Role of Social Organizers in Pumped Irrigation Systems in Subang, West Java, Indonesia

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INTRODUCTION

The majority of the people in Subang are peasants who live in conditions of poverty. The economic resources are poor and the area is isolated and is suffering from the effects of drought. In 1982, the village of Sidajaya suffered a serious food shortage, the result of a very long dry season. About this time, after having studied the socioeconomic situation in Subang, Bina Swadaya, in cooperation with the local government, undertook to help the people to overcome these problems.

Before starting, a study was made to reexamine the technical, economic, and social feasibility of project implementation in the proposed region. In addition, in May 1984, a baseline survey was made to collect data necessary for project management and for comparison at the time of final project evaluation. The baseline survey covered the six villages of Sidajaya, Sidamulya, Padaasih, Cihambulu, Cikaum, and Pangarengan. Data were collected by a team consisting of five persons from Bina Swadaya and Bappeda Subang. The feasibility study for installation of pumping systems was conducted jointly with the Kabupaten Public Works Service. The findings concluded that a pumping system in Cikaum village would not be feasible and this village was dropped from the project.

The project is managed cooperatively and is organized under the water users’ associations. Up to 1988 this project has covered 506 hectares in 5 villages.

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PROJECT AIMS

Through a process of motivation and consciousness-raising of the community, the aims of the project were formulated as follows:

* To generate income.
* To create employment opportunities.
* To increase income equitaheness among the following groups: landless farmers, landowners, and small farmers.
* To increase community participation in the development process.

These aims are achieved through the efforts of social organizers who provide information, explanations, and guidance, to assist the development of the communities. There are now 85 self-reliance groups with a total membership of 3,190 people.

Farmers usually have a very limited role in irrigation development and often take little responsibility for system maintenance. Many facilities which have been well-constructed according to technical standards have a shorter life than planned as a result of insufficient maintenance. It has also been observed that certain irrigation facilities remain unutilized, because they do not satisfy farmers’ needs. This has been recognized as due to an insufficient sense of ownership, which is the result of farmers being uninvolved in the planning and implementation of the development of the system.

Negative results may be prevented in the future by increasing farmer participation. To obtain such participation social organizers who will live among the farmers are needed to carry out the following actions:

* Motivating the farmers to participate in all stages of development of the pump-irrigation system.
* Developing the farmers’ organizations.
* Identifying the farmers’ needs and desires and communicating them to the technical planners, as well as submitting project suggestions to the farmers.

In Subang the social organizers carried out the above actions by applying the following basic strategies:

* Improvement of technical design based on farmers’ expressed needs.
* Helping the water users’ associations with organizational development, including identification of objectives, historical background, area location, membership, organization structure, and financial and administrative procedures.
* Providing continuous technical assistance for institutionalization of water users’ associations through extension, baseline-data collection, participatory planning and recording, and evaluating and monitoring.
It should be noted that project success is determined to a considerable degree by community participation and the quality of the social organizer. The social organizer who could be of either sex should have the following qualifications:

* **An** agricultural field-worker background.
* Age between **22-30** years.
* In good health and preferably **not** handicapped.
* Ability to communicate; to be creative, flexible, and logical.
  Passed the socia-organizer training carried out by the **Pusdiklat** (The Education and Training Center) of Bina Swadaya.
* Ability to speak in local dialects which is an added advantage.

ADVANTAGES OF THE PROJECT

**Income Generation**

From the point of view of landowners, irrigation permits the harvesting of two crops of rice per year as compared with only one when unirrigated. For landless farmers income is increased when two rice crops are harvested per year. This group may also produce a non-rice crop in the third season of each year.

**Increased Employment Opportunities**

The increased productivity of the land permits more workers to be absorbed into the local agricultural activities, reducing problems of urban drift.

**Equitable Income**

Landless farmers are able to raise a thud crop under irrigation in the dry season without paying additional rent. thus increasing their annual income. This contributes to more equitable income distribution in the region.
Increased Participation in Development

A package of education, training, and guidance offered to local groups on a regular basis increases their knowledge and skills. This process helps to increase their level of participation in community matters.

The training program is organized on two levels:

* Promoter level: To stabilize the promotion of self-reliance groups, with 15 promoters (local volunteers) from the project-fostered villages trained in a special course.

* Group level: Training by subject, with several courses already held in all of the fostered villages, encompassing basic accounting, leadership, and management, as well as various vocational courses.

As a final note, the success of this project depended on community participation. This was made possible through

* The involvement of formal and informal personages in motivating the community.
* The quality of social organizers, especially their perception, commitment, and skill.
* The benefits expected by the farmers if this project is successful.
* Community involvement from the planning stage.
* Confidence in financial management instilled in the community during physical project implementation.
* The presence of field promoters residing in fostered areas.
* The sense of belonging which grows and is fostered among the project beneficiaries.