

POLICY BRIEF No. 00.1

POVERTY AND FOREIGN AID:**The Hesawa Experience****S. Rugumamu****Research**

A study on the effectiveness of a major aid programme in reducing poverty through the provision of rural drinking water supply was undertaken in 1998 in Mwanza and Kagera region. The Swedish supported Hesawa programme was launched in 1985 after a lot of re-thinking on the provision of social services in Tanzania. After 10 years about one million people in 600 villages had benefited from these 'health through sanitation and water' activities. This study has been published as REPOA Research Report No. 00.1: **Foreign Aid, Grassroots Participation and Poverty Alleviation in Tanzania: The HESAWA Fiasco**; by *S. Rugumamu*.

HESAWA programme had the objective to improve the general health standards and to promote economic growth and social development among the poorer groups in rural areas. The key questions were: To what extent this objective has been achieved in a sustainable way? And to what extent the poor themselves participated in this programme?

The broad hypothesis that guided this research was: If the target population, the government and donor agencies effectively participate in problem identification and analysis, project design and planning, project implementation and evaluation, then the overall impact of the project on poverty alleviation is likely to be markedly enhanced.

Research Methodology

The initial stage of this research drew heavily on secondary data, such as official donor and government documents. In the second stage primary data were collected: A sample of 1080 people (440 male and 640 female) in 12 villages in six districts were interviewed, with a structured questionnaire. Almost all of these were farmers, a majority aged between 15 and 45 years with 60% female and 78% classified as 'poor'. Over 50 aid administrators, government officials and NGOs, policy makers, target groups were also interviewed, often in a less structured way. Cross validation of responses with different interviewees was purposely sought to ensure comparability and reliability of responses.

Analysis of data was based on descriptive statistics and deductive reasoning. The study hoped to enhance awareness among policy makers of some of the consequences of aid conditionalities, as well as to show the importance of community participation and gender sensitivities in project design, implementation and evaluation.

Research Findings

Despite the good intentions and objectives, participation of the water-users at the preparatory stage has been limited in Hesawa's programme. Only few male leaders attended promotional meetings, workshops and gender awareness raising meetings. The majority of the water users knew little about who really owned the programme, who initiated it and what the modalities of management and ownership were. In general, men were more informed about the programme than women, who had less opportunity and time to attend meetings and actively participate in the water committees.

Beneficiaries are much less involved in planning than in implementation. Even the location of water points was usually decided at the 'top', often ignoring specific village suggestions. Hesawa's official criteria for site selection were not always adhered to, such as incidence of water-borne diseases and distance from safe water supply. Collusion between some rich families and district water officials was responsible for a less than optimal location. Relatively well-to do peasants were more willing to contribute to well construction, less risk averse and easier to organize than the poor ones, whose needs are greater but resources fewer.

The well-to do were more satisfied with the quality and quantity of water provided through the programme. They captured benefits like improved hygiene, timesavings and new productive activities (irrigation). Most of the poor especially women complained about the reliability of and accessibility to the new water source. Affordability was less of a problem, provided the water was there. Maintenance was poor and led to frequent breakdown of facilities especially in villages where Hesawa support had been phased out.

Although Hesawa introduced various technologies (gravity, wells, pipes), not enough consultation with villagers took

place to make them sustainable. Furthermore capacity for adequate maintenance was not there and there was lack of additional income to meet increasing user cost.

Institutional sustainability is also at risk, as many village water committees (60%) were not functioning properly. Only about one third were doing well, according to interviewees. The main problem was the low social standing of the poor who dominated these committees, as they were not always elected, had not enough influence over officials, technicians and/or members to perform their assigned role.

Policy Lessons

- This study has confirmed the importance of participation of stakeholders in all stages of a project, from the design stage, in order to create sustainable improvements in rural livelihoods.
- Technologies ought to be chosen together with the people, taking note of their financial position and technical capacities.
- Location of water points should follow democratically laid down criteria, with competent, user committees (with adequate female representation) put in place before a donor (with all its infrastructure) withdraws.
- The conflicts between the 'rich' and poor officials ought to be minimized to avoid frustration of the vast majority of rural poor who need these services more.
- Development workers, change agents, or facilitators should play a crucial role and influence the way village water management personnel is recruited.

Further Research

There is need to study other aid projects further to arrive at more general conclusions regarding their impact. Both the issue of participation and sustainability require more studies, to establish the extent to which participatory (aid) programmes influence sustainability. In this context one would also like to know why some village committees function while others did not, despite a similar overall context and aid approach.

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