

UN-DESA Water Utilities Workshop
25-27 July 2006, Bangkok, Thailand

Worker Participation



**A Strategy to Improve
Quality and Efficiency
Using Workers' Skills
and Knowledge**

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Public Services International

Public Services International PSI

Global federation of public services unions

25 million working men and women

650 national unions

150 countries

Sectors : health; water, waste and energy;

local, state, national government, etc.

PSI founded in 1907

Workers – the untapped potential

- The most important resource is our human resource
- HR management is very complex
- How to make the most of worker knowledge
- How to facilitate and sustain motivation
- Maintain and increase skills/capacity
- Trade unions as local, national, regional and global partners

Can we change?

Labour is the most poorly understood factor
in the water equation

Why Worker Participation?

- **Use all the information in the organisation**
 - *Workers are closest to the production and closest to the users*
 - *A methodology for consulting workers*
 - *Bring hidden knowledge forward*
 - *Cheaper than consultants*



Increase productivity

- Workers want to do a good job
- Workers know the operations
- Avoid bottlenecks
- Prevent problems
- Common interest in improving services
- Show workers trust – get efficiency back



Meeting Actual Needs and Priorities

- Do we deliver the needed services, in correct amounts, to the right people?
- Are there any other services that should be delivered instead?
- Workers are in closest contact to citizens
- People talking directly to people is the best way to improve dialogue and teach people how to better use services



Efficiency and effectiveness

- Avoids bottlenecks in production
- Offering the needed services to the right people/communities
- Avoiding unnecessary bureaucracy
- A part of every worker's job will be to create change
 - *Find better ways to do the job*
 - *Use resources more effectively*



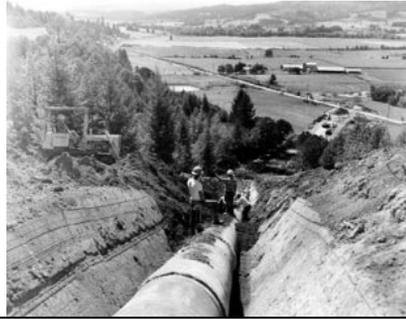
Better workplace cooperation

- Workers in different units can cooperate and coordinate their work
- Workers from different units as back-ups for each other
- Less need for buying services from more expensive contractors



Number one for politicians

- **Better services – high quality**
 - The key is to use the knowledge of those who actually deliver the services and the feedback they get
 - Involvement leads to higher motivation and performance
 - Focus on services, not on conflicts
 - Better knowledge on services provided



Restructuring and Reforms

- **Restructuring public services is necessary**
 - *New technology*
 - *Limited finances*
 - *New and higher demands*
 - *Changing population*
- **Workers contribute better if they participate at design phase**



Flexibility

- **Change is an important part of the job**
- **Finding new ways will make the job safer**
 - *Flexibility and innovation will be the best way to improve working conditions*
 - *Necessary changes implemented without conflict*
- **A part of the project is to educate workers to handle new tasks**



Avoid labour conflict

- **Regular dialogue will reveal what might be controversial**
- **Solve problems before they become conflicts**
- **Less conflicts when workers feel safe and trusted**
- **Influence means solving problems at a low level**



Health and safety is key

- Workers with influence in their workplace are healthier and more motivated
- Job security is good for health
- Positive relation to citizens
- Delivering high quality services gives higher job safety and satisfaction
- Fewer workers away sick
- Higher efficiency



Starting

- **Accept the three involved partners**
 - *Workers and unions*
 - *Managers*
 - *Elected politicians*
- **All partners must be committed to the common goal:**
 - *To deliver high quality and efficient public services*



Respect

- All partners should be respected
- Achieve consensus
- Respect for written agreements and law
- All partners must have an internal discussion on principles



Serious, credible information

- New ways of working can create fear
 - *Is this just another way to put pressure on working conditions?*
 - *Will the workers try to get rid of all mid-level managers?*
- Each partner must present the project to their group
- How can I contribute?
- Citizen information



Political backing

- Workers will have more influence
- This methodology needs political backing and should be rooted in a political decision at the right level
- Politicians will not handle details
- Politicians should follow the project closely



Pilot strategies – early success

- Overcome workers' scepticism
- Unions may know some projects that could be quickly successful
 - *Pilot strategies*
 - *Best way of convincing people is to show that it works*
- Do not start too big, workers and managers must build confidence in the process



Finding ideas for improvement

- **A problem could be an idea**
 - *Unions must be involved in motivating workers to bring their ideas*
- **Build working groups around ideas**
- **Designate a project leader**
 - *To coordinate and facilitate new ideas*
 - *Confidence of all partners*
- **Educate other workers to help in the process**



Fast reporting back

- **Response from decision-makers must be quick**
 - *Implementation should be rapid*
- **Reduce bureaucracy**
- **Long waiting time = less commitment**
- **Every proposal needs an answer**
- **A negative answer given in the right way could be inspiration for further development**



Sharing the results

- All partners should gain
- The methodology is not about wages
 - *This does not replace collective bargaining*
 - *It is about respect and dignity and Quality Public Services*

Workers' initiative methodology

Labour Participation

- Gain for all partners
- Higher quality and efficiency
- Safer jobs
- Fewer conflicts
- Dialogue
- Better reputation

