



# Using the MPA in Benin

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**A demand-responsive approach should enable greater sustainability of water supply and sanitation projects, but how do we find out about what there is a demand for? The Methodology for Participatory Assessments (MPA) described here has been developed as an evaluation technique to help understand people's demand for and use of water services.**

The MPA is a participatory assessment tool that allows the community, the project staff and policy makers to look at the sustainability of WSS (water supply and sanitation) services.<sup>1</sup> It takes a demand-responsive approach one step further, by integrating aspects of gender and poverty as well as a three-level analysis of sustainability: at community, project and policy levels.

The analytical framework of the MPA is based on seven key indicators with a number of sub-indicators for each one (see Table 1). From these key indicators and their sub-indicators, a series of participatory exercises have been developed which enables the stakeholders to be informed on how they score relative to these indicators. The word 'score' here is used to mean that the MPA uses qualitative as well as quantitative methods. In fact, many of the exercises allow stakeholders to score themselves on different questions regarding their water and sanitation services. The scoring is done in a participatory manner, through discussion groups or voting, and other methods. The information that results from these exercises enables the facilitator to be able to assess where the community or programme staff situate themselves on a nominal scale from 0 to 4, or in other words from a WSS service going from low to high levels of demand responsiveness, gender and poverty sensitivity, and hence sustainability. Box 1 is an example of how such an exercise is carried out.

At the programme or project staff level the assessment is carried out with people from the NGOs (non-government organizations), CBOs (community-based organizations) as well as government staff from the

ministry in charge of water and sanitation. At this level of analysis, we also invite some representatives from the community level, often members from the water and sanitation committee. This is to provide a reality check for all the participants, since we often find that the opinions of the community, the NGO staff and government representatives on how well the WSS services work may differ quite widely. These discussions can be very interesting and constructive.

At the policy level an open discussion is held between high-level government staff to assess to what extent a demand-responsive approach (DRA), and a gender- and poverty-sensitive approach have been integrated in the policy documents or strategy, and to what extent it is effectively implemented in the field. The two previous assessments at community and project staff level are reviewed and from this

discussion the effectiveness of the strategy or policies can be assessed.

## How can the MPA used?

As already mentioned, the MPA can be used at different levels. It can also be used at different times of the project cycle: at the planning stage, during implementation, and for monitoring and evaluation. Nevertheless, to maximize its potential benefits and impact it is suggested that the MPA is used at the planning stage of a project and that it continues to be used as a monitoring system. The MPA is a resource-intensive methodology, and a full village-level assessment can take four to five days. So, if the MPA exercises are first used at the planning stage to obtain the baseline data and to set the objectives for the project, then used regularly by the NGO as part of the monitoring system, they are less likely to overwhelm the community.

Table 1 The MPA's seven key indicators and the level at which they are used

Indicator	Level
Is the service effectively sustained? (measuring system's quality, effective functioning, financing and management)	Community
Is the service effectively used? (assessing hygienic and environmental use)	Community
Is the service demand responsive? (measuring user demand, project responsiveness to demand)	Community
What is the division of burdens and benefits from the service? (assessing gender and poverty focus during service establishment and operations)	Community
To what extent does the community participate in the establishment and operations of the service? (effectiveness of training, management committee, etc.)	Community
To what extent was there institutional support for gender- and poverty-sensitive demand-responsive participation? (is there an enabling organizational system and organizational climate?)	Project/programme
To what extent does the current policy support gender- and poverty-sensitive, demand-responsive participation? (measuring the supportiveness of sector policy and strategy)	Policy makers

**Box 1. Exercise on gender division of burdens and benefits of the WSS service**

**Objective:** Analyse the equity in the division of labour, type of work, skilled and unskilled, paid and unpaid, between men and women in the WSS committee.

**Materials necessary:** Drawings of WSS-related activities, white paper for more drawings, markers.

**Process:**

- Meet with all the members of the WSS committee and ask them to discuss and list all the types of tasks that are related to the establishment and running of the service.
- Once they have listed all the types of tasks, show them pictures that represent these tasks and ask them to confirm that this picture represents the activity they meant. If the group does not relate to the picture ask them to draw a picture of the activity. Spread out all the drawings and now ask the group to come to an agreement on which of these activities is considered important and which ones are less important. Also ask them to show which activities are paid and which are unpaid.
- Once they have identified the tasks as important and less important and paid and non-paid, ask the group to show how many women and how many men carry out the tasks listed.
- From this exercise the group gets a clearer vision of who (man, woman or both) carries out what tasks, and what tasks are considered important and are paid or unpaid.
- Discussing the results of this exercise we present the group with a number of descriptions linked to a score (see table) and ask them to pick which one best describes their community.
- The group does not see the scores, which would mean little to them, but gets an idea of how they have graded their community, from not so good, to a good project. The converted score is used during the analysis of the completed assessment.

	Score	Convert to
Women do not participate in any of the tasks	0	0
Women only carry out less-important and unpaid tasks, all important and paid tasks are carried out by men	1	25
Women carry out both important and less-important tasks but not any paid tasks, which are only carried out by men	2	50
Women carry out both important and less important tasks and one woman also carries out a paid task	3	75
Important and less-important tasks as well as paid and unpaid tasks are equitably shared between men and women	4	100

The long-term objective would be that the water and sanitation committee feels empowered enough to carry out the monitoring exercises by itself.

**Results from the MPA in Benin**

In a recent study<sup>2</sup> the MPA was used to assess Benin’s strategy for rural water supply and sanitation. This strategy was piloted in 20 villages in the Atlantique and Zou regions under the ‘Project d’Assistance au Développement du secteur de l’Alimentation en Eau et de l’Assainissement en milieu Rural’, better known as PADEAR. The strategy was particularly concerned with the implementation of DRA, and the MPA was thus an appropriate tool to look at some of the key components of DRA. In each village between five and 45 people participated in the exercise.

Figure 1 shows in which aspects of the project the communities felt they made the decisions and in which

aspects they felt that others (elders, community leader or project staff) made the decision for them. From the

results we can see that in some aspects of DRA the project did quite well, such as the initiation of the project, access to

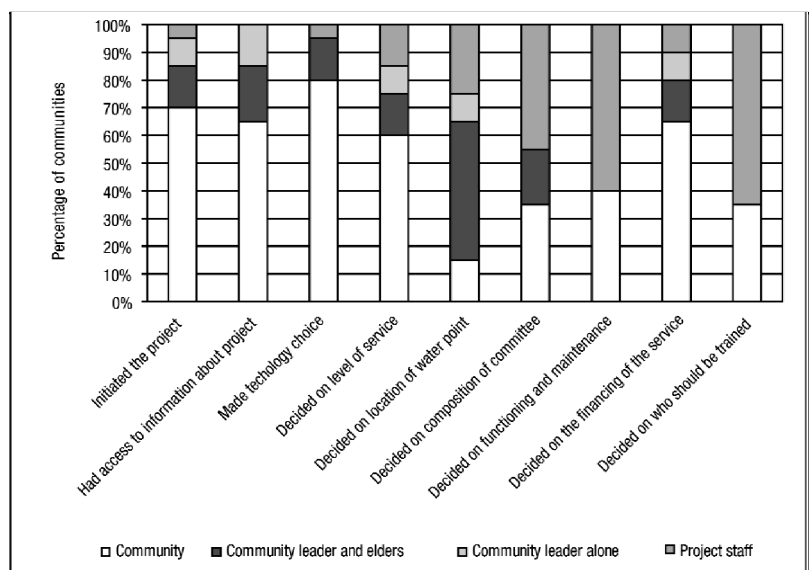


Figure 1 How communities felt that decisions on water supply had been made (from MPAs in 20 communities)

# participatory monitoring and evaluation

information and technology choice. However, it is clear that in other aspects – such as the location of the water point, and the functioning and maintenance of the supply and who should be trained – it was not the community at large but the project staff and the elders who made the decisions.

Many more results emerged from this study, which will now be used in the revision of the WSS strategy in Benin. A clear lesson from the MPA is that the NGO needs to learn how to facilitate the community's choice, and not to make the decisions for them.

## Conclusion

The MPA has now been used to assess other WSS projects. It has proved to be a useful tool to carry out assessments and led to a better understanding on the part of the communities of their own projects and how they would like to manage them. One important point to remember is the need for investments and resources to implement the MPA. Thorough training in the use of the MPA tools requires a two-week intensive training, followed by practical experience in the field together with some support for new trainees. It is essential that sufficient time be spent on training as the benefits reaped from using participatory tools depend to a large extent on expert facilitation and the competent use of these tools. This investment is not lost, however, since the tools can continue to be used in monitoring to enhance the sustainability of projects.

## About the author

Suzanne Reiff is a Water and Sanitation Specialist at the Water and Sanitation Program, based in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. Her main focus is on hygiene promotion, gender and poverty issues in the WSS sector.

## References

- 1 Dayal, van Wijk and Mukherjee (2000) 'Methodology for participatory assessments with communities, institutions and policy makers; linking sustainability with demand, gender and poverty' The Water and Sanitation Programme.
- 2 Reiff, Suzanne (2002) 'Les hommes et les femmes du Bénin évaluent leur projet d'approvisionnement en eau potable et d'assainissement – leçons d'une évaluation participative du PADEAR IDA/ DANIDA' the Water and Sanitation Programme – Africa.

## webwatch

### The World Bank Group Participatory Monitoring & Evaluation (PM&E)

Part of the participation and civic engagement resource, the PM&E section includes key readings, good practice and lessons learned, specific events, tools and methods, plus a useful reference tool devised from a 2002 learning and exchange workshop on the topic.

[www.worldbank.org/participation/partme.htm](http://www.worldbank.org/participation/partme.htm)

### The Eldis PME guide

This guide covers how organizations can determine their progression towards goals and objectives and who should be making these judgements. It links to a range of full-text online guidelines and manuals and gives examples of M&E indicators, case studies and bibliographies.

[www.eldis.org/participation/pme/](http://www.eldis.org/participation/pme/)

### IWG-PA Participation web site

The web site of the Informal Working Group on Participatory Approaches and Methods to Support Sustainable Livelihoods & Food Security (IWG-PA) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). It offers resources (tools, projects, library), opportunities for interaction with the group and a really valuable search facility for relevant web sites and organizations.

[www.fao.org/participation/](http://www.fao.org/participation/)

### PM&E in Latin America: Overview of the literature with bibliography (IDS 2000)

By Pasteur and Blauert, this scan groups available literature according to focus and discusses it with reference to broader issues such as timing, financing and responsibility. Their annotated bibliography of over 90 examples of the literature provides keywords and abstracts.

[www.ids.ac.uk/ids/particip/research/pme/pme-latam.pdf](http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/particip/research/pme/pme-latam.pdf)

### Community-Based Natural Resource Management Social Science Resource Kit

Volume 8 of the resource kit focuses on PM&E and includes an extensive range of reading materials, details of training manuals and handbooks, bibliography and links to related sites.

[www.idrc.ca/cbdrm/documents/CBNRM\\_Toolkit/Vol8Main.htm](http://www.idrc.ca/cbdrm/documents/CBNRM_Toolkit/Vol8Main.htm)

### MandE (Monitoring and Evaluation) News

This news service keeps members up to date with events and literature in M&E methods relevant to development projects.

[www.mande.co.uk/news.htm](http://www.mande.co.uk/news.htm)

### INTRAC PM&E training courses

The International Training and Resource Centre offers courses in managing PM&E for staff from international NGOs and donor organizations, together with people from Southern and Eastern civil society umbrella bodies and support organizations.

[www.intrac.org/Intrac/ManagingParticipatoryMonitoringandEvaluation\\_en.html](http://www.intrac.org/Intrac/ManagingParticipatoryMonitoringandEvaluation_en.html)

### The Participatory Development Forum

Supported by CIDA, this is a network which offers a seven-language interface Virtual Resource Centre on participatory development aimed at practitioners, project officers, programme managers and policy makers.

[www.pdforum.org/](http://www.pdforum.org/)

### The Participation Group at IDS homepage

This extensive resource of the Institute of Development Studies provides overviews, articles and reports from the programme, a selection of full-text introductory documents plus workshop and networking group information.

[www.ids.ac.uk/ids/particip/index.html](http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/particip/index.html)

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