

Human Values and Ethics in the Workplace

*Improving Leadership and
Performance in the Water
Education, Supply and
Sanitation Sectors*

RESOURCE PAPERS



#1 Human Values Sensitive Planning

#2 Human Values and Ethics in WATSAN



#3 Real Change Happens Within



“Human Values and Ethics in the Workplace” is a capacity-building initiative developed in a collaborative effort between the Global Dharma Center (GDC) and UN-HABITAT, within the framework of the Human Values Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Education (HVWSHE) Initiative of the Water for African/Asian Cities Programmes. The purpose of the capacity-building is to improve leadership and performance in every aspect of the water education and water supply and sanitation sectors, and to help bring about a new ethic in water use and management.

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#1 – Human Values Sensitive Planning

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Overview of the Project Planning

Process

A “project” is a process that passes through several distinct phases called a project cycle. The project phases can be categorized into three broad categories. The first phase includes project identification, formulation and appraisal. The second phase is a critical stage where implementation of the project commences, which includes monitoring and control, and reporting and interim evaluation. The third phase includes end of project reporting, evaluation and termination/ commissioning.

In the case of on-going activities (non-project, repetitive operations), the environment tends to be stable. But in the case of projects, resources and schedules are in a constant state of change, and stakeholders change from phase to phase. For example, at the first phase the dominant roles are those of the consultants and experts who make the study and appraisal of the project. In the second phase, the contractors (in the case

of construction projects) play a more significant role.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Human values are essential elements of human nature and are positive qualities that are shared among people.

A Project is a process of working to achieve a goal through utilizing skills and talents from multiple professions and organizations.

Project planning is a process of defining the resource requirements (time, money, manpower, etc.) for the project.

Human Values Sensitive Project Planning involves a project planning process that is based in human values.

The project planning process, therefore, needs to take into account the state of constant changes as well as anticipated problems and uncertainties. The planning process has to: consider the resource requirements at each stage of the project; define the risks and mitigating measures; and clearly identify the results to be attained at the end of the project.

Negative Impacts of Deficient Project Planning

Water supply projects are designed to achieve specific goals and the end results

should produce benefits to the target groups. However, there are always cases where people are negatively affected due to the activities of the projects. In many projects, people located in the project area can be harmed, while the target-beneficiaries of the project are located at a far distance undisturbed. For example, people can be displaced from their original residence area due to either inundation of the land by water or protection of a dam from pollution and environmental degradation. In most of the cases people resist to be removed from their original residence area due to social, cultural and economical factors.

In other cases, attention may not be given to downstream users while building a dam for water supply purposes. There are cases where dam projects remained non-operational due to the violence of downstream users that were not considered and consulted at the stage of project formulation. Furthermore, people found along the water distribution networks can be affected. Sometimes the design of the water distribution systems may not be conducive for women and children who are mostly responsible to fetch water from water supply points. And in some cases the disadvantaged sections of the population are not taken into consideration while fixing the prices of the water.

The above examples show a significant deficiency that can occur in the planning process of the project if human values are not applied. For example, in many cases the internal motivation of compassion and caring for others is not taken into account at the stage of project formulation. Usually the engineering aspects are given due emphasis at the stage of project formulation and as a result many projects face problems either during implementation or at the stage of operation.



The Need for Human Values in the Planning Process

As a solution to the problems mentioned above, there is a need to give weight to the human aspect of water projects by involving the elements of *human values* in the process of project planning. Accordingly, the concept of “*Human Values Sensitive Project Planning*” should

be developed in order to better support and meet the requirements of different stakeholders with a variety of needs.

Professionals who are engaged in project planning need to possess the essential elements of human values. They need to consider the humanitarian aspects of the people who will be affected by the project. This can be done either by mitigating the negative impacts or compensating those who will be affected. They need to care for the poor people by looking at the most cost-effective design of the projects. Among the necessary values that planning professionals should possess in order to produce high quality outputs are: taking responsibility, caring for others, concern, right conduct, prompt action and truthfulness.

There is a need also to consider the sustainability of the water project in order to deliver high quality services on a consistent and reliable basis. The professionals should feel the responsibility of ensuring standard, ongoing service delivery to the public, which includes:

- Non-interruption of water supply

- Sufficient quantity and safe quality of water supply
- Efficient handling of customers complaints
- Transparent and fair price of water
- Caring for the disadvantaged people

Concluding Remarks

Even though water supply projects may be planned to benefit a certain target population, there are many instances in which they negatively affect other groups of the population. There are many cases where the social or human aspects are neglected or given little importance by the professionals engaged in the planning process, which is usually dominated by the engineering issues of the project. As a result, many project failures have been recorded, either at the implementation stage or operation phase. Therefore, there is a need to involve *Human Values Sensitive Project Planning*. The professionals engaged in project planning, apart from the technical skills, should be equipped with the essential elements of human values to guide them in their work.

#2 Human Values and Ethics in WATSAN

by Rakesh Nath Tiwary, Community Development Expert, Tata Consulting Engineers (TCE) Ltd., UWSEI Project, Madhya Pradesh, India

Values and ethics are those elements in human beings that guide their behaviour in day-to-day life. These elements are formed within their personality based on the environment in which they were brought up and the kind of experiences they have undergone in their life. This makes the development and the change in the value system in one's life a dynamic process – a fact that motivates the development planners to intervene in a given system in such a way that desired human values and ethics are established among the people who matter. Any project, institution or a whole sector can provide such a set up where such interventions can be taken up. Any urban water supply and environmental improvement project can provide such an opportunity. Some experiences and views in this context have been described herein.

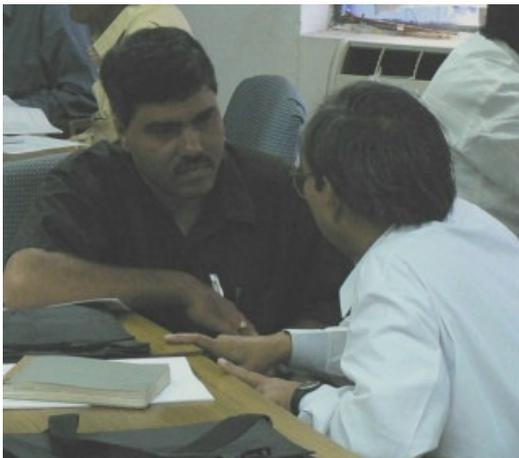
How have we put human values and ethics into practice within the WATSAN sector?

To get a proper site to install water supply and sanitation facilities, in both rural and urban settings, has always been a problem. Many times, such proper sites fall within private ownership, but must be acquired for the common use. The human value of *charity*, particularly for providing water to the needy, has always been a part of Indian culture. This, along with the *concern for the welfare of all* and the *duty towards humanity* are the human values which come on the fore when people donate land for sites and contribute on behalf of the poor when such contribution is required as a prerequisite for providing WATSAN services.

The human values of *trust* and *togetherness* are lived through the participatory planning processes involving the communities. The processes are extended into implementation, monitoring and evaluation by using such techniques whereby the community does not remain just as a user of the services but develops a sense of ownership.

Involving the community in decision making at all the stages of a project is the core principle showing *faith* in them and believing in the *dignity* of all. Decisions are taken collectively – most of the time through user groups, women groups,

youth and citizen committees – on the issues such as: what are the requirements, where should the facilities be located, how will they be used, and maintained and so on. Wherever these human values-based processes are followed, the result is better in terms of creation, use and maintenance of WATSAN facilities.



The human values of *awareness* and *sharing* are integrated into the project through community awareness programmes, campaigns and workshops, whereby communities as well as other stakeholders are not only kept informed but are made aware of the components of the project. Educational and awareness materials are developed after conducting studies on the existing level of awareness and practice behaviour of the communities.

In a society ridden with caste, class, and religious differences, when the poor lower caste person serves water to us in his/her

own vessels, it not only establishes the human values of brotherhood, equality and respect for others but also generates a sense of dignity among the poor.

The need for ethics comes into the fore in the context of fetching the water from the common source without coming in the queue, breaking the pipe lines for personal use, getting illegal connections, and not paying for the Municipal services. When reminded that these are unethical, some people realize it and change their behaviour. For example, in one rural setting where the community members used to spit on the hand pump platform and wash their dirty clothes, children and youth planted flowers and plants revered by villagers around the platform – which changed the community behaviour because it was unethical to put any sort of dirt around them.

The benefits of human values and ethics for leaders working with urban water supply and environmental improvement projects

At present, there is a crisis in human values and ethics at the workplace and in the water sector itself. It results in dishonest practices, selfish behaviour, improper use of time and money, mistrust of each other at the workplace and so on. When workers stop respecting their leaders and community at large, and collaborate with corrupt elements in the

society to give them undue advantages, the programmes and institutions naturally collapse, leading to financial and moral crises. This has happened in all walks of life, including the water sector over the years. It is now part of the responsibility of the leaders working in this sector to re-establish the human values and ethics which have gotten subdued, but have not died.

The benefits of human values and ethics for leaders working with WATSAN projects and institutions would be in the form of the following:

- Proper office management with everybody keeping time
- Teamwork, where everyone contributes to one's total capacity.
- Healthy competition for the benefit of the community.
- Comprehensive planning involving the beneficiaries.
- Optimum and judicious use of available resources.
- Generation of new ideas and openness to undertake experiments in the benefit of the programme.
- Institutionalization of value based practices.
- Trust in government programmes by the community
- Self satisfaction of having contributed to the noble cause.
- Good quality of work.

There can be many more benefits in latent form as human values and ethics become part of the normal behaviour contributing in every respect of life.

How human values and ethics at the adult level can promote a new water use and management ethic in the country

The prevalent concept of “Water as Commons” (that is, “water is a free gift of nature and thus, should be available to everyone freely”), plus the “welfare state” concept, has run the show to a large extent in rural as well as urban areas. Now it is high time that the concept of “Water as Commodity” – and that too, as a very precious and scarce one – has to be established. Users must save water, share their resources to get and maintain water and sanitation services, be considerate that others also get water, and develop the practice to pay for the services on time so that the system can be sustained. A holistic thinking has to be developed about how a poor water supply and sanitation service affects the wages of poor families and the whole life cycle, thus aggravating the poverty situation at the ground.

Human values like self-control, proper use of money and resources, right conduct, good citizenship, humanity and holistic thinking do exist among the adults of the society. These need to be re-established and generated in the context of WATSAN

from top to bottom at management/ implementation levels as well as among community leaders. These human values and ethics can provide the base to establish a new water use and management ethic, such as: potable water should not be misused or wasted; water is to be conserved and saved; any wastage or leakage has to be reported to the proper place; getting WATSAN services has a cost and it has to be paid.

All these issues are related to human values and ethics in life and can be resolved by living and promoting them. They cannot be achieved by any other means except for making people aware of them and educating them in this regard. At the management level, creating a disciplined and dutiful team for a WATSAN project would be a clear indication of the acceptance of these human values – where they should be established at whatever cost and at all levels, including communities.

The need for continued capacity building with human values and ethics at the adult level

Values and ethics are formed largely through upbringing, culture and experience of an individual. Though a large part of values and ethics already exist by the time one attains the adulthood, these can be changed,

reformed and established, as it is a highly dynamic process in the life of an adult.

There are examples when people, highly unethical and valueless in behaviour, have taken a U-turn to uphold human values and ethics in the later parts of their lives. Similarly, people have left human values and ethics when they have found it difficult to practice in their environment. It is indeed a challenge to inculcate human values and ethics in the adults and sustain them as a part of their behaviour, particularly when this “colourful” world allures them to do away with these “old” traits. But human values and ethics never die and there are people who practice it and can start practicing if they are made aware about it and a suitable environment is created for them.

Capacity building is not a one-time event, particularly when it has to be built at the attitude and practice level. It has to be emphasized time and again. Adults learn those things which have immediate practical relevance to them and they relate everything with their earlier experiences. The capacity building interventions of human values and ethics have to visualize its practical importance and needs, which it can easily do. But it is a difficult proposition to establish it among those who have lived without human values and ethics and yet prospered.

The right people – those who have experienced the power and role of human values – can take it up further. Such people are in abundance and can make change possible provided they are identified and put together in a system. Adults learn from the experience of others

also. Continued events and access to those examples where adherence to human values and ethics have made considerable changes in the situation can help adult learners to relate it in their situations and learn.

#3 – Real Change Happens Within

by Kaveri Dutt, Community Development Expert, Tata Consulting Engineers (TCE) Ltd., UWSEI Project, Madhya Pradesh, India

Yesterday I was clever.

That is why I wanted to change the world.

Today I am wise.

That is why I am changing myself

- Chinmayanand

Almost all of us strive to change the immediate world around us. Most of us even follow the philosophy of “Think Globally and Act Locally.” Yet, it is common knowledge that, despite the best of intentions, experts, workers and stakeholders do not always manage to inculcate a sense of integrity and responsibility for long-term sustainability and maintenance of the infrastructure work that they undertake.

When facing the current challenges of our water and sanitation infrastructure, most of the time stakeholders are left thinking such things as, “What went wrong?” “What happened?” The most common practice that ensues is the “blame game,” where we proceed to make a large list pointing to what is wrong: “political will, administration, bureaucracy, government, the public, etc.” We talk about these entities as if there is no human content in

them – whereas they are in reality the embodiments of collective human action and decision making.

In a world that is gripped with the disease of greed rather than a respect for true needs, corruption and dishonesty in the disbursement of duty becomes the order of the day. The tragedy is that no matter what the interpretation, most people miss the forest for the trees, since ultimately the fact is that human beings are the ones responsible for the doing or undoing, which usually goes unaddressed and unresolved.

It is in this context that I have quoted Chinmayanand’s statement – to show that real change requires a deep understanding, not from knowledge alone, but from the wisdom that comes only from the maturity of our spiritual, moral and ethical character and nothing else.

Focusing on internal change

For the urban water and sanitation project, which is to be implemented in four cities within the state of Madhya Pradesh, India, the main mandate for implementation is as follows:

1. Water supply

2. Sewerage system
3. Storm water drainage
4. Solid waste

Over and above these components, the project has an all-encompassing additional issue of community development: attempting to address poverty reduction, area improvement and community initiative. Within this additional issue, the first concern related to water is that of preserving and purifying it.

For example, many water professionals chase after the fact that water is wasted because of pilferage and leakage. However, an equal issue that gets very little attention is measuring how much water is wasted by the middle class when they throw away the water that has been stored the day before, or keep the wash basin tap open while they are brushing their teeth or going through other ablutions. If the value of water is realised by all those involved in the process, then a new appreciation will arise for the effort it takes to supply it, for the costs involved in bringing water to our washbasins, and for the fact that droughts and water shortages do not dramatically happen in just a day. Thus, when the value of water is understood and optimally utilised, the issue of water wastage can become a thing of the past.

The most challenging issue, however, is that we must bring out human values and ethics in each working adult in order to

promote a new water use and management ethic as well as a new work ethic in our country, where corruption has become the order of the day. Realistically, reversing the order may be a long journey, but it is most certainly possible. We must never lose sight of the fact that this is the land of Gandhi and Buddha, where such initiatives and success have happened throughout history.

On a personal basis, most of us, when and if we get a chance – usually on our way back home (when our mental energies are at our lowest) – we realise and recognise that unless human values and ethics become an integral part of how we work, no amount of improvement in the infrastructure will be a success.



So where do we start?

One of the approaches that could be taken to help bring about this internal change based in human values is to conduct personal interviews with all the stakeholders – e.g. engineers,

draftspersons, Municipal Corporation counterparts, community – asking them to identify the points in which their consciences have said something and they have had to work contrary to that... and the repercussions of doing their work when they are going against their conscience.

We could also ask the stakeholders what they consider to be the ideal process and methods, based on human values, to achieve the best results. If copious notes of each person's ideas were taken and internalised, then we would undoubtedly be able to come up with creative methods whereby we bring out human values amongst those involved. We could ask simple questions, such as:

- In your role, what is the best way to design the water supply system, given the present human conditions and other resources available?
- In your role, what is the best way to design the sanitation and sewerage system, given the present human conditions and other resources available?

One way to reinforce the new attitudes and behaviour that happen as a result of this internal change is to have the adults be accountable to the youth – that is,

without creating a defensive situation, create an adolescent parliament where the implementers of a water project have an open and live telecast through the local cable television network. This would give those who are responsible for the work an opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to be a champion of human values. This type of demonstration on behalf of human values is an opportunity that we should maximise in any way possible.

Additionally, institutionalising an award at different levels for incorporating human values and ethics could be an additional incentive. In fact the prospect of being nationally and internationally known for having conducted exemplary work may motivate the possibility of the very change we wish to achieve.

In the ultimate analysis, the internal process, or force of doing “good” will result in “bringing out” the best that human values and ethics have to offer us in our work with water and sanitation.



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