COMMUNITY-BASED ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM (CEMIS) MODULE NO. 4

GUIDELINES FOR ASSESSING EFFECTING DEMAND OF COMMUNITIES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL INFRASTRUCTURE

United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)
Nairobi, 1995

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HS/373/95E
ISBN 92-1-131287-6

FOREWORD

The adequate availability of basic infrastructure services such as water supply and sanitation is an important contributor to health, well being and economic productivity of our society. Unfortunately, despite the efforts made during the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade (1981-1990), some 250 million still remail unserved with water supply and 400 million without sanitation in urban areas alone. Most of them belong to urban low-income groups, the "urban poor", and continue to live in health-and life-threatening situations.

For a long time, investments in environmental infrastructure projects were influenced by the myth that the poor could not pay for the services. In reality, however, they were paying for more than their wealthier counterparts in the formal city but received much inferior services, e.g., water from vendors at exorbitant prices. Meanwhile, the provision of environmental infrastructure services has remained largely dependent on public investment and central government transfers to local authorities. In the absence of user involvement in the planning and provision of these services, relatively little attention is paid to ensure continued functioning of these services. According to one estimate, one in four water supply systems does not function at any one time and the number of those being abandoned is nearly equal to the number of new ones being commissioned. Even functional systems often remain in disuse. In some cases, two-thirds of the population, reported to have access to improved facilities, did not use them.

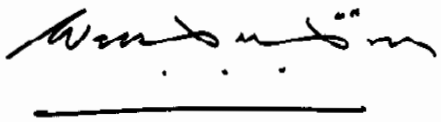
One of the factors that contribute to this situation is the general lack of information on how the communities secure water and sanitation, how much they pay for the services and how much the households are willing to pay for a better and more reliable service. In the absence of such information, infrastructure planning is usually based on assumptions made about the population to be served and per-capita consumption rates. In this top-down planning process, the tariff to be charged is usually calculated by supply-side considerations and focus on costs recovery without any realistic assessment of the affordability and willingness of the target consumers to pay for such services.

The present publication is part of the ongoing effort by UNCHS to support the implementation of Agenda 21 by enabling communities to effectively participate in service provision and management. The guidelines outlined in this publication rely on a participatory process to gather the necessary information and to mobilize the essential commitment of communities to pay for the services based on their ability and willingness. After extensive field trials, planned in 1996, these guidelines will be developed into a training manual for use by service agencies and communities.

The publication is an outcome of the ongoing UNCHS (Habitat) project aimed at developing and testing a Community-based, Environmental Management Information System (CEMIS) through field work in Accra (Ghana) and Jakarta (Indonesia). The project is being executed with financial support from Government of Denmark under the Environmental Health and Sanitation Component of the DANIDA-UNCHS Programme Agreement.

I hope the publication will be of practical use to professionals and decision-makers in governments and international agencies who are interested in pursuing a rational, demand-driven approach to the provision and management of environmental infrastructure services.

The contributions of Dr. Charles Surjadi and his team at Atma Jaya University (Indonesia), Prof. Christian M. Rogerson of the University of Witwatersrand (South Africa), Ms. Lynette Ochola of Oxfam (UK & Ireland) Kenya in contributing to the manual and Mr. André Dzikus of UNCHS (Habitat) in developing the framework for the manual and both supervising and substantively contributing to this publication are gratefully acknowledged.



Dr. Wally N'Dow
Assistant Secretary-General
United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)

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