**AFRICA CENTER FOR PROJECT MANAGEMENT**

**ASSIGNMENT**

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**Student number:** Acpm Pgd / 103/2018

**Course:** Postgraduate Diploma in Water, Sanitation & Hygiene - WASH

**Course Code:** PGD002

**Module:** Introduction to WASH

**Due Date:** December 31, 2018

**Introduction**

This assignment on Introduction to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene – WASH elaborates the topic through providing answers to various questions on WASH promotion and public health issues.

Community radios are seen as an important means of communication in promoting WASH behaviors and practices in many developing countries particularly in rural areas where many people still have the tradition to listen to radios.

Public health have been defined as a science and art of protecting and promoting the physical, mental and social well-being of the population and the environment they reside in. International NGOs are looked at as playing an important role in the promotion of public health in many developing countries through providing financial and technical support to governments and local health practitioners.

The assignment also provides some guiding question for carrying out a WASH assessment in disaster situations where a successful assessment should provide information relevant in making key decisions on necessary interventions.

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**QUESTION N° 1**

1. *Suppose you work with a community radio station, describe what your radio station would do to address water, sanitation and hygiene issues with regard to your i) audience, and ii) WASH messages?*

**Answer to question n° 1**

Despite the reduced habit of people to gather around their radios and spend some considerable amounts of time listening to radio programs due to competitive technology people still listen to radios while they are driving, on their phones or while at work in their laptop computers particularly in the urban environment. In rural areas, radios remain a viable tool to transmit various relay information to community people including marketing and educational messages.

As a community radio station worker, with passion and concern to influence local communities and trigger behavior change in views, understanding and behavior related to water, hygiene and sanitation, I would work with the local radio to implement the following programs to address water, hygiene and sanitation issues:

* 1. **Audience**

Radio stations can easily reach both illiterate and literate people buy using local and widely spoken languages. They also have the capacity to reach large numbers of people at the same time. The local radio will facilitate the delivery of participatory audio presentations that directly address water, hygiene and sanitation issues. Liaising with the local government authorities, community leaders and activists, the radio station will select WASH challenges affecting the area communities including the most affected age groups or gender. The radio will then seek to raise awareness so that the target groups are motivated to tune to the radio and listen to the programs when they are on air.

Audience groups would include;

1. Teenagers and youth (both boys and girls)
2. Mothers and fathers
3. Elderly people

Although it can be difficult to select the reach specifically one group at a time as different age groups and gender can be tuned to the radio at the same time, it is possible to address issues affecting specific groups though radio messages such as preparing programs that address WASH issues affecting female adolescents during menstrual periods while at school or at home or targeting mothers as the main caregivers to babies and young children. Radio programs can raise cultural issues that can trigger discussion in the community and lead to lasting changes. Parents are the main decision makers at home and it is good to target them with WASH messages as they are ones who will decide on aspects like construction of latrines, water treatment, etc. It is important to ensure effective communication on WASH matters to teenagers as they are the future parents and they can model the future generation.

* 1. **WASH Messages**

Key WASH weaknesses at community level can be obtained through research, meetings with local leaders, activists or from government records. The community radio will gather such information to guide it in preparing its audio presentations. Themes being discussed on radio programs should be easily identified by the target communities or groups or the communities should identify themselves with those issues[[1]](#footnote-1). Some of the common WASH challenges in both urban and rural areas are:

1. Importance of latrines
2. When and why we should wash hands
3. Dangers of poor sanitation at household and community level
4. Why we should drink clean water

Depending on proposed themes, the target groups and costs, radio programs will be presented in any of the following forms; spot messages, drama, in-studio discussions, talk shows, phone-in and quizzes[[2]](#footnote-2). Participative programs will allow for exchange of opinions, discuss new and innovative ideas and peer influence among listeners. Sanitation and hygiene promotion should be seen beyond just providing information. It should promote community engagement and influence communities to address their hygiene and sanitation problems and adopt improved water, hygiene and sanitation practices[[3]](#footnote-3). Recorded spot messages can be cheaper and can be played as many times as necessary while other forms that will need more participants can require more financial resources.

**QUESTION N° 2**

1. *In your own words, what is your understanding of public health and what are its key elements?*

**Answer to question n° 2**

Public health is defined as a field of health science that seeks to protect, promote and improve the overall health of individual people and the communities they live in[[4]](#footnote-4).

It entails all effort and activities implemented to prevent people from getting sick or injury, improving their social well-being and prolonging life. Public health involves educating people for behavior change, developing working policies and researching for prevention of diseases including vaccination of both children and adults[[5]](#footnote-5). Successful implementation of Public Health activities will result in effective prevention of diseases, improved quality of life, reduced human suffering which in turn saves financial resources both for individuals and governments in general.

The Centers Diseases Control and Prevention has identified and enlisted ten practices that are considered as essential elements of Public Health, these are;[[6]](#footnote-6)

1. Monitoring the health status of communities in order to be able to identify prevailing health problems.
2. Carry out regular diagnosis and investigation of health problems and health hazards in the community.
3. Bring awareness through information and education and empowering people about health issues they may be exposed to due to their behaviors or environmental conditions.
4. Mobilize and establish community partnerships to identify and solve health problems.
5. Develop policies and plans that promote and support individual and community health efforts.
6. Enforce laws and regulations that protect health and ensure safety of people.
7. Link people to established personal health care services and assure the provision of health care when unavailable.
8. Assure a competent workforce for public health and personal health care
9. Evaluate effectiveness, accessibility and quality of personal and population based
10. Research for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems\* services

**QUESTION N° 3**

1. *Public health is about partnership between the different players. Explain how the role of international non-profit/NGO in terms of:*

*i) recruitment, ii) training, iii) funding and iv) monitoring for public health projects contribute to the success or failure of those projects in the developing countries.*

**Answer to question n° 3**

*“Non-governmental organizations have become key actors in responding to poverty and related suffering. In Africa, NGOs play a leading role in providing health care and education.”[[7]](#footnote-7)*

International non-governmental organizations – INGOs generally play an important role in representing the western world and governments in many developing countries. Their participation in development activities impacts both political and economic environments while also brining in the international public opinion in the areas they operate. Involvement and participation of INGOs in public health has progressively gained momentum and increased in numbers in the recent years. They strongly support the promotion of public health services around the world particularly in reducing the impact of large-scale diseases like Ebola, Cholera, HIV AIDS, etc., that pose a threat to public health[[8]](#footnote-8).

INGOs facilitate partnerships and networking between different practitioners involved in the delivery of public health services such as; governments, major donors, communities and local groups (community based organizations – CBOs). They play an important role in mobilizing the international community to support low-income countries, influence law makers to ensure effective policies are put in place and advocate for primary health care as a human right for the poor.

1. ***Recruitment***

With globalization and democratization, INGOs stand together with the government and the private sector in reducing unemployment rates in developing countries. Some INGOs deploy large numbers of volunteers from their donor countries to their work areas. Smaller numbers of expatriates are usually part of the INGO staff particularly in providing technical support and leadership. Many developing countries benefit from these large scale NGOs as they employ considerable numbers of local / national staff. This enhances continuity and sustainability of the development initiatives. INGOs also promote full participation and involvement of individuals and communities in the planning, implementation, and control of their existing programs[[9]](#footnote-9).

1. ***Training***

Capacity building and empowering local / national staff is a key role played by INGOs in developing countries. INGOs provide necessary trainings to both project staff and government workers to be able to effectively respond to identified needs of primary health care programs. In some cases, specific training topics are extended to community workers and project beneficiaries. The cascade group and care group models are widely used by INGOs in training beneficiaries and promoting behavior change in communities. Involvement of locals increases effectiveness by addressing cultural and traditional barriers while in some cases, training messages are built around existing good practices. Many INGOs have extended their efforts in developing locally sustainable and culturally accepted health technologies and promote efficient use of resources such as; energy, water, sanitation and medical care facilities. They have also contributed in the creation of innovative and effective health education methods that empower both individuals and communities to take ownership of their own health[[10]](#footnote-10). INGOs also play a key role in capacity building and empowering local NGOs such as community based organizations so that they are able to effectively address health problems in their communities or areas of operation.

1. ***Funding***

Many INGOs are a representation of the western world or international community and are usually seen as possessing some financial power or do have the capacity to mobilize funding for health activities in developing countries. Examples of INGOs are World Vision, CARE, Food for the Hungry, World Food Program, UNICEF, etc. These mobilize funds through the UN and other funding agencies to support development and public health programs being implemented in developing countries including African countries. Depending on recipient country policy and/or INGOs practices, some INGOs will not implement project at ground level, they rather use their technical expertise to capacity build local NGOs who are considered as sub-recipient of the grant funding. Such INGOs also provide technical support and funding to government institutions and support government budget deficit. For example, in Mozambique, UNICEF and other INGOs support the Ministry of Health with some medicines, in water supply, in contracting consultants for research and technically support areas of weaknesses. INGOs have been seen to increasingly receive financial support from international donor in detriment of many local governments.

1. ***Monitoring for public health projects contribute to the success or failure of those projects in the developing countries***

The expertise possessed by many INGOs allow them the capacity and ability to monitor many public health projects being implemented in developing countries. They are able to provide equipment and skilled personnel for monitoring and evaluation of project activities. Continuously research is key in identifying key need in public health and the ability to take appropriate preventive measures makes huge impact in saving both lives and money. Some real-time monitoring methods are at times employed to keep track of some health sensitive issues and those will need technical support in addition to financial resources to pilot them, make improvements, advocate for their adoption by government institutions and roll them out. Many public health projects involve community mobilization and communicating for behavior change. These activities require close monitoring of project progress including carrying out mid-term evaluations and barrier analysis surveys.

In general, INGOs play a cornerstone role in the successful implementation of public health projects in many developing countries by providing technical support, mobilize funding, advocate and support policy development. However, attention is needed by INGOs to avoid creating donor dependency. Local people may get used to giveaways and relax instead of assuming responsibilities for their own health. Community participation and involvement in all stages of project implementation is vital to reduce project failure. It is also important to consider cultural issues when developing training messages, consider the community context when defining types of project intervention and when hiring project staff to ensure effectiveness and reduced barriers.

**QUESTION N° 4**

*In your capacity as the environmental health officer you have been tasked to lead the assessment of a disaster situation. Come up with two key questions under each of the following five headings in your assessment list , namely i) General overview of the situation ii)Water supply iii) Solid-waste disposal iv) Excreta disposal and v) Vector-borne diseases for purposes of assessing local conditions, health needs and identifying local resources in the disaster situation that you are addressing*.

**Answer to question n° 4**

According to the International Committee of the Red Cross, an assessment is an important element in program planning and it gives an understanding of the current situation in an emergency and in order to identify the key problems, their main source and the magnitude of the consequences. An assessment should not focus on identifying an intervention, but concentrate on finding out whether or not an intervention is needed.

There are three types of assessment suggested for emergency situation namely a rapid assessment, a detailed assessment and a continual assessment. The rapid assessment is ideal in situations where a disaster (cyclone, earthquake, flood, etc) has just occurred and people have been displaced, shelter destructed and people are exposed to public health risks.

Imagining that I am leading an assessment in a disaster situation, I and my team will carry out a rapid assessment to get an overview of the disaster situation, identify the major problems and define whether there is or not an emergency and what would be the needed interventions to mitigate the impact of the disaster.

Below are a few questions to guide the assessment team during the interviews with different informants:

1. ***General overview of the situation***

* How many people or households are affected and where are they? Are they displaced from their homes?
* What are the current or likely water and sanitation related public health risks?[[11]](#footnote-11)

1. ***Water supply***

* What are the current water sources in use by the affected people?
* Is the water source in use free from contamination? Or at any risk of contamination?[[12]](#footnote-12)

1. ***Solid-waste disposal***

* How do people currently manage solid waste? Are there designated points for waste collection?
* Are there any locations with uncontrolled dumping of wastes closer to dwelling places?[[13]](#footnote-13)

1. ***Excreta disposal***

* Are there any existing toilet facilities in the area? If they exist, are they being used?
* Do vulnerable groups of affected people like elderly, disabled, women, children have easy access to the toilet facilities?[[14]](#footnote-14)

1. ***Vector-borne diseases***

* What is your understanding of the relationship between water/sanitation/shelter/ vectors and disease?[[15]](#footnote-15)
* Do you have any problems with the presence of disease vectors in and around the toilets and dwelling places (such as vermin, bats, birds, mosquitoes, flies, cats, dogs)? What do you think attracts disease vectors? How can diseases vector population be reduced?[[16]](#footnote-16)
* What are the common vector-borne diseases in the area and how serious are they? [[17]](#footnote-17)

1. Guidelines for Sanitation and Hygiene Promotion through Radio, Ministry of Health - Uganda [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Guidelines for Sanitation and Hygiene Promotion through Radio, Ministry of Health - Uganda [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Promoting Hygiene, chapter 9 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. American Public Health Association, https://www.apha.org/what-is-public-health [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The University of Pittsburgh [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The University of Pittsburgh [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The Conversation (Academic rigor, journalistic flair) entitled “The role of NGOs in Africa: are they a force for good? [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Anbazhagan, Suguna & Anbazhagan, Surekha. (2016). Role of non-governmental organizations in global health. International Journal of Community Medicine and Public Health. 17-22. 10.18203/2394-6040.ijcmph201515 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
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11. Rapid needs Assessment for water, Sanitation and Hygiene, WHO, Regional Office for South-East Asia, New Delhi, India [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Sphere handbook [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. The UN Refugee Agency - UNHCR WASH ASSESSMENT PRIMER QUESTIONS [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
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