



UNDP–
World Bank
Water and
Sanitation
Program
South Asia
Region

**LEARNING FROM
IMPLEMENTATION**

This Field Note is about the lessons learned, both achievements and challenges, from identification of eligible communities for participation in the Community Infrastructure Project (CIP), currently being implemented in 55 rural and urban communities in the Northwest Frontier Province of Pakistan.

NWFP – CIP PAKISTAN

Started: 1995

Government Agency:

Local Government, Elections and Rural Development Department (LGE&RD)

Supported By:

GoNWFP, IDA (loan), SDC (grant), UNICEF (grant)

Main Activities: (loan funded)

Infrastructure upgrading for 55 rural and urban low income communities of over 3,000 population

Infrastructure Provided:

Water supply, sanitation/drainage, access roads, solid waste management, community facilities

Population to be Served : 421,000

Community Contributes:

20% of cost of community works

Other activities (grant funded):

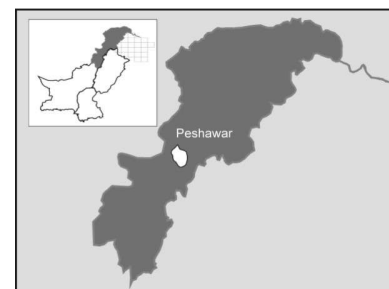
Community Development, Mobilization, Health and Hygiene, Women and Children, Process Monitoring

Improving Community Identification and Response in an

Innovative Project

NWFP Community Infrastructure Project

The Community Infrastructure Project (CIP) is an innovative project. It attempts to be responsive to communities' expressed desire to improve their lives through access to better infrastructure and to test the recipient's willingness to contribute substantially to the costs of providing and maintaining facilities. The CIP offers communities a menu of options in infrastructure, which includes water supply, drainage, flood protection, streets and footpaths, sanitation, solid waste management and community facilities.



The appropriateness of the community selection criteria, the quality of the communication and understanding reached between the project and potential beneficiaries, and the ability of the project to respond to informed demands from communities, are critical for the ultimate success of the project and the sustainability of the benefits it delivers.

Flaws in communication during the all-important social mobilization process and the project's ability to respond appropriately to communities' demands can result in wasted investments of time and money, cause disappointments and cast doubts on the Project's effectiveness and the credibility of delivering institutions.

Clearly, projects which intend to be demand responsive and adaptive must ensure that they indeed do elicit demand which truly reflects community preferences and that they are capable in responding in a flexible and effective manner to this demand.



Monitoring Innovative Projects

Conventional project Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems do not usually capture these critical project processes. Conventional M&E systems focus on inputs and outputs (physical and financial) as they relate to pre-defined project targets, staffing levels and expenditure. These systems, while they provide information to key decision-makers, do not look at decision-making itself as a critical project process.

For new and innovative projects with process orientation, and flexible and adaptive design, a new approach to monitoring is needed which focuses on key project processes, identifies appropriate corrective actions for all key actors, not just project management, and which goes on to monitor the impact and appropriateness of its own recommendations in a cyclical, interactive manner. The approach being used in CIP is Process Monitoring (PM), which helps projects learn from themselves and adapt in order to become more effective at delivering the benefits they were intended to.

Using Process Monitoring to Solve the Drop-out Problem

An important issue which emerged early in the Project was that a surprisingly high number of communities were dropping out of the Project. 37percent of communities dropped out in Phase and 48 percent in Phase II. Clearly, something was wrong with the community selection process. What was it? Project management tended to see the problem as one of failure to meet technical and financial feasibility criteria, scattered settlement patterns and poor coordination between line departments who were supposed to plan and deliver services.

But was this the whole story? Why were so many communities failing to meet selection criteria? Was it because of the criteria, the process by which the criteria were being communicated to communities, or something else?

The PM technique was used to examine the entire process of community selection to find out where problems arose. A variety of methods were used to collect information about this critical process; participant observation, focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews and discussions, among others.

Coordinating Social & Technical Aspects

An important finding related to the lack of coordination between the social and technical wings of the Project. Assessments of both these aspects in coordination with each other was lacking, resulting in schemes being dropped at later stages either due to technical or social non-viability. In response to this finding, efforts were made to coordinate activities and jointly assess schemes.

Mobilization in Larger Communities

Another set of issues arose from the shortcomings of mobilizing larger communities. Household level structured surveys covering the entire community were exclusively used to determine priorities. This method, while recording the views of the head of the household interviewed, was not adequate in capturing community demand, which required sometimes complex negotiations between competing priorities, designs and costs. Nor was this methodology appropriate for capturing the priorities of women or more vulnerable groups.

There was also a tendency for the mobilization process and the flow of information to be dominated by a few influential individuals, who did not necessarily reflect the priorities of the community as a whole.

Through the findings of PM, it was recommended that the mobilization process be changed to focus on smaller groups such as neighborhoods, and that more participatory methods be used in interacting with communities.

Another problem "discovered" by PM was the lack of continuous and frequent contact with communities, due to

Problems with Project Rules

After six months of intensive field observation, discussions and analysis, trends began to emerge. Project rules which put a ceiling on the cost of primary works compared to secondary (community level) works led to excluding a number of communities, even when these communities were willing to pay a higher share of the costs.

A second finding which emerged from the PM process was that there was a second set of problems created by lack of clarity of project rules and the communication of these rules to both Project staff and community members.

An example of rules which were unclear was the role of existing infrastructure in determining eligibility for project inputs (where there were existing infrastructure services in the community, they became ineligible for participation in the Project, but the extent and nature of this existing infrastructure was unclear), and how to calculate the communities' up-front contribution for O&M.

development staff. Delays in project implementation due to lengthy government procedures, coupled with sporadic and at times non-existent contact with the Project resulted in communities losing interest. This problem was highlighted to project management, who took steps to improve staffing and logistic arrangements.

Problems due to Project Procedures

An important problem disclosed through PM was the lengthy, bureaucratic procedures which resulted in loss of the community's interest and confidence in the



Key Lessons

- Clearly stated project rules and proper understanding of these rules (selection criteria, rules for scheme identification and prioritization) by both Project staff and communities and the correct application of these rules, are essential ingredients of project success. Problems posed by both inadequate or inappropriate understanding of rules, and the rigidity of the rules themselves, negatively affected the Project. For example, inflexible rules regarding the ratios of primary, secondary and tertiary infrastructure (i.e. community infrastructure and primary systems) allowed, prevented the Project from responding to communities who were willing to contribute more than required for a different mix of infrastructure. A community might demand a greater amount of primary infrastructure for example, and be willing to pay a greater percentage of the capital cost (than 20 percent) for corresponding community infrastructure. Thus an opportunity to introduce an element of competition between communities was lost because of rigid project rules.
- Coordination and complementarity between social and technical assessments is critical for project success. The quality of social mobilization has important repercussions for scheme identification and selection, and community development units in the Project need to be properly staffed and functional.
- To prevent loss of credibility due to delays in physical implementation resulting from lengthy government procedures, these procedures must be streamlined. Communities must be effectively and sufficiently motivated, well aware and clear about rules and the terms of the partnership, obligations, and reasons for possible delays.
- Coordination and consistent policies and strategies are required between government line departments and projects to prevent duplication and wastage of resources and inconsistent messages to communities.
- An M&E system should include process indicators and mechanisms for timely feedback to project management and identify remedial action to allow problems to be addressed at the right time.

AHMEDABAD: A Case of Delays and Poor Coordination

In Ahmedabad, the willingness to participate was so high that both men and women met together to participate in the training organized by the Project, not an insignificant occurrence in a gender-segregated society.

Paradoxically the Project later had to drop this community due to loss of interest during the long wait for things to happen. At the same time Public Health Engineering Department (PHED), the government line department responsible for water supply, began a scheme in this community which offered "softer" terms than the Project. This further undermined the communities' interest in participating in the Project. Had the CIP initiated its physical implementation in a timely manner, the community would not have turned to another department.

As a result of this finding, the Project started liaison with line departments and other programs and projects in the same area. Reduction in duplication of services and better coordination in selection of communities resulted.

Conclusion

Innovative, community-based projects must respond flexibly and adapt to the varying demands generated during the community mobilization process. Very few projects start out as truly demand responsive and adaptive. This often has to be learned. Process Monitoring (PM) is a useful tool to enable projects to learn from themselves by identifying, analyzing and communicating problems arising from the complex interactions between projects and communities.

In this case, PM helped the Project identify, understand and take action to address the root causes of a serious problem; drop-out of many communities after being initially selected to participate in the Project. The actions taken by Project management as a result of information provided through PM helped the Project to learn from its "mistakes", become more adaptive, and ultimately improve its effectiveness in delivering appropriate infrastructure which responded to communities' demands and it's willingness to share costs.



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