Ghana Journal of Development Studies Volume 4, Number 1, May 2007

THE CONCEPT AND PRACTICE OF COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT OF RURAL WATER AND SANITATION PROGRAMMES.

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ABSTRACT

This paper contributes to the discussion on finding a concise definition, which would encapsulate the concept of community management. It argues that although community management continues to be the most acceptable strategy for ensuring sustainable water supply and sanitation schemes, the concept and its practice lack concise definition. This is because as a new development paradigm, it continues to be defined and redefined by field experiences as practitioners endeavor to develop best practices. The concept of community management can only thus be understood within the context of what pertains in the field. It is therefore suggested that the conceptualization of any community management strategy should encompass issues relating to its practice, especially with regard to factors influencing the performance of water and sanitation committees and sustainability of programmes. These include the development of strong and innovative local leadership, establishment of mechanisms for continuous institutional support, both financial and technical, for communities and integration of the status and functions of water and sanitation committees into existing local governance structures. It also requires the institutionalization of appropriate legal framework and control mechanisms that could empower local governance structures, traditional authorities and entire communities to demand accountability from community management committees and establishment of appropriate incentive regimes that could motivate members of management committees to want to commit themselves to ensuring the sustainability of water supply and sanitation schemes.

KEY DESCRIPTORS: Community Management, Sustainability, Institutionalization, Operationalization, Institutional support and Maintenance funding.

INTRODUCTION

At an international conference held in The Hague, Netherlands in 1992, participants argued that any rigid definition of the concept of community management might be too "constraining and would not reflect the flexibility of this approach" to development (Evans & Appleton, 1993:7). This flexibility, perhaps, derives from the fact that community management is still an evolving concept and as new development rationality, it continues to be defined and redefined by field experiences as practitioners endeavor to develop best practices.

This paper explores the literature on the concept and practice of community management of water supply and sanitation programmes. The purpose is to develop a framework within which the concept of community management can be understood in relation to known practices in the field. It begins with an analysis of the historical evolution of the concept of community management. This analysis is used as a basis for identifying the sets of dimensions, principles and characteristics that constitute its essential components. The study further looks at the practice of community management by local organizations and draws lessons from experiences contained in study reports on community managed water supply and sanitation programmes.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Since the 1990s, the community management approach has become the dominant and standard project management strategy for the development of the water supply and sanitation sector (Kendie, 1994). However, it was at the New Delhi Global Consultative Conference on Safe Water held in 1990 to review the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade that community management was endorsed as one of the guiding principles for rural water and sanitation delivery (Najils & Edwards, 1991). According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1990), this really marked the official birth of the community management paradigm.

The principles adopted at that conference sought to remedy the failures in the operation and maintenance of community participatory schemes of the 1970s and 1980s. Indeed, even before the close of the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade (1970 – 1980), many of the water supply and sanitation systems constructed broke down soon after implementation as a result of poor operation and maintenance management (IRC, 2004). It thus became sufficiently clear that sustainable water and sanitation could not be achieved without involving the users, not only in the provision of the basic inputs but also, in the planning of programmes, in the selection of appropriate technology, systems management and the establishment of local management committees (Oakley, 1991 & IRC, 2004).

The result of these realizations was the conceptual shift within the participatory paradigm to that of the community ownership and management approach. Basically, the concept of community management drew support from the intellectual expositions on the "bottom-up" approach championed mostly by Chambers (1974, 1983). Simply put, the new paradigm emphasized that communities should not just be involved in system inception, but should accept ultimate responsibility for and ownership of the entire lifecycle of the system (IRC, 2004).

Emphasis on community management was strengthened in the Nordic Fresh Water Initiative of 1991. This initiative called for the devolution of responsibility for water and sanitation management to the lowest possible level. Community management was further stressed in the Dublin Statement on Water and Sustainable Development held in 1992. The general consensus reached by the participants at the conference

was that water and sanitation management should be based on a participatory approach, involving users, planners and policy makers at all levels (IRC, 2004).

At the United Nation's Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992, world leaders undertook to implement a comprehensive programme that would provide sustainable water supply and sanitation services to hundreds of millions of the world's population who were deprived at the time. The summit adopted AGENDA 21, which provided a unique strategy for sustainable development in the 21st century. A guiding principle for the achievement of AGENDA 21 was: Community management of services, backed by measures to strengthen local institutions in implementing and sustaining water and sanitation programmes (Evans & Appleton, 1993: 1).

The list of activities provided in the AGENDA 21 document included numerous measures meant to promote an effective mainstreaming of community management into national and international development agenda (IRC, 2004). These activities were as follows:

- Encouragement of water and sanitation development and management based on a participatory approach involving users, planners and policy makers at all levels;
- Application of the principle that decisions are taken at the lowest appropriate level with public consultation and involvement of users in the planning and implementation of water and sanitation projects;
- Support and assistance to communities in managing their own systems on a sustainable basis;
- Encouragement of the local population, especially women, youth, indigenous people and local communities in water and sanitation management;
- Linkages between national plans and community management at local levels; and
- Integration of community management within the context of overall planning.

At the Second World Forum held in The Hague, Netherlands in March 2000, the strategies required to attain the goal of achieving hygiene, sanitation and water for all by 2005 were set out in VISION 21.These strategies focused on mobilizing people's own creativity and energy in developing solutions for improving their health and welfare. This, undoubtedly, is a people-centered approach that builds on community management as its main vehicle.

Later, the World Bank - Water and Sanitation Programme developed the demand-responsive approach, which was heavily geared towards operationalising the community management approach. Essentially, the approach emphasized the need for providing agencies to respond to user demand in the provision of water supply and sanitation facilities (Bajracharya and Deverill, 2001). In other words, the World Bank policy framework for water supply and sanitation delivery required that the concept

of user demand should be employed as a practical tool guiding the design of projects globally.

The concept of demand-responsiveness requires that users of water and sanitation facilities make their own informed choices and commit resources in support of these choices (Katz and Sara, 1997). The idea of making informed choices implies that communities should have a clear understanding of the implications of their choices in terms of investment or recurrent costs, expected participation in planning and implementation and responsibility for operations and maintenance of their water supply and sanitation systems.

By the year 1990 therefore community management had clearly emerged globally as a key water supply and sanitation development and management concept. According to the IRC (2004), its evolutionary process was widely informed at all stages by the neo-liberal considerations for reduced state involvement, the ideas that water is a basic human right and an economic good as well as people first and empowerment approaches. These different perceptions have, to a large extent, provided the variations that exist in the conception of the community management strategy as shown subsequently.

ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT

McCommon, et al (1990) defined community management in terms of its three broad dimensions, namely responsibility, authority and control. According to them, the principle of responsibility confers ownership of the system with all its management requirements on the community. The community thus feels responsible for the maintenance and repairs, regulating usage and financing of water supply and sanitation facilities.

By authority, the community has the legitimate right to make decisions about the system regarding technology choice, service levels, form and composition of local organisation, usage regulations and financing mechanisms. Control implies that the community has the power to determine outcomes and to implement its decisions regarding the system. Community management, in this sense, therefore means that beneficiary communities have the responsibility, authority and control over the construction as well as the operation and maintenance of their water supply and sanitation systems (Laryea, 1994).

Evans and Appleton (1993) offer an incisive exposition of the processes that are likely to make community management successful in this dimension. These are efficient community decision making processes, community responsibility backed by legitimate authority and effective control, community mobilization of resources, community access to external support (public or private) to supplement local management capacity and agency acting as facilitator and supporter and helping to build community self sufficiency.

From a relatively not too different perspective, the IRC (1997, 2004) considers community management in terms of its fundamental principles. The first principle is that community management is a social process in which communities own the process of change. This firmly places the ownership of the process of the development and upkeep of water and sanitation systems in the community itself. In other words, community management is seen as a process that places a large share of the responsibility for construction as well as the operation and maintenance of water and sanitation systems in the hands of the users themselves. This requires that the participating community is well equipped and empowered to assume the role of managing its water and sanitation scheme.

The second is that community management involves long-term partnerships between communities and support agencies. It is a process in which all key stakeholders strengthen the capacity of each other and, thus, enabling their combined resources to be used more effectively to develop dependable and sustainable water and sanitation systems. According to Lammerink and Bolt (2002), the idea that community management is based on partnerships suggests that there are limitations to its successful implementation by target communities alone. This implies that although communities may be able to take on a very substantial share of management responsibilities, the involvement of support organizations may always be required. The principal role of support organizations is to continuously facilitate management by communities through the establishment of suitably supportive legal and policy frameworks, providing skills training regularly, ensuring that the necessary spare-parts are locally obtainable and developing necessary support and audit approaches.

The third is the transformation of the roles of the water and sanitation agency and central government and all support organizations. Community management, in this case, is a process that makes the support agency no longer the provider of technical goods or solutions. Instead, it becomes the facilitator of processes that enhance the capacity of the community to manage its own water and sanitation systems. Communities are, therefore, perceived as active participants, knowledgeable and accountable for their actions.

The fourth principle is that there is no fixed formula for community management. This implies that each community can develop its own management system and relationships depending on local circumstances. This is because community management is an approach that seeks to make the best use of resources available within the community with support from government agencies, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and other communities. Relationships among partners may, therefore, change and evolve as communities become better able to manage their own affairs.

Perhaps, the typology provided by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1993) is a useful summary of the various ideas presented so far on the concept of community management. The UNDP identified community participation as two broad and distinct areas of development. These distinctions, according to them,

are neither clear cut nor mutually exclusive. Instead, they represent two different purposes and approaches to supporting community development initiatives.

The first is participation as a means to an effective implementation of development initiatives. Participation, in this sense, is taken to mean a process whereby local people are "prepared" to cooperate or collaborate with externally introduced development programmes or projects. In this way, people's participation is sponsored by the external project.

The UNDP introduces the term "participatory development" to describe this approach. To them, it is a means to an end because it involves an empowerment process that allows those affected by a project to assume responsibility for taking initiatives, implementing them and maintaining high levels of sustainability. This approach is different from one in which people merely "participate in development" - a strategy which only mobilizes people to collaborate with already-decided-upon plans of action without creating any sustainable base among those affected and leaves no level of control with the people.

The second is a broader view of participation. It encompasses what Oakley and Marsden (1984: 28) refer to as the "inexorable consequence of the process of empowering and liberation" in which participation is an end or a goal in itself. This goal, according to the UNDP, is expressed as building the capacity of people in terms of their acquiring the skills, knowledge and experience they require to take greater responsibility for their development. In fact, the state of achieving power and meaningful participation in the development process is the import of the exercise.

Participation in this sense is an instrument of change and is used to help eliminate the factors of exclusion and provide poor people with the basis for more direct involvement in the development process. The purpose is to achieve some structural change through the creation of groups that are able to diagnose and analyze their own problems, decide upon collective action and carry out such action to deal with the identified problems independent of outside direction. Eade (1997) submits that this concept of community participation is mostly used in poverty reduction programmes since poverty is often explained in terms of institutionalized exclusion and marginalization of vulnerable groups and their lack of access to and control of resources that they need to sustain and improve their lives.

It is argued that a meaningful combination of these two broad dimensions of participation constitute the very core of community management. From this perspective, it can be said that community management entails two distinct yet interrelated activities. The first is instrumental since it entails the establishment of structural relationships and the development of people's capacities to negotiate and seek the resources and changes they require in order to improve their lives. The second is tactical and involves the methods and techniques employed by development workers to bring lo-

cal people into playing meaningful roles and to have a stake in development programmes and projects.

In conclusion, community management is basically, a project management strategy in which communities are made to participate more meaningfully in exogenous development efforts. As a strategy, it aims to empower and equip communities to own and control their own systems to the extent that they play prominent roles in planning, resource mobilization and systems management. Community management also entails that owners of water and sanitation facilities become responsible for providing the funds that are required to meet all operational management and maintenance costs as a means to ensuring the sustainability of their systems (McCommon, et al; 1990). According to Schouten, et al (2003), the idea that communities should operate and maintain their water supply and sanitation facilities came partly from an erosion of belief in the capacity of national governments to deliver water efficiently to their populations and partly from the belief that communities have the skills and the motivation to meet their own essential needs.

The primary purpose of this management strategy is to ensure the sustainability of water supply and sanitation systems provided in the communities (McCommon et al, 1990). Water supply and sanitation facilities are sustainable to the extent that they are maintained in a condition which ensures a reliable and adequate water supply and made available to the users over a prolonged period of time and the service delivery process demonstrates a cost-effective use of resources that can be replicated (Harvey and Reed, 2003).

LOCAL ORGANIZATION AND COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT

The use of water committees as basic organizational structures for community-managed water and sanitation programmes and projects has gained currency in recent times. Although traditional management structures and local leadership exist in almost all communities, the practice is to form new local organizations to manage new water and sanitation technologies. Consequently, most programmes and projects require communities to establish committees to coordinate local management of new systems (Lammerink and Bolt, 2002).

According to Evans and Appleton (1993), the establishment of community water and sanitation committees has become the most commonplace approach to the institutionalization as well as the operationalization of the concept of community management. This is because it is through these committees that each section of the community is empowered to seek an equitable share of project costs and benefits.

Conceptually, the idea of establishing local organizations to manage community-based water supply and sanitation programmes can be understood from the perspective of the theory of development for social change or transformation. This derives from the conscientization or awareness-creation approach to adult literacy developed

by the Brazilian educationist, Paulo Freire (1972, 1973). To Freire, conscientization is the process by which vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalized groups can be made aware of their own humanity and their innate power to transform their specific circumstances through a dialogue-reflection-praxis model of education. Implicit in this model are the ideas of self-help, social mobilization and social organization for action. These are processes that together constitute dynamic instruments for facilitating peoples' involvement in the change process (cited in Amedzro, 2005).

In practice, representatives of the development agency initially facilitate or coordinate the dialogical and reflective processes for the identification of community felt and expressed needs and the setting of realistic objectives and plans for corporate action. As the community members begin to take control of the problem, the facilitator gradually withdraws from the problem-solving process and the community assumes responsibility for managing the local programme.

A local organisation, whose membership is drawn from the community, is then established to take on the role of the facilitator and to subsequently manage the programme. As indicated by Amarantunga (1989), the creation of such community management committees is basic to the process of social transformation to the extent that they constitute assertive strategies in which the dignity, capability and intellect of rural residents, through their accredited representatives, are respected and valued as important contributions to the change process.

The processes for the establishment of local management organizations and their empowerment constitute the two most pervasive instruments for facilitating participatory development through the strategy of community management. It is widely held that the active participation of rural people in development efforts, as a means to ensuring programme sustainability, can only be ensured if they are brought into some form of organizational structure. (Oakley and Marsden, 1984; Eade, 1997; Fowler, 1997).

In view of the flexibility in the implementation of the community management strategy, there are wide variations in the forms and organisation of water and sanitation committees worldwide. For example, there are the single-handed management by traditional leaders in Yemen, large community committees attempting to reflect the full complexities of multi-ethnic settlements in the Cameroon as well as the small community water and sanitation committees and boards with volunteers and paid staff as in Honduras and Ghana (Evans and Appleton, 1993).

However, the most important considerations for their establishment are that firstly, they are recognized as being legitimate by their communities and secondly, they are able to carry out the task of operating and maintaining the water supply system. Thirdly, efforts are made to ensure that a local organisation is not in conflict with other decision-making structures inside or outside of the community. Lastly, they not composed of only the elite of the community and so antagonizes the rest (Evans and

Appleton, 1993). In order to ensure that these conditions are obtained, most donor agencies prefer that community water organizations are democratically elected and represent all interests in the community (Lammerink and Bolt, 2002).

The functions performed by local management organizations also vary considerably, depending upon the agreed division of responsibility between the support agencies and the community. However, the general task descriptions of community water and sanitation organizations cover a broad range of skills. These skills require water and sanitation committees to negotiate on behalf of their communities, co-ordinate and administer technical and managerial tasks, organize contributions by the community, in cash or kind, towards construction and towards operations and maintenance, keep accurate financial and administrative records, promote good use of the water system, promote hygiene and sanitation practices and regularly communicate and report back to the community (IRC, 1997; Limmerink and Bolt, 2002).

EMERGING ISSUES

It must be reiterated that community management is currently the dominant paradigm and framework for the design and implementation of almost all donor supported water supply and sanitation projects in developing countries. The theory is that, as a strategy, community management holds the key to successful and sustainable water supply and sanitation schemes since it is the means by which local people can meaningfully participate in their development (Laryea, 1994). Such participation is seen to be critical to the continuation of these systems since external assistance cannot be maintained for a long period of time (Wijk-Sijbesma, 1981).

However, experiences from the field indicate a variety of practices as each community develops its own systems management strategies. As a result of this lack of uniformity in systems management practices, there are equally varied degrees of success and sustainability levels of community managed water supply and sanitation schemes. These, all together, have increased the fluidity in the conceptualization and practice of community management.

Studies that provide descriptions of successful community-managed water supply and sanitation projects, for example, used various assessment parameters. Reports by Kendie (1994) on the Upper Region Water Supply Project in the Bolgatanga District, for instance, emphasized the overarching role of water committees and traditional leadership in community management. According to him, the effective management experienced in the study area was primarily due to the fact that water management committees and traditional leadership ensured reliable service delivery, demonstrated high levels of commitment and accountability, ensured revenue collection efficiency and showed a growing capacity to plan and manage their services effectively.

Field reports presented by various project managers at the Community Water Supply and Sanitation Conference held in May 1998 in Washington DC considered efficiency in programme delivery by water and sanitation committees as fundamental to successful community management (UNDP-WORLD BANK, 1998). They pointed out that great progress was made to the extent that local organizations developed ground rules that allowed communities to take lead roles in service planning and management of operations and maintenance. Water committees in Guatemala, in particular, were found to be able to effectively manage conflicts within their communities over tariff payments and most of them were said to be keeping good financial records and regularly reporting back to users on incomes and expenditures.

Effective community monitoring by local water committees played an important role in achieving successful community management in projects supported by Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) in Pakistan. Evans and Appleton (1993) reported that regular village meetings, sometimes attended by AKRSP support staff, were held to report on the general condition of water system and to hear community views. The Village Organization and Village Water Committee kept meticulous records and maintained a set of books including minutes books, work attendance registers, cash books, stock registers and issue registers.

The literature is also replete with community-managed water supply and sanitation projects that have failed to be successful. One significant conclusion is that the inability of most projects to ensure high degrees of sustainable operation is due to lack of adequate maintenance funding (Briscoe and de Ferranti, 1988). It means therefore that community management is a necessary but not sufficient condition for project sustainability. Instead, other factors including a realistic apportioning of costs of operation and maintenance of facilities to users as well as the ability of users to pay tariffs were also required. Any community management approach should therefore address conveniently the issue of the willingness and ability of users to pay for water services if project sustainability should be attained. This should be so especially in communities in which the burden of payment of tariffs rests mostly on women who are the primary water users (Kendie, 1994).

Indeed, communities differ considerably in their socio-economic structures. Poverty levels differ since economic opportunities available to members are not the same in all communities. Consequently, the human and financial resources available to management committees to mobilize towards effective operation and maintenance of their water facilities and the promotion of hygiene and sanitation differ from one community to the other. This definitely explains why some communities are more capable of maintaining their water supply and sanitation systems than others. It means, therefore, that the existing programme management system that treats all communities as equals is no longer viable.

By the World Bank's (1990) estimation people earning an annual per capita income of below US$370 could be considered as poor. The general rule, according to Evans

(1992), is that people should not pay more than about three to five percent of income on water and sanitation services. The implication is that the most that the 'poor', according to this criterion, should pay for the use of water would be between US$11 and US$18 per year. Thus, for the majority of rural poor in most programme regimes, whose incomes were below the poverty line, an annual contribution of even US$10 per person per year is likely to be beyond their ability to pay. Otherwise, they would have to sacrifice, with adverse consequences for health and total well-being, in order to access water and sanitation services.

It needs to be stated that users effectively appreciate costs through the benefits (or the utility) of any service or product provided. The analysis they make on the basis of weighing costs and benefits, from their own perspective, largely determines their demand for a service or product. Utility itself is considered as the pleasure or satisfaction derived by an individual from being in a particular situation or from consuming goods and services (Kotler, 1993). In the view of Evans (1992), the fact that no single measure of utility exists, it is by their choices of combinations of available commodities that consumers reveal what it is that generates utility for them. Accordingly, where incomes are low and money is scarce the issue of opportunity cost is highly pertinent from users' point of view

Thus, as indicated in a World Health report published in 1987, although rural people may have high water needs they can still object to cash payments. This is because cash income is scarce in rural areas and they will always continue to use, at no expense, traditional sources of water in order to save their cash income for the acquisition of those goods which cannot be purchased without money. With the increasing costs of operation and maintenance, low levels of cost-recovery due to poverty levels of target communities and inability to charge realistic rates for the use of water, the possibility of most communities to attain financial self-sufficiency through the sale of water alone will remain a mirage. Without deliberate efforts at exploring alternative sources of income and obtaining continued external intervention, there is no way most communities can continue to sustain their water supply facilities in future.

Using field reports from Ghana, Kenya, Uganda and Zambia, Harvey and Reed (2003) emphasized that neither a contribution to capital costs nor a sense of ownership instilled by the initial processes of sensitization and mobilization necessarily led to a sense of responsibility for as well as the ability and willingness of communities to manage, operate and maintain or finance a water supply system over a long period of time. Moreover, since demand for water and sanitation facilities was often artificially generated by implementing agencies, communities rarely acquired a full understanding of what would be required of them in the long-term if services were to be sustained. Consequently, many facilities fell into disrepair soon after installation or as soon as anything went wrong with the pumps.

The implication is that the term 'self-sustaining' as contained in various national and international policy documents must be redefined since it is becoming increasingly

obvious that most communities are not capable of sustaining their water supplies all by themselves. Similarly, it would be a gross overestimation to assume that communities would be able and willing to finance major rehabilitation costs where they often failed to finance simplest repairs. Indeed, field experiences had shown that successful community maintenance required ongoing institutional financial and technical support (Harvey and Reed (2003).

It is possible therefore to advocate for the development of a comprehensive and effective framework for continuous institutional support to communities to be able to keep the systems working after "handing over." Although the capacities of communities were crucial, their efforts must be continually supplemented by governments, support agencies, non-governmental organizations and the private sector for community management to be successful. As aptly stated by Schouten, et al (2003:289),

Together, they can create a rural water supply (and sanitation) service in which each stakeholder takes its share of responsibility in an institutional framework that addresses all the functions needed to provide water to rural people, including policy making, regulation, legislation, taxation, and price policy, planning and construction, technical support, operation and maintenance..

Field reports have also indicated that most of the serious setbacks suffered by community-managed projects were occasioned by the fact that operation and maintenance were largely based on voluntary efforts. In practice, community management of water supply and sanitation systems means management by a committee that works on voluntary basis. This often created the impression that there was a group of devoted community members volunteering for the benefit of the community as a whole. On the contrary, as noted by Katakweba (2001) and Scott (2001), efforts at promoting community management based solely on volunteerism had not been easy and the systems put in place not sustainable. The fact of the matter was that although these volunteers did not receive any basic remuneration for their contributions to the community, they spent long hours as decision-makers and overseers of the facilities. In the performance of their services to the community these volunteers experienced harassment and abuses, especially, when collecting user fees. This greatly affected their morale, performance and eventually their functionality.

Consequently, there were reported cases of many projects characterized by non-functional committees who were often slow to address problems and repairs. User fees could not be collected and neither were meetings held nor any records maintained. Water source areas became bushy, broken taps not replaced and water not continuously flowing (Scott, 2001).

It is argued that water and sanitation committees can no longer be considered as groups made up of devoted volunteers working for the benefit of the community as a whole. This supposition lends support to Scott's (2001) contention that without adequate motivation for members of community water and sanitation management com-

mittees, their commitment to the entire operation management and maintenance process can neither be guaranteed nor maintained.

Bolt et al (2001) considered the inability of governments and projects to institutionalize community management within intermediate levels of governance and society as another major factor limiting effective implementation. In most cases, the necessary effective decentralized support structures and mechanisms needed to make community management work at the micro-level was hardly put in place in most beneficiary communities. They observed that, in practice, following the "hand-over" of facilities, most communities were often left on their own with the assumption that the capacity building work undertaken during the project period had left them with the necessary skills and institutions to manage their systems indefinitely. However, as they noted, there was an increasing recognition that community management institutions and rules were often vulnerable and susceptible to conflicts, abuse of resources and external interference.

The consequences were that, firstly, most local organizations managing projects often failed to demonstrate appreciable levels of accountability and transparency in the management of communities' finances. As indicated by Evans and Appleton (1993), this lack of financial probity and transparency by local management committees often influenced the level of commitment of communities to their water and sanitation systems and hence their willingness to make subsequent contributions towards their operation and maintenance. Indeed, evidence from the field suggest that whole structures of community management have foundered rapidly because of suspicion that community funds collected for the use of water supply and sanitation services were being mismanaged or misappropriated (Kwatakweba, 2001; Scott, 2001). Adequate book-keeping and regular review of accounts with the entire community membership are, undoubtedly, prime requirements for increasing their commitment and contributions to efforts aimed at obtaining sustainable and reliable water and sanitation delivery.

It is not likely that water management committees can simply make themselves accountable to their communities. It is equally not possible for rural populations to demand financial accountability from their managers as long as they are deriving the expected benefits from their investments in the water supply and sanitation facilities. There is therefore the need for the institutionalization of appropriate legal framework, control mechanisms and effective systems of checks and balances in which local governance structures and traditional authorities, and indeed, entire communities are empowered enough to monitor, audit and demand accountability from local management committees.

Secondly, local organizations lack legitimacy to enforce usage control measures, ensure revenue collection efficiency and promote acceptable hygiene and sanitation standards. In most cases, water and sanitation committees became susceptible to abuse and total disrespect in their communities. In effect, their performance in terms

of ensuring proper handling of hand-pumps and stand pipes, hygienic use of water at collection points, obtaining orderly collection of water, effectively managing conflicts ensuing from collection of water and keeping water collection sites clean had not been satisfactory (Bolt et al, 2001).

Since community management was a recent development phenomenon and therefore, not yet well entrenched in the fabric of rural societies, it is necessary for projects to guarantee long-term support for the sustainability of community management institutions and systems. This requires that governments provide adequate resources and exercise the political will to create support structures for communities left on their own after the "hand-over" of projects. Appropriate legal or policy environments that offered a framework for sustainable community management by local organizations should also be created.

CONCLUSIONS

Since the 1980s, community management has been found to be the most acceptable strategy for ensuring sustainable water supply and sanitation schemes. Community management has been particularly useful in mobilizing the participation of communities towards the continuation of water and sanitation programmes in the absence of continued external assistance (Wijk-Sijbesma, 1981).

However, the concept and practice of community management continues to be inconcise. This is, perhaps, because it has only recently become mainstreamed into development initiatives and began to find expression in development literature in the 1980s (Bolt, et al, 2001; IRC, 2004). Therefore, as rightly indicated by Evans and Appleton (1993: 27),

As experience grows, it is important that information continues to be generated and knowledge continues to be shared. Further studies are needed to resolve anomalies and harden guidance on the most effective way of promoting and implementing successful community management.

What has been achieved in this write-up is to provide some framework for understanding the concept and practice of community management with reference to field experiences. It seems clear from the discussions so far that the conceptualization of any community management strategy should encompass issues relating to the development of an active and committed membership of water committees and a strong and innovative leadership which had the ability to:

i. Enforce rules governing the use of water and sanitation systems;
ii. Make and implement strategic decisions with regard to water use and sanitation;
iii. Ensure revenue collection efficiency;

iv. Demonstrate much transparency and accountability in handling community finances; and

v. Ensure efficient administrative management and prudent financial management practices.

Building the capacity of communities and their water and sanitation committees and providing them with continuous institutional support, both financial and technical, to efficiently undertake their responsibilities and effectively meet their management challenges on sustainable basis should be the major tasks for providing and support agencies.

Similarly, the institutionalization of community management that would legitimize the status and functions of water and sanitation committees and the provision of appropriate legal or policy environments that could empower them to effectively enforce regulatory policies regarding water use, secure adequate maintenance funding and maintaining sanitation standards are crucial for effective community management. At the same time, it would be necessary to institute legal and control mechanisms to compel management committees to be accountable to local governance structures, traditional authorities and their communities. Alternatively, subsequent capacity building efforts must aim at empowering traditional authorities and communities to monitor the use of monies collected by the local management committees as well as audit and demand accountability from them.

Research reports have shown clearly that the initial internalization and identification processes that members of water and sanitation committees went through during their recruitment and orientation were not strong enough for them to be exceptionally willing to sacrifice their time, effort and personal gains to the activities of the collectivity (Wallace and Wolf, 1991). Thus, the viability of the management of community social development efforts by committees that work purely on voluntary basis is increasingly being questioned (Katakweba, 2001; Scott, 2001)). It is therefore significant that subsequent designs of community management programmes should have inbuilt incentive regimes that could motivate members of management committees to want to commit themselves to efficiently operate and maintain water supply and sanitation schemes on sustainable basis.

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