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**DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL WATER SUPPLY
AND SANITATION PLANS IN AFRICA**

by

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Introduction

Safe potable water and sanitary disposal of human wastes for all were one of the primary goals of the United Nations Water Conference at Mar del Plata, Argentina in 1977. The action plan developed at this conference called for the establishment of an International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade over the period 1981 to 1990 to vigorously address the water and sanitation needs of over two billion people on Earth. A key tool in promoting the Decade was to be the establishment of national water and sanitation coverage targets and the preparation of country-level Decade plans.

In early 1981, at the start of the Decade, only nine countries had reported the development of Decade plans for their water and sanitation sector. By 1983, this number had grown to 59 country plans with another 31 under preparation. Although the pace of plan preparation was slower in Africa than in other regions, by the end of 1983 WHO reported that 18 countries had completed Decade plans, with another 13 plans in progress in the Africa Region.

This paper describes the role of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), through its technical assistance arm, the Water and Sanitation for Health (WASH) Project, in helping countries in Africa to develop Decade-related plans. USAID was instrumental in developing the first national Decade plan (Sri Lanka) in 1980. This initial plan was the result of a high intensity effort by a large team of outside consultants and contained little direct input by host country officials. The work described in this paper, however, illustrates a highly collaborative approach, whereby the pace of planning activities and the nature of the planning products are directly determined by the capabilities and efforts of host country officials.

This approach and its outcomes are described for the countries of the Central African Republic, Zaire, and Swaziland.

Planning Process

When the WASH Project was asked in 1981 to assist in formulating a detailed Decade water and sanitation plan for the Central African Republic, WASH staff saw an opportunity to improve upon the classical master plan pattern in which outside consultants arrive in-country, quickly prepare a document, and then leave. Through its initial advisory experiences in various USAID-assisted countries, WASH staff saw planning as a process, rather than an event resulting in a document. Decade planning, therefore, should occur over the entire ten-year period and should result in a progressive strengthening of the planning capabilities of host government agencies and their representatives. Numerous examples existed of weak, ineffective national planning agencies

unable to control, or even influence, water and sanitation activities promoted by donor countries. As a result, national water and sanitation development too often was influenced by donor interests rather than national goals.

Because of the problems that arose from top-down planning, WASH saw the goals of Decade planning to be more than the production of a document. In fact, experience showed that the preparation of such a document by outside experts in a country with weak development institutions usually resulted in an inappropriate report, largely ignored by host country officials. The real purpose of Decade planning, therefore, had to be closely associated with local capabilities and local involvement (or "ownership") in the planning process. The objectives of an institutional strengthening approach rather than a document-oriented approach were several:

- * to establish a sense of local ownership and responsibility for national planning and implementation
- * to increase host government control over the development of its water and sanitation sector
- * to attract donor resources to the water and sanitation sector
- * to establish a sustainable national planning process

WASH adopted the following principles in its approach to Decade-related planning:

- * Decade planning is a process of institutional strengthening rather than the production of one or more documents.
- * The process involves assisting host country nationals to understand their water and sanitation needs, to decide what can be done about them, and to take the necessary steps to achieve these ends.
- * The process, from the WASH standpoint, is non-directive and only advisory in nature.
- * Host country personnel make all major decisions and carry out all planning activities.
- * The pace and resulting timetable of the plan development process is dependent upon the interest and efforts of host country personnel.

- * The long-term process of institutional strengthening is more important than the immediate production of technically-sophisticated plans and reports.

In applying these principles, WASH consultants were instructed to be advisors to the host governments and not primary authors of planning documents. They were to support and encourage the development of planning activities among host-country personnel but not to carry out the work themselves. Other general guidelines for consultants:

- * Draw from experience, especially what has happened in the host country.
- * Provide background information on important planning issues and concepts.
- * Suggest approaches and, where necessary, alternatives but do not give the (consultant's) correct solution.
- * Find ways to support host government decisions.
- * Identify methods of strengthening the planning process.

In applying the above principles to Decade planning assignments in Africa, WASH consultants generally followed a similar pattern of planning-related events in all three countries. This pattern, with some variation between countries, generally was as follows:

1. Establish an interministerial national action committee.
2. Formulate national policies and strategies for water and sanitation development.
3. Hold a national seminar on the policies and strategies to inform all parties of official objectives.
4. Prepare a short-term action plan at the conclusion of the national seminar.
5. Establish a planning unit for national water and sanitation development.
6. Carry out longer-term planning activities (data collection, donor coordination, project proposals, sector plans, etc.).

Depending on the state of planning capabilities in a given country, the above sequence of activities has taken from one to four years after the initial WASH visit. Each country has decided its own pace and the rate at which planning activities are to be undertaken. The pace of events, however, is not considered to be as important as the actual institutional development of host country planning capabilities.

Three countries have requested WASH assistance in Decade planning activities. These countries and the dates of initial WASH assistance are the Central African Republic (1982), Zaire (1984), and Swaziland (1985). The following sections summarize the Decade planning process and the corresponding WASH involvement in each country.

Central African Republic

At the start of the International Water Decade in 1980, the Central African Republic was beset by serious water supply and sanitation problems. Only four towns in the entire country had piped water systems, while none had sewerage systems, and improvements in the rural areas were limited to a few wells and springs. In general, conditions were deteriorating for lack of resources and the Government of the Central African Republic (GOCAR) had no effective water and sanitation programs to build upon.

UNDP and other UN-affiliated agencies worked for almost two years to convince the GOCAR to establish an interministerial National Action Committee (NAC) to coordinate water and sanitation activities in the country. By mid-1982, these efforts began to show some success. In July, the GOCAR drew up a draft decree for the establishment of an NAC and requested WASH Project assistance in formulating a detailed Decade water supply and sanitation plan similar to one that USAID had prepared for Sri Lanka in 1980.

USAID and WASH responded to the GOCAR request by sending a consultant to assess the situation and define the nature and extent of subsequent assistance needed to develop a Decade plan. The consultant visited the CAR in August 1982 and concluded that GOCAR planning capabilities were limited by inadequate human, technical, and financial resources and a lack of coordination among institutions having water and sanitation responsibilities. Rather than outline the donor resources needed to prepare a Decade Plan, he recommended the following five-step process designed to strengthen GOCAR planning capabilities and progressively mobilize the water and sanitation sector in the CAR:

1. Establishment of a National Action Committee.
2. Preparation of a water and sanitation strategy document.
3. Official GOCAR adoption of the strategy documents.
4. Water supply and sanitation seminar.

5. Implementation of initial project development activities.

The GOCAR accepted these recommendations and, with expectations of subsequent assistance from USAID, began to implement them. In September 1982, the NAC was formally established by presidential decree. Four months later (January 1983), a Technical Subcommittee was appointed to work with a WASH Team on the preparation of draft policies and strategies for the water and sanitation sector. The policy and strategy document was completed in February and formally approved by the Council of Ministers in April. In May, the NAC held a national seminar on water and sanitation strategies for technical and administrative officials from different parts of the country. The purpose of this seminar was to inform all relevant GOCAR officials and representatives of donor organizations of the new policies and to solicit their participation and support in future planning and implementation activities. At the conclusion of the seminar, the Technical Subcommittee prepared a short-term action plan to guide subsequent activities and set three-year coverage targets for the period 1982-1985.

To assist the NAC in establishing the necessary planning organization, a WASH consultant spent November 1983 in the CAR the Technical Subcommittee helping to plan a secretariat and a permanent Planning Bureau. This bureau was authorized by the GOCAR in January 1984 and staff were appointed in September 1984. Meanwhile, UNDP provided funds for the construction of offices; a new State Secretariat for Hydraulics was created to be responsible for water supplies, and the NAC began to hold coordination meetings with WHO, the World Bank, and other donors. WASH consultants returned in September 1984 to review progress and determine further needs.

In January 1985, the Planning Bureau of the NAC began to collect field data in anticipation of an international donors' meeting. A WASH consultant spent the summer of 1985 working with the Planning Bureau and with the State Secretariat for Hydraulics preparing project proposals for donor support and in outlining planning activities for the remainder of the Water Decade. These proposals were presented at the donors' meeting held in Geneva in November 1985. A year later, in October 1986, UNDP and the planning bureau began formulating the terms of reference for a detailed rural water and sanitation master plan. This plan will be developed over an 18-month period beginning in mid-1988

Zaire

National planning is relatively new in Zaire. The first attempt at an overall national economic plan was the Mobuto Plan, which covered the period January 1981 to September 1983. This attempt was followed by another intermediate economic plan for the period October 1983 to December 1985. In 1985, the Government of Zaire (GOZ) began work on its first Five-Year Development Plan for the period 1986-1990.

National planning for water supply and sanitation is also very new in Zaire. Until recently, little was done to coordinate the GOZ organizations working in the sector. Urban water supply is under the jurisdiction of REGIDESO, an autonomous public enterprise whose origins date back to 1939. In 1984, REGIDESO began preparing a national urban water supply plan as input to the impending Five-Year Development Plan of 1986 to 1990.

Rural water supply, on the other hand, is the responsibility of the National Rural Water Service (Service National d'Hydraulique Rurale, or SNHR), which began operating in 1978 in a limited number of rural areas with material support from UNICEF. Between independence in 1960 and 1978, rural water activities were almost non-existent, and only some missions and non-governmental organizations (NGO's) were able to maintain their efforts. SNHR was formally reconstituted as a national service in September 1983 under the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and given responsibility for the provision of potable water in rural areas. One of the first activities of the new SNHR was the preparation of a list of projects for a five-year program expansion over the period 1983 to 1988.

Sanitation responsibilities are divided between the Department of Public Health and the Department of the Environment, Conservation of Nature, and Tourism. The National Sanitation Program (Programme National d'Assainissement, or PNA) was created in 1981 to be responsible for planning, coordination, execution, and evaluation of sanitation activities affecting public health. In practice, the PNA has concentrated on urban centers and has had little impact on rural areas, although in 1985 it did prepare a national program of activities. The Department of Public Health has limited responsibilities for rural sanitation. In 1982, a Division of Primary Health Care (Direction des Soins de Santé Primaires, or DSSP) was established within the Department of Public Health, with authority to integrate water and sanitation activities within rural health zones. At present, the DSSP is most active in those rural health zones where it can work closely with the USAID-financed SANRU primary health care project.

In February 1981, the GOZ created an interministerial National Action Committee (Comité National d'Action de l'Eau et de l'Assainissement, or CNAEA) to be responsible for all planning, coordination, and execution of development and rehabilitation programs in the overall water and sanitation sector. The CNAEA immediately set a target of 35 percent rural and 70 percent urban coverage, respectively, for potable water supply by the end of the Water Decade in 1990.

Between 1981 and 1984, the CNAEA was involved in a number of planning-related activities, including the organization of an international donors' conference in Kinshasa in February 1983. A background report, prepared by WHO for this meeting, was the first attempt in Zaire to compile overall data on existing resources and projected needs.

In early 1984, the CNAEA requested assistance from USAID in preparing a national rural water supply plan. A WASH Project team visited Zaire in September 1984 and recommended a process of institutional development and planning-related activities leading to the eventual preparation of a national plan.

The process recommended by WASH consisted of five major steps, as follows:

1. Formulation of rural water policies and strategies.
2. Presentation of policies and strategies at a national seminar.
3. Establishment of a permanent planning unit.
4. Preparation of a national rural water plan.
5. Preparation of an overall national water supply plan.

In October 1984, the CNAEA accepted the WASH recommendations, but broadened the area of concern to include rural sanitation as well as rural water supply. Step 1 of the foregoing process was begun in January 1985 when a two-person WASH team assisted a technical subcommittee of the CNAEA in preparing a draft of national policies and strategies in the rural water and sanitation subsector. Step 2 occurred when these policies and strategies were formally reviewed by all branches of the GOZ at a national seminar held in Kinshasa in May 1985. A WASH consultant assisted with the design and organization of the seminar. The revised policies and strategies developed in the seminar were officially approved by the CNAEA in October 1985.

Step 4 of the process was initiated in July 1985 when the GOZ requested USAID/WASH assistance in preparing the rural water and sanitation plan. (Step 3, the establishment of a permanent planning unit, has not yet been implemented, although the GOZ has decided to establish such a unit in SNHR. The planning activities undertaken to date on the rural water and sanitation plan have been under the general direction of the CNAEA.) To develop the rural water supply and sanitation plan, the CNAEA, in mid-1985, set up a subcommittee of senior experts from the various GOZ departments concerned with rural water and sanitation. This subcommittee was assisted in its work by representatives of WHO, UNICEF, and the SANRU project.

With financial assistance from USAID, the CNAEA subcommittee carried out a series of field investigations in all eight rural regions of Zaire from October to December 1985 in order to obtain basic information for the rural plan. A WASH team then visited Zaire in January 1986 and again in April 1986 to assist the CNAEA in defining the elements of the plan and in reviewing preliminary plan drafts.

By June 1986, the committee had completed the plan for the rural sector. This document was promptly reviewed and approved by the National Action Committee (CNAEA) and then combined with an already-existing urban water and sanitation plan to form a national water and sanitation plan for both rural and urban areas. By the end of 1986, the national water and sanitation plan was formally incorporated into the Five-Year Development Plan for 1986-1990. These planning efforts, culminating in the incorporation of the water and

sanitation plan into the Five-Year Development Plan, marked the establishment of the first official national plan ever developed in Zaire for the water and sanitation sector.

Swaziland

Swaziland has shown interest in national water and sanitation planning since March 1977 when it participated in the United Nations Water Conference at Mar del Plata. In March 1979, following a WHO/SIDA-sponsored mission, it was proposed that a National Action Group (NAG) be established and administered by the Rural Water Supply Board (RWSB). This proposal was requested in a Cabinet paper in July 1979 and approved later that year.

During its first few years, the NAG presided over a number of studies, including the 1980 Decade Country Report, a survey of manpower needs and a plan for manpower development, and several technical and health-related investigations. Between late 1981 and mid-1984, however, a series of ecological, political, and administrative events caused a decline in Decade-related activities of the NAG. Nevertheless, the NAG was able to initiate some sector planning activities, including an analysis of projected costs for water and sanitation targets for both rural and urban areas of Swaziland through the year 2001, a draft plan for the water and sanitation sector, and a review of the National Plan for Zambia by various Swaziland officials.

In August 1984, a working subgroup was established to be responsible to the NAG and to assist the Senior Engineer of RWSB, who serves as the Secretary of the NAG, in gathering and analyzing background data and in drafting a sectoral policy and a national action plan. In November 1984, the Government of Swaziland requested assistance from the WASH Project to assist in developing a sector plan.

Although the NAG had not met for some time, by August 1985 government officials had prepared a draft outline for a revised Decade Plan. In addition, partial sections of the Fourth National Development Plan 1983/84 - 1987/88, were available from the appropriate ministries along with other planning documents.

A two-person WASH team visited Swaziland in September 1985 and worked with the Technical Subgroup on the design of a program of national water supply and sanitation planning. The consultants recommended the following steps as input to the development of a Decade plan:

1. Formulation of national policies and strategies for water supply and sanitation development.
2. Presentation of policies and strategies at a national seminar.
3. Preparation of a short-term action plan.

4. Preparation of the water and sanitation component of the Fifth Five-Year National Development Plan, 1988/89 - 1992/93.

These recommendations were accepted by the GOS. The Technical Subgroup then began to collect background information on existing policies, strategies, and programs in the water and sanitation sector.

In February 1986, a WASH team was sent to Swaziland to assist the Technical Subgroup with the preparation of a national policy and strategy document. Rather than submit the document directly to the Cabinet for approval, the NAG decided to first review and discuss the proposed policies and strategies at the national seminar. A WASH consultant returned to Swaziland to assist the Technical Subgroup with the design and operation of the seminar, which was held in June 1986. Over sixty participants and observers from government, the private sector, NGO's, and the donor community attended the seminar.

Following completion of the national seminar, another WASH consultant worked with the Technical Subgroup during July 1986 on the preparation of a Two-Year Action Plan for the period for 1987/88 - 1988/89. This document contained proposed water supply and sanitation activities for the urban, peri-urban, and rural subsectors. It also recommended that a five-year sectoral development plan be prepared during the two-year period. The Action Plan was reviewed extensively by government and revised several times by the Technical Subgroup over the next four months. One major revision to the plan was that the Technical Subgroup take responsibility for the preparation of rolling three-year capital development plans for the sector. In April 1987, a final version of the Two-Year Action Plan, along with the policies and strategies document, was sent to the NAG for official approval.

At present, the Technical Subgroup continues to meet on a regular basis, as it has since July 1986. It intends to begin the development of a Four Year Master Plan in the near future with assistance from USAID, the World Bank, and UNDP. The overall experience of the NAG and the Technical Subgroup in Decade planning activities already has provided several favorable results, including greater coordination between GOS agencies, increased donor funding of water and sanitation programs, and growing interest among GOS officials in copying the interministerial Decade planning mode in other development sectors.

Conclusions

The Decade planning approach adopted by the WASH Project puts primary emphasis upon involvement and decision-making by host country officials in all planning-related activities.

Based on experience in the Central African Republic, Zaire, and Swaziland, this approach has been enthusiastically accepted by national officials responsible for water and sanitation development. The overall time necessary to develop specific planning documents takes longer with this approach than the conventional method of producing plans with outside consultants, but local

institutions are stronger, a sense of ownership of the plans is imparted, and the long-term sustainability of the planning process is enhanced as a result of this process. Other factors which sometimes arise from the above approach are increased donor involvement in the water and sanitation sector (due to better organization of the sector and more efficient management by the host government) and restructuring of the water and sanitation sector (in terms of the creation of new organizations for water and/or sanitation development).

The most important outcome of this approach, however, is that the host government gains greater control of water and sanitation development in its own country. This is not to say that external donor involvement is no longer needed. Indeed, the establishment of effective Decade planning processes should provide more opportunities for useful donor cooperation, but in areas and for reasons determined by the host government. Thus, strengthening national planning capabilities in host governments provides them with corresponding power and responsibility over the health and welfare of their citizens.

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