

INTERNACIONAL WATER AND SANITATION CENTRE  
-IRC-  
CENTRO DE SERVICIOS PARA EL DESARROLLO  
-SER-

Project:

"The rol of communities in the management of improved rural water supplies in  
developing countries"

The leadership of women in Barrel Chiquito handling the water  
project

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Quetzaltenango, Guatemala, October 1999.

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## INTRODUCCION

The community of Barrel Chiquito rely on an interesting experience in the handling that they get at their water project. It demonstrates the capacity that the women have in order to direct the committee of water, as well as the administration of other communal projects.

It is a small community, that for the lacking of earth in order to cultivate, the men go out to work of the community almost all year and they work in properties. The women therefore have to assume the responsibility of directing and make the communal works.

The gestion, construction and administration of the water project give the space so that the women demonstrate their abilities, their force and their motivation, giving the opportunity in order to value the participation of the women in the community work in order to achieve a project of vital importance for all the families, like it is the water.

This experience is presented, in order to share the work that make the committee and the community in order to manage their water project, with the aid of the project of Investigation- Participative Action for the improvement of the community administration in the water supply.

## THE DE LEADERSHIP OF WOMEN FROM BARREL CHIQUITO HANDLING THE WATER PROJECT

### I. The principal characteristics of the community of Barrel Chiquito

The village of Barrel Chiquito has a territorial extension of 4 square kilometers. This village belongs to the village La Barranca of the municipality of San Cristóbal Cucho, department of San Marcos. It is to 22 kilometers of San Marcos and 15 kilometers of San Cristóbal Cucho.

Upon observing this community is a small town that has 29 houses in total live 250 people. Most of the houses are where unite the two roads of entering to the village.

Near the ravine, only 4 families have 10 strings in accessories, where seed: coffee, maxan, pacaya and tomato tree. The rest only have a rope or rope and half near their house. Around their houses seed plants of coffee. They also have pacaya, tomato, güisquil and sticks of avocado and which they sell in small quantities.

In each food is not necessary the omelete. For this, some families, they rent lands in distant places, for the seed of corn.

The little that seed don't reach for the food. This situation obligate the men to be going to work to the properties of the south coast, to the seed, clean and cut of coffee. In the months of November to January, the children don't attend the school and all the family is gone to the accessories.

### II. The handling of the water project, in hands of the Community of Barrel Chiquito

#### A. Constructing the water project:

In order to have water in the houses of Barrel Chiquito, before the construction of the water project, water of the cascades was carried and of the eyes of water, the one which they use in order to make the food, for the bathroom of the small children and for drink. It is also used for the family orchards that are had near the house and for drink of the domestic animals: horses, cows, chickens and pigs.

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<sup>1</sup> They named barrel because in this places has mud.

In order to wash the clothes they had to go to the river. Also the big children, youth and the adults go to the river in order to take a bath, or they well utilize the cascades.

In the time of winter is taken advantage of the rain water and stays in barrels, jar or pails. This helps in order to don't carry water and is taken advantage of in order to make the food, the laundry of clothes, for throw water to the family orchards and for drink of the domestic animals.

The carry of water makes the women and the children, but it is hard and to carry enough time. It is walked until hour and half, round trip it is only brought a jar and a pale per person. One must make some four journeys, in order to bring the water that needs the family in a day.

The families of Barrel have suffered many years, for not having water in the house. In 1,988 a group formed by six people of Belén, expound to the community the purchase of a source of water, thinking of near future the construction of a water project.

The people accept the idea like them manifest Mrs. Eugenia Velásquez: "Already is time that we make something, in order to don't follow carrying water, it is hard for us the conduction, we are already tired. Also, the water serves us everyday. I am agreed to help in order to buy the source of water, later we are going to construct the water project."

Through the motivation of Mrs. Eugenia, the other people say that they was agreed to help so that the source is bought and consecutive that become the water project. In that same year the community of Barrel, purchase a source that is near of this community, paying the quantity of Q. 2,800.00.

In order that we don't lost the idea and the motivation that people show, in order to construct the water project, the same group of people that motivated the purchase of the source of water, begins to make administrations in front of the Municipality of San Cristóbal Cucho, San Marcos. To this Municipality, the group of Barrel make known the necessity that has the community of the water project and they solicit the financial support in order to construct the project. They to the end of a year don't achieve a positive answer.

Like there is necessity of making new gestions to other institutions in 1989 is carried out an assembly in the community and elected to the committee that will give pursuit to the administration of the water. In the election is considered to people that they formed the group that motivated the purchase of the source of water, because the people looked at their capacity in order to administer and represent to the community.

This committee are formed for five women and a man. They are: President: Eugenia Velásquez, Secretary: Teodora Fountains, Treasurer: Francisco Cabrera, Vocal I: Martina Orozco, Vocal II: Jacinta Orozco, and Vocal III: Romelia Dionicio.

The Departamental Government of San Marcos legalize to the committee. This committee begins to redeem their functions and they search for other institutions of the department of San Marcos and of other departments, in order to solicit financial support for the construction of the water project. Finally they arrive to Water of the Town<sup>2</sup>, that after receiving the application of the committee manifest the possibility of supporting to the community of Barrel, in the construction of their water system.

Water of the Town, makes a first visit in the same year (1989), in order to know the community of Barrel and expound their work way to all those that live in this community. The people apparently agree with the conditions of the work that Water of the Town proposes.

These conditions are: the community should contribute work hand for transport of materials, storage of materials not locals, drain and help for the construction of the structures that the project require. Also an initial economical contribution of the 5% of the value of the investment of the project. Contributing with local materials, like: stone ball and accept the commitment of paying a loan that makes the institution in order to finance the construction of the system of water.

The work begin in 1990, they become the studies of feasibility of the project. These studies, are: the topographical removal, the design of the project, the calculation of budgets so much of materials, accessories, work hand and technical services. This helps to the community, in order to know how much it costs the water system in total.

Later the technicians of Water of the Town, explain to the committee, the result of the studies. They made known the general budget, the contribution that should give the community, how much in local materials, like in daywork and the most important the form of financement for the construction of the system.

The president of the Committee, Mrs. Eugenia Velásquez, says: "the technicians of Water of the Town, explained us that the institution could give us financement for the construction of the project, a part in donation and another part in loan. The loan could be pay in 6 years, but upon beginning the construction we have to give some money".

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<sup>2</sup>This is a no gubernamental Institution from Quetzaltenango, working en the execution of water projects assisting rural communities.

They get a loan of Q.15,600.00, that they utilize in order to cover the 25% of the total cost of the construction of system. This loan is gotten in order to pay it in six years. Another contribution that gives the community is their daywork and the local materials. The remainder that needs in order to construct the project are achieved like donation.

So much the community and Water of the Town, they come to an agreement for the construction of the water system. Signs an agreement, between the committee like representative of the community of Barrel and Water of the Town, so that responsibility of the beneficiaries in the payment of the loan exists.

After the committee makes the agreements with the owners of lands, for where pass the general lines of the conduction of the piping of the project, in order to legalize the permissions of pass.

In May of 1991, the construction of the water project is begun. The goal in order to construct the project is of 7 months. The committee organizes commissions of work with the beneficiaries supervise and control the execution of assigned tasks and the daywork of the beneficiaries, so much in the drain and transporting of materials.

In the construction of the project was observed that there are few men working. Mrs. Calixta, says: "our husbands, they are working in the accessories of the South Coast, that is why we have to make this work." The committee organized the women for the transporting of local material and not local, like stones, piedrín, pipes of plastic.

The testimonies of this work, express Mrs. Jacinta, that is a woman that supported committee in the construction of the water project:

"The truth is that the local material that we needed for the construction of our water project didn't exist. The men were not in the community, they leave to the properties to work. Then, the women took advantage of that they were filling the holes of the highway with big stones. We hid and when the truck left, we brought the stones to the community.

We the women could make the works when the men were not, they only sent the money in order to pay the waiters. The waiters made the heaviest works, like the drain, transporting of cement, iron pipes and blocks. They gave us also capticitaiion for the handling of the keys."

The children, also help in the work of the project construction. For example: the girls besides preparing the foods for the family, they help to take care of their



brothers and sisters. They carry the water that is needed in the house. They make the purchases of the things for the food in the stores that are in the center of the village a kilometer of the community.

**SQUARE No. 1**

**Participation of the beneficiaries in the Water System construction of Barrel Chiquito**

| Aspects  | Men | Women | Committee | Girls | Boys |
|--|-----|-------|-----------|-------|------|
| Economic Contribution  | X   |       |           |       |      |
| Transporting of local material and drain                       | X   | X     | X         | X     | X    |
| Preparing the foods for the family                             |     | X     | X         | X     |      |
| Capacitation about Administration, Operation and y Maintenance |     | X     | X         |       |      |

Issue: Data proportioned by committee women, in the investigation of field. The committee carries out meetings, with the community, where they inform to the beneficiaries of the advances and problems that give up in the construction of the system of water.

They arrive technicians of health and social promotor of Water of the Town and they carry out capacitation to the committee, on the functions that it has to redeem within the construction of the project. The beneficiaries, participate in shops on: in health manners and the adequate use of the water and of the latrine.

In November of 1.991 are inaugurated the water project and sanitation. The work of the committee causes impact in the neighboring communities, because it is handled per women. These communities participated in the inauguration of the water project, manifesting their admiration to the committee. They deliver them floral arrangements, fruits, alcoholic drinks of the region and diplomas.

**A. Managing the operation of the water project:**

After finishing the construction of the water system the committee decides to legalize in front of the departamental Government of San Marcos, like Pro-Improvement Committee, in order to carry out other projects of communal development. Mrs. Calixta who is integrated of this committee, says: "that

doesn't want to say, that we are not going to occupy or take care of the water, we believe that yet it is our responsibility what happens with the water project."

This same committee follows in the administration of the operation of the water system. The women are who direct the work of the committee. They form groups of beneficiaries for cleaning of the distribution tank then control, if the cleaning becomes or not. Some members of the committee, travel to San Marcos, in order to buy the materials of cleaning, that utilize: brooms, chlorine, soap. They also buy oil in order to fatten the padlocks that have the lids of the boxes of control for valves.

The treasurer collects the rate. With the aid of the president, they carry the control of the payments of the beneficiaries, the quota for rate and the loan that is had with Water of the Town. They have a simple notebook, where it is the listing of all the beneficiaries and they there write the quantity of money that gives each one. When they pay them, they give a receipt to the beneficiaries, so that they don't distrust of the money that is levied. In this notebook, the treasurer writes the expenses that become in the system of water, for the purchase of cleaning materials and accessories that one must change.

Every six months, the committee visit the beneficiaries' house in order to control the use of the water and the latrines. In these visits, Mrs. Teodora, told us: "When the people know that the committee are going to arrive, they get worried and they clean around their washing place, in order to don't leave signs that the water is waste. But we know for the one which they tell us the neighbors that in some houses the water is waste. They also sweep the latrine, so that this clean when we make the visit."

In the maintenance of the water system, the plumber with the help of one or two integrated of the committee make a revision of all the parts of the system: they are going to see the captation, they walk in all the line of conduction, they revise the keys of general pass, the valves of air and cleaning. Unfortunately the plumber makes this work every year. Also, the plumber makes the arrangement of spouts in the house and repairs some damages the system suffered, when there are fuges.

Because the committee are Pro-Improvement they have to attend to the other necessities of the community: the school administration, teachers, electric power and stoves. These responsibilities has the committee, occupy their time in order to make the administrations, neglecting the adequate administration of the water system.

Mr. Francisco, the treasurer says: "we no longer remains time, in order to collect the rate to all, it is difficult for us make assemblies in order to inform to the community, what is happen with the water project. Every three months, we had planned to revise and make cleaning in all the parts of the project, but with

the works we have to make in the project of light, we now make it every year. We have not been going to surrender bills to Government, we neither have paid the loan punctually with Water of the town."

Some money that levies the committee with the rate, doesn't reach them in order to buy accessories that they were destroyed for their use, they neither have for the purchase of cleaning materials. They in occasions use the money of the rate, for their expenses when they go to San Marcos to carry out administrations of other projects.

In spite of having succeeded in introducing the electric light to the community, the purchase of a land for the school and the construction 35 stoves. The water project needs of a specific administration. This has handled by the committee, they think that they will be formed for specific commissions, for each one of the projects that they are worked in the community.

It was achieve that the school have a commission of family parents. The project of stoves it is attend by ladies' supported by their husbands. While the project of electric power doesn't need of maintenance on behalf of the community. The committee takes the responsibility and mores matters of the project of water. New administrations are made, for the attention of the dirty water that leaves from the houses, that it are one of the looks of sanitation, that it have not been attended to.

#### C. The utility of the rate in the handling of the project of water

The rate, it is an economical contribution that the beneficiaries give for the service of water they have. These economical funds, are used by the committee for purchase of materials of cleaning, change of property and for some repairs.

From the construction of the project in 1991, the committee with the support of Water of the Town define a quota of the rate of Q. 0.25 monthly per beneficiary, the one sum a quantity of Q 3.00 for year. According to the technician of Water of the Town "the quota of the rate is very low, defined so because the people of Barrel are of scarce economical resources. They also have to pay the loan to Water of the Town. Every year each beneficiary has to pay Q. 87.00, makin a total for the 6 years Q. 522.00 each one."

The rate is quite low, Q. is levied 87.00 for year only. With this quantity it is achieved very little. It serve to the committee in order to carry out repairs of small damages that are presented in the project of water, purchase of some materials for cleaning and plumber payment.

The president and the treasurer of the committee levy the rate, they before make a reminder about payment date. Subsequently the beneficiaries arrive to the house of the President in order to make the payment.

#### B. The application of the regulation for the control of the project of water

From the construction of the project of water, the institution Water of the Town leave to the community an internal regulation in order to control the right operation of the project. In practice, the committee doesn't apply this regulation.

Mrs. Eugenia, that is the president of the committee, says: "The regulation was lost, we don't know who has it. We didn't use it, because we don't know well what it says. Water of the Town only left us the regulation, but we didn't chat it with them."

However, the committee manages their own forms for the control water use. the same beneficiaries controlled each other. They warning to the committee, if somebody is making wrong use of the water.

By being a small community, there is to communicate between the committee and the beneficiaries, that is why they believe that there is not necessary of a regulation that this writing in paper. Also, the project doesn't give many problems, because there is enough water.

#### I. Working in the improvement of the capacity of the community for the handling of their project of water:

##### A. The IAP project and their contribution

With the idea of supporting the work of the community, three investigators of the IAP team present to them, the project of Investigation-Participative Action for improvement of the community capacity in the administration of the water-IAP-. The interest of the IAP project, is to support the work that women make in the administration of the water.

The presentation of the IAP project becomes by knowing the one which is pursued: sharing a work that improves the capacity of the community and the committee for the adequate handling of the system of water.

Complete the presentation of IAP, Mrs. Jacinta Orozco says: "we know the work that you make in the institution where you work, our project of water is operating well. The problems that it had have its caused by strong rains, but we know how to fix it. With the new project that you bring us, is good because

we continued in contact with the institution. We have planned to carry out other projects, maybe with the one we learn from you we are going to make it".

Mr. Armando Cabrera says: "Since the construction of the project of water we did not have visited by other institutions. Now that you come with a new project, we accepted it, because we are enchanted by having people of institutions in the community, we felt important with their presence in our community."

With these expressions, the IAP is begun. It is expounded to the community that it is necessary to make a code of work and to form a group of people in order to make a study of the community and its situation about the water and sanitation in the community.

The attitude of the people was very positive, the team is composed with six people, four women and two men. This group is capacitated about the techniques to utilize for the diagnosis of water and sanitation. Consecutive guides are elaborated in order to make the investigation about water and sanitation in the community.

In the elaboration of the water diagnosis it is utilized the map technique with drawings, where it is making an outline of the community, the people draw the houses, the roads. They also draw the place where is the source, the tank of distribution and the line of conduction of the water.

In order to know the state of the latrines, it is made a walk with members of the committee and beneficiaries, observing, how they utilize the latrine, if it is clean or not. Later, the group is reunited and speak about what they observed, in order to see what problems they found and search for solutions in order to make a better use of the latrine.

After, they it is elaborated the report of everything that it was seen about the water supply and sanitation, It says to all the beneficiaries the problems that it was met: the rate is very low and doesn't pay expenses that they have in administration and maintenance. Also, the committee doesn't care about the project of water by attending to other communal projects, they don't have gear for the project maintenance, they don't know how to make new amplifications for connections, the dirty waters from houses runs in the roads of the community and the strong winters have dragged tubing.

They talk between the beneficiaries and the committee, they decide that it is more urgent to solve about the rate, later the capacitation of the committee and the plumber, so they can know about their functions, in order to make the amplifications.

In the same assembly, the committee decides to increase the the rate from Q.3.00 to Q.6.00. Again, after a year the committee realizes that this increase neither cover the cost of administration and maintenance of their project.

After, the IAP team helps to the committee to elaborate a list of activities that they should carry out in the handling of the water system. It is make the necessity in the committee in order to give maintenance to their project, every three months and maintain the necessary resources for the administration by itself.

It is give capacitation to the plumber and committee about amplifications, they elaborate a map with the current number of services, and to the committee about the administration and control of the financial resources (money gathered of the rate), functions of the plumber and committee are elaborated.

With these knowledge the committee says, "now that we already know how to make the amplifications, we are going to say it to the people, that the water is enough and it is possible to sell more spouts, so that no longer oppose each other. We also have to capacitated another plumber, so if he quit, he can teach another one to remain," Mrs. Eugenia president of the committee says, "I believe that what we have to make is a document that could guide us the memeber of the committee, to do what we are saying" the idea to making a regulation, in order to improve the control of all the matters that they have to see with the water system.

#### B. Why is it change the rate?

The committee discusses, with the support of the team of IAP, about the activities that are necessary in order to maintain a good operation of the water system, they know that the money that they levy for rate, is not enough in order to pay expenses of maintenance.

These expenses are: purchase of cleaning materials, pay of the plumber and the expenses that make the members of the committee traveling to San Marcos in order to surrender bills of their revenue and expenses to Departamental Government and to Quetzaltenango, for the payment of the loan. Besides purchase of documents, photocopies, expenses of communication, furniture in order to keep their documents and of stapler and perforator.

To all these activities assigns them has a cost in total of Q. 420.00 that it is the money that needs the committee every year, for the administration and maintenance of the water system. In 1997, the committee expounds this situation to an beneficiaries assembly, making them see the necessity of increase the rate. This assembly becomes in the month of December, because they meet

all the families in the community and they also have money that they have achieved of their work in the properties and sale of their crops of coffee.

The first impression of the beneficiaries was from denial, because the last year had become the first increase. However the committee explains and justifies the necessity of the increase, saying: that in several occasions, the integrated of the committee has utilized their own money in order to make the administrations of the water of water. So that way they increased the rate Q. 15.00 for beneficiary every year.

Also, the committee has begun the proposal to the beneficiaries so that the quota of the rate pays every three months and don't wait for paying it until the month of November of every year.

### C. Why a new regulation is elaborated?

The committee thinks that it is important rely on a regulation, so that it can help them to take decisions and guide the administration of the project.

The different agreements that are taken in the capacitations on functions from the committee, of the plumber, uses of the water, the criterions for amplification and the quota of rate; the committee sees the necessity of writing it in a document, because they say: "the words carry the air, it is better write it, so that it can be respected for the beneficiaries and they could use other people when there is change of committee." "It is also necessary, write when it is necessary to change the committee, because we already carried out more than 8 years"

At this time, they are more conscious of the importance of the regulation, the members of the committee, there are beneficiaries that doesn't come so necessary, because they have not had grave problems and they have water all day, meanwhile those that meet in high parts have been left without water in the hours of greater water consumption (nine of the morning to one of the afternoon).

The principal reasons in order to make a new regulation it is because the anterior didn't know by everyone and it was also lost. The committee doesn't have a document where appears the agreements that guarantee the project good administration.

In order to make the new regulation, the members of the committee gathering, the plumber and three of the beneficiaries, with the support of the IAP team. First, it is elaborated a test with three topics : a) the laws and liability of the beneficiaries, b) the functions of the committee and c) the functions of the plumber.

The first topic corresponds to the sanctions and prohibitions of the beneficiaries about: the size of the piles, the proper uses of the water, the use and maintenance of the latrines, the contribution of workdays for the maintenance and repair of the project, the payment of the rate and taxation in case of emergency.

The second topic correspond to the functions that should redeem the committee, in the project of water and the period of work like committee. The third topic correspond to the functions, liability and sanctions of the plumber.

Once that the test is discussed with the three topics, the team of IAP proceed to the redaction of the regulation according with the answers and suggestions that ii was gave by the participants.

In a meeting of the committee, the first draft of the regulation is presented, discussing and clarifying their content, incorporating other aspects that had not been considered in the the three topics of the test. After making the modifications to the document, the committee organizes an assembly in order to present the regulation to the beneficiaries.

The regulation in general, it is accepted by the beneficiaries, who understand their laws and liability of better way. In their application, problems with the beneficiaries have not been presented.

I. The contribution that they carry out the women, in the handling of the project.

The participation of the woman plays an important role in the gestion, construction and administration of the system of water.

In the gestion the women are the one that put the initiative on the purchase of the source of water and they undertake the administrations in order to get financement for the construction of the system. When the committee is organized, there are 5 who conform this organization, working with them a man.

In the construction of the system, they direct the organization of the community in the works of drain and materials transporting. They represent the community in front of the executing institution.

In the administration of the project, they carry out a combined work with the plumber and they assit inmediatly technicians damages that affect the system of water immediately. In all time that has constructing the system, only they have stayed a week without water. The rason of being women, have greater relationship with the water and know of the consequences that suffer without



relying water, that's why they control the uses that the beneficiaries gave to the water strongly.

They left her husbands to work outside of the community, may permitted the women in order to made decisions in the maintenance of the system of water. It permitted them also, involve in other projects of communal development, the one which guarantees a wider participation in the future.

II. The taking of decisions in the community, like determinant factor for community administration in the system of water supply.

The taking of decisions in the community of Barrel, it is centered in the Pro-improvement Committee, with the support of the Auxiliary Mayor. This committee is the only that exists in the community. From the experience that is generated with the construction of the system of water, decisions in two levels are taken: the first, at the committee leve, they meet in order to define and decide the tasks that each member will carry out, being the principals: contact with institutions in the department and in other places, as well as edit the applications and deliver them to where they correspond.

Second, at the community level: the decisions that are taken are those that are related with the interests of all the beneficiaries, for example, when it is required them involved in the system of water of the economical contribution of all, or when it is are required of the handwork.

The committee involves to the community in the taking of decisions, through their participation in the communal assembly, where the outputs of the carried out tasks, the problems, are expounded necessities that face and the proposals for their solution. The answer of the people has been discuss and analyze the proposals and contribute other ideas in order to make a final decision.

In most of the assemblies, the people accept the proposal of the committee without greater discussion. The attitude of the community in order to take this decision, it has been considered like a vote of trust toward the committee, because until this date the proposals that the committee has expounded to the community, they have operated all.

Now, the transcendent decisions for the future of the community, they are continued taking of combined manner, at the committee level, the Auxiliary Mayor and the community, this way has not been change since the construction of the water supply system.

## CONCLUSIONES

1. The women demonstrate capacity for the gestion and administration of communal projects, such it is the case of the management that they get the water project. The fact of having greater relationship with the uses of the water, it ist establish an active participation in order to maintain the good operation of the service of water in the community.
2. The community of Barrel Chiquito, by being a small town, it have facilitated the taking of decisions of all those that form the community level, under the management of one committee, that is the sponsor of the communal projects. Nevertheless, it is necessary the specific organization in order to attend each one of the communal projects.
3. The capacity site that has the community of Barrel, is an important resource for the gestion of the water, the one which strengthens and develop, starting from the support that gave the methodology of IAP. This methodology, it have contributed to create greater responsibility and leadership of the community in the taking of decisions and in the administration of their system of water supply.