taken to support "back-home" use of these tools. A committee was formed to finalize unit implementation plans and to agree on which standards will be used to gauge board-wide performance. Participants were asked to work on the issue of "how do you get your staff involved in helping to review, modify, discuss, or add to the mission statement and performance standards in such a way that they will become committed to achieving them?" Finally, participants developed individual implementation plans for using what they had learned.

This combination of theory and "real" application through small group and individual exercises was characteristic of the approach used throughout the course.

- It is critical that there be a mechanism for follow-up and that it be used. One of the major advantages of a management development program that has three sessions interrupted by six months of work-life "application" is that it provides an opportunity to try out new ideas, to discuss successes and failures, and to plan, either alone or with others, what needs to be done next.

This advantage is realized only if specific steps are taken to create and reinforce mechanisms for follow-up. We found that one follow-up mechanism is not really enough and that experimentation with multiple follow-up mechanisms improved the quality of the "application" of the skills and knowledge learned during the course. These included consultation with the resident technical assistance team, the "skill improvement groups," the materials sent by the WASH team as follow-up and pre-session work for each course, and individual work plans done during the course of each session.

- In order to have a really successful training program, participants need genuinely to want to change and be unhappy about the status quo. Part of the reason for the success of this program was a general consensus that things needed to change.

While this is not unusual at middle management levels in many organizations, it is important to work with upper level management to gain their support and participation. Coaching top management at the same time that the management training is going on is critically important. During the time that this training program was going on, there was significant and ongoing coaching of the Board's top management by the resident technical assistance team. This was augmented by the WASH consultants during their short-term visits (including the facilitation of a "top management team" off-site retreat prior to the final workshop).

In many instances, it is also important that top management be working on their own skill development, in some cases drawing from the course itself. Time invested in this activity is well spent.

- It is important to match the management development process with a larger change process in the organization. Probably the single most important factor in the success of this training program was the fact that it was coupled with a much wider strategy for organizational change. This broad-based change is described earlier in this report and provided the impetus for many participants to reconsider their roles and develop new skills.

For example, the project brought reorganization and new functions and divisions. The course helped the more junior staff who found themselves in higher positions as a result of reorganization to develop the necessary management skills quickly. The course brought focus to new decision-making processes and assisted many who were used to thinking only as "engineers" to also think of themselves as managers.

The USAID project had as one of its objectives the institutionalization of performance indicators. The course increased the potential that this would actually happen by providing an opportunity to learn and a place for discussion and experimentation. The resident technical assistance team was then able to follow up and reinforce the concept.

For many managers, being more skillful in managing the broader organizational change was the real incentive for participation in the course.

4.2 Conclusion

As was described in the early sections of this report, the management development program was conceived of as an important supporting element of the overall change strategy charted by the National Water Supply and Drainage Board. It is concluded that the management training program significantly contributed to helping this change come about.

This project provides a good model for management training, and others interested in carrying out similar efforts could benefit by reviewing this training project design and the lessons learned. Experience has shown that it really is possible to bring about improvement in organizational performance through sustained organization development activities.

It also shows that this comes about when there is an overall recognition of the need for change on the part of the participants. The course played a number of roles for these men and women in addition to skill development. The periodic sessions provided a showcase for their strongly increasing sense of team success. Talking about the "team" and management successes tended to be reinforcing, and paying attention to success bred more success.

By focusing the training program on the management skills necessary to decentralize and reorganize the Board, and by helping develop top-level commitment toward sustained organizational improvement, the management training program has been an integral and successful part of the USAID institutional development project.