Thematic Fiche no. 8

Sustainability II: Ownership and Community Involvement

This is the second of two Thematic Fiches on sustainability in energy projects. The first one covered how considerations on business models can ensure financial sustainability. The theme of this fiche is how to ensure project ownership in the communities of intervention. More specifically it focuses on how to ensure ownership and sustainability by involving communities in the different phases of energy projects. The fiche is based on available literature as well as experiences gained from projects sponsored by the first ACP EU Energy Facility.

Community involvement is an essential aspect of most energy projects. If a project is not understood, adopted or appreciated by the beneficiaries the sustainability of the project can be challenged. The worst case scenario is that hardware is installed by an external project implementer, but not used by the beneficiaries because it is designed in a way that is not feasible, or they do not understand how to use it. Moreover in too many energy projects the installed hardware is left to deteriorate after project implementation because the community is not committed or does not have the financial and technical capacity to maintain it. In this way a well planned and implemented project can be unsuccessful in reaching its overall project objectives because the community was not involved from the beginning.

Involvement in all phases of the project

Ownership and sustainability is dependent on community involvement through all phases of the project from project start up, through project implementation and until project handover. The three phases of the project are illustrated in the figure below.

Figure 1 – Three phases of the project

In the section below some general consideration about community involvement are presented. The remainder of this fiche will go through the three project phases and for each phase it will describe activities where community involvement is important. It will explain why involvement is important in these activities and how this involvement can be organised. Practical experiences with community involvement from 15 projects sponsored by the ACP-EU Energy Facility will be included throughout the fiche as cases to illustrate tools, risk and success stories.

The Fiche can be seen as a checklist for project implementers to ensure that community involvement has at least been considered in all aspects of Energy projects.

General considerations on ownership and community involvement

Pros and cons

Community involvement can have positive consequences for both the community and project implementer.

The community will get a degree of control over the project, it might get a financial return from the project or other tangible benefits, and if successful the project will provide a sense of satisfaction.

The project implementer will get valuable information for the project design. Moreover community involvement can handle demand side issues, e.g. explaining what electricity can be used for. Community involvement can be a useful process to

overcome critics and dissatisfaction during project implementation, and in some cases even to avoid thefts and vandalism against the project. Finally as already mentioned it is essential to ensure ownership and project sustainability.

The challenge with community involvement is that it is often a very time consuming process. Moreover honest attempts of involvement bear the risk that the community might have other needs and hopes than the project implementers expected or planned, the consequence being that the project plans and objectives need to be revised during project implementation. Finally the project implementer should be aware of the fact that involvement creates expectations, and failing to reach these expectations might create disappointment and dissatisfaction among the beneficiaries.

Ambitions for community involvement

The ambitions for community involvement will depend on what role the community is expected to play in the project, if they are mainly seen as e.g. customers to an energy infrastructure project or if they are expected to take an active part in project implementation and take over the project activities once the project is finalised.

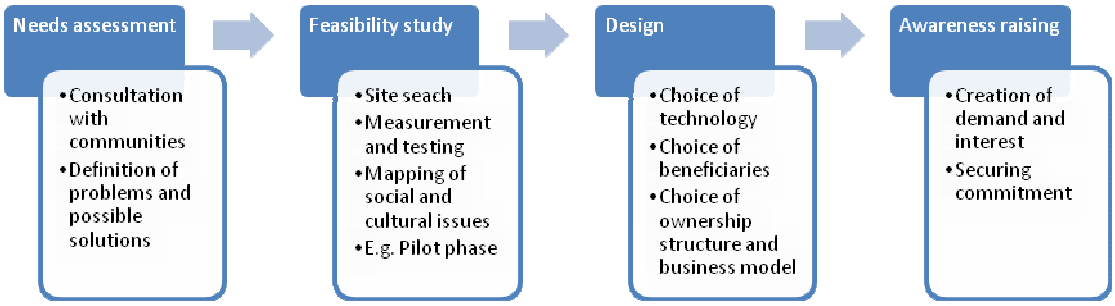
The level of ambitions can be seen as a spectra ranging from community awareness raising and community consultations to community commitment, community investment through money, materials or human resources and community ownership of the project in the long run.

The ambitions of community involvement will influence how, when and why the community will be involved. Higher ambitions will demand a more organised process and in some cases a more organised community.

Project start up

The below figure shows the four major steps of a project start-up: needs assessment; feasibility study; design; and awareness raising.

Figure 2 – Four steps in the start-up of the project



Needs assessment

The first step of a project start up is to carry out a needs assessment, to ensure that project funds are spent in the most efficient way to cover the needs of the beneficiaries. In some cases needs assessments can provide input to a project baseline which is important to measure project performance.

A needs assessment can be done in two ways. One is to predefine the beneficiaries and find out what their needs are. This is often done by project implementers used to working with a specific target group. The other method is to predetermine the service, and indentify the communities in the greatest need for this service. This is often done in bigger energy infrastructure projects. Both methods require community involvement, but the first method will demand the most extensive involvement to ensure that the voices of the beneficiaries are heard. In case a proper needs assessment is not carried out the relevance of the project might be challenged and thereby also the commitment of the beneficiaries. E.g. rural electrification might not be appreciated if the greatest need in a community is food or water.

A special example of the first method is participatory development, where the communities are heavily involved in defining their own needs through a participatory process. Often meetings in the benefitting community are carried out where they define their own needs, prioritise the needs and discuss possible ways of covering these needs through internal mobilisation or external support. The method is mainly used by organisations working closely with the community members. Below two examples of participatory development approaches used in ACP EU Energy Facility projects are described[1].

[1] For more information about the REFLECT model described in the case see: http://www.reflect-action.org, and for more information about the PEOPLE approach see: http://www.hedon.info/

Case: Malawi - 9 ACP RPR 49/29: Msamala Sustainable Energy Project

In this project Concern Universal uses the REFLECT model for participatory development. This development approach is used to empower the community. The project trains community REFLECT facilitators in participatory approaches. They assist the community in developing a problem analysis and in identifying what actions should be taken. The identified solutions lead to the development of micro projects. Some of these projects can be carried out by the community without support. Other calls for external assistance. Concern Universal assists the community in implementing the micro projects such as development of participatory forest management plans and local tree planting to overcome a problem of deforestation.

Case: Somalia - 9 ACP RPR 49/01: Somalia Energy and Livelihood Project

In this project implemented by ADRA-UK, partner organisations and selected community members are trained in how to conduct community/ household energy needs assessment using participatory methodologies, including Participatory Explorations of Options for Local Energy (PEOPLE approach) and Energy and Sustainable Livelihoods approach (ESL). These approaches actively involve the community in household energy decision-making and planning processes. These needs assessments define the technologies used in the project.

Carrying out an honest needs assessment can be a challenging task for four reasons.

1) It is a time consuming task carried out before the project is designed. Often the project design is developed under time pressure because the project implementers needs to respond to a funding “window of opportunity” e.g. by applying for a donor grant with tight deadlines. The result is that activities prior to project design are not highly prioritised. Often the community is involved later in the process once the project design has been developed and the funding is available and at this time it can be difficult to change activities, beneficiaries or objectives of the project.
2) Funding is often not available for the project preparation activities, which means that the time and effort put into these activities have to be covered by the project implementers. The effect is once again that these activities are not prioritised.
3) Involvement of communities can create expectations. Therefore it can be challenging to involve communities before project funding is secured, and funding is often not secured before the project has been designed and approved.

4) Many project implementers have a tradition for working with specific beneficiaries, in certain geographic areas and with specific services/ technologies. The result is that parts of the project design are already predefined before the needs assessment is carried out, and the list of "possible" needs the project can cover is already limited. E.g. an organisation working with hydropower will not provide improved coking stoves even though the needs assessment might show that is what the community would prioritize.

Project implementers need to be aware of these pitfalls when they design and set the ambitions for the needs assessment. In all cases a needs assessment built on community involvement is important to ensure the relevance, and in the long run the ownership and sustainability of the project.

Feasibility Study

Feasibility studies are essential to ensure that the project reaches the planned objectives with a certain input. Feasibility studies can include the following areas:

- Technical feasibility: Which technologies will be most appropriate in the area e.g. for generation of electricity?
- Cultural feasibility: Which technical and organisational solutions will be culturally acceptable?
- Mapping of resources and markets: Which human resources are available in the area, and which products can be acquired at which cost?
- Organisational analysis: Which formal and informal organisations are already present in the community and how can they influence project preparation and implementation?
- Market analysis: In case the project is mainly dependent on selling electricity or other energy products a market analysis is relevant to carry out, to identify the marked for the products.

The benefitting communities also need to be involved in feasibility studies. They have the best knowledge of the area they live in, and they have a clear understanding of what will be cultural acceptable. The community involvement can take several forms ranging from consultation with a few experts/representatives, over focus group discussion to bigger meetings or hearings.

Pilot projects can be an important add on to a feasibility study, especially if a technique is planned to be replicated in large numbers. In some projects it might be

difficult to anticipate how the technology works, or how the local community reacts to the project before the project is physically developed, and pilot projects give a change of changing the design before large scale implementation.

Case: Ethiopia - 9 ACP RPR 139/7: HydroBioPower

In this project implemented by Lay Volunteers International Association one of the main components was the instalment of 1400 low-cost biogas schemes in 45 villages to be connected to cooking stoves. The project initially installed 45 schemes in 9 villages as pilot projects. Through this pilot phase important lessons were learned. Experiences from these pilot schemes showed that cultural and technical issues heavily affected the efficiency and usability of the schemes. Further to animal dung it was foreseen to use human waste for the biogas schemes, but this turned out to be culturally unacceptable for the beneficiaries. Moreover the pilot project showed that the biogas produced in the domestic schemes was insufficient to prepare the national dish, which heavily affected usability. Finally the product used for the biogas containers were destroyed by the sunlight. All these issues had to be reconsidered before the project could be installed on a larger scale.

Design

In the project design phase many decisions are taken based on the needs assessment and the feasibility study. E.g. a technology will be selected and if needed a feasible community organisation will be designed. A challenging aspect of project design is the selection of location and beneficiaries, which can result in disappointment and mistrust, and in some cases even vandalism of the project. Mistrust can sometimes be overcome by including the beneficiaries in the selection of beneficiaries or at least in defining the selection criteria. In other cases conflicts of interests can make it challenging to include the community. In this case the community should as a minimum be informed about the selection criteria to ensure they understand why and how the beneficiaries were selected. This is important to ensure ownership as well as transparency in project implementation.

Case: Tanzania - 9 ACP RPR 139/15: Mwenga 3 MW Hydro Power Plant

Mufindi Tea Company has developed a Hydro Power Plant to provide electricity to the Tea Company as well as 14 communities. When the grid was established the communities along the grid line that did not benefit from the project expressed their frustration of not being connected to the grid. The project decided to include these villages as beneficiaries to overcome this frustration and to avoid vandalism.

Case: Malawi - 9 ACP RPR 139/3: Catalysing modern energy service delivery to marginal communities in Southern Africa

In this project Practical Action is providing electricity for rural communities in Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Malawi. Communities are heavily involved in all countries, especially in Malawi where community cooperatives are planned to take over the power schemes once they are constructed. The Malawian communities are involved in developing the business plan for the project and in deciding which areas the grid will cover. Practical Action is assisting them in taken the financially most feasible decision by introducing business criteria in decision making. The communities are provided with figures for repayment for different possible grids, and the community decides which areas that should be covered based on these and other arguments. In this way training in business models influence the choice of costumers and decision on grid extension and beneficiaries.

In some cases the design of the project is based on input from the community during project implementation. In this case considerations of organisational design are important. If contribution from the community is expected either in cash, in labour or in kind a clear agreement about what is expected from the community could be developed before funding is secured and project implementation starts. For more about community organisations and community input see the section on project implementation.

Awareness raising

Awareness raising is needed for several reasons. One is to create transparency and to inform affected communities about project activities. Another important aspect especially for rural electrification programs is marketing. To create a demand for electricity the beneficiaries/costumers needs to know what electricity can be used for, and how to handle it. They need to know how to prepare their houses to be connected, and to get information about security aspects of electricity. In some cases the communities can be very suspicious of new technologies and they need to see how it works in practise before grasping the idea.

Awareness raising is important both for bigger infrastructural electrification projects and smaller community based projects.

In general a well informed community is expected to be less reluctant to embrace the project, and in the long run more willing to support the project and buy the products.

Moreover experience show that awareness raising can minimise thefts and vandalism[2].

A special target group for information is local authorities such as government officials and traditional authorities. The local officials must be informed about the project to ensure that it is in line with local plans. The traditional authorities often have a big moral influence on the ownership of the projects in the community.

Case: Tanzania - 9 ACP RPR 49/12: Up scaling access to integrated modern energy services for poverty reduction

In this project implemented by Humanist Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries one of the planned results was fuel switch for diesel engines from normal diesel to Jatropha oil. In this regard they carried out awareness campaigns among farmers about economic benefits of Jatropha cultivation for bio-fuel production. The campaign included seminars, radio and TV programmes, articles, brochures, posers and exhibitions, and much awareness was created in regards to the production and use of Jatropha.

Case: Democratic Republic of Congo - 9 ACP RPR 49/07: Eko Makala - Ensuring sustainable supply of fuel wood for the rural people around the city of Goma

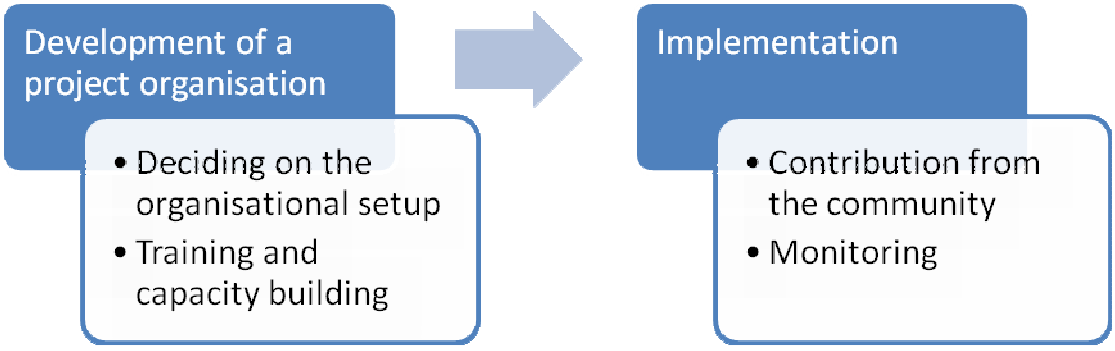
The World Wide Fund Belgium and its East Africa Regional Programme Office worked in this project to establish a 2000ha's plantation model for fuel wood in partnership with local farmer's associations. They experienced a hesitant target group that needed to see proof that it was worth putting time and effort into the production of wood - and to meet technical standards. The first test plantations thus allowed educating the farmers and demonstrating the benefits of participating.

Project implementation

Figure 3 below illustrates two steps in project implementation relevant for community involvement namely development of a project organisation and implementation of project activities.

[2] One example of how theft and vandalism is minimized through awareness raising is the study: ”Transforming Electricity Consumers into Costumers: Case study of a Slum Electrification and Loss Reduction Project in São Paulo, Brazil”: http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNADO642.pdf

Figure 3 – Two steps in project implementation



Development of a community organisation

In most cases an organizational structure needs to be identified or developed, to organize community involvement. The structure and formality of this organization will depend on how much the community is expected to be involved in project implementation. The organisational development should be based on the institutional analysis carried out as a part of the feasibility study.

Community organizations can be divided into two overall categories:

- **Community wide organizations:** These are community representative structures, and can be included in community wide decision making. Their main role is to represent the interest of the community to outsiders, and to make decisions on their behalf. These organizations are expected to follow some kind of rules for election and representation. In some cases they are the lowest level of government or they follow local tribal structures. In other cases they have been developed as part of project implementation.
- **Interest groups or social institutions:** These are not fully community wide, and they are often formed for specific purposes, or to represent specific groupings, such as women or youth. It will most often be voluntary to join, but there might be restrictions on membership, so they will not be representative for the community. In some cases these groups take on more general community development issues. E.g. a parents committee can be involved in income generating activities to cover the cost of some community investments.

For rural energy projects the organizational set-up will depend on the level of community involvement. In case the community is mainly involved in hearings, collection of information and project monitoring as might be the case in bigger

infrastructural project a community wide organization might be proper to use. If the community is expected to invest in the project through money or labour or they will operate and maintain project facilities in the long run, an interest group such as a cooperative might be more relevant. The organizational set-up will also depend on the business model used in the project[3].

When deciding on the project organization it is important to consider if already existing structures can be used or new organizations needs to be developed. The institutional analysis will inform this decision. The advantage of using existing structures is that these can provide a more sustainable basis for community activity. They often have a clear purpose the members can relate to, and they have a higher possibility of existing beyond the project implementation phase. Moreover by working with existing structures the implementer do not add to the number of competing organizations in a community. Finally the creation of new organizations might lead to relationship of dependence, where the organization is not working independently of donor funding.

In some cases there it is not possible to use existing organizations, because there is no organizations to build on, or because the organizations in place have inbuilt social conflicts. In these cases it might be necessary to create new organizations. Moreover organizations created for one specific purpose might in some cases be more flexible and action oriented.

In case new organizations are developed it is important to agree on official procedures and rules. This can be a very time consuming aspect of project implementation, but can be crucial to strengthen accountability and to avoid social conflict within the new organization. Examples of issues to consider are how members are elected or selected, how meetings are organized and reported on, and who can take decisions on what issues.

[3] For more information about business models see the Thematic Fiche nr. 7 on this issue.

Case: Madagascar 49/41: Electrification rurale décentralisée par énergies renouvelables dans le sud de Madagascar*

Fondation Energies pour le Monde is implementing this project where two villages are provided electricity from renewable sources. An important aspect of the project is development of an organization that can take over operation and maintenance of the power generation and distribution system in the long run. In this project considerable effort has been put into development of templates and procedures for this organization, including procedures for conducting meeting templates for meeting minutes, and procedures and templates for invoicing. This is done to ensure transparency and accountability.

*: Decentralised rural electrification by renewable energy in southern Madagascar

In case community organizations play a key role in the project both new and existing organizations need to have capacity built up to be able to carry out the new tasks assigned to them. Capacity building should include both training in institutional capacities such as book keeping and accounting, and technical capacities relevant for the specific project such as business skills, maintenance of the power generation facility or creation of products for income generating activities[4].

Below a few examples of different organisational designs used in the ACP EU Energy Facility projects are mentioned.

Case: Cooperatives

In several of the Energy Facility sponsored projects community cooperatives have been developed to handle operation and maintenances of schemes providing electricity for the benefitting community. These are characterised by the fact that members are the owners and the owners are the users. Examples include the HydroBioPower project in Ethiopia (9 ACP RPR 139/7) and the project “Catalysing modern energy service delivery to marginal communities in Southern Africa”, for the project activities carried out in Malawi and Zimbabwe (9 ACP RPR 139/3). For both projects organisational development and capacity building are integrated parts of the project design.

[4] For more information about institutional analysis and organizational development see: Practical Action: “Learning from Practice – Empowering community organizations: A light touch approach for long-term impact”: http://practicalaction.org/media/preview/10783

Case: Rwanda - 9 ACP RPR 49/02: Community-assisted Access to Sustainable Energy in Rwanda (CASE-RWANDA)

Care Österreich has in this project assisted communities in organizing themselves in loan and saving groups with an average of 15 members. Among the members of the loan and saving groups smaller business groups have been formed. These business groups have been trained in production of improved stoves, as well as accounting, business management and marketing. The groups are provided loans from the loans and saving groups and the objective is for them to earn a living from producing and selling stoves.

Case: Malawi - 9 ACP RPR 49/29: Msamala Sustainable Energy Project

In this project implemented by Concern Universal solar power systems are given to community schools as grants. The project uses community organisations already in place to manage the solar systems, namely the School Committees or Parents/Teachers Association. The maintenance is paid by a Maintenance Fund which is administered by the committees, and they carry out income generating activities to ensure funding for operation and maintenance.

Implementation

Community involvement in project implementation can take many different forms once again depending on the ambitions for community involvement. In some cases they are only involved as costumers of energy products or they are simply monitoring project activities. In other projects they are producing and selling energy products themselves, such as improved stoves or solar lanterns. In electrification projects they might be heavily involved in producing the power generation equipment and they can take over production once the equipment has been installed.

For all types of involvement it is recommendable that the community provides some input for the project to show commitment. This can range from simply paying a connection fee to the electricity grid to major community investment in form of money, labour or in kind. The higher the local contribution, the stronger the ownership is expected to be.

In projects with heavy community investment it is important to consider how to split the benefits and/or the surplus of the project between individuals that have not made the same investment into the project. In case this is not properly defined it might lead to social conflicts within the community organisation. E.g. in case the surplus of

selling improves stoves produced by a business group is evenly divided should all contribute with the exact same number of working hours?

Case: Zimbabwe 9 ACP RPR 139/3: Catalysing modern energy service delivery to marginal communities in Southern Africa

In this Practical Action project inputs are transformed into benefits in a very specific way. In Zimbabwe where a micro-hydro scheme is developed they use what they call the ShareD Model. In this model a community cooperative is designed as a private company comprising of ownership in shares and a management body that will run the operation of the scheme. The shares are attributed to members of the community in relation to how much they have contributed to the development of the scheme in kind or with materials. All input is registered and transformed directly into shares in the cooperative receiving ownership of the power scheme once it has been constructed.

It should be clearly defined who is in charge of collecting the investment or connection fees and systems should be in place to ensure this is done in a transparent way.

Finally it is important to consider what will happen in case the community is not able or willing to contribute to the project as much as planned and/or expected in the budget. This can hamper the effort of reaching the objectives of the project. Another scenario is that the contribution from the community is severely delayed. This might result in delays in project activities, but it might be worth waiting for to ensure ownership of the project.

Case: Madagascar – 9 ACP RPR 49/33: Appui à la synergie énergie - environnement dans le sud-ouest de Madagascar

The SEESO project in Madagascar 'Support for the energy - environment synergy in the southwest of Madagascar' has a component aiming at enhancing reforestation activities. A problem occurred when beneficiaries expected direct financial support for the work they performed on reforestation in their fields. Companies working in the biofuel field pay for labour, which has influenced people's behaviour. The majority of the farmers have thus sought financial support during the planting and maintenance of tree nurseries. So the SEESO project now allows foresters to grow food crops between the rows of wood seedlings, to allow them earning an income.

Case: Ethiopia - 9 ACP RPR 139/7: HydroBioPower

Community input in cash, in kind or through labour was an essential part of this hydropower project implemented by Lay Volunteers International Association, but based on changes in the political environment and experiences gained through project implementation the input has changed character. The benefitting communities were expected to pay 50% of the expenses in cash, and contribute to the construction with labour. The cash contribution was expected to be financed partly directly from the beneficiaries and partly through a loan from the Rural Electrification Fund. Several issues made this a challenge. First of all the hydropower scheme became much more expensive than planned. Secondly a new Ethiopian law made it illegal for any NGO to receive money from the beneficiaries, and finally the loans turned out to be too administratively heavy to get, and were therefore not applied for. The contribution in labours was initially well received, but delays in project implementation and confusion of who would benefit from the project in the end resulted in the beneficiaries refusing to work for free, and paid labour was introduced instead to ensure that project activities were carried out without further delays. The result has been that the contribution from the community has been less than initially planned.

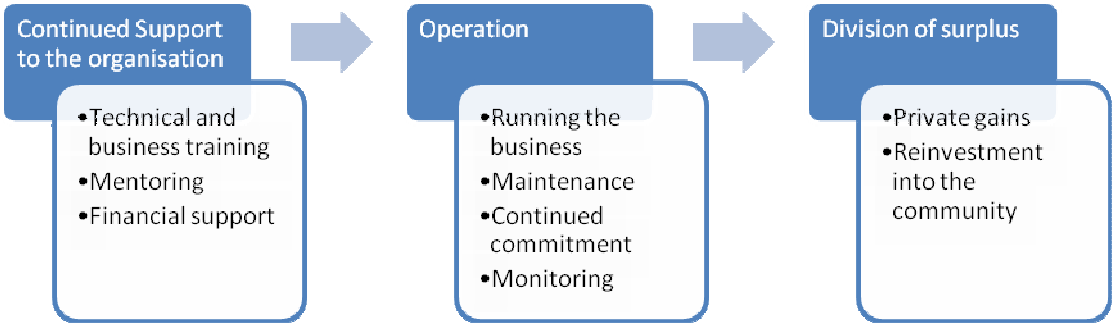
Case: Uganda 9 - ACP RPR 49/11: Providing access to modern energy for northern Uganda (PAMENU)

In this project 2 Micro Hydro Power schemes were being constructed, with the community providing most of the building materials and well as labor. GTZ which is implementing the project decided not start constructing the schemes until all the materials needed was provided by the community. This initially resulted in delays in project activities, but the patient approach resulted in high community involvement and may lead to a high level of ownership in the long run.

Project Hand over

Figure 4 below shows three steps in project handover where community involvement should be considered: Continued support to the organisation; Operation and Division of Surplus.

Figure 4 – three steps in the process of project handover



Continued support to the organisation

A proper project hand over is essential to ensure sustainability, and the exit strategy should be considered and prepared from the very outset of the project. This is especially important if the community will take over project equipment and activities in the long run.

Some community organisations find it very challenging to stand on their own feet once the project implementation period is over even though community involvement, commitment and ownership has been emphasized throughout project implementation. These might need support to fulfill the responsibility appointed to them.

In projects where community organizations carry the responsibility of project sustainability in one way or another continued capacity building and mentoring in the technical aspects of the operation as well as business management and organisational development might be needed.

If the business model of a project is well planned and implemented there should be no need for continued financial support. On the other hand a newly established community organisation might not be financially robust enough to overcome external shocks such as thefts of equipment. In this case some organisations might need financial support even though the project is officially handed over to the community. Terms for this support should be established as a part of project hand over to align expectations and to avoid continued dependency.

Case: Malawi - 9 ACP RPR 139/3: Catalysing modern energy service delivery to marginal communities in Southern Africa

In Malawi Practical Action is supporting the development of hydropower schemes, which will be taken over by community cooperatives. During the project efforts have been put into institutional development and into developing a financially viable business plan including tariff setting. Anyway, Practical Action monitors how the cooperatives are managing the operation and maintenance of the scheme, sometimes bailing them out in case they have unexpected financial burdens. In general Practical Action tries to avoid this, and in all cases it needs to be justified, to ensure that that it is not something the community cooperatives takes for granted.

Case: Kenya - 9 ACP RPR 49/20: Developing energy enterprises project East Africa

The organisation Global Village Energy Partnership International is in this project targeting micro and small business to improve people's access to energy projects and services. The enterprises receive training in entrepreneurship and in the technologies they expect to use in their business. Moreover the project provides the entrepreneurs with a loan guarantee so the entrepreneurs are able to get cheap and safe loans. Once the entrepreneurs have started their business the project follows the businesses through a mentorship program to ensure continuously support for the entrepreneurs.

Operation

During project hand over a plan and an organization for operation and maintenance should be established. The level of community involvement in this process will depend on the community's involvement in operation and maintenance. As a minimum the community should be aware of who to call upon in case of malfunctions.

The organization for operation and maintenance can take many forms, including voluntary groups, trained and paid personnel or private sector providers, e.g. in form of a business development component of the energy program. In most cases the organization chosen will need capacity building in the technical aspects of operation and maintenance. Moreover a plan for staff turnover should also be prepared as experience show that this is a serious challenge in many energy projects. A way to ensure that knowledge stays in the community is by introducing a training of trainers program in which some community members are trained in specific techniques, and use their knowledge to train other community members.

The financial viability of operation and maintenance should be ensured through the business model of the project[5].

The best way to ensure continued commitment from the community after project hand over is by creating a strong sense of satisfaction with the service delivered, and by giving the community a continued feeling of getting a tangible output from the project. One way of doing this is through the division of surplus, which is covered in the next section.

Case: Madagascar 9 ACP RPR 49/32: Programme Rhyvière

The Rhyvière program aims at developing the local use of small hydro systems in rural areas in Madagascar. Based on their positive experiences from earlier projects in the country, the implementing organization GRET (Groupe de recherche et d'échanges technologiques) seeks to establish Associations of Users of the Electricity Network (ASURE). People will be selected by users to represent them and to be a liaison between municipal authorities, which are not necessarily on the site where the grid will be completed, and the service provider. The ASURE will not aim to manage the installation but seek to ensure proper compliance with contractual commitments and will be transferring complaints from users. These associations will at the same level as the municipality be involved in the negotiation of different types of contracts.

Case: Ethiopia - 9 ACP RPR 139/6: Community Managed Renewable Energy Program for Rural Ethiopia

This project implemented by Plan UK is among other things providing communities with solar power units in selected schools and health clinics and they are installing solar powered pumps in selected communities. As a part of the project 20 Community Renewable Energy Committees has been established to manage, monitor and sustainably maintain energy programmes and to promote these programmes within their communities. The beneficiaries play a key role in this project as they participate in forming the committees, they have taken part in various trainings to improve local capacities, focused on women's participation in the renewable energy committees, and they are participating in organizing and managing tariff systems for operation and maintenance of the new water system. The community organisations will be trained in installation, maintenance and repair of services and facilities developed through the project, in order to promote sustainability after the grant contract is finished.

[5] For more information on this issue: Thematic Fiche nr. 7 on Business Models in Rural Electrification programs.

Case: Dominican Republic – 9 ACP RPR 139/11: Local development of the Dominican-Haitian border area through reforestation with Jatropha and production of renewable energy from biomass at the community level

The local production of Jatropha oil that will be established through this project implemented by Instituto Dominicano de Desarrollo Integral, IDDI, will serve the lighting and cooking needs of the families in the area. Two Multifunctional Platforms will be established, with a mechanical press, oil processing equipment and a generator of 10 kW. The platforms will be managed by cooperatives of the beneficiaries themselves. Ultimately they will be able to sell surplus production of Jatropha oil at a price similar to that of kerosene, as it has the same attributes, to the rest of the population and to neighboring territories. This will generate income that will ensure the continuation and extension of the actions taken, including the production of organic fertilizer, soaps and longer term, of biodiesel. With these resources, the cooperative will also fund further training, advice and services to new and existing producers. The project will ensure training for entrepreneurs in basic management and accounting, as well as in sales and marketing of Jatropha sub-products.

Division of surplus

In case an energy project creates a surplus the project design should define how this is used to avoid mistrust and conflicts.

In some cases private investors are implementing and running the energy project, and they will get the surplus. In other cases the project is owned by the community or by a cooperative. In this case the surplus can either be divided between community- or cooperative members using a specific formula or it can be reinvested into the project or into other community activities. Examples of reinvestment into the project could be to use the surplus for grid extensions or loan and savings groups where surplus from some entrepreneurs are used as revolving funds and lend to others for them to start their own business. Examples of reinvestment into the community could be that the surplus is used to buy a refrigerator for vaccines to the local health clinic.

If the surplus is reinvested in the community, community members should be involved in deciding how this is done e.g. through a participatory needs assessment process, and decisions should be taken in a transparent way. In this case the organisation used for the energy project might take on other responsibilities to implement or monitor this investment.

Case: Malawi - 9 ACP RPR 49/29: Msamala Sustainable Energy Project

In this project Concern Universal is supporting Loan and Saving Groups. This is a community managed rural bank operated by community members themselves. They contribute money in form of shares and borrow from the fund to start micro-businesses. The project only provided capacity building in terms of training of community agents who are village based. The community agents are responsible for community mobilisation and orientating group members on the concept. After an agreed period, for instance one year (mostly in December when most communities procure farm inputs) they share the money contributed over the agreed period inclusive of interests accrued. They share based on how much each member contributed to the fund.

Case: Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe - 9 ACP RPR 139/3: Catalysing modern energy service delivery to marginal communities in Southern Africa

In this project renewable power schemes are provided to rural communities. Practical Action uses different business models in the three countries, but in all models the grant from the Energy Facility partly covers the initial investment cost and the rest is covered by private persons either as one private entrepreneur or as Community Cooperatives. Each project has two trust funds: One that covers the grants given and one that covers the private investments. Surplus from the first trust fund is reinvested in the community e.g. as grid extensions or other social services. Surplus from the second fund goes to the private investors, and can if they chose to also be reinvested into the power system, but can also be withdrawn for private use.

Conclusion

Community involvement is essential to ensure project ownership and sustainability. The concept of having an influence on project activities creates commitment, and therefore it is valuable to include and involve the community in **all phases of a project.** This thematic fiche as well as the examples presented has highlighted some important issues to consider when planning and conducting community involvement.

Project start up activities such as needs assessment, feasibility studies and awareness raising often have low priority for project implementers. If properly done it is a time consuming exercise, and time and funding might not be available to cover these activities. Nevertheless a thorough project start up including community involvement can be essential to reach the project objective and to ensure sustainability, and a lack of involvement from the beginning can be difficult to compensate for later in the process.

Project design – especially within the energy field and other highly specialised and hardware heavy areas - often have a tendency of focusing on the technical aspects of project implementation, whereas community involvement, and organizational development are often forgotten. The effect is that these activities are not described in the objectives, outputs or activities of the program. When community involvement is not included in the project design, performance against these activities will not be measured, and there will be an incentive to downgrade these activities. It is important to make **goals for community involvement**, so success on this parameter is also appreciated as a part of project monitoring, and to ensure that the project management tools are also covering these activities.

Donor procedures can make it difficult to change project design once funding has been approved, and as mentioned community involvement is often limited before the project design has been finalized. This can challenge ownership, as the community does not have a change of influencing the project along the way. The project implementer and the donor need a **flexible approach** in order to include input from the community.

Community involvement and mobilization as well as organisational development can be surprisingly time consuming activities. To ensure sustainability involvement cannot be forced or fast tracked. To create honest ownership it might be necessary to play a **facilitating role** and to trust the process. This will in some cases lead to delays in project implementation, and it might be tempting to take over the process

from the community to reach the goals set in the project design, as donors will expect progress according to the work plan.

Project implementers should be aware of the fact, that community involvement always create **expectations**, and failing to meet these expectations might result in disappointments and in worst case project failure. This also means that the community should be involved when it is relevant, and they should receive **continued feedback.** In case communities has been asked to contribute to a project which is then delayed they should be informed, and reasons for the delay should be explained.

When communities are directly included in project implementation it is important to create **clear organizational structures** to ensure transparency and avoid social conflicts. Moreover it is important to include **capacity building** and organizational development as an integrated part of project design.

An **exit strategy** should be planned from the outset of project implementation, so the community is ready to carry the responsibility granted them through project hand over.

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Useful links

1. Practical action: Has extensive experience with community involvement in all aspects of project implementation. Useful documents and guidelines can be found at: http://practicalaction.org:8080/knowledge-base

2. Plan international: Plan International works extensively with community involvement. Useful publications can be found at: http://plan-international.org/about-plan/resources/publications

3. For tool for needs assessments and feasibility study see: FAO´s "Field Handbook" on: ohttp://www.fao.org/docrep/012/ak214e/ak214e00.pdf

4. Practical Participatory Tools from Wageningen University: http://portals.wi.wur.nl/ppme

5. For more information on the REFLECT model: http://www.reflect-action.org

6. For information about the PEOPLE approach and other community involvement tools see: http://www.hedon.info/

7. The study: "Transforming Electricity Consumers into Costumers: Case study of a Slum Electrification and Loss Reduction Project in São Paulo, Brazil" can be found at: http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNADO642.pdf

Thematic Fiche No. 8 "Sustainability II: Ownership and Community Involvement "

European Union Energy Initiative (EUEI)
http://www.euei.net

ACP-EU Energy Facility
http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/energy-facility
E-mail: EuropeAid-Energy-facility@ec.europa.eu

Monitoring of the ACP-EU Energy Facility
http://www.energyfacilitymonitoring.eu
E-mail: acp_eu_energy_facility@danishmanagement.dk