

Distr.
RESTRICTED
E/CEPAL/WAS/R.33
April 1982
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

C E P A L

Economic Commission for Latin America
Washington Office



IXth MEETING OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE FOR COOPERATIVE
ACTION ON THE INTERNATIONAL DRINKING WATER SUPPLY AND
SANITATION DECADE (IDWSSD)

(15 - 16 April, 1982)

Prepared by the CEPAL Washington Office.

82-7-1450



Notes on the IXth Meeting of the Steering Committee for Cooperative Action on the "International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade" (IDWSSD)

Like the recent CEPAL meeting in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, from 11 to 14 January, the ninth meeting of the Steering Committee for Cooperative Action held at the World Bank Headquarters in Washington, D.C., on 15 and 16 April 1982, dealt with the topic "International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade (IDWSSD). This time, however, the debates centered around the ways and means to promote the exchange and transfer of information in direct support to the planning, development or implementation of national water supply and sanitation programs. As can be seen by the attached documents, the agenda covered an extensive list of topics. The following three sections will record only the most extensive or debated topics, e.g. the short introductory interventions of the delegates of the agencies, the plans or projects elaborated for the water supply and sanitation decade, and the coordination between the agencies activities.

I. Preliminary introduction

The debates were preceded by short statements highlighting the progress made by the agencies since the last meeting.

The World Health Organization (WHO) informed about the recent work program of the organization. It covers not only traditional type related to water supply and sanitation sector studies, but also now places greater emphasis than before on community participation and health education aspects of development activity, particularly in the rural sector.

The progress report of the Economic Commission for Latin America (Spanish acronym CEPAL) focused on the contrast between the significant results achieved during the last 30 years in providing water services and sanitation facilities to an increasing proportion of a fast-growing population with the need for improvement in this field. In this regard, in order to promote the implementation of the Mar del Plata Action Plan, the Commission has been taking a series of initiatives. In this connection, at two seminars held consecutively in Santiago, Chile, March 1981, and Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, CEPAL has focused its activities on the discussion of specific avenues for horizontal cooperation in the financial economic and social aspects of drinking water supply and sanitation. Among other points, it was recommended :

- That governments should set up focal points or national coordination centres to operate as the basis for a Latin American horizontal cooperation.
- That CEPAL while supporting WHO/PAHO in the convening of periodic meetings, will continue in the future the promotion of horizontal cooperation activities together with the monitoring and evaluation of progress in the implementation of the IDWSSD.

Water supply and sanitation, together with training packages for drinking water management by rural cooperatives are among the services included in the ILO regular programme 1982/1983. Also under the modules of Employable Skills Programme, over 400 learning elements have been produced which are of relevance to the decade activities. Of these, nearly 25% are devoted to water supply installations and hand-pump maintenance.

For its part the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) announced that it had completed the first draft of the "System-Wide Medium Term Environment Programme" (SWMTEP) to be presented at the 10th Session of its Governing Council. It includes a chapter on Water Resources and, in November 1981, was circulated for comments to all the agencies of the intersecretariat Group on Water Resources.

Also being implemented are various projects, among them: "The Integrated Water Supply: Demonstration Project in Swaziland", and other related to training courses and environment.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the activities of the Water Resources Branch of the Department of Technical Cooperation for Development of the United Nations. It is backstopping approximately 36 groundwater projects in some thirty countries with a total value of \$36 million. Activities of these projects are geared to the exploration, development and management of new sources of water for the supply of rural population, well-digging and construction programme, training of technicians and skilled workers in this field.

II. Plans, projects submitted by some agencies

Some guidelines or patterns for project formulation in the field of water supply and sanitation, were submitted by some agencies. One of them was elaborated by UNDP, Division of Information, and was adapted from the draft report of a consultant. It contains suggestions intended to complement wider, more general project formulation guidelines for drinking water supply and sanitation, in order to sensitize project staff to the basic needs for community participation and communication. It contains general recommendations on how community involvement can be incorporated into all project-related activities. It is suggested

that any additional funds and time spent on such "social design" should pay off in terms of reduced problems, delays in construction, operation..., as well as in closer achievement of intended objectives.

Of even broader scope was the World Bank Report to Water Decade Steering Committee. It encompasses a) The Bank's review of its lending policy for water and sanitation project, b) progress on UNDP-financed projects under execution by the Bank, and c) stage of the preparation of training materials for formulating investment projects.

It was recalled that the Bank in addition to several country-specific projects, is executing six broad-based UNDP projects in support of the Decade.

Among them were mentioned: 1) the Low-cost Water Supply and Sanitation Project that has undergone review and is being extended for another three years, 2) the Hand-pumps Testing Program which is completing laboratory testing of 16 pumps and is now moving into the field testing phase, and finally 3) the opening of Decade project preparation offices in Asia and Africa, to help prepare investment projects.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the "Project Preparation Handbook Volume I: Guidelines", just distributed by the World Bank. It explains the process of project development from the perspective of agencies which might be asked to provide financial assistance. In this regard, it underlines three levels of project preparation to satisfy the information needs of those agencies: a) Project identification, b) pre-feasibility which permits the selection of preferred alternates, and finally, c) the feasibility stage which provides the details necessary for the completion of the project.

For its part the Department of Technical Cooperation for Development of the United Nations is very active in the field of IDWSSD. It is undertaking a series of activities related to water resources planning, investigations, well drilling, or installations, etc. It is also carrying out some 50 projects in about 40 countries involving a highly training component. About 80 U.N. experts and consultants are, or soon will be, involved in these activities, and there are projects to organize technical schools for water well drilling and mechanics, specially in some African countries.

Finally, various projects were submitted aiming at enhancing the role of women as participants and beneficiaries in water supply and sanitation. In this regard, it was suggested the formation of a task force that should:

- Review the existing Decade policy documents and strategies to suggest how they might be adjusted to ensure that they adequately reflect the concerns and need of the women.
- Ensure the participation of women at all stages of planning and execution process of water supply and sanitation projects.

III. Coordination or cooperation between agencies

Also discussed were various aspects related to coordination of activities with the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the formulation and execution of the IDWSSD projects. In this respect, it was agreed to discuss some of those projects with them, to get their support, but also to show some restraint since any kind of relations with the NGOs might have some "political fall-out" at the national levels, that could affect the relations between a U.N. agency and the government of a member country.

The most debated topic, however, was the coordination of the activities of the various agencies involved in water and sanitation project, and the exchange of information among them. In this respect, it was not clear what agency would assume responsibility for coordinating and distributing information about the activities of all those involved in the related project. So far, while the UNDP representative in a country would be assuming the role of coordinator, the WHO meanwhile was considering itself as the lead agency of the task force on information exchange. This moved the delegates of the various agencies into a lengthy discussion in order to find some ways to improve and coordinate the flow of information between them with respect to current and prospective activities related to IDWSSD. In this regard, the WHO delegate submitted a paper describing the role and activities of the "Programme on Exchange and Transfer of Information" (POETRI), and its executing agency, "The International Reference Center for Community Water Supply and Sanitation" (IRC). As mentioned in its statute, IRC will use its extensive network of collaborating linkages, close liaison and intensive cooperation with the aid donor entities, bilateral and multilateral agencies, and non-governmental organizations, to facilitate a broad and effective exchange and transfer of technological information on community water supply and sanitation projects.

Anyway, it was concluded that regarding the actual state of the exchange of information among the agencies, there was some room for improvement.


