



WORKING WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN RURAL WATER AND SANITATION

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AN INTERCULTURAL APPROACH



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MDGIF
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URACCAN
Universidad de las Regiones Autónomas
de la Costa Caribe Nicaragüense

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PREFACE

Water and sanitation has been one of the priorities of the Spanish Cooperation for long time, particularly because it is a priority for the government partners and civil society organisations in the countries where we work.

In addition to the work implemented bilaterally, the Spanish Cooperation has also put in place two innovative and aspiring mechanisms to progress towards the achievement of the MDGs relating to water and sanitation: the Spanish Water and Sanitation Fund for Latin America and the Caribbean, implemented through the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation and the Inter-American Development Bank and the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund (MDG-F), in collaboration with the United Nations. The latter of which with a thematic window specifically relating to water and sanitation.

From this enriching experience we have placed particular emphasis on working with indigenous communities, specially in Latin America. In order to achieve the future Sustainable Development Goals, strengthened work with indigenous communities should be essential but this requires working with sensitivity and cultural respect. In this regard, we wish to thank the work completed in this document which highlights the valuable experiences to be taken from the MDG-F programmes.

Water and sanitation will continue to be a priority for us and a good example of that is our recent agreement with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to create a new cooperation mechanism: the Sustainable Development Goals Fund (SDG-F). Water and sanitation is one of its three priorities of action together with inclusive economic growth for poverty eradication, and food security and nutrition.

At the Spanish Cooperation we firmly believe in the value of evaluation and knowledge management as key steps in ensuring that our cooperation is the most effective and contributes to where it is most needed. For this reason, we are pleased to have contributed to making possible this investigation which is based in the analysis and evaluation of more than 100 water programmes and rural area development. I am convinced that this publication will be an extremely useful instrument for government actors, civil society and the international community to improve cultural dialogue with indigenous communities.

Gonzalo Robles Orozco
Secretary General of International Development Cooperation, Spain

FOREWORD

As the global development agenda moves into a new era of sustainable development, in which the Millennium Development Goals will be expanded to the future Sustainable Development Goals, this document provides insight from real-life experience on how development initiatives should adapt to indigenous cultures to ensure sustainability.

Since its inception, the MDG Achievement Fund (MDG-F) identified water and sanitation as one of its key priorities, focusing not only on access to water infrastructures but, more importantly, on how water and sanitation resources were governed. With a focus on democratic governance of public services which included the active participation of beneficiaries, the MDG-F promoted programmes in 11 countries strengthening the capacity of national institutions to design and implement water policies and regulations to provide communities with efficient water and sanitation services. As a result, 440,000 citizens gained access to safe affordable drinking water.

A constant concern that guided our programmes was to overcome the barriers that indigenous peoples face in accessing water and sanitation services. In spite of a growing awareness of the problem, more practical and comprehensive guidance was necessary. Therefore, together with the UNDP Water Governance Facility at SIWI (WFG) and the University of the Autonomous Regions

of the Nicaraguan Caribbean Coast (URACCAN), we launched a joint research initiative under the title “Transcultural Transparency in water and sanitation management in indigenous communities”. We are convinced that this document will be highly useful. Based on the MDG-F’s experience, in a concise manner it provides basic instruments and examples of how water and sanitation programmes can be truly inclusive by respecting ancestral knowledge, culture and governance mechanisms so that indigenous communities can fully participate and take ownership.

Sustainability, understood both as environmental sustainability and long-term sustainability of results, is a priority of our work. This is why in 2014, the Government of Spain and UNDP decided to expand the MDG-F into a new development cooperation mechanism, the Sustainable Development Goals Fund (SDG-F) that intends to act as a bridge between MDGs and SDGs through joint programmes. These recommendations are precisely part of this process and are being published with this aim in mind: learning from the experience to make rural water and sanitation projects more sustainable.

Bruno Moro
Director, Sustainable Development Goals Fund

BACKGROUND

This document is one of the outcomes of a joint research initiative called Transcultural Transparency. It focusses on how to overcome sociocultural clashes between communities, service providers, development co-operation actors and local authorities, particularly in areas with large groups of indigenous peoples.¹ It poses recommendations to be borne in mind by stakeholders working on water and sanitation with indigenous peoples in Latin America. The recommendations made in the document apply to any work on water and sanitation in rural areas, but they are especially relevant to work with indigenous and ethnic minorities. Sociocultural differences here matter very much for defining and realising successful projects.

The Transcultural Transparency initiative arose from the demand of development practitioners working with water and sanitation in rural indigenous communities. They expressed a need for more systematic information about issues to keep in mind and ways of dealing with the different world views of the various actors involved, and what would be the most efficient way to intervene in these areas.

The recommendations are based on the results of two coordinated research processes: 1) a literature review of over 100 project documents, evaluation reports, policies, strategies and thematic studies, and 185 scientific articles published on water, sanitation and indigenous populations and ethnic minorities; and 2) research conducted on site into different socio-cultural barriers associated with service provision, with six communities of indigenous peoples, descendants of African slaves and mestizos on the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua.

Transcultural Transparency is a joint research initiative by the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund (MDG-F)²,

the UNDP Water Governance Facility at SIWI (WGF), and the University of the Autonomous Regions of the Nicaraguan Caribbean Coast (URACCAN). The WGF also managed the knowledge management strategy for the documentation, analysis and dissemination of innovations and experiences of the joint programmes of MDG-F's thematic window for Democratic Economic Governance of water and sanitation.³ The field research with the six communities on the Nicaraguan Caribbean Coast was led by URACCAN.

Even though the focus of this particular document is not public policy and interculturality, it is still essential to recognise what links them. A water and sanitation project with an intercultural approach is more likely to be sustainable if there are public policies which recognise and support the implementation of initiatives which respect the rights and aspirations of indigenous peoples. One of the central obstacles to appropriate sector policies is often the lack of knowledge and information on the situation of indigenous peoples, as data that describe indigenous peoples' situation is scarce.⁴

At the same time, the attitude of those implementing the project and of partnering institutions is key if they are to engage respectfully with the indigenous peoples themselves. Experiences from both MDG-F programmes and the Transcultural Transparency research project have shown that even if the enabling legislation is in place, its effects can be substantially hampered by lack of understanding or lack of respect for it. In changing these attitudes campaigns to raise public awareness and the provision of spaces for public dialogue between indigenous peoples and officials can both be instrumental.

¹ www.watgovernance.org/TTT/en

² At the time of printing this publication the MDG-F has closed. The experience, knowledge, lessons learned and best practices of the MDG-F are, however, being built on by the current Sustainable Development Goals Achievement Fund (SDG-F).

³ www.mdgfund.org/content/democratieconomicgovernance

⁴ For some of the Latin American countries disaggregated data for indigenous peoples and peoples of African descent can be found at CEPAL's website www.cepal.org/cgi-bin/getprod.asp?xml=/celade/noticias/paginas/0/36160/P36160.xml&xml=/celade/tpl/p18f.xml&base=/celade/tpl/top-bottom_ind.xml

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' ACCESS TO WATER AND SANITATION SERVICES

“Water as well as the earth is our mother, why the quality of life depends on her.”

(Testimony from the community Saklwas, Nicaragua in Campos & Zamora, 2009, p. 17)

“The intercultural approach is oriented towards the recognition of the coexistence of diverse cultures in the current societies which should live together, based on the respect for each other’s world views, human rights and rights as peoples.”

(UNFPA *et al.*, 2012, p. 24)

Most indigenous peoples have a close relationship to and deep knowledge of their territories and the natural resources within them, including the water resources (Peña, 2004). Indigenous peoples’ relationship to water is also strongly connected to the spiritual world, with water often seen as a sentient being, fundamental for the survival and wellbeing of the earth and its people. (Anderson *et al.*, 2011, Finn and Jackson, 2011, Mooney and Tan, 2012, Nash, 2007, Toussaint, 2008, Singh, 2006).

Throughout the world there are disparities in water and sanitation services coverage between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples (UNDP, 2006). Low access to sanitation and water supply in indigenous areas can be attributed to a range of physical and economic challenges, but also to cultural and political barriers. It is much more likely for indigenous peoples to suffer the multi-dimensional factors of poverty, including under-nutrition and other deprivations related to health (Eversole, 2005). It is estimated that indigenous peoples make up about 5 per cent of the world population, but represent 15 per cent of people living in poverty (IFAD, 2009).

As minorities, indigenous peoples are even more marginalised because of their weak participation and lack of significant representation at higher political levels (Carling, 2001). This marginalisation can partly be explained by hierarchical structures inherited from colonialism, as well as by the current political systems and electoral processes, which may conflict with indigenous authorities’ governance systems. As a result,

indigenous peoples benefit less from national development opportunities, and this includes their lower access to water and sanitation services (Mikkelsen, 2001).

Indigenous peoples’ right to equitable access to services and resources is highlighted in several international conventions and agreements, including the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No 169 and the UN Declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples (UN, 2007). The right to prior, free, informed consent is one of the key components promoted in the Convention No 169 for any intervention in indigenous communities. Most countries have also ratified the Human Right to Water and Sanitation, entailing an obligation to progressive realisation of universal access without discrimination.

Even though most development work in water and sanitation advocates a comprehensive intercultural approach in indigenous areas, few of the programmes reviewed for this document specify how this should be done practically. Projects are, in general, not well adapted to the local reality of indigenous communities. The most common trend is to build programmes with a standard approach to providing rural water services, with different degrees of sensitivity towards indigenous peoples.

This standardised approach towards service provision generally does not allocate sufficient time and resources to achieving a shared understanding and definition of the goals. This has contributed to a low level of ownership and a lack of sustainability in many initiatives.

BOX 1. RIGHTS-BASED APPROACHES TO COMBAT INEQUALITIES

Human Rights-Based Approaches (HRBA) aim to identify and analyse violations of basic human rights, both in relation to liberties and to access to services and resources, in defence of the autonomy and dignity of all peoples. As human rights are interdependent, an HRBA entails interventions to look for integrated strategies to combat discrimination and meet the needs of the most marginalised and vulnerable groups. Five of the most common problems for marginalised groups, both in the development of policies and in programming, are: lack of visibility; lack of representation; low level of participation in spaces for decision-making; lack of access to services and resources and; lack of recognition of their rights. The application of an HRBA to projects working with indigenous peoples can be used as a tool to visualise the multiple structural inequalities they face and to put pressure on the government to change its practices and policies to target the reduction of these inequalities (UNFPA et al., 2012).

The recognition of the human right to water can also be used to support indigenous peoples' claims for access to safe water and sanitation, because it entails governments taking "deliberate, concrete and targeted steps" (p. 23-24) to progressively realise universal non-discriminatory access to water services. Even if this does not oblige the states to provide access to free water, it should be physically accessible, have an acceptable quality and be affordable (de Albuquerque, 2012).

For guidelines on the integration of the Human Rights-Based Approach in water and sanitation development work, see WaterLex toolkit (in construction) www.waterlex.org/waterlex-toolkit



Photo: UNDP Ecuador

Institutional and Leadership Challenges among Indigenous Peoples

Indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities face major institutional and leadership challenges affecting progress and sustainability in water and sanitation interventions. Indigenous authorities are under great pressure from external forces whose values and norms may clash with those of the indigenous peoples.

Migration for work or study in urban areas, or even abroad, and new influences from information and communication technologies, are among the principal sources of stress for indigenous authorities. The exposure of people to other social values and lifestyles, based on individualism instead of community, compete with traditional lifestyles and undermine the culture of collective values that many indigenous peoples maintain.

Conflicts with external settler groups, private interests and governmental policies over territories and the right to natural resources can cause long-term and profound social and cultural disruption. Moreover, drug trafficking and abuse tend to increase the levels of violence and crime, creating far-reaching family and social conflicts, along with the unequal and unsustainable influx of illicit currency to the local economy.

Development projects in themselves also have great impacts on traditional lifestyles. For example, projects often create new management and decision-making structures without involving or respecting existing indigenous authorities. Contact with the modern political system has also changed internal

power relations and fostered political polarisation within indigenous structures which previously were based on decision-making by consensus.

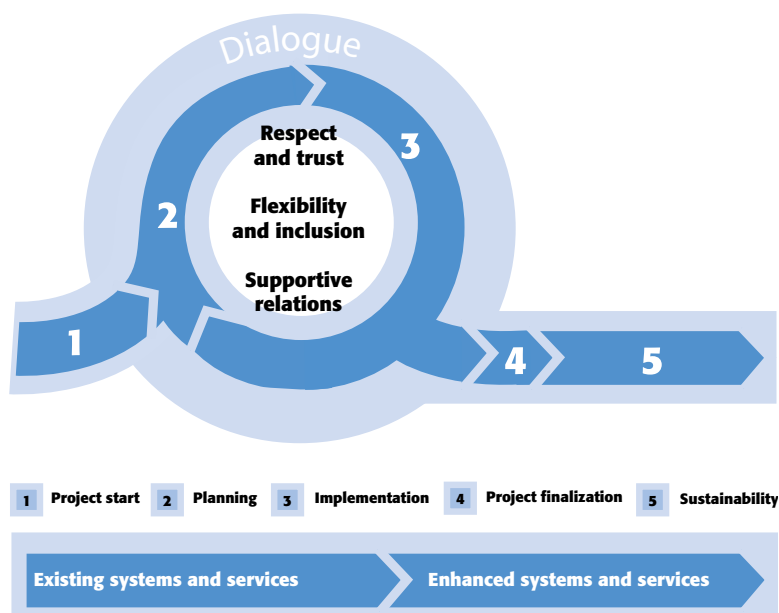
This situation of multiple stresses generates intense internal processes of cultural and institutional renegotiation – sometimes resulting in extensive conflicts – and profoundly affects the functioning and legitimacy of indigenous authorities.

There are also inter-generational tensions, where youths exposed to the new influences demand changes to the traditional lifestyles, while the more adult parts of the population requires greater identity, unity and respect for their culture.

Towards an Intercultural Approach in Water and Sanitation

Below we present recommendations for the practical inclusion of an intercultural approach in rural water and sanitation projects. To make them easier to apply, they are presented according to the project phases – 1) starting up, 2) planning, 3) implementation, and 4) finalization, as shown in Figure 1. The “Elements to consider in the different phases of the intervention” are presented later, according to their corresponding project phase. The values that are considered “Fundamental Principles of the Intervention” have been put in the centre of the figure and are presented in the next chapter. A section on sustainability then follows, and then a special note on sanitation before the conclusions.

Figure 1. The Project Cycle and the Fundamental Principles



“Applying the intercultural approach is not a question of training people in their own language, but of creating the spaces for cultures to really meet.”

(OPS and GTZ, 2006)

Most of the elements and activities to be considered during the project cycle could be applied equally beneficially in water and sanitation projects in rural non-indigenous communities. There are, however, elements of particular importance for projects working with indigenous peoples:

1. Indigenous peoples’ world views, relationships and knowledge related to water and sanitation. As noted above, indigenous peoples often have strong and close relationships with water resources. These values and relationships affect the solutions that are considered desirable by indigenous peoples.

2. Involvement of indigenous authorities. Most indigenous peoples and communities have their own governance structures that correspond to rules and norms that sometimes diverge from those of external institutions. This can include for example a focus on consensus decision-making and collective solutions which require more time for dialogue and discussion.

3. Establishment of a relationship between indigenous authorities and governmental institutions. Because of the historical marginalisation of indigenous peoples they generally have a weak relationship to the national government, and the indigenous authorities are frequently not adequately recognised. To establish a relationship based on mutual trust and respect is imperative for long-term sustainability.

4. Tariffs and the monetisation of water. Introduction of a tariff system is one of the aspects of water and sanitation projects which generate most resistance in indigenous communities. The perception of whether it is correct or not to pay for water and water services is closely linked to world views and cultural values, and in addition the economic resources available in indigenous communities are often scarce.

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF THE INTERCULTURAL APPROACH

Dialogue

An on-going dialogue between stakeholders is the channel for the processes of the intercultural approach and the basis for creating mutual respect and understanding. A non-hierarchical dialogue, where different perspectives and aspirations are considered equal, is fundamental to generating respectful relations between the actors. A dialogue of equals is also required for an 'epistemological encounter' which enables the integration of the communities' knowledge and scientific knowledge throughout the project. This allows the project to respond to complex problems in a holistic and contextually appropriate way, as solutions are formulated with those who are most affected by the problem and have most knowledge of the specific setting (SENSABA, 2011). According to the Committee of Experts of the ILO Convention No 169, a "permanent dialogue at all levels, as required by the Convention, [will] contribute to preventing conflict and building an inclusive model of development" (ILO, 2009, p. 38).

To facilitate an effective intercultural dialogue, the following factors should be borne in mind:

i) To generate trust among the stakeholders is essential to the success of any intervention. This is achieved by respecting indigenous customs, cultures and authorities. In practice, to recognise the time that

this process requires is vital. It is also important "to open up channels for communication" for an initial process of getting to know each other, via local mechanisms and traditions, using adequate spokespersons or authorities who are recognised by the community. In general, indigenous leaders are designated the ambassadors and spokespersons of the community because they are fluent in Spanish or are well-educated. This does not however always mean that they are able to represent the interests of the community as a whole, nor do they replace other indigenous authorities or spaces for decision-making; see Box 2.

ii) To ensure culturally adequate settings for the dialogue. General meetings are not always the most suitable way to generate open communication, since there can be cultural restraints on the free expression of certain groups. This is especially important to consider when seeking the impressions of social groups that may be less powerful in the community, such as women or youths.

iii) To use appropriate language. Working with facilitators who are fluent in the local language, and if possible recognised within the community, is key to establishing smooth communication among the parties.

BOX 2. INDIGENOUS AUTHORITIES

The structures of authority of indigenous peoples can look quite different in different settings. In the Miskito and Sumu-Mayangna communities involved in the Transcultural Transparency research project the fundamental authority was the community assembly, as well as authorities such as the Elders Council, the community arbitrator/judge (Whita) and the supervisor of natural resources (Síndico). In addition there was the Territorial Government, which had been more recently instituted, responsible for the governing of one indigenous territory.

In the Bolivian Ayamara people the highest authority is the mallku who governs several communities that together form an ayllu. But decisions are taken in the ayllu assemblies. Second to the mallku is the jilaqata, followed by the alcaldes comunales, which have specific tasks related to their respective neighbourhoods.

Source: Choque, 2001

“Often [projects] come in and impose ideas and ignore the opinions of people living there”

(Testimonial, Orinoco, Nicaragua)



Photo: MDG-F

Respect and Trust

Respect and trust are fundamental values for an effective intercultural approach. Lack of respect towards local culture is a recurring theme highlighted by indigenous peoples in problems associated with water and sanitation projects. The abuse that indigenous communities have suffered on numerous occasions, as well as a history scarred by conflicts, wars, marginalization and lack of respect for their human rights, have resulted in low levels of trust in external institutions. And the long history of development assistance based on short interventions, without continuity or sustainability, has also contributed to eroded credibility and trust for development organisations.

Lack of knowledge of cultural and social values associated with water and sanitation poses the greatest obstacle to a sense of ownership by the communities and sustainable interventions. Imposing both technical and management solutions that are not culturally and socially suited and acceptable will condition the intervention's success.

So it is necessary to take into account the history of past efforts and their results and the relationships that stakeholders have had at the time of approaching a community, and in selecting the ways and means for their involvement. A long-term commitment to communities by development agents and government authorities builds relationships of trust and understanding, which are especially valued by indigenous peoples. Respect for them and for ethnic minorities is shown at various levels, for example through official recognition of their rights and authority structures. But it also entails taking into account their values, interests and aspirations as equals.

Flexibility and Inclusion

Flexibility, understood as the will to change the scope, methodology and outputs associated with an intervention, is essential to create an appropriate and effective application of an intercultural strategy. Although most projects provide for forms of participation instruments to enable communities to express their needs and concerns, this does not necessarily allow the communities the capacity to take decisions and to influence substantial aspects of the project. On many occasions, participation exercises are mainly processes of informing the community, geared to justify the intervention, and to persuade them to accept and approve it. Communities often accept, either because they are afraid of rejecting an opportunity of investment into the community, or because they expect to obtain some benefit from the intervention, even if it does not exactly meet their needs. This frustrated dialogue is manifested on many occasions in community testimonials about projects that have failed.

“The Miskito world view has not been taken into account much; why? Because I see that the projects only come in, execute and leave.”

(Municipal Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Unit.
Waspám, Nicaragua)

“They come to our community to take concrete actions and then never come back again”.

(Testimonial, Nicaragua)

The inclusion of the community in a position where it can substantially influence all phases of the project cycle, from its formulation through its implementation and monitoring, contributes to empowering that community as a manager of the project interventions - and beyond. As already noted, it is important to be aware of the diversity of interests and perspectives within a community, and to understand the internal tensions and power dynamics of its leadership and representation. It is important for the success of the project to find ways to involve and reach the diversity of groups within the community, and not to be limited to the most accessible leaders and official representatives. This also helps to avoid reinforcing potential systems of corruption and abuse of power.

“It is time for us to be respected and for our culture, beliefs and world view to be taken into account.”

(Testimonial, Marshall Point, Nicaragua)



Photo: UNDP Ecuador

To manage the different interests inside the community within the limitations posed by timetables and budgets is no easy task. However, the final cost of not including the communities in the different processes, or not adapting solutions to local conditions, is much greater; as shown by the numerous cases of poor sustainability, poorly functioning water and sanitation services, or even their sabotage or complete disuse.

Long-Term Supportive Relations

It is commonly recognised that community water management cannot be sustainably carried out in isolation, without regular, structured backing by the authorities who are obliged to provide services. Indigenous communities commonly face difficulties in their relations with administrative structures and state authorities. In many cases there is mutual mistrust about intentions and capacities.

The presence in the community of support agents, beyond specific actions, and beyond mere construction of infrastructure, is a fundamental factor for the sustainability of interventions (Lockwood and Smits, 2011). This calls for long-term institutional relationships between local organizations and the responsible institutions (e.g., municipalities) as a mechanism for continuous backstopping, see Box 3. It is very important to avoid the tendency towards abandonment after the period of intervention.

Engagement by state authorities beyond the period of infrastructure construction is essential in view of their importance throughout the life cycle of

BOX 3. LONG-TERM PARTNERSHIP

Significant success has been noted in the intercultural approach of the Joint Program of Democratic Economic Governance in Panama. In this context, WHO/PAHO, along with UNICEF and ILO, have worked together with the Ministry of Health (MINSA) to maintain a relationship over many years with the indigenous communities in the Ngäbe Buglé area. A dialogue has developed and reinforced indigenous structures.

As a leader of a local water committee told his community: "Another institution, MINSA, works with us, advising us, and we report to them monthly. We are not alone – they are with us, and we are with them."

Documented by video: www.watgovernance.org/sa/node.asp?node=1662

the services. So elements to foster are:

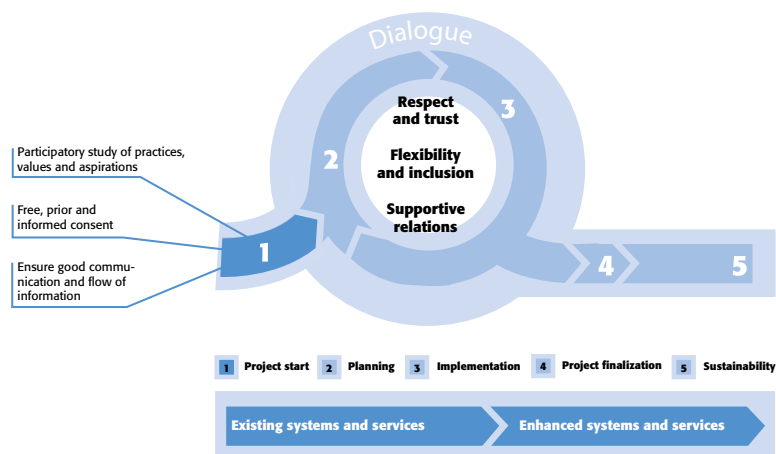
- i) The effective involvement of authorities throughout the project as well as in the continuous operation of the service;
- ii) Capacity-building and communication about the state's administrative structures, obligations and the rights of citizens;
- iii) Spaces for continuous dialogue between indigenous communities and government authorities.

INCLUDING THE INTERCULTURAL APPROACH IN THE PROJECT CYCLE

Start of Project

Participatory study of practices, world view and aspirations associated with water, sanitation and hygiene: Lack of prior knowledge about indigenous peoples' beliefs and values related to water, sanitation, health and hygiene helps explain a large part of the failures of many interventions. Often studies have been done a posteriori, seeking explanations to the resounding failures of some projects, above all in sanitation. Currently Sanitation Marketing⁵ approaches are developing more studies before interventions, attempting to understand people's values, practices and expectations regarding these services (Jenkins and Scott, 2007; Baskovich, 2011). They use social and commercial communication to increase both the demand for and the supply of sanitation services, but are primarily based on formative studies of existing practices and needs. It is important that such studies in advance become normal practice, accepted as necessary for working with indigenous peoples. The present research focused on determining the role of different actors, using participatory methods; see Box 4.

Figure 2 – The Project Cycle and the Considerations at the Project Start



Above all, people must be involved as subjects in research, not as objects, throughout the intervention, to initiate the process of generating trust, mutual understanding and dialogue. In this context different actors may play complementary roles, involving academic institutions and non-governmental organisations.

BOX 4. PARTICIPATORY METHODOLOGIES AND THE IDENTIFICATION OF ACTORS

The research project on Transcultural Transparency used several participatory techniques (participatory mapping, de Venn diagrams, etc.) to analyse with the communities their problems with water and sanitation, stakeholders in the sector, and suitable solutions.

A stakeholder analysis needs to consider all types of actor, since government agencies, international organizations, local civil society and religious organizations, associations, and private companies can all play an important role.

For further information on participatory techniques, please see: www.sswm.info/category/planning-process-tools/decision-making/decision-making-tools/deciding-community/participato

⁵ For more information on Sanitation Marketing approaches see www.wsp.org/toolkit/toolkit-home

Free, prior and informed consent: Both the ILO Convention No 169 and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples recognise indigenous people's right to own and control their land, and to own, use and manage the natural resources on that land. The UN Declaration calls on states to consult indigenous peoples to obtain their free, prior, and informed consent before approving any project affecting their land and resources; see Box 5. The cost of participatory processes with indigenous peoples must be included as part of the planning process, taking into account potential differences among community decision-making processes. These may be quite different from decision-making in society at large, which is based on representation, delegation of power and/or decision by majority vote (UNDG, 2009); see Box 6.

Ensuring good communication and flow of information: Indigenous communities, like others, are not free of internal conflicts or of the risks that community elites might monopolise project benefits. It is not unusual for indigenous peoples to complain of a lack of representativeness and commitment from their leaders. For proper project implementation, it is essential to be aware of communities' internal tensions, allow for them in dialogues with

BOX 5. FREE, PRIOR AND INFORMED CONSENT

Consultation and participation are crucial components of a consent process. They require time and an effective system for communicating among stakeholders, to reach an understanding or consent.

- "Free" implies no coercion, intimidation or manipulation.
- "Prior" entails sufficient time in advance of the start of activities, respecting the time requirements of indigenous consultation/consensus processes.
- "Informed" means that the information provided covers all aspects of the project.
- The process needs to include the option of withholding consent or withdrawing it if the conditions for the agreement change.

For more information see the Pro169 toolbox

<http://pro169.org>

Source: Guidelines on Indigenous Peoples' Issues, UNDG, 2009 page30

the communities, and ensure that there is equitable and inclusive participation in decision-making – this is the only way to ensure that water and sanitation services are constructed on the basis of peoples' true needs, priorities and aspirations.

In many cases, projects assume that indigenous leaders express the voice of the whole community. As this is not always the case, it is necessary in this context to create meeting spaces like community assemblies, focus groups (of men, women and youth, for example), and other tools to elicit priorities from a more representative sample of the community.

“They share training workshops only with their relatives... most leaders don't inform us about their new knowledge, so this is a failure for the community: there is no development”

(Testimonial, Uhry, Nicaragua)

BOX 6: INTEGRATED PLANNING OF RURAL ACCESS

Local governments and development agencies co-operated with indigenous communities in the planning and prioritising of interventions in the Chaco area as part of the MDG-F programme on Democratic Economic Governance in Paraguay. The process of integrated planning of rural access starts with a visit to the communities and interviews with key actors, and then develops details about needs, resources and desired solutions. The information collected is presented in larger meetings with several communities, where decisions about priorities on the construction plans are made.

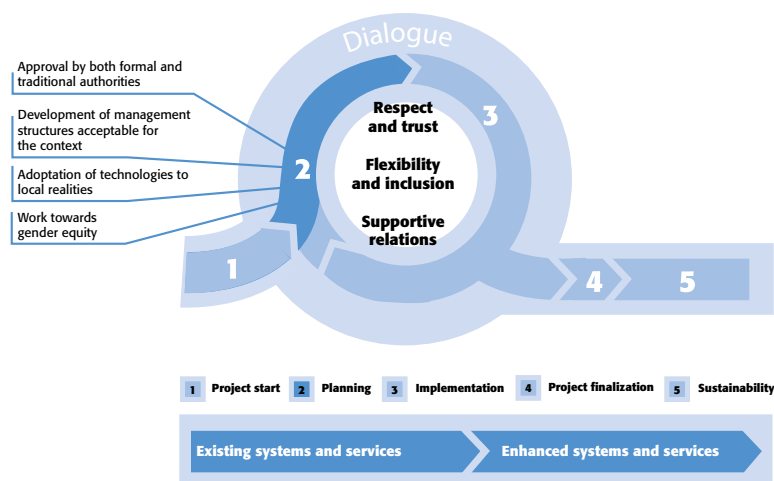
The process takes some three months, and respects the time frames of the communities. As women were in many cases not comfortable in expressing their ideas at larger meetings, their concerns could be informally worked into the men's proposals between the meetings. However, in a community with female leadership, it was less complicated to engage with the women than in those led by men. The opening up of dialogues may also lead to many other community issues not directly related to water and sanitation being brought into the process.

For more information visit: www.fimi-iiwf.org/odmdg/ventanas-tematicas/gobernanza-economica-democratica/59-fortaleciendo-capacidades-para-la-definicion-y-aplicacion-de-politicas-de-agua-y-saneamiento

Planning Phase

Approval by formal and indigenous authorities: Indigenous communities often have several types of authority. There may be administrative structures for the territories, alongside other indigenous authorities with specific competences. The work and permission of these authorities is an important factor for all parties to begin the project with a positive attitude. On occasion, insufficient knowledge of the specific institutional fabric in indigenous territories, or the contradictions between mandates of different authorities, results in institutional misunderstandings that can seriously affect the project's success.

Figure 3 – The Project Cycle and Important Considerations for the Planning Phase



Other institutions that may be important in the community should also be involved, to act as project promoters, rather than blocking it. It is necessary to work with the structures and institutions recognised by the community as their own – for example religious institutions; see Box 7 – to ensure the community's change in attitude towards sustainable water and sanitation services is backed by the main local actors.

Development of acceptable service management structures:

The values of indigenous communities regarding individual rights and governance models may diverge from the values promoted by water and sanitation projects. These contradictions add complexity to the challenge of using existing governance structures. Community water management structures must be designed with and accepted by the indigenous peoples themselves. This may entail, at least in the short term, forgetting some standard principles of good governance for water committees, like gender equity. Principles considered fundamental for the proper operation of these systems can be introduced only through dialogue between the parties. Imposing a certain type of management body has quite often led to it being inactive, and even to its dismantling shortly after the end of the project.

BOX 7. THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

One particular dimension that arose from the fieldwork of the research project was the Church's importance in leading interventions in the communities – which means that it must be involved in project development.

“The existing community leadership is always included, respecting and working with the community, religious and ancestral authorities.”

(Acción Médica Cristiana, Laguna de Perlas).

“When doing the field visit one must contact the leaders such as the church and try to create a relation with them to be able to go into the community”

(Municipality of Bluefields, 2013)

Adaption of technology to the local context:

When predetermined types of infrastructure are imposed by projects, this may be a reason for failure, either because the technologies are poorly adapted to the local context, or because the potential users do not

BOX 8. USING LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

In the Paraguayan MDG-F programme people from the communities where development interventions were under way who possessed extensive knowledge about the local environmental conditions were named 'empirical experts' and/or brigade leader as a way to recognise and highlight the value of their knowledge. Their expertise related to soils and the location of fresh water reserves in the dry Chaco landscape was essential to the implementation of the programme.

Source: Maria Teresa Gutierrez, ILO Paraguay

accept them. The special relationship that many indigenous communities have with their land is associated with a profound knowledge of its ecology, the local water resources (amount, seasonality, quality, etc.), and local practices that may be very effective for issues such as drinking water treatment (e.g. using local plants to filter water) and personal hygiene (e.g. using plant by-products, ashes or other materials for hand-washing, instead of soap).

This includes the use of different water sources for different purposes, and how to reuse water. This cumulative body of knowledge generally referred to as Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), passed on through generations, should be respected and built into any project when designing improved services – as seen in Box 8. Box 9 includes a list of examples of sources of information about alternative technologies in the area of water and sanitation.

Working for gender equality: In most cultures women bear the main responsibility for managing water in the home, which is why it is important to ensure that their knowledge, perspectives and interests are included and considered in decision-making. And studies by for example the International Water and Sanitation Centre (IRC) and the World Bank have shown that community water and sanitation projects designed and implemented with women's full participation are more sustainable and effective (UN-Water, 2006; Van Wijk-Sijbesma, 1998). The promotion of non-discrimination is common practice in development programmes, especially in relation to gender inequality. Yet, as discrimination also exists within indigenous communities and organisations, just

as it does everywhere else, a great deal of sensitivity is needed when working towards increased equality. The MDG-F programme in Ecuador decided to concentrate its gender activities at the local level on communities where openness to changes in the gender roles or already established women's leadership existed before the programme implementation. This was because promoting gender equality met strong resistance in some communities where it was actively pursued. The conclusion was that a specific effort to raise general awareness of women's roles and gender equality was needed before projects that integrated water, sanitation and gender could be implemented. At the same time, other MDG-F programmes attribute a lot of their success to their

BOX 9. ALTERNATIVE TECHNOLOGIES

There are many different accessible sources on technological alternatives: The "Smart Solutions" series, published by the International Research Centre (IRC), in collaboration with UNICEF and other organizations, for Water, Sanitation, Rain Water Collection, Hygiene and Disinfection.

Accessible through: www.nwp.nl/activiteiten/activiteit-en-in-nederland/ngo-platform.php

A compendium of sanitation technologies has been compiled as a collaboration among Eawag, Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council and the Water Alliance.

www.eawag.ch/forschung/sandec/publikationen/compendium_e/index_EN

There are also organisations devoted to researching and promoting alternative technologies, such as the Practica Foundation.

www.practica.org or www.susana.org

The Technical Cooperation Agreement between the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) and the Swiss Development Cooperation Agency (SDC) to improve sanitation in rural areas of Peru generated over 130 technical documents from 1997 to 2008.

Accessible in Spanish at www.bvsde.ops-oms.org/tecapro/index_pre.html

They include a compendium of water and sanitation technologies.

Accessible in Spanish through www.bvsde.paho.org/bvsade/e/fulltext/tecnologias/tecnologias.pdf

BOX 10. STRENGTHENING OF WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

Factors helping the success of the work on women's leadership in the MDG-F programme on Democratic Economic Governance in Panama include:

- The involvement of women in the whole process of programme implementation, from the start, ensured the empowerment of this group.
- Women were assured of the opportunity to benefit in conditions equalling those of men from the opportunity to earn an income from building infrastructure.
- The integration of men in household work allowed the women to be involved in all the project activities.
- Women's traditional work was recognised as being just as important as the men's, generating confidence and raising self-esteem.

As a result:

- Local organisations are currently represented by both men and women and the Administrative Board of Rural Aqueducts in Bisira has been chaired by a woman for the last two years.
- Men appreciate and acknowledge the participation and leadership of women, thus improving their basic skills.
- Women have earned their place within Ngäbe society structures that were traditionally ruled by men. Today they are recognised as leaders and entrepreneurs

Source: Bonilla Cáceres (2013), Case Study of Women's Leadership, page 31.

strong record in promoting female leadership and women's capacity building – as in the Panama case described in Box 10.

These different experiences show the importance of being sensitive to how, where and to what extent equality – including age, capabilities, sexual orientation and gender – can be promoted. Nonetheless, the need for sensitivity should not be used as an excuse not to work to combat discrimination in community organizations and partner institutions. The least to ask of any intervention is that it takes care not to aggravate existing inequalities.



Photo: MDG-F

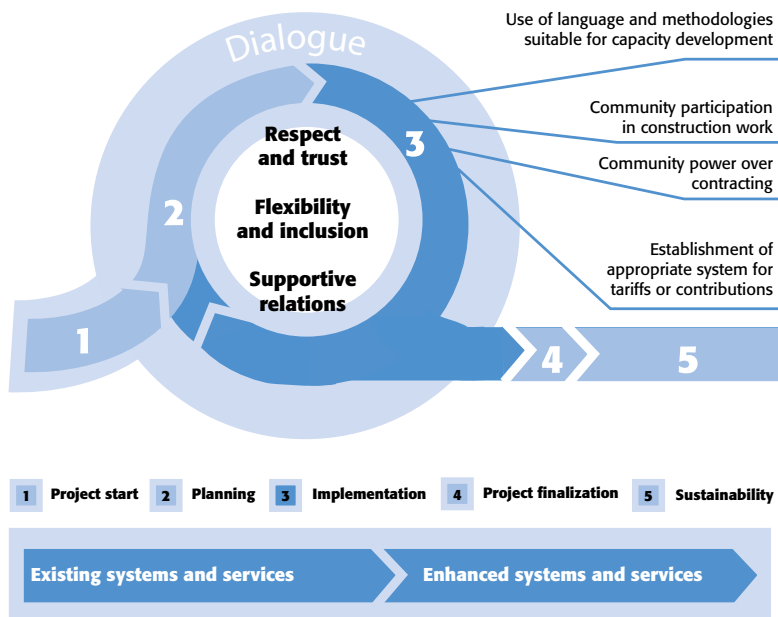
Implementation Phase

The implementation phase includes physical construction and start-up of the management structure.

“The long historical memory of the Andean peoples has generally been preserved in narratives, called legends... [that] maintain the principles, values and logics of their worldview”

(SENASABA, 2011, p. 17)

Figure 4 – The Project Cycle and Important Considerations for the Implementation Phase



Using appropriate methodology and language for training and education:

Working with indigenous communities, it is common practice to translate materials into the peoples' own languages. However, experience shows that translating is not enough; the translators must be able to transform technical jargon into the way the community speaks. They need also to reflect on how messages and knowledge are conveyed within the community, not thinking exclusively of printed materials as the only way to transmit information (Heising, 2002). As much of the knowledge of indigenous peoples is transmitted orally, and illiteracy is often higher than the national average, ways of visualising information and the use of oral presentations are important. As noted earlier, the holding of numerous meetings and talks, with diverse community groups and institutions, is crucial to ensuring a mutual understanding of the values, priorities and practices that need to be supported to develop sustainable access to water and sanitation services.

Community participation in constructing water and sanitation infrastructure:

There are different degrees of possible community involvement in the construction process. At the basic level, community members can be trained, in order later to be hired as part of the construction crew. This generates skills in the community, and in some cases pride, as a Miskita woman, trained as a bricklayer, put it: "Now we are skilled workers ... we used to be the community counterpart; now we can be contracted" (ILO, 2012, p. 50).

Community contracting: Another possible method entails the community in supervising infrastructure and giving final approval (prior to acceptance and final payment), ensuring its involvement in and control over the infrastructure that has been installed; see Box 11. There is some experience with community management of contracting, where the community itself is responsible for the entire process of contracts for and supervision of the infrastructure.

Establishment of an appropriate payment system: When using a drinking water system it is the cost of the service, and not of the water itself, that is being charged for. But the fact that a resource can be captured and its provision made into a commodity is a huge cultural change, which not everyone is willing to accept. Besides, there are many peoples without a steady cash income, for whom having to use money to pay any fee becomes a major obstacle. The establishment and collection of fees are among the greatest difficulties encountered in the programmes that were reviewed for this document.

In this context, two alternatives stand out:

i) Making payments flexible, allowing payment in kind (animals, harvest produce, etc.) which the water management body can then sell or exchange for the goods and services it needs, or paying by working for the community; see Box 12;

BOX 11: COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT TO MANAGE CONSTRUCTION WORK

In the Panama MDG-F programme indigenous communities were trained to implement 'community contracting'. Here the community negotiates a contract, generally on infrastructure construction, with a government institution, private company or a development programme. As the community negotiates the contract the traditional relationship of provider-recipient is changed to a partnership, empowering the community by increasing its self-esteem and generating greater social cohesion. It also ensures a strong sense of ownership of the project and the infrastructure, while retaining many of the skills needed for maintenance within the community. The social auditing exercised by the community also ensures the quality of the infrastructure. However, as with all participatory processes, community contracting requires substantial time and support.

For more information see: www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/recon/eiip/download/community_contr.pdf

Source: ILO, 2001

ii) Working with government authorities to design a level of subsidy and support for communities according to their socio-economic situation. This way, some countries have set up systems to subsidise some of these services; see Box 13.

BOX 12: ALTERNATIVE RATE PAYMENT METHODS

Modern drinking water supply systems require some user payment to maintain them, while many indigenous peoples do not handle currency.

In communities on the Nicaraguan Caribbean Coast maintenance work on the systems is accepted instead of payments as a way to give families with low incomes access to drinking water.

Source: Inés Hernandez, RAAS Regional Government, Nicaragua

BOX 13: SUBSIDIES FOR BASIC SERVICES

In Colombia the government has instituted a national system of subsidies of basic services, such as electricity, gas, drinking water, sewerage and solid waste disposal, based on the socio-economic level of the household. Rural communities are generally within the subsidised areas, while richer households (often urban) pay higher rates to finance the system.

The system has brought economic and health benefits to the most disadvantaged sectors of the population.

Source: Gómez, 2007



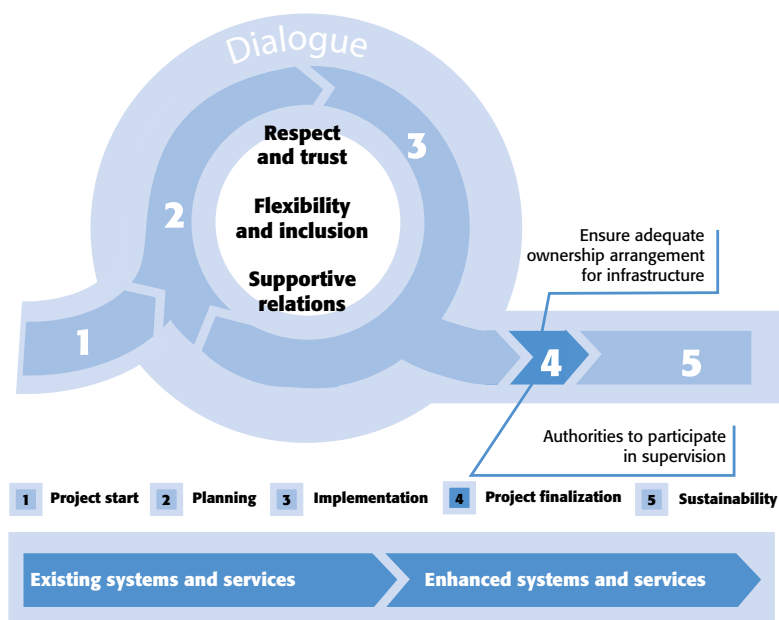
Photo: Fundación Avina

Project Finalisation

Ensure an adequate system for ownership of infrastructure: Problems with ownership begin with the perception that initiatives are “actions by outsiders”, for which no responsibility for subsequent maintenance is acknowledged. Along with the problems with the sense of ownership of the project, which must be worked on from its very beginning, comes the question of the formal ownership of the infrastructure. Indigenous peoples have generally had difficulties in gaining formal recognition of land ownership and collective ownership. Many indigenous peoples’ ownership systems are based on collective property, and this is impor-

tant to keep in mind when siting the infrastructure as well as in determining management structures and the distribution of responsibilities. Failure to manage these aspects may compromise project results. It is particularly important to have clarified these aspects at the time of handing over infrastructure and initiating the services.

Figure 5 – The Project Cycle and Important Considerations at Project Finalisation



BOX 14. CONTINUOUS PRESENCE

The Miskito communities of Klampa and Bum in the Northern Atlantic Autonomous Region, Nicaragua, participated in a water and sanitation programme with collaboration from UNICEF and ACRA (Association for Rural Cooperation in Africa and Latin America).

A great success of this project was the result of the programme personnel living in the community, sometimes for several weeks in a row. These stays enabled the team to learn about existing practices and values regarding hygiene, sanitation and water supply.

The project constructed rain water harvesting systems and raised toilets adapted to the community’s existing houses.

Documented by video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=SLZH5y2l6VY

Supervision with the participation of the authorities: As indigenous communities are often remote and face obstacles managing outside contracts, they lend themselves to abuse and low-quality construction. This makes it important to provide adequate supervision of the process, despite logistical difficulties, and to include the local authorities who will ensure that the service carries on in the future. At the same time, the involvement of the community as regulators and overseers throughout the process of intervention is equally important. On a number of occasions, a well-defined project, even with important elements of community decision-making and participation, has ultimately failed because of a lack of supervision and deficient implementation. The use of 'community contracting' (see Box 8) can be one way to engage the community in social auditing and monitoring, but it is also advisable to include specific objectives, resources and time within the project for post-construction support.

BOX 15. INTEGRITY

Corruption implies breaching society's expectations about adequate behaviour. For this reason, it is important to take the cultural perspective into account when analysing this problem.

Integrity refers to the need for representatives of the public, private and civil society sectors to perform their duties honestly, resisting extortion and fighting corruption. The main lines of work in this direction are promoting participation, transparency and accountability.

The Water Integrity Network (WIN) offers a wealth of resources and tools for use in this field. For further information, please see www.waterintegritynetwork.net.

Different initiatives for water management integrity are being applied locally, as for example in Costa Rica.

This has been documented by video; see UNDP (2013) ASADAS Primer Corte <http://vimeo.com/67035096>.

Sustainability

The sustainability of services will largely depend on proper implementation of the project throughout the project cycle, affirmed through continuous monitoring and evaluation of the intervention. This document will not discuss all the aspects which influence sustainability, but we do highlight three fundamental elements in this context:

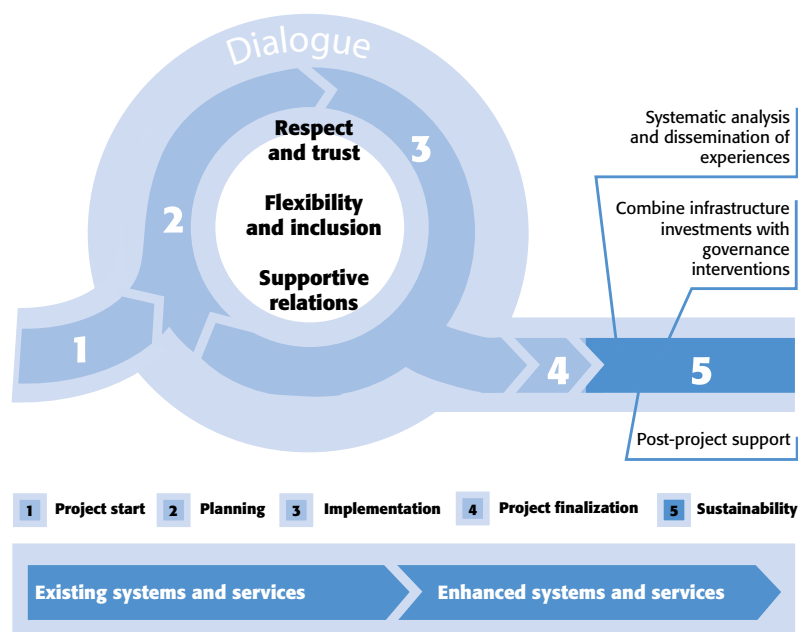
Post-project support: It is internationally recognised that support from authorities and service providers for community water management must continue, for any type of community (Jiménez & Pérez-Foguet, 2010;

Lockwood and Smits, 2011). Since indigenous peoples cope with the same technical, management and leadership challenges and problems as any other communities they too require support.

Combine infrastructure investments with governance interventions: One general finding in the MDG-F governance programmes in the water and sanitation sector is the advantage gained by combining investments in infrastructure with broader support to the governance of the services and the support structures (Kjellén and Cortobius, 2013). This generates organisations with the capacities to maintain their services, ensuring the sustainability and community ownership of these systems.

Systematic analysis and transmission of experiences: The shortage of systematic analyses of experiences from projects working with indigenous communities has stood out in this research. This lack of systematic information results partly from a general tendency to highlight only successes, combined with the political sensitivity of some aspects of interventions in this field, which limits the possibilities of learning from experience.

Figure 6 – The Project Cycle and Important Considerations for Sustainability



A SPECIFIC LOOK AT SANITATION

Sanitation and hygiene are closely related to perceptions of pollution and dirt, and with the associated concepts of cleanliness and health. This implies that there is no universal definition of what is dirty, per se, but rather a socio-cultural construct within each society (Douglas, 2002). Personal values and beliefs are fundamental for the societal system of maintaining order and cleanliness. So solutions for sanitation and hygiene need to be based on existing values and established practices in each population, and must also meet their aspirations.

For that reason, cultural values related to sanitation systems and preferences must be explored, understood and used to advantage. Lack of knowledge about the values associated with hygiene and sanitation has caused more than a few failures in project implementation, for reasons discerned by subsequent socio-anthropological studies. Providing latrines or health education will not of themselves change sanitation and hygiene habits.

Recent approaches to sanitation marketing explore community perspectives in order to stimulate or alter preferences relating to hygiene and to promote the demand for sanitation and healthy environments. Experiences in this field usually have no specific relationship to indigenous peoples (Jenkins and Scott, 2007; Baskovich, 2011; Mehta and Knapp, 2004), but their methodologies may prove quite useful.

The hygiene habits of indigenous peoples may differ from those of many Western cultures. It is therefore important to generate a mutual understanding among all those involved in a project before designing any solutions. There are studies that show that the hygiene habits of indigenous peoples in their native context may be more effective than those of outsiders. Briones-Chávez et al. (2013), for example, showed how the practice of many indigenous peoples of constructing elevated dwellings effectively protected them against soil-transmitted helminths.

BOX 16: **SANITATION AND CROWDING IN RAMA CAY**

The Rama Cay community suffers from severe overcrowding. By tradition, the Rama people have built latrines over the water, around their two islands. The community's elders say: "Our ancestors always used them, and nothing happened to them" and they also consider it favourable to be free of odours, with the ocean's fresh fragrance.

Composting toilets were introduced in this community, but with little acceptance, as it was considered that people should not 'play' with feces (it is necessary to stir the contents of the latrine periodically to produce fertilizer). Even so, some women and youth showed interest in the advantages of obtaining fertilizer for their crops. The crowding also makes it difficult to find an on-

land sustainable solution that will be acceptable, since the people give priority to building homes on what little land they still have left.



Photo: Mercedes Tinoco

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This document aims to gather principles and recommendations for working with rural water and sanitation projects with indigenous communities in a respectful and sustainable way. The recognition of the human right to water and sanitation compels us to work for universal access to them, with a participatory approach and avoiding discrimination. This is particularly important in relation to indigenous peoples, who have been socially and economically marginalised and so have been prevented from enjoying equitable recognition of their needs, perspectives and rights in water and sanitation provision. A fundamental part of respecting the values of indigenous peoples is to give formal recognition of their authority over and rights to lands and resources.

As stated in the introduction, many of the recommendations in this document could be applied equally to rural water and sanitation projects with non-indigenous communities. Yet there are specific features that affect the sustainability of an intervention. These are indigenous peoples' world views, relationships and knowledge of water and sanitation; the need to involve indigenous authorities and to establish a relationship between them and government institutions; cultural values and economic possibilities related to tariff-setting and the monetisation of water.

Dialogue is the basic tool to generate long-term relationships of mutual trust and support between the indigenous communities, the responsible authorities and development agencies. For this dialogue to be fruitful it requires adequate resources and sufficient time, with the necessary flexibility to change work plans according to community demands. It is also essential to accompany the process well beyond the construction and management of services.

However, the recommendations in this document should not be taken as a set recipe of activities to follow. It is important rather to stress that it is an approach based on respect, openness and flexibility which is fundamental. So it is how activities are carried out, rather than which activities are selected, that should be at the heart of intercultural work.



Photo: MDG-F

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WORKING WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN RURAL WATER AND SANITATION: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AN INTERCULTURAL APPROACH

Throughout the world there are disparities in water and sanitation services coverage between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples because physical and economic challenges intersecting with cultural and political marginalisation. At the same time most indigenous peoples have a close cultural and spiritual relationship to water resources in their territories and have deep knowledge of them. Yet this is often overlooked by water projects working with indigenous peoples, which compromises the effectiveness and sustainability of the project. This document poses recommendations on how to implement an intercultural approach throughout the project cycle in rural water and sanitation projects with indigenous peoples, focusing on Latin America. It concludes that the establishment of mutual respect and trust through dialogues as equals, flexible and inclusive project processes and structures and the creation of long-term supportive relations are fundamental elements of an effective intercultural approach.

