

Community Management Tool Box

Ideas to improve community participation,
A water and sanitation project experience in rural Malawi
Inter Aide Chiseka WASH¹ project in Lilongwe District, Central Region

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1 Introduction

1.1 Context

The field experiences described below were carried out by the Inter Aide Chiseka WASH project in Lilongwe District, Central Region, Malawi. IA started projects in Malawi in 1992 in Lilongwe District and targets poor rural communities. The population is mostly from the Chewa tribe and speaks Chichewa.

Water availability and quantity are rarely a problem in the area, but traditional water sources are unprotected and very shallow. The water quality is therefore very bad. So the objective of the well construction activity is mostly to improve the drinking water quality. Sanitation is relatively poor as well: traditional family latrines are commonly found but at an average coverage of only 50%. Hygiene status at household level is very low with, for example very low rates of proper hand washing and drinking water storage. Consequently, waterborne diseases are rampant with regular acute watering diarrhoea including cholera. So on one hand, the project objective is to reduce waterborne diseases through direct and small scale implementation of activities targeting access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene behavior change.

On the other hand, the project aims at guaranteeing the durability of the effect of the action. In the Malawian context, the project chose to rely on the communities themselves, especially for well maintenance. Important community participation is a key to achieve durability. Yet communities are close to the extreme poverty level and have a low educational level.

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¹ WASH : Water, Sanitation And Hygiene



The population consists mostly of subsistent farmers. The population density is high – more than 200 inhabitant / Km², living in pretty compact villages. The tools presented here were experienced while implementing the following activities:

Hardware:

- constructions of 25 hand-dug shallow wells per year,
- 1,000 san-slab casting per year and an introduction to eco-sanitation,

Software:

- Hygiene behaviour change in hygiene by adapting the PHAST² methodology in 35 communities per year
- Introduction of the CLTS³.

1.2 Purpose of this paper

Failure to implement development activities is common and often related to social problems. Without a primary focus on the “*people*”⁴, technical assistance alone seldom has a durable impact. Moreover, it can even be harmful as it might make people dependent on it.

The success of a development project requires the people to participate in and appropriate the project activities and outcomes. If the project is well designed and still, the people do not participate, it might mean that they don’t want or don’t need it; more often, it means they have other priorities (this has to be taken into account by the project team, in the design and planning; people living at or below the poverty level necessarily have to prioritize their subsistence!). For Inter Aide’s project, participation is a *sine qua non* condition, as it translates the communities’ true motivation. It also creates ownership, preserves self-esteem and dignity, and avoids dependency. All this leads to stronger impact and sustainability.

Thus, we believe that the success of a development project can be obtained through the highest people’s participation: they participate because they are involved, as their own objective coincides with the project objective, and because they want to achieve this objective.

² PHAST: Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation. A participatory approach to help communities to improve their environmental health through a project cycle.

³ CLTS: Community Led Total Sanitation. An approach based on shame and discussed, targeting the eradication of all kind of open defecation at community level, without any kind of subsidies.

⁴ People: in this paper, the word “people” stands for the direct beneficiaries of the project. They are the community people.



2 The project team dynamic

2.1 Participatory approach

The participatory approach aims at mutual learning. It obviously has to be used extensively. It might appear time consuming. Yet this time taken to raise communities' awareness and obtain their participation will guarantee the impact and durability of the action. Thus, it should be considered as a necessary investment, and a key toward success. The participatory approach is can be used at all level, and the **manager should use it** with his team.

2.2 Overcoming inertia

Most development workers are desperately trying to do a good job. But as behavior change is challenging and takes time, they daily face huge difficulties. However, they are the ones doing the work on the field. Consequently they should be the first ones to be intrinsically motivated. So, although it is time consuming, team management and coaching is central.

2.3 Constant learning process

Whatever the existing know-how, improvements are always possible. Some old staff may be reluctant to change but, most of the time, it can be stimulating for the team to learn, explore and implement new things. A spirit to set-up!

Project visits

Even project from other sectors can be visited. It helps to open minds. Because motivating the team at all levels is important, a maximum of field staff such as facilitators or mason should be involved (fill up the pick-up!).

Over 3 years, the Chiseka project team visited a pre & post maternal health project (Mai Mwana, women group), an agriculture project (cooperatives), an integrated nutrition project (COOPI), a hygiene school project (Wash club), a community health project (malaria and nutrition). Only one WASH project was visited.

Other means

- It can be easier to show videos, or to organize debates on cross-cutting issues like HIV-Aids or gender.
- Books, documents are easily found on internet. Open the project library!
- Trainings with external master trainers instigate strong dynamism. Firstly, it brings new skills, gratification and increased self-confidence. Secondly, facilitators themselves, master trainers share their whole facilitation skills with the team.



Part of the team and the master trainer Muthi Nlema (holding papers), during the forum theatre training.

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2.4 The “Big man” factor

For sure, development projects are affecting people behavior and creating dependency. The visit of the project manager is even more disturbing the community, especially if he is white. Indeed, he is seen as a powerful, important and rich man. In Malawi, people dramatically change their behavior when “important” people are visiting their place. Basically, they expect some kind of distributions. A woman said: *“Today I am happy. The boss came to our village. Now I know that I will receive something. I don’t need to do anything. I just need to wait”...*

The team manager should always think twice before visiting a community. Be sure there is a need for you to be there. Keep low profile and go there mainly to observe field realities and for providing support to your team, not to do their job. Make it clear for everybody.

3 Taking advantage of constructions

3.1 Construction and behavior change

Facilitators can be involved in construction work (e.g. casting slab). Similarly, technician and builders can be involved in facilitation: they love it! However, a close collaboration between facilitators and builders is mandatory, especially when working simultaneously in the same community. Ongoing constructions should be seen as opportunities to empower the community through mobilization. Indeed, constructions are actually only a “small” part (even though it’s the most costly, and unaffordable by the communities) of the project objective. Without community empowerment, constructions alone will not allow to achieve the objectives. This is why construction time constrains shouldn’t set the pace of the community’s implication. On the opposite, constructions should follow the community pace. The facilitation work should be central: the technical aspects should follow the social level.

On the Chiseka project, construction timings are disconnected from the facilitation timing (PHAST adaptation).

3.1.1 Technical team and hygiene

On the project, the whole technical team participated in the training adapted from the PHAST methodology. The technical manager received a formal PHAST training. Indeed, the technical team spends a long period of time with the communities. Even if they have the status of contractor, they are perceived as project representatives. So they should have an exemplary hygiene behavior.



3.1.2 Pump installation and hygiene

Communities are very motivated to get a well with a hand-pump, as they know they cannot afford it alone. This motivation can be used as a mean to insist on hygiene messages. The Chiseka project made an interesting experience: once the wells were built, the pump was installed only when hygiene standards were satisfactory. Indeed, “*why to install a pump if you lack of hygiene at home?*” Short term results in terms of hygiene are impressive. On a longer-term the impact on hygiene behavior remained significant (according to an assessment done 6 months later).

The lessons learned are:

- *First*, when people want, they can do a lot.
- *Second*, it seems that this approach really helps the people to understand the connections between safe drinking water and good hygiene.

3.1.3 Training on pump maintenance

Communities are enthusiastic during their well construction period. They are also stimulated by all the project team visits. However after a while this dynamic drops down, and committees fall back into inactivity. In addition, as there may be no pump breakdown before months, there is no rush to train the people to its maintenance.

To increase its impact, the VLOM⁵ training is done 6 months after the pump installation. It reactivates the committee. As fast-wearing parts are getting old already, people can visually check and easily understand how parts get worn out. They are impressed by that. So they are eager to learn about their pump maintenance. With such a mindset, it is easier to make then debate about the importance of having a spare-part kit and to properly implement preventive maintenance to avoid major breakdowns.

3.2 Financial participation

In Malawi, communities always say they don't have any money, and cannot afford anything — which might not always be true. This reaction is especially strong when it comes to financial participation within the framework of international NGO or governmental projects. Yet, participation strengthens independence, durability and contributes to ownership.

⁵ VLOM : Village Level Operational Maintenance, a first level technical training to the pump maintenance.



The higher the quality of the facilitation is, the higher the participation can be. In the Chiseka project, in-kind participation from the community is mandatory: it consists in unskilled labor and locally found materials. However, in-kind participation is often not enough to instigate ownership, and financial participation is perceived as a major effort for people having cash access difficulties. So money should often be requested. This is true both for latrines slabs and wells.

Financial participation for well construction

It is understood that communities cannot afford and don't have the skills for a well or a borehole construction. Nonetheless, they will be in charge of the pump maintenance, and this is a main issue. How are they going to buy pump spare-parts if they cannot even pay for the well construction, which is an enthusiastic work?

The less they participate through labor and material, the more they should participate financially. The scope is 20% of the total cost should be community participation. On the Chiseka project:

- No money is collected for a complete hand-dug well construction (the in-kind participation is enough).
- 5,000⁶ Kw are requested for an usual well rehabilitation (consisting in over-digging, full surface-work construction and new pump installation)
- The highest amount collected was 15,000 Kw for a simple surface rehabilitation work but requesting a new pump valued at 50,000 Kw (in-kind participation was very low). They complained, but paid!

Latrines slabs

The CLTS focuses on sanitation. Its approach is particularly interesting, as:

- The main sanitary issue is open defecation (both defecation in the fields and latrines without cover), not the quality of the latrines,
- Latrine with concrete slab might not always be the most appropriate standard⁷ for the poorest countries: too expensive, the huge needs will never be covered,
- Subsidizing family latrines is counter-productive as it creates dependence, so it reduces coverage. It is a trend very difficult to reverse.
- Much more effective: to eradicate open defecation by having people building their latrines on their own — it might be the most reliable way to reach the MDGs.

However, casting slabs is a main activity on Chiseka project. Yet, this project tried to address this issue by focusing more on beneficiaries' needs. It tried to combine the CLTS

⁶ 1US\$ = 150 MKw, so 5000 Mkw = 33 US\$

⁷ International donors often prefer to provide funds for concrete and hardware and they are reluctant to fund salaries. Yet the main costs of participatory approaches consist in salaries... So a project that is casting slabs might get funds more easily. Paradoxically, casting slabs is both more costly (as facilitation costs are still needed) and... preferred by donors!... Ironically, we could say that it's good for the development business...

If casting slabs is done by private local entrepreneurs, then of course, we could say it's good for... business development...



approach and its slab-casting objectives, by steadily increasing the financial participation per slab. It was also combined with the introduction of the compost latrine. So in addition of having to prepare the pit prior to casting, people eventually had to pay about 25% of the material cost. This requested huge mobilization efforts. Finally, the slab casting activity slowed down but the slab use rate increased.

3.3 Committees

3.3.1 Guideline versus field realities

In the area, most formal committees are composed of 10 members: Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, their 3 assistants, and 4 members. Their mission is to promote hygiene and take care of the pump. The secretary keep records, the treasurer keeps money, etc... Yet, unless the members are really trained and truly motivated, this doesn't always work, as:

- The secretary, if literate, has neither book nor pen. If he has it, he doesn't know what to write. In any case, he hardly writes!
- The treasurer has no money. For poor people, money isn't kept: it is spent.
- Members often didn't choose to be in the committee in the first place, but were assigned to it by the Chief. The chief just created a committee upon external request. It is perceived as a necessity to benefit from development projects. Consequently most of the time, only the chairman has some motivation and sense of responsibility.
- Overall, such a complicated organization doesn't make much sense for small infrastructure and activity. People know it.



In practice, communities have their own way of organizing themselves, mostly according to their customs and traditions. Here are some examples:

- As a culture relying on oral tradition, nothing is written.
- The traditional chief is the one to decide. When he is not available, his representative speaks for him and will report to him.
- The traditional chief selects people to whom he delegates specific tasks, i.e. road rehabilitation...
- People can get involved on their own according to their motivation and capacities, i.e. for pump maintenance.
- Money is collected when needed, and the one who can pay pays. Money is never kept more than few days.



However, on the long term, it is good to reinforce the community organizational capacities. This project has seen some impact one year after implementing regular committee follow-up: according to this, it seems that the committee's activities are carried out with low intensity but on the long term.

So the Chiseka project makes a point of working with committees (namely Village Health Committees or VHC), both for hygiene and water point O&M⁸. They are set up by the Health Supervision Assistant (HSA) from the Ministry of Health. They are usually found totally dormant. The project activities re-activate them, and sometimes they need partial re-election. In practice, only some of their members are dynamic (usually around three, the most motivated being usually the chairman).

However, the objective of a VHC is specific: it should be related to health, including hygiene promotion. Members should be skilled and remain active on the long term. They should not be asked to manage intensive extra work, i.e. a well construction. So, specific committees can be created according to fit the specific needs of the project.

3.3.2 Well construction committee

The *well construction committee* is created for the construction only. It disappears when the work is completed. It is composed of the following members:

The chairman supervises the organization, and specifically organizes the community's participation. Indeed the project usually requests to have work shifts, per chief and proportional to each chief's population. It guarantees that the well will belong to the whole community. The builder checks it daily.

The store-keeper is in charge of storing the cement at home. The main requirement is to have a waterproof roof and a safe door. Other materials and tools are kept by the VHC treasurer.

Two security men are responsible for the security on the construction site: they make sure the security rules are always respected on the working site⁹. They are selected after the security training (fence, helmet, harness...). One of them should always be found on the site.



⁸ O&M: Operation and maintenance

⁹ A Fiche "Pratique" [Note on security rules](#) as they are implemented by Chiseka Project, was written by Damien Delaplace. It is online on PRATIQUES Website in the Water / Techniques section (EAU / Techniques) <http://www.interaide.org/pratiques/pages/eau/techniques/techniques.htm> . A [video](#) showing the security rules is accessible online for Pratiques members, in the restricted "Forum section".



Cement women: usually three (or one per chief) women are in charge of checking that cement isn't misused (it is expensive and easily sold). They have to be on the construction site for any cement stock movement. Each cement woman has her own stock card. Often illiterate, they sign with finger print.

Cement Women are selected during a general meeting¹⁰. *First*, women are debating about the cement misuse issue. *Second* they are asked to select the ones fitting to the job (honesty, availability...). It is based on the idea that:

- When more eyes are looking, illegal arrangements are more difficult to carry out. It results in better transparency and accountability.
- Women are more reliable than men on such matters, especially considering how important the well infrastructure is for them: they are the one getting the water and washing the clothes (*Who is the well for? What is the cement for? If the cement isn't used for the well then what may happen?*).

This system of cement women is working very well. Even builders are happy about it as they feel safe from any accusation (and temptation? and pressure?). In addition, the way the cement women are elected is very transparent and creates an open debate about the corruption issue. They are elected upon their individual qualities. These qualities fit a specific need. The need for control is well understood. This is a good "civil" experience for the community. It shows them how committees can be set up.

Once the well is built, the *well construction committee* disappears. The well future O&M is under the responsibility of the VHC.

3.3.3 Latrines construction committee.

To mobilize a community as a whole is more difficult when it comes to individual equipment. The *latrines committee* is created after the first day of the CLTS approach¹¹ called the "triggering". This committee is made of *natural leaders*¹² who are officially recognized both by chiefs and VHC members.

Children are involved as well. Indeed, from 8 to 10 years old, as they have no inhibition, they think it's great fun, and they can be mischievously efficient when it comes to defecation and pinpointing people continuing open defecation! Yet they need the adults' protection to perform their duty, and especially the chief's. In practice, they might not dare to be active as a group, but may be active at home.

¹⁰ General meeting: in this paper it means a meeting targeting as many people as possible, including chiefs and committee members. It requests an appointment.

¹¹ CLTS : Community-Led Total Sanitation. Based on shame and disgust, the first day *triggers* the need of latrines. It targets eradication of all open defecation, on a large scale, without any subsidies.

¹² "atural leaders": in the CLTS methodology, natural leaders are the most motivated members of the community. Although they have no special status, they can take the lead of the change.



4 Involving Chiefs

4.1 Traditional chiefs

In rural Malawi, traditional chiefs are extremely important for development projects: without the chief's support, the implementation is poor. Surprisingly, chiefs don't always support development in their communities. The main reasons are:

- Chief conflicts: they are quite common, and usually due to political power struggle (promotion and demotion)
- Personal issues: greed, alcohol addiction, idleness... After all, chiefs are human beings too!

However, the chiefs' involvement is so important that some development organization focus only on them. For example GTZ is working on chief conflict resolution. Other organizations work on chief sensitization to public issues, sense of responsibilities, leadership...

This project has not time and no specialized staff to conduct such a work. So, it gives time for communities to prepare themselves. Over three years, several communities which initially seemed impossible to work with became highly motivated after one year or two years. Communities have their own life, and their own priorities.

4.2 Splitting big villages

According to the country, the words “village” and “town” can have different meanings. In Malawi, “village” means the houses under the authority of one chief. However in this document, the word “village” has a “western” meaning: group of houses geographically close together and surrounded by open fields.



This chief seems reluctant.

Big villages can have thousands of inhabitants. To work with, they have to be divided in smaller groups of about 80 households¹³ each, because:

- For a proper participatory approach, focus groups cannot have more than 25 people. With an average participation of 1 adult per household, focus groups for 80 households require four facilitators, plus one for children, and then it's possible.
- Small villages are easier to work with. The bigger a community, the more difficult it is to mobilize. According to our experience, 80 households is a critical size.

¹³ Household: In Malawi, there are on average 4,5 people per household.



- For rural water supply, the Malawi standard is 50 households per well (about 250 people): this is why the project builds one well for 50 to 100 households.
- The *inter-knowing circle* is the maximum number of people knowing each other well enough to work together. This number is maximum 500 people, so 100 households.

This is why Chiseka project divides villages bigger than 80 to 100 households into smaller groups. This subdivision is done by the people and according to the village traditional organization: as chiefs have 20 households on average, a village of more than 100 households may have more than 5 chiefs. These chiefs may or may not have affinity (there may be a chief conflict) or common goal (one may already have a well on his side of the village) etc. So, people are explained why and how the community has to be split according to their chieftainship specificities. Once this is agreed upon, each portion of the village is considered as 1 “community” (which means one PHAST cycle, 1 well construction etc.). In the Chiseka project, such village portion is called “*Mudzi Onse*”, meaning something like “*chiefs together*”.

4.3 The importance of Chief Level

In Malawi, a “community” usually has several chiefs¹⁴. Each chief should be involved in the project activities. If not, the population under his authority won’t benefit from the activities. So, the participation of each chief is monitored constantly – through attendance checking, in-kind participation, agreement etc. In the process, some chieftainship issues or conflicts reveal themselves in half of the communities. The earlier the better, as problem can be addressed more easily.

Well construction

A well benefits to more than 50 households, so usually to the population of several chiefs. If one chief doesn’t participate to its construction, then his “subjects” won’t benefit from it. So, to know their involvement through attendance checking “*per chief*” (both people and chief themselves) is extremely important. This has to be done mainly during:

- The siting (choosing the location of the future well): the chiefs’ participation is mandatory. Distances and land ownership are of extreme importance. All chiefs have to approve. Everybody should be on site and asked to approve the site (especially women). Once dug, the well cannot be moved!

Failure to implement activities is often related to social issues. Unfortunately in such cases, the community is usually classified as “not motivated”.

¹⁴ See [Traditional Chiefdoms - A field experience of the traditional political powers in the Chewa communities of Central Malawi, from Inter Aide Chiseka WASH project](http://www.interaide.org/pratiques/pages/eau/eau_autres/Fiche_Watsan_Mlwi_Chewa_Traditional_Chiefdoms.PDF). Damien Delaplace, Inter Aide avril 2010- Online 18.06.2010 at http://www.interaide.org/pratiques/pages/eau/eau_autres/Fiche_Watsan_Mlwi_Chewa_Traditional_Chiefdoms.PDF



- The well construction: each chief's population has to participate proportionally to its size.
- As well as during *project planning* (agreement about in-kind contributions such as materials and labor, financial participation, as well as timing), *VLOM* training, etc.

Other facilitation

Same as for the well construction, information collection should always be done *per chief*, like:

- KAP survey: how each chief's population is improving in term of hygiene?
- PHAST: what is each population's level of interest? Are all targeted population involved in the project?
- San-slab casting: how are slabs spread according to each chief's territory?

Results can vary a lot from one chief to the other. In addition, such information means a lot to the chiefs themselves and their population. The motivated populations perceive it as a positive feed-back. The other ones are ashamed and stigmatized. This stimulates the villagers and creates a positive competitive spirit.

4.4 Chief meetings

The project operates in a community only upon request from its leaders. In the Chiseka project, information meetings targeting only the chiefs – called *chief meetings* – are organized to stimulate such requests. On average, one third of the chiefs who participated in such a meeting make a request within one month.

Chief meeting activities

In mainly consists in:

- Informing about the kind of activities and approach the project proposes: hardware, software, criteria's of intervention, in kind and financial participation...
- Informing about how they can benefit from it: they just need to write a letter requesting the intervention of the project.
- Assessing the scope and the need of their communities: they draw a map, indicate population number, existing infrastructures, etc.

Scope of the chief meeting

The targeted population has to be proportional to the scale of the activities:

- Doing a *chief meeting* at village level is too low: it can be effective but not efficient.
- The Traditional Authority level¹⁵ is very large. For this WASH project it is too large. However *chief meetings* at TA level had good result for the maintenance

¹⁵ TA : Traditional Authority, gathering hundreds of villages.



- network project – which works at district level (there are several TAs per District).
- In this project, *chief meeting* at **Group level** is fine (20 to 40 chiefs, or 500 to 1000 people). Indeed at this level, chiefs easily cooperate. There may be 15 to 20 of chiefs coming. Two to three requests will be received. This is also the VDC¹⁶ level. So on the long term, this kind of meeting may help to set up development plans. VDC members can be invited to the meeting.

Concentrating on geographical areas

Chief meetings can be a mean to focus on some geographical areas. Thus, activities will be geographically concentrated. It makes community mobilization and construction works much easier in term of logistic, and it saves a lot of time. This is interesting as activities are often extensively spread out. So overall, targeting geographical areas through chief meetings improves the whole project efficiency and effectiveness.

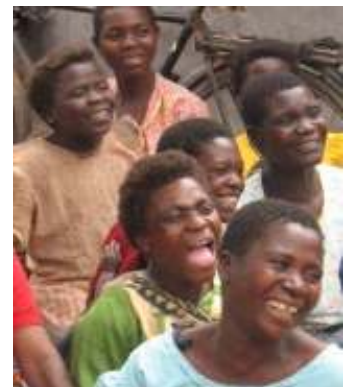
5 Communicating

5.1 Informing

In theory, communities should be involved at each stage of a project so that the project provides adequate answers to the population's needs, and gets good appropriation and participation. The community's involvement should start at the project design stage. This also implies an integrated approach. In practice, for many different reasons, it works differently. For example, during a water and sanitation project implementation, a community's wish will be answered as long as it coincides with the project's objective, and as long as they meet the project standards and accept its rules and procedures.

So the project should even more so inform communities about what is going to happen. This can be done through *introduction meeting*, i.e. explaining the adaptation of the PHAST methodology (before starting it), during the well construction planning meeting (before the construction starts), or more generally at the beginning of any meeting (what the meeting will be about) and at its end (what the next activity will be about). It is mandatory that elders are present at such time, and participate. Indeed, the better they are informed and embrace the future activities, the better they will mobilize their people.

It is also good to inform ahead of time about the end of activities. Indeed, when it comes to issues like hygiene behavior or lack of participation, people tend to lie — of course people will tend to hide their shortcomings to outsiders! This leads to endless and useless discussions. In such case, it is good to remind them that all this will end soon, e.g.: “*there are three more meetings, after that we will not come back*”. This helps the people understand that it doesn't make sense to loose time. Then they want to benefit more from each remaining activities.



¹⁶ Village Development Committees: the lower level of the decentralization.



5.2 Climate setting

Communities welcome facilitators like any external visitors: it is very official. They expect speeches and lessons. To get a proper participation, things should be more relaxed:

- Before the meeting, organize songs and dances: everybody in! “*Boss, can you dance with us?*”
- At any occasion, do funny thing like icebreakers.
- Use humor and joy at anytime.

5.3 Sit in circle

To see and hear one another, people should sit in circle. Everybody should “*feel in*”. It creates a group dynamic. To get the circle, start with everybody singing and dancing, hand in hand... and suddenly have them sitting. Sitting in circle “*under the big tree*” is common in traditional societies. Let them choose the specific place which may exist in the village (the “*bwalo*” in Chichewa, meaning the “*circle*”). Find other good location for each focus group. Beware of the sun which will move. Facilitator(s) should mingle among the people to “*feel in*” as well. They should not look nor act like teachers.



A men group meeting: despite a high attendance, good participation is possible thanks to the circle, under the big tree. Where is the facilitator?

6 Meeting attendance and cancellation

The objective here is to save time and improve the project efficiency through the organization and setting up rules. Indeed, time and money are squandered due to unexpected delays and cancellation. It is often a matter of respect. Respect it is very important in all traditional cultures.

6.1 Setting appointments

It is often necessary to establish appointment for important or general meeting. Time and date should be chosen with the community.



Commonly, women are not consulted by the chiefs when setting up an appointment. Yet, timing should be adapted to their busy days. In addition, they are the most concerned about water and hygiene at home. Special attention should be paid to them, for example by asking specifically to them: “aren’t you cooking at 1 p.m.?”

Even with proper appointments, problems like people being late or not coming at all are common. The *appointment slips* make the appointment clearer and more official: it is impressive! It also helps the facilitators establish their planning. The slip should be signed by several community elders and one facilitator, with witnesses. The facilitator keeps the duplicate. In Malawi, cell phones are very common, so always exchange phone number.

6.2 Checking attendance

A common way to monitor the training activities is to check the attendance. In addition, people know they will be counted! As people may be late or leave early, several counting can be done – like at the beginning and at the end. As said earlier, attendance is checked per chief.

Appointment slip duly signed and with phone number. Be there at 12 AMT.

6.3 Delay and Cancellation

Facilitators may acknowledge the enduring reality of the “*African time*”: AMT, by opposition to GMT. In practice they may arrive late themselves, provided they foreseen it when setting up the appointment: the untold rule is that an appointment is set-up at “9 for 10”. This is to be pragmatic.

Setting limits

A meeting with appointment can be cancelled in case of:

- Low attendance: e.g. for a general meeting, a “normal” attendance is one adult / household. Chiefs and committee members should also be there.
- Excessive delay: one hour late is the maximum in African time.
- Rule of cancellation: it is often necessary to postpone a meeting. For example in Chewa culture, funerals are sudden and very common. Facilitator may encounter problem as well. So the rule is *to always inform, even with only 1 hour of notice, in case of cancellation*. In Malawi this is easy as in each and every village there is a least one cell phone. Here facilitators should be exemplary.



Mandatory people motivation

A participatory approach in meeting is mandatory when it comes to behavior change in hygiene practices and pump maintenance. In terms of *focus group size*, the ideal is to have one facilitator per focus group of 12 to 15 persons – the maximum size being 25 persons. In practice, due to lack of facilitators – and thanks to their know-how - attendance is often more than that.

The ideal is also to have *motivated* people: a proper participatory approach cannot be expected if people feel obliged to be there. So ideally, they should be no pressure.

When attendance is “a bit low”: In such case:

- if the objective is behavior change, meetings are not cancelled. Indeed: the people who came are the most *motivated* and focus groups will have the *ideal size*. The people are praised because they came, and the meeting takes place. Then the impact is very good.
- If people should show their motivation through attendance — for a well construction planning for example — the meeting is cancelled.

6.4 Penalty

Interestingly, even when the attendance is outrageously low, people never want to cancel a meeting: “*please wait a bit more!*”. There are no well or san-slab construction as it’s been done already. There are no allowances nor any kind of material distribution – just a meeting. So why is it so? Because people actually value the meeting! As people may feel they have nothing to win or to loose by coming to the meeting or not, they’ll start taking the issue more seriously if they are asked: “*how much do you pay me to wait more?*”

In case of cancellation, never set up another appointment straightaway: it would convey the message that their neglect (or disrespect) is tolerated. A sort of “penalty” is better. In this project, elders are invited to come to the office and to discuss about this cancellation without notice — “*if you want us to come again*”. They usually come within less than three days. Then they are asked: “*what happened?*”, “*how much are you ready to pay as compensation?*” In Chewa culture, payment is very appropriate so solve all kinds of problem. But before enforcing penalties of any kinds, facilitators have to be good at their job!



6.5 Impact

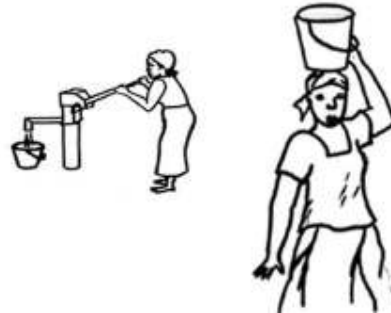
About 30% of the communities were fined – 3 US\$ each – and never did it twice after that! They gave more valued to the facilitators’ work. Less than 5% never came to the office, so these communities were “lost”.



As the number of cancellations dramatically dropped down, it improved the project efficiency a lot: the number of PHAST sessions carried out per month doubled.

7 Gender sensitive approach

Gender inequity is a transversal issue largely acknowledge as a major reason of under-development. It is more especially true in a WASH project: water and hygiene is the responsibility of women. However, men tend to decide. In Malawi, women are maintained in a particularly submissive social position.



7.1 With communities

Within the frame of this project, an effort is made to balance this inequality. It is done through:

- Segregating men and women during PHAST focus groups, so that women get a chance to express their needs;
- Creating women groups (and men groups) during the PHAST follow-ups,
- Having women facilitators to meet women beneficiaries,
- Paying a particular attention to women: make sure they can speak during meetings and take part in decision process: during well location (*stting*), but also when setting-up appointment, schedule and priorities,
- Having cement women for the cement security.

Women feel freer without men around. Interestingly, men as well!

7.2 Within the team

To have a gender sensitive approach, better to have women within the project, especially to meet women on the field. Yet, due to the construction component, WASH projects tend to have few female employees, especially at high position. However, this tendency should be reverse within the facilitation team. Indeed, especially during PHAST activities, women represent two third of the attendance. This is why on this project, two third of the facilitators are women. Effort is also made to give them position with responsibilities.

8 Children

Children are keen to learn, change habits easily, and can put pressure or remind their parents about hygiene. They will keep their knowledge for their whole life.



Specific activities can be developed. On this project, they were inspired by the PHAST methodology and related activities implemented at school. Children activities were implemented simultaneously and deal with the same subject as for their parents. They are based on:

- Games, songs, drama, repetition of messages — use the microphone!
- Practical activities like demonstrations: “*all in line! everybody wash hands!*”
- Competition: “*which group will build the best dish rack?*”

At the end of each session, it is important to have them showing their work to the adults.

It is also possible to involve the children, more especially when it comes to:

- Know the truth about other people: children have no problem telling it
- Find feces in the open defecation areas.
- Sing funny songs full of shameful truth all along a village visit (“people not setting up their san-slab are dirty / are lazy / are selfish etc.”).

