Exit Strategy & Creating Project Ownership

CREATE SUFFICIENT PROJECT OWNERSHIP TO APPLY YOUR EXIT STRATEGY AFTER COMPLETION

Creating project ownership refers to a series of activities related to presenting and discussing a project with the objective of engaging the community to participate actively. The community must be consulted and involved sufficiently that they consider the project as their own. An exit strategy should be jointly planned and agreed upon to clarify how the project will end or transform (e.g., once goals have been achieved, or at the end of the project or funding cycle), how the implementing organization will withdraw and who will take over to sustain project outcomes and how.

An exit strategy is defined as a planned approach in which the implementing organization, responsible local government bodies and the community or target group plan for the handing over of the project management after completion.

Purpose and link to IQC

Creating project ownership and planning an exit strategy help to ensure the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of an intervention. Encouraging all community members to participate in the project process increases their sense of responsibility regarding the project and helps to promote transparency and integrity. An exit strategy fosters sustainability and mitigates risks of failure. It needs to be designed jointly from the onset and revisited regularly as the initiative evolves.

HOW TO

1. Identify handing over partner

The partner who will own the project assets after handing over has to be identified jointly with the local government and the community. Depending on the type of project, the national policy framework and the local priorities, options include handing over to

1. The community, which is the most common approach.
2. The local government. This is an option if local government is responsible for facilitating service provision including in rural areas.
3. The local water service provider. If there is a public water service provider that also manages assets on behalf of the local government, this is another option.

All options have strengths and weaknesses, since the immediate handing over partner will feel most ownership while there is a danger that the other partners will avoid taking responsibility. This is why it is important to engage all tow (or three, if there is service provider already) actor in the handing over process, e.g. by having the government hand over facilities to the community and not the project implementer doing this themselves.

2. Choose management option

Besides asset ownership it is important to clarify how they will be managed, operated and maintained in the long run. Again depending on the policy and legal framework, as well as local context, there are several options:

1. Community management in agreement with local government
2. Community management in partnership with local service provider or private operator
3. Private operator contracted by asset owner
4. Local government/government owned utility

3. Support the community to select and register a community committee

Hold a meeting with the entire community in which the importance of selecting and registering a community committee is discussed. Clarify that the project is owned by the beneficiaries and the members of the community committee are not paid for the work they do on behalf of the beneficiaries, but they rather do it on voluntary bases.

Facilitate a process to elect the members of the community committee.

The committee gets officially registered. In Kenya for example the committee needs to get a registration certificate from Social Service Department and a pin number from Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA).

4. Hold a meeting with the community

During a meeting with the entire community the following information should be shared and related questions should be addressed:

1. The intended project is presented. The proposal is discussed and based on the feedback from the community changes are integrated.
2. The exit strategy is planned and agreed upon by both the implementing organization, the community committee and the local government. During this process the community committee formally accepts to be the responsible for the required project follow-up (e.g. operation and maintenance, revenue collection or continuation of training activities, depending on the type of project) and potential support and requirements or standards from the local government are agreed. If the community committee needs additional training to perform these activities,

the implementing organization should include the development of any required capacities into the scope of the project (see info sheet "capacity assessment for project follow-up").

3. Once the agreement is reached, the project and the assignment of related responsibilities is approved by the entire community.

Template

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References & Further Readings

- MINISTRY OF WATER AND IRRIGATION. 2007. An overview of the Community Project Cycle (CPC), Kenya.
- Morrison et al. 2015. Guide for Managing Integrity in Water Stewardship Initiatives. CEO Water Mandate and WIN, USA.

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