

STEPS FOR A SAFE WATER SYSTEM PROJECT

1.0 GATHER BACKGROUND DATA ON THE NEED, TARGET POPULATION, AND FEASIBILITY OF A WATER INTERVENTION

Tasks:

- Specify the data needed as background for the project
- Plan how to collect the data
- Collect the data
- Organize and analyze the data
- Interpret the data



Good background information is essential when deciding whether to implement a Safe Water System project. It is also necessary when writing a proposal for funding.

To assess the need for intervention, you need to:

- identify the populations at risk (that is, lacking potable water)
- define the nature and extent of disease problems that may be attributable to unsafe water
- assess the feasibility of a water intervention in terms of the infrastructure and other support available
- determine the community's interest and likelihood of acceptance of the intervention

Gather data from available sources, and undertake informal observational surveys or interviews. Possible sources of data include groups and individuals who work with water supply or water projects, and reports of studies of water supply, demand, or quality. These individuals and reports may be found in:

- the Ministry of Health (MOH)
- other government ministries responsible for water
- NGOs such as CARE
- UNICEF
- universities
- local governments
- water companies
- water testing labs at universities or municipal governments

Consider working with local committees or organizations, such as mothers' clubs or water committees, to participate in data collection, analysis, and planning. If you involve community representatives in the assessment, their participation can pay dividends later in terms of greater community adherence to, and ownership of, the project.

This step is not a baseline survey for evaluation purposes. However, these data will supplement information that will be obtained from formative research for project implementation. Useful information to gather and analyze is listed in Figure 1. See Annex A for a sample questionnaire with questions about relevant knowledge and practices.

Figure 1: Background Data for a Safe Water System Project

Epidemiological data (Sources of data: MOH, special studies)

- How common are diarrheal diseases? What proportion of clinic visits?
- Which populations are most affected?
- Have cholera outbreaks occurred? When and where do cholera outbreaks typically occur?

Water infrastructure (Source of data: Ministry responsible for water)

- What proportions of urban and rural populations are not served with potable water systems?
- Where are underserved populations located?
- What is the microbiologic quality of source water in target populations?

Water handling practices (Source of data: Survey)

- Who collects and handles household water supplies?
- How common is it to store water in the home?
- Is household water storage particularly common in certain populations?
- What types of water storage containers are used?
- Do target populations use unsafe water handling practices, such as dipping?
- What water treatment practices are commonly used, if any?

Socio-cultural aspects (Source of data: Survey research)

- What do target populations understand about disease transmission through water?
- What do target populations understand about causes and prevention of diarrhea?
- Is clean water a high priority for target populations?
- Are there cultural barriers to water interventions (e.g., religious or ancestral associations with water supply)?
- Who makes decisions about household expenditures?

Economic aspects (Source of data: Donor agencies, NGOs, water ministry)

- What are potential sources of external funds?
- What donors have previously funded water projects?
- Can target communities pay for products?
- Is ability to pay seasonal (e.g., in agricultural communities)?

Possible support and infrastructure (Source of data: government, NGOs)

- Which government departments and officials can be approached for support?
- What NGOs are present in country?
- Which areas have a government or NGO infrastructure to build on?
- Which organizations are potentially available for the various aspects of implementation (e.g., hospitals, health centers, NGOs, women's groups, local companies)?