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“Participatory Utilization and Resource Efficiency of Water” Project, *USAID*

GUIDE

ON PARTICIPATORY PROCESS OF IDENTIFICATION AND PRIORITIZATION OF COMMUNITIES’ WATER PROBLEMS, AND PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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1. ENSURING WIDER PARTICIPATION OF PUBLIC FOR IDENTIFICATION OF PROBLEMS IN THE COMMUNITIES

A key role is assigned to public participation in identifying the problems in water management and use because community residents directly or through their representatives (Community Active Groups (CAG)) participate in the process of bringing their urgent problems to the agenda of the community. Participation of community residents is ensured through households' survey or focus group discussions and community meetings

1.1. Households' Survey

The aim of a household survey to involve community residents in the process of identifying the problems in water resources management and use and ensure inclusion of these problems in the community development agenda.

- Communities with less than 250 households conduct households' census: all households in the community are interviewed.
- Communities with 250- 5,000 households conduct survey with sampled households.
- Communities with more than 5,000 households conduct focus group discussions. However, if the community has resources, sampled households survey can be conducted: face-to-face or telephone interview.

If phone survey is preferred, the method of automatic telephone survey is offered, which is described below.

The survey software is installed in the computer and connected with the telephone network through an external modem. The landline numbers are collected and imported in the system. For each survey specific closed questions are developed and entered in the software. The system randomly selects 400 numbers from the total phone numbers in the database the subscribers of which then are interviewed. The phone operator asks a question and after receiving an answer makes a checkmark against the relevant answer. The limitation of the software is that although it may be also used for cell phones, subscribers are selected by the phone operators rather than randomly by the system. The software allows to analyze the survey results.



For details about the survey software you can directly contact the author, *Emin Zavaryan (091 524335)*, who installs the software and provides the training for the relevant staff.

1.2. Discussions within Focus groups

As mentioned above, in communities with **more than 5000** households focus group discussions can be held.

Focus group discussions are also intended as an initial stage for identifying community problems. These discussions are also held before community meetings.

2. CONDUCTING COMMUNITIES MEETINGS

The purpose of community meeting is to present the active and interested people of the community the results of the community household survey and focus group discussions on community issues with the participation of community stakeholders; selection of Community Working Group (CWG) by participants of the community meeting; and presenting the role of Community Active Groups (CAGs). When initiating a community meeting, the following steps must be taken:

- Invitation to community meetings;
- Presentation of the results of the survey / focus group discussion;
- Election / re-election of the Community Working Group (CWG)
- Presentation of the role of CAG in the community.

2.1 Invitation to the community meeting in communities

After surveys /focus group discussions, the community meetings are held, where, depending on the size of the community, can participate up to 100 residents.

The head of the community, representatives of the staff of the community head, community council, other community stakeholders: residents, including young people, private sector representatives (if any), non-governmental organizations (if any) should participate in the community meetings. Gender balance should be maintained as much as possible.

Community residents should be notified about community meetings. Before calling for a community meeting, it is necessary to:



- coordinate the meeting with the community head,
- determine the venue,
- elaborate the agenda of the meeting,
- prepare the analysis of surveys / focus group discussions,
- prepare the office supplies needed for the meeting conducting.

2.2 Identification of the community problems based on participatory approach and their classification in order of priorities

2.2.1 Presentation of the process of participatory development of water sector project

During a community meeting the stages of the community water sector program are presented, particularly: surveys / focus-group discussions, community meetings, strategic planning training, strategic plan development, discussion and approval by the community's council.

2.2. 2 Communities Working Groups (CWG) election/ re-election

During the community meeting takes place:

- the presentation of the CAG's role in the community,
- the election / re-election of the CWG by participants of the community meeting.

2.2. 3 Problems classification

Following the community meeting, the classification of problems takes place by the CWG, according to the priorities by using a weighting and scoring method - the Delphi method. The explanation of the methodology, with the appropriate examples, is presented below. The members of the CWG can assess priorities of problems through the assessment jointly after the community meeting, or each member of the CWG can carry out the assessment individually, and then the average score will be defined for each identified problem based on the scores that are given by each member of CWG.

Problems prioritization by using weighting and scoring assessment principle based on Delphi method

Delphi method is a communication technique or method that was originally developed as a systemized, interactive, prediction / assessment method based on the experts group's opinion.

Let us suppose that in one of communities as a result of the participatory process the following problems are revealed:

- the scarcity of drinking water,



- poor quality of drinking water,
- need for repair of drinking water lines,
- absence of drinking water supply for 24 hours a day,
- necessity of installation of irrigation water pipes (polyethylene or concrete),
- high tariffs for irrigation water,
- drilling of deep wells and installation of pumps,
- revision of contracts with Water Usage Associations (WUAs),
- drainage problem.

Despite their importance, identified problems might be too generic or large to be implemented within the project. Therefore, it is necessary to divide them into specific, measurable parts so to clarify what part of the problems can be solved in a shorter period of the project time.

For example: *Improvement of drinking water supply:*

- rehabilitation of 3 km of the water line;
- installation of 50 water meters.

In order to classify community problems according to priorities, it is necessary to assess them by the setting of universal criteria for all problems identified.

The following criteria (Table 1) for identifying and assessing community problems priorities are proposed:

- approximate cost assessment needed for the solution of the problem,
- environmental and health positive impacts of the problem solving,
- number of residents to be benefited as a result of the problem solving,
- public support for the solution of the problem.

Although an attempt has been made to present criteria as comprehensive as possible, however, the above-mentioned is not a final option, and the community representatives, who has identified problems, are free to change these criteria.

Table 1. Criteria of problems classification



Assessment criteria	Score	Weight
Estimated monetary value (number of marks = 10)		
< 1,000,000 AMD	4	2.5
1,000,000 AMD –5,000,000 AMD	3	
5,000,000 AMD - 15,000,000 AMD	2	
> 15,000,000 AMD	1	
Environmental and health positive impact (number of marks = 8)		
Negative	0	2
No	1	
Low	2	
Mid	3	
High	4	
Number of beneficiaries (number of marks = 6)		
< 25%	1	1.5
25%-50%	2	
50%-75%	3	
75%-100%	4	
Public support (number of marks = 4)		
No	1	1
Low	2	
Mid	3	
High	4	

Table 1 consists three columns: 1. Assessment criteria; 2. Scores and 3. Weight.

1. In the column of “Assessment criteria” above suggested criteria are listed:

1. Estimated monetary value,
2. Environmental and health positive impact,
3. Number of beneficiaries,
4. Public support.

Quantitative or qualitative separation is made for each criterion. So:

1. The estimated monetary value is the approximate assessment of cost required for the action implementation which is a part of the problem. This is done by using the following scale:



- < 1,000,000 AMD
- 1,000,000 AMD - 5,000,000 AMD
- 5,000,000 AMD - 15,000,000 AMD
- > 15,000,000 AMD

There is no need to make accurate calculation for monetary value, but based on the suggested scale it is necessary to determine the approximate value of the problem solving, taking into account the general knowledge and experience of different participants.

2. Environmental and health impact assessment of certain action is the assessment of possible environmental and health impact on the community. This is done by using the following scale:

- Negative
- No
- Low
- Mid
- High

3. The number of beneficiaries is an assessment of the percentage of the community's population that would potentially benefit from the implementation of the selected action.

This is done with the help of the following scale:

- < 25%
- 25%-50%
- 50%-75%
- 75%-100%

4. Public support is an assessment of the possible level of community support for the implementation of the action. This is done by using of the following scale:

- No
- Low
- Mid
- High



2. In the column of “Scale” the scores scale is presented, which sets points for the quantitative or qualitative indicators of each criterion. For example, according to Table 1, when specific actions, that are a part of the revealing problem, are assessed:

- a) lower monetary value ensures higher score and vice versa,
- b) higher environmental and health positive impacts ensures higher score and vice versa,
- c) bigger number of beneficiaries ensures higher score and vice versa,
- d) greater public support ensures higher score for the action and vice versa,

3. Weight of each criterion is determined (see Table 1, third column).

- a) Table 1 is drawn on the board or attached to the flip chart, leaving the second and third columns blank.
- b) Each of the members of the CWG is recommended to select 3 criteria out of 4 that are most important for the community problems solving, in their opinion. In doing this, the members of the CWG are working separately, without consulting with each other, and after decision making, they mark 3 criteria, leaving the 4th empty.
- c) The number of marks for each criterion is calculated.
- d) The total number of marks collected for each criterion is divided by the number related to the minimal number of marks. For example, if the numbers of marks for each criterion are 10, 8, 6, and 4 (see Table 1) then the weights will be 2.5, 2, 1.5 and 1 respectively (in this case the smallest number of marks is 4, so each number of marks 10, 8, 6, 4 respectively is divided into 4).

How does each certain action that is a part of the problem is assessed (see Table 2)?

Assessment of specific action that is a part of the community problem and definition of its priorities are implemented by using of Table 2. The explanation for the Table 2 usage is presented below.

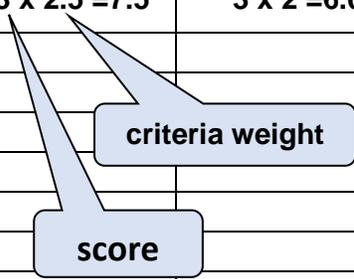
The priority of each specific action that is part of the problem is determined as a result of multiplication of criterion weight and score that is regarded to appropriate qualitative or quantitative assessment under certain criterion.



The same assessment procedure should be used for all specific actions that are part of the problem.

Table 2: An example of definition of specific action priority that is part of the community problem

Title of Problem	Specific Actions	Assessment Criteria				Total (scores)
		Estimated monetary value (scores)	Environmental and health positive impact (scores)	Number of beneficiaries (scores)	Public support (scores)	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Problem A	A1	3 x 2.5 =7.5	3 x 2 =6.0	4 x 1.5= 6.0	4 x 1= 4.0	7.5+6+6+4 =23.5
	A2					
	A3					
	A4					
	A5					
Problem B	B1					
	B2					
	B3					
	B4					



2.2.4. Definition of community objectives

The objectives are formulated according to the Table 2 (Summary Table of assessed specific actions) based on the identified problems. Addressing identified problems aims to achievement of some strategic goals. Problems are grouped into separate fields, each of which represents a separate strategic goal. Achievement of any goal is conditioned by the addressing specific objective, i.e. by the implementation of programs / projects, which have been divided into three main parts: short-term, medium-term and long-term. The duration of short-term programs is up to 2 years. Programs for 2-4 years are considered to be medium-term, and programs with a period of more than 4 years are considered to be long-term.

2.2.5. Development of community projects deriving from community problems



Suggested ways to address community-specific problems are programs / projects (Table 3). The results of programs / projects implementation should be measurable and realistic within a specific period of time.

Programs include description of the problem, certain actions or assignments, deadlines, responsibilities, possible funding sources, expected outcomes, and link with other programs.

The list of programs/projects is elaborated after the training in cooperation with the Local Government and the Community Working Group (CWG).

Table 3: An example of a project raised from the community problem



Project 1.1		Priority score of the problem				37
Title: Improvement of irrigation water supply in the community						
Goal of the project: To ensure the increasing of area of irrigated lands in the community.						
Brief description:						
Program start date:				Program closing date:		
Planned actions and timetable						
##	Actions	April	May	June	July	
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						
Expected outcomes:					Beneficiaries:	
Estimated cost of the project:						
Possible contributions:						
<i>Municipality/Village Hall</i>						
<i>Condominium</i>						
<i>Private and Institutional Investors</i>						

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