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Water Advocacy in Practice

In this section we hope to encourage you to have confidence to do advocacy work by showing what is being done already. We are also including examples of regional initiatives aiming to find solutions to water problems. (Details of how to become involved in these initiatives are given in Appendix 2.) We hope you will find the questions for discussion useful within your organisation.

Question for discussion

- *Why is there a lack of access to water and sanitation in your country eg: drought, flooding, pollution, infrastructure failure, land rights – anything else?*

LOCAL

CASE STUDY 1: ACCESS TO WATER

CORD Rwanda and UNICEF¹

UNICEF had devised a national programme: 'Water and Environmental Sanitation' for water development in Rwanda. Looking at the country's water problems from a national perspective, they had decided on a standard solution for every area. CORD were given a quota of materials and money by UNICEF in Spring 1998 to protect 40 springs in the area they worked in.

However, the majority of the springs in that area were technically very difficult to protect. The government had even encouraged people to move from the valley where the springs were situated to the hilltops. CORD did not want to carry out the UNICEF plan because they had found other springs to the West that would be easier to protect and would provide cleaner water that could be distributed more easily.

CORD drew up the following objectives:

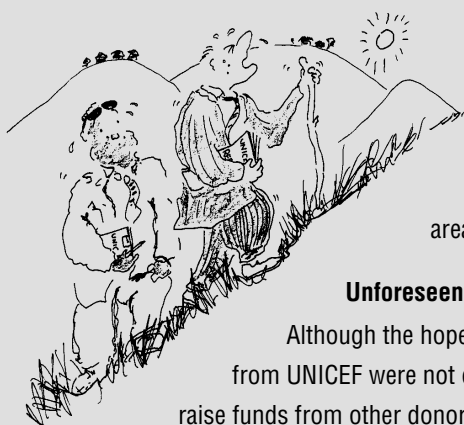
- To convince UNICEF that it would be unwise and impractical to carry out its proposed solution in the designated area.
- To persuade UNICEF to agree to let CORD use the same money and materials to protect springs in another area.

Advocacy action

At first CORD attempted to change UNICEF's mind by visiting their offices for meetings, and by making various telephone calls and writing letters. But this did not work so they decided to change their methods. They invited some people from UNICEF to come and visit the site of the proposed spring protection in the valley. They walked from the hilltops where people were living down to the valley where the springs were situated and then back up the hill again. This was the route the women would have to walk to obtain water from the protected springs.

¹ Christian Outreach Relief and Development (CORD) is a British relief and development agency, committed to helping refugees, children and marginalised people, both at times of crisis and post emergency. They aim to enable communities and individuals to have greater control over situations that affect their lives, to encourage self-reliance and to provide sustainable solutions to problems. UNICEF is the part of the United Nations that deals with issues affecting children.

ADVOCACY GUIDELINES



As they walked back up the hill there was a change of heart as UNICEF officials realised that their solution was impractical.

By Spring 1999, UNICEF agreed that CORD could use the materials to protect the springs in the other area instead.

Unforeseen outcomes

Although the hoped for result was achieved, the money and materials from UNICEF were not enough, and considerable extra work was needed to raise funds from other donors. The technical solution in the new project was also far more complex than in the original one, and consequently more work was needed in training the community to ensure the adequate management and maintenance of the project. In spite of all this, ultimately the new solution was much more appropriate for the long term than the original plan would have been.

Questions for discussion

- *What are international donors doing about water problems in your area? Do you agree with what they are doing?*

CASE STUDY 2: PARTNERING WITH WATER AUTHORITIES

DSK in Bangladesh

A Bangladesh NGO, Dushtha Shasthya Kendra (DSK) has been piloting an innovative approach to the provision of water for urban slum dwellers in Dhaka, with the support of a number of international agencies. The Dhaka water authority does not have the flexibility to provide water to informal groups with no legal status, such as those living in the city's slums.

DSK provided an 'intermediation' role between the slum communities and the government. They helped to organise community groups, providing training in managing the water supply, obtaining community contributions, organising credit, and providing technical support for the design of the water points. They also trained community group leaders in how to lobby water utilities. Finally, with the support of DSK, the groups approached the water authority and signed an agreement for the provision of the waterpoint.

Nineteen of the originally planned 20 water points are now in operation and a further ten have since been completed. The loan recovery rate is satisfactory and the groups are all expected to be able to complete repayment during the agreed time schedule, after which they will take full responsibility for management of the waterpoint. A second phase has been planned to cover another 30 water points to be installed by DSK and a further 36 by other NGOs, with technical support from DSK.

The success of this pilot programme has generated interest from other NGOs and agencies including UNICEF, who have begun to replicate the approach for themselves.²

Question for discussion

- *Is there a government authority that you could partner with, to achieve your aims?*

2 Taken with grateful thanks from Cathy Watson, *WaterAid Advocacy Sourcebook*.

CASE STUDY 3: DON'T GIVE UP

The Sahsa community, Nicaragua

The Sahsa community was established in the mid-1980s when the Sandinista government moved them away from the dangers of crossfire in the civil war at the time. There are now 1,300 inhabitants, living in the RAAN (the North Atlantic Autonomous Region).

From the start, the health of the community was very poor: high levels of infant mortality (more than 200 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1989), malaria epidemics, diarrhoea and respiratory infections...

In 1989 Acción Médica Cristiana (AMC) began work in the community, and found great organisational strength, due to the community's traumatic origins. Through its leaders, the community had identified the need for latrines and clean water if health was to improve.

Water came mostly from a small river, while the few people who had corrugated iron roofs managed to collect rainwater. The overcrowding, lack of latrines, and many animals moving freely round the area meant the river was very easily contaminated. A number of steps were taken to improve this: animals were not allowed close to the river; water was only to be taken from up-river, while washing and laundry were to be done downstream; chlorine was increasingly used and water was boiled to purify it. All this had positive results but needed great efforts by the people.

Other options were discussed such as communal and family wells. Then in 1992 after consulting experts, a draft project was chosen for constructing a gravity-driven mini-aqueduct for drinking water. (There was no electricity for a pumped system.) The cost would be US \$60,000, and the community set up a committee to work with the AMC to find the funds. The community itself would provide the labour, land and maintenance of the work.

For several years government authorities and national and international organisations were approached, but with no success. Then in 1997 came a breakthrough: a Swiss development co-operation agency, along with the Canada-Nicaragua Counterpart Fund, began looking at water projects in the area. They called together all the NGOs and community leaders, and representatives from the AMC with a delegation from the community presented their project. Interminable negotiations followed with endless bureaucratic complications: it was only thanks to the strong motivation and will of the community that in November 1999 the funds were finally obtained for their project.

A consortium was formed of various organisations, with the local Mayor's office providing the necessary legal and logistical support, and the community being the owners and executors of the project.

Worse problems now arose, as an individual in the community claimed ownership of lands that everyone had thought were communal. For political reasons, the State did not declare these lands 'areas of public utility' which would have over-ridden the individual's claims. The whole project was in danger of collapsing, and some people began to put pressure on the individual, even resorting to violence. This did not help as he then took the community leaders to court, accused of physical aggression. At the same time, the community took him to court for contaminating the water: he had located 300 cattle by the river's source.

Meanwhile, the community appointed representatives to put pressure on the Mayor's office, the Ministry of the Interior, offices of justice and regional media. A group of leaders even went to Managua, the capital city, to the National Assembly where they met opposition Members who expressed their support. The trip was paid for by the community, and supported logistically by the AMC.

They also visited NGOs, human rights organisations, the media and leaders of the different political parties. They met with much support, but the final decisions had to lie with the judge and the landowner. The AMC and other NGOs joined in the campaign to put pressure on the landowner.

In August 2000 a final ultimatum came from the funding agencies: if the conflict continued, the funds would be withdrawn and invested in another community. This decision filled the community members with fear. They thought and prayed hard for a rapid and positive resolution of the problem, and then decided to try a process of conciliation through a lawyer. They made themselves available to talk with the landowner in order to assess the current and future implications of losing this opportunity. Incredibly, after all that had occurred, the landowner agreed to donate part of the land needed to construct and protect the water system (approx 20 manzanas of land), and to allow permanent passage for its maintenance.

In October 2000 the dream began to turn into reality: 580 people (nearly half of whom were women) were organised into groups of 80 to give their vital contribution of labour. The aqueduct should only take a few months to construct. From beginning to end, from deciding on the project, gaining approval and funds, fighting the legal battle for land ownership, and finally participating in the building and maintenance, it has been the strong motivation and organisational capacity of this community that has ensured its success.

Questions for discussion

- *How can your organisation involve the local community in any advocacy you do? Think of the different methods you could use for your advocacy actions eg: networking, media work, lobbying officials, legal mechanisms. Which ones are most appropriate and at which stages of an advocacy strategy?*

CASE STUDY 4: PUBLIC CAMPAIGNING

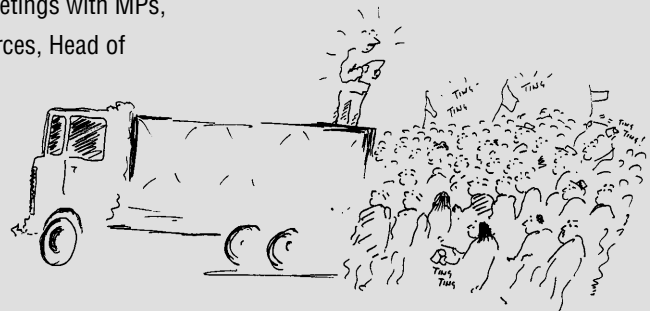
Ação Evangélica (ACEV), Brazil

Ação Evangélica is a small Pentecostal denomination with 27 churches in Brazil, 18 being in rural areas of the Northeast. Ação Evangélica seeks to put into practice the holistic Gospel message it preaches, being active in evangelism, church planting, discipleship, Bible teaching, leadership training, development and relief work.

Pipeline campaign

Amongst their various activities, Ação Evangélica drills wells for poor communities and in parallel to this it does water advocacy work. For the last seven years they have been campaigning for a pipeline to be run from the Coremas reservoir to the Patos, São Mamede and Santa Luzia region. This has taken the form of regular public meetings with MPs, Secretary of State for Water Resources, Head of the State Water Board, Mayor and Local Councillors.

One day the organisation held a can-bashing day which involved 5,000 people. The politicians' attitude was fascinating as they



hoped the day would be a flop and not many would turn out. However, as they saw that crowds were gathering and TV cameras had arrived, they quickly joined the march at the front!

This ended in a public meeting with speeches from on top of a large lorry. ACEV led the meeting, carefully controlling the party political balance of speakers. This got some politicians really angry as they were not allowed to speak. The majority of speakers were non-party political.

ACEV also organised a petition to the State Governor, and even paid for adverts on TV in favour of the pipeline. Sadly though, so far all this work has led to nothing but promises.

Well-drilling campaign

At Olho D'Água, ACEV wanted to drill two wells but were constantly hampered by the authorities who refused to give them even a small patch of land. Says John Medcraft, the Director of Ação Evangélica, 'Water here means political power. If the people have their own water, the people have power. Corrupt politicians hate that.'

More recently they had similar trouble at Maturéia where the Mayor, plus his allies, refused to co-operate. They eventually managed to sink a well with a low hand pump production level because they were refused a better site that had been recommended by their geologist.

Why no success yet?

The organisers do not think there is anything wrong with their campaigning, but they feel they have failed to make much headway because they do not have decision-making power in their hands. They believe they will win and eventually the pipe-line will be put in place: it is all a question of bringing enough pressure to bear on the authorities, who have spent a fortune on spreading electrical power statewide so as to be able to privatise it. Ação Evangélica are arguing that they should spend some of this money on the pipeline.

Another lesson learnt is that politicians do not like doing things underground – pipelines, proper sanitation and drainage systems – because you cannot see them and thus they do not win elections. The politicians have actually said this off the record!

As for the future, Ação Evangélica are utterly determined to continue. They plan to hold two public meetings: the first one exclusively with those in power, and the second with the opposition politicians. They hope that this will increase pressure, with elections coming up in 2002.

A sign of success?

Recently, the State Governor announced on the radio that he would, as soon as possible, be starting work on the pipeline! He might not keep his promise but the group do see it is a step forward because they can now hold the authorities to a public announcement.



Questions for discussion

- Are any of these examples of campaigning appropriate for you (eg: a can-bashing day, public meetings with political leaders, adverts on TV, petitions)? If so, which ones?

CASE STUDY 5: LOBBYING GOVERNMENT

NGO Network in India

A group of NGOs, Oxfam (India) Trust and Hyderabad Training and Development Centre decided to work together in Visakhapatnam district in the state of Andhra Pradesh following the failure by government to maintain 300–400 handpumps. The maintenance was dependent on government mechanics who did not have the right resources to do the job properly. The situation was serious because most people were dependent on the handpumps as their main source of water.

Consequently, the group of NGOs decided to put together an alternative proposal to solve the problem. They started a project to train community mechanics to maintain the handpumps in each village.

Before the project could be successful, the NGOs had to persuade the government staff of its benefits, as officials are often suspicious of the quality of the work of community mechanics. After much persuasion and hard work the government agreed to let the community mechanics have access to the handpumps.

However, government officials were still unhappy about working with the community mechanics. As the NGOs were concerned that this relationship problem would lead to delays in mending the handpumps, they put a new proposal to the government. They asked for a full operational partnership based on a written agreement, so that collaboration would be formal and effective. They drafted a document to show the government officials. After a lot of persuasion and lobbying, the proposal was accepted.

The NGOs had to be patient and persistent. They had to contact many different officials eg: the Collector, the Chief Executive Officer, the Superintendent Engineer... The hard work paid off, and these officials became convinced that this was the best way to work together. There is now close collaboration with government mechanics, and the government continues to provide replacement spare parts to community spares banks. The government also now agrees that the community has an important role to play in handpump maintenance. In addition, relationships between all parties – government, NGO staff and communities – are much closer.³

Questions for discussion

- *Is there a network of NGOs working on advocacy on water issues that you could join? If not could you set one up?*

3 Taken with grateful thanks from Cathy Watson, *WaterAid Advocacy Sourcebook*.

NATIONAL

CASE STUDY 6: CHANGING PRIORITIES

NGOs in Uganda

In 1999, a small group of development and advocacy NGOs in Uganda carried out a Participatory Poverty Assessment with funding from the World Bank, to ask poor communities how they defined poverty and what their priorities were for poverty reduction. In 8 out of 45 districts, water and sanitation facilities and services was found to be their second priority for poverty eradication. Prior to this study, government budget allocation to the water and sanitation sector was the lowest among the social sector. With the results of the Poverty Assessment, the NGOs lobbied the Ministry of Finance to reflect the priorities of the poor for poverty reduction in Uganda's PEAP (Poverty Eradication Action Plan). Consequently the PEAP was revised, and water and sanitation now have second priority in budget allocations. A taskforce of NGOs has been formed to ensure that the study results are also reflected in the current PEAP review.

Questions for discussion

- *What are the local and national governments doing to combat or overcome water problems? Do you agree with what they are doing? Are there key policy processes in which they are or could be involved, that you could influence, eg: Framework for Action, NSSD? (see Appendix 1).*

REGIONAL

Some examples of work going on at a regional level:

Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC)

The WSSCC is an international member organisation with regional focal points.

The **Latin American Regional Group** was established in 1997 in Manila. The group set up five working groups to look at issues including the 'modernisation of potable water and sanitation sectors' and 'community management and collaboration with civil society'. The working groups are based in various countries: Bolivia, Colombia, Honduras and Venezuela.

The Latin America working group has also been involved in Vision 21: a global vision for water in the 21st century. Now they are working at country, regional and global level to work out how the Vision can be translated into action.

The **Southeast Asia Regional Group** was also established in 1997 in Manila. Members of the group come from different types of agencies – government, NGOs etc. Firstly the group contributed to a vision for Asia through national consultations in Myanmar, Philippines and Thailand with users, governments and NGOs.

Then in 1999 there was an Asian Regional Consultation which adopted the target of 2015 for every person to have an 'adequate hygiene, sanitation and safe domestic water supply with equity for all'.⁴ This contributed to the global Vision 21 (see above).



Other meetings have been held, such as an Advocacy Planning Workshop in Myanmar. Now all efforts are being put into translating the Vision for Asia into action: with awareness-raising and advocacy work, getting more stakeholders involved in Vision 21, identifying resources and making hygiene and sanitation a priority issue.

Nile Basin Initiative (NBI)

There are ten countries making up the Nile River Basin: Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda. Each country has different uses for the water and other resources of the basin. The NBI was set up in 1999 as a regional partnership, aiming to agree a permanent legal framework so that the rivers of the Nile can be sustainably managed and safeguarded for generations to come. This will become quite a challenge as population and economic demands grow and put greater pressure on water resources.

The NBI works through grass roots action and decision-making. They also want to set up joint development projects which they hope can bring about 'tangible benefits'.

The International Water Management Institute (IWMI)

In 2000 the IWMI, a global organisation, set up a new project in the Aral Sea region encompassing the countries of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tadjikistan and Kyrgyzstan. The aim of the project is to contribute to the building of effective water resource institutions in the region.

Following the break-up of the Soviet Union in the 1990s there has been a big problem over the management of water for farming between the different countries. A body called the Interstate Co-ordination Water Commission of Central Asia (ICWC) was set up to co-ordinate the allocation of water between the countries. IWMI is working with ICWC and others including the agricultural ministries of the countries themselves.

⁴ www.wsscc.org/forum5/execsumm/mapxs08.html

INTERNATIONAL

CASE STUDY 7: WORLD WATER FORUM

Tearfund, EFICOR and Kale Heywet Church at the World Water Forum and Ministerial Conference March 2000

This was the second World Water Forum to be organised by the World Water Council (WWC) and the Dutch government. It was intended to give an opportunity to 'address the challenges ahead and set down the conditions for a world in which everyone has access to clean water in 2025'. It was open to everybody but particularly to 'stakeholders' in water. The main stakeholders were considered to be:

- NGOs
- youth
- women
- business

... although government representatives and Trade Unions were also present.

The Ministerial Conference, running in parallel, was intended to 'generate political commitment' to solving the world's water problems. At the end of the conference, the Ministers would produce a declaration stating their commitments and beliefs, and agree to establish national water targets. In response to this, the four major stakeholder groups had to produce their own declaration and make an oral statement to the Ministerial meeting.

What was the problem?

The World Water Forum identified the problem as a global one of availability and quality of water, in the context of rapidly growing populations. But the solutions that the Forum was proposing also posed potential problems, as it seemed to many that there was an underlying agenda of privatisation and the unthinking involvement of the private sector to solve the water crisis. The approach of the large institutions dominating the Forum was to provide large-scale, high technology top-down solutions requiring big injections of investment. There were concerns that this approach is not necessarily the most appropriate, and does not favour the involvement of poor communities in water management and service provider accountability.

Tearfund, EFICOR (India) and the Kale Heywet Church (Ethiopia) were represented at the Forum. Between us we had various objectives, including to:

- gain a clearer idea of what each of our organisations should include in its advocacy and policy work on water, and to build up our relationships with each other
- input into the NGO declaration
- learn more about the international policy processes
- learn to do water advocacy work: speaking for the community and addressing their needs holistically; contributing to government policy; developing water policy in local areas
- develop contacts with other NGOs and form networks.

Were the objectives achieved?

The Forum helped to focus our ideas about the advocacy work on water and informed us about policy processes.

Tearfund had already had an opportunity to input views into the NGO declaration at earlier meetings in London. While at the Hague, everybody contributed to producing a policy document to influence the NGO declaration. Tearfund's prior knowledge of the process helped everyone to participate actively, unlike many NGOs who were disadvantaged by the Northern-based procedures.

Meeting as a team every day and in the evening on the last day helped to build relationships with each other. Useful contacts were also made, with government officials, NGOs and people from the private sector. Networking with other like-minded organisations was particularly useful because it encouraged each person and helped people to see how they could work together in future.

LESSONS LEARNT

An educational experience

Attending the Forum and participating in the Framework for Action consultations previously was a very educational experience. One starts to understand some of the different interests and forces that may be at work at international fora and to learn about which problems can be avoided.

NGOs must put their own interests aside and work together

It is very important for NGOs to work together and not push their own agenda when it is not directly relevant to the wider agenda.

Understand the process and relevant documents

Before attending such an event it is extremely important to have a good grasp of the exact process and documents. Most of the people from NGOs did not, partly because it was all very complicated. However, having prior knowledge ensures a much more effective strategy and targeted responses.

Christians have a role of reconciliation

It is very important for Christians to be involved in these events because we should try to bring a sensible viewpoint, to find the middle-ground. We should listen to others, and not try to dominate discussions. When we do speak we should identify the most important things and people will listen to us.

Not everybody has the same agenda

It cannot be assumed that everybody has the same understanding of poverty: it is more complicated than that. Business often wants to take advantage of the poor and everybody has their own agenda.

Don't attack others

It is very important to understand the policy process clearly and to know the facts, as it helps us to be more objective rather than falsely attacking others. We must be passionate in what we believe but never attack others.

Questions for discussion

- *How do the national and international policy processes affect the work you are doing? How could you influence them? Is there any way that your organisation and Tearfund could work together to influence the international policy processes?*

