

Who Cares About The Community? Agua Del Pueblo as a Case Study for Water-Related Non-Profit Work

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Abstract

Agua del Pueblo, “The People’s Water,” is a Guatemalan non-profit founded in 1972 to provide rural communities water and sanitation services. Agua del Pueblo (AdP) has completed projects in more than 800 communities. Using a specific, integrated methodology, AdP emphasizes community involvement in each stage. Through this, water acts as a means rather than an end, creating community organization structures that empower people to become less reliant upon outside aid. 783 million people still lack improved water sources, leading the United Nations and UNICEF to declare an international “Drinking Water Decade.” The article investigates the replicability of AdP’s methodology.

Nonprofits play a distinct role in the provision of services, arising for a variety of reasons, one of which being nonprofits responding to specific “market failures” by governments and other organizations (Hansmann, 1980, p. 845). In the sector dealing with water and sanitation services, nonprofits have a daunting challenge (WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation, 2010). Agua del Pueblo is a nonprofit organization headquartered in rural Guatemala that works to provide water and sanitation services while also empowering communities. Creating a distinct methodology, the organization has had a great deal of success in its 40 years of existence, providing more than 800 communities with technologically and culturally appropriate solutions to their specific water and sanitation needs. This article seeks to analyze Agua del Pueblo in the global context, responding to the research question of: How are the long-term successes and implications of the community-empowerment-focused methodology of Agua del Pueblo relevant and replicable within the global context of water needs? In answering this question, Agua del Pueblo acts as a model for other organizations hoping to respond to similar concerns by presenting its methodology as a template for others. In the same way, it gives additional attention to the woeful lack of water-centered nonprofits in combating the growing number who lack this critical resource.

HISTORY OF AGUA DEL PUEBLO

The history of Agua del Pueblo is one that can be characterized most simply by the word “serendipity” (A. Karp, personal communication, June 11, 2012). A group of young men and women, mostly Americans, all finding themselves centered in Guatemala for various reasons in 1972, began a water project in conjunction with the local Catholic Parish in San Lucas

Tolimán. Each individual had his or her own motivation for becoming involved in the creation of a rural water project, ranging from some simply “looking to have an adventure in the world,” receiving “a tremendous satisfaction from helping people” and others having Peace Corps commitments (H. Kestenbaum, personal communication, July 3, 2012; A. Karp, personal communication, June 11, 2012).

Generally, the group's diverse assortment of skills such as engineering and anthropology gave them a great deal of potential to positively contribute to the communities of Panimaquib and Pampojilá, two local communities in need of water. After a series of fortuitous events including a local pipe company agreeing to sell pipe to the communities on credit, generous donations arriving from American companies, and a coffee plantation owner adjacent to one of the communities committing to finance a large portion of the project in order to obtain water on his own plantation, the young volunteers realized their project goals were in fact possible and feasible. According to an article written by two early AdP founders and another colleague regarding one AdP project, "the experience of some young volunteers involved in the project to assist the communities of Panimaquib and Pampojilá became the stimulus to create an NGO [Non-governmental Organization]" (Karp, Cabrera, and Cabrera January 1999, p. 19). Following the successful completion of that project, the group created a formal methodology out of the strategies that had worked effectively on their first projects and began the process of gaining legal recognition. After first incorporating in the state of Missouri in the United States in 1974 under the name "The People's Consultants," they eventually gained legal status as a non-governmental organization in Guatemala in 1981 as "Asociación Pro Agua del Pueblo." In their initial U.S.A. Articles of Incorporation (as amended in 1974), their first goal was "to construct technically adequate water systems in impoverished communities in the Central American country of Guatemala and other Latin American Countries, taking into consideration the cultural, sociological, and economic characteristics of each community" (p. 2). As the Articles continued, their additional goals include

training Latin Americans, creating a replicable methodology and model, educate communities, and, lastly, encouraging "further community development in the respective communities in which the water systems have been introduced" (Articles of Incorporation, p. 2).

RURAL WATER TECHNICIAN PROGRAM

Two unique aspects of the Agua del Pueblo's methodology, which is still in use today, include the "tecnicos en acueductos rurales" (Rural Water Technicians) training program and an emphasis on community involvement. The engineering program trains a group of "tecnicos de acueductos rurales," called TARs, who serve as "barefoot engineers" in Guatemalan communities. According to an article by Clemens, Karp, and Papadakis (2002), developing countries lack the type of technician needed to serve as an intermediary between community members and trained engineers. If this need was not filled, Agua del Pueblo realized, its work would perpetually require foreign assistance in planning and carrying out rural water supply systems, therefore limiting the number of communities that could be helped and reducing AdP's sustainability as an organization (Clemens, Karp, and Papadakis, 2002). Similar to Guatemala's "barefoot doctor" program (Rural Health Technicians), individuals were selected directly from rural communities and trained for six months in a variety of sectors including fluid dynamics, engineering design, management, methodology, community organization, construction, maintenance, and health education (Elmendorf, Solares, Alvarado, Hurtado, & Vielman, August 1986). Through this program, as an evaluation conducted by USAID of the joint work of Agua del Pueblo and CARE remarked, TARs were able "to

be the link between rural workers and the engineer” (Elmendorf, Solares, Alvarado, Hurtado, & Vielman, August 1986, p. 51). The methodology, as revised in 2011, explicitly outlines the role of TARs, noting they should solely work under the supervision of an engineer and never as a substitute. Similarly, they should come directly from rural communities, providing them with familiarity of both indigenous cultures and languages (Agua del Pueblo, corrected 2011).

This use of trained but local technicians has a variety of distinct strengths and advantages, as detailed in “The People’s Water: Technology Transfer and Community Empowerment in Guatemala” (2002). Once a community completes one program successfully with the leadership of their own community members and the advice of rural water technicians, they gain confidence in their ability to plan and execute projects from start to finish, leading them to take new initiatives in creating supplementary community improvement projects such as infrastructure and schools. In many occasions, when AdP arrived, the village had no history of local taxation. In order to complete the integrated AdP project, the community was forced to adopt a local system to collect taxes, a necessary component of many development efforts. Additionally, using local figures creates flexibility in which the particular technology can be adapted to the needs of the local community rather than simply implementing a generic service (Clemens, Karp, & Papadakis, 2002). As they are cognizant of the local norms and customs, technicians can lobby on behalf of the community to ensure the appropriateness of services while also knowing how to convince the community that a comprehensive water and sanitation program would be in their best interest. The last, and most tangible, benefit,

according to Clemens, Karp, and Papadakis (2002), is the reduced costs of paying a mid-level technician as compared to a professional engineer, lowering the costs of both the construction of the system and the maintenance costs after the system is installed. Consequently, projects become much more affordable for both Agua del Pueblo and the communities themselves as well as more sustainable in the long run, since, in the case of a system failure, the need for hiring a professional engineer disappears.

AGUA DEL PUEBLO METHODOLOGY

Another crucial part of AdP’s success comes from its very detailed and extensive integrated methodology, which details steps for project execution from initial contact to maintenance and follow-up reports. The common thread throughout the process is a strict emphasis on community organization and the leadership role of the community in each step of the process. In the first place, Agua del Pueblo never actively recruits communities to serve; instead, AdP waits for communities to approach them with a felt need. A seemingly insignificant aspect, this is essential in ensuring that AdP works with only those communities that are “concerned about the problem and interested in seeking a solution to it” (Elmendorf & Buckles, 1980, p. 11). In other words, “the implicit lesson is that sustainable technology transfer efforts are more likely to result from transfers that directly address a pre-defined need for a community” (Clemens, Karp, & Papadakis, 2002, p. 122); unless a community recognizes its need for a specific technology, it will not embrace the technology in the way it should. Thus, a degree of community organization already exists before projects begin in the sense that people are organized enough and willing to seek a solution to a community problem. In

the next series of steps as outlined in the written AdP “Proceso Metodológico,” Methodology (corrected 2011), Agua del Pueblo obtains basic information regarding the community and its current water and sanitation practices, compiling information that will contribute to a feasibility study for the project, including the distance traveled to obtain water, any potential sources of water, climate, and an analysis of both current population and potential population growth. In this stage, the community is also required to form a water committee; the water committee will eventually take the leadership of the execution of the project. As Elmendorf and Buckles (1980) noted in their study, it is essential for communities to select committees based on their own traditions, rather than AdP simply requiring a democratic vote in order to elect the members. This committee is responsible for obtaining the signatures of at least 80% of the community on a petition to demonstrate the commitment of a sizeable majority to both paying for and constructing the water and sanitation systems. Agua del Pueblo requires communities to donate all of the unskilled labor to build the project and all of the materials to which they have access, such as sand and gravel. In turn, committees ensure each household contributes its share of both money and labor (Proceso Metodológico, corrected 2011).

During this process, Agua del Pueblo continues to conduct more advanced studies of the community and begins to calculate an estimate of both the total cost of the project and the total amount of time and labor it will require to complete. Explicit and written responsibilities of both Agua del Pueblo and the communities are essential for both sides; it allows Agua del Pueblo to ensure that the community will follow through with their commitment, and it shows the community that Agua del Pueblo will, in fact, carry out

this project. Many communities have negative perceptions of foreign or governmental aid due to unfulfilled promises in the past. In personal communication with many of the early AdP founders, many commented upon various communities’ skepticism of actually receiving assistance until AdP volunteers began to carry in physical project materials. Similarly, Agua del Pueblo requires written consent from the water committee to finance a portion of the project; the proposed price of the system is required to be within ten percent of the final cost. One key to AdP’s success in communities is the transparency of the entire process. While final project details are being confirmed, community members begin to participate in health and sanitary education programs, a required component of the installation of a water system. A typical AdP water system has a significant and immediate impact on each member of the community. As the World Health Organization’s *Water Safety Planning for Small Communities* (2012) notes, the burden of carrying water typically falls on the women and children in the community. Once the system is complete, and each family has potable water in their backyards, their savings of time and effort are incredible; the improved access allows women to focus on both economic activities and their families (Clemens & Douglas, 2012). Finally, the construction process begins, with the community determining where to place the latrines and water pumps based on engineering design. After the inauguration, the water committee and AdP-trained technicians in the community are fully responsible for any subsequent operation and maintenance services, giving the community complete ownership over its water and sanitation systems.

IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

From even the earliest days in which the idea of forming a non-profit organization was still a long shot, community empowerment was labeled as one of AdP's original goals, with some founders ranking the goal of community empowerment as high as the physical goal of bringing water to communities (personal communication¹). The idea of community empowerment has tangible and intangible, immediate and long-term benefits. The benefits of community participation in the planning process are evident from the beginning, in that only with input from those who will actually build and use the system can the project be designed and executed effectively. As Elmendorf and Buckles (1980) found, "it is easier to change technologies than to change behavior" (p. iii). Therefore, there must be commitment on the part of not only the core group of members who make up the water committee, but from the entire community, especially women, who are likely the most effective resource in training their families to use improved hygiene and water systems (Elmendorf & Buckles, 1980). In another tangible way, the community organization structure established is sufficient, when thinking short-term, to collect monthly water "taxes" from citizens, and, when thinking further into the future, to be responsible for any maintenance needs. Regarding concrete, long-term goals for communities, local institutions provide communities with a planning board for future projects to further community development. Once the community has a committee in charge that is experienced enough to be able to install a water system, there are plenty of opportunities for future development that became significantly more feasible and realistic.

In the case of Panimaquíb and Pampojilá, one of the earliest and most influential projects of Agua del Pueblo, a multitude of

benefits resulted from the communities' active involvement. Following the successful completion of their water system, the community proceeded "to construct roads, introduce electricity, and build a clinic and junior high school," along with a newly established "legal and economic capacity" (Clemens, Karp, & Papadakis, 2002, p. 114, 110). Most dramatically, the installation of a water system in Pampojilá allowed workers to move from the plantation where they had been living, thereby ending the feudal relationship under which they had been living as indentured servants for generations. First, the water committee of Pampojilá and Panimaquíb led the villagers in a strike against the plantation owner for better wages and working conditions, going so far as to rally the community against the plantation owner's efforts to hire strikebreakers (Clemens, Karp, & Papadakis, 2002). More importantly, it was only because there was now water elsewhere in Pampojilá that the "colonos" were able to move to their own land, giving them a great deal of legitimacy in their strike; not only could they strike, but they could finally escape from their restricting feudal environment (Clemens, Karp, & Papadakis, 2002, p. 117). Through both the physical water system and the community organization structure that was established alongside it, Pampojilá gained increased potential in their ability to change their way of life and positively affect the entire community.

Though the physical benefits are certainly noteworthy and provide a great source of pride for the community, the intangible benefits are much more influential in the life of the community, whether recognized or not. Citizen participation is a key aspect of Agua del Pueblo's methodology and a crucial factor in not only creating sustainable water systems, but also in

empowering communities to believe in their ability to enact social changes. As Ohmer (2007) found, research supports the idea that community members who are active in creating change in their own communities gain both self-efficacy and empowerment. She continues, “citizen participation is a potential mechanism for facilitating neighborhood collective efficacy by providing opportunities for neighbors to develop trusting relationships, which creates the foundation for shared expectations and behaviors” (p. 110). Self-efficacy, a concept promoted largely by Albert Bandura, and especially one’s perceived self-efficacy, “plays a key role in human functioning because it affects behavior not only directly, but by its impact on other determinants such as goals and aspirations, outcome expectations... and perception of impediments and opportunities in the social environment” (Bandura, 2000, p. 75). Extending the concept of self-efficacy to collective agency, Bandura remarks, “the higher the groups’ motivational investment in their undertakings, the stronger their staying power in the face of impediments and setbacks, and the greater their performance accomplishments” (Bandura, 2000, p. 78). As a result, the collective efficacy that comes from active participation of citizens in a single community development project, such as water, can provide the impetus for a community to continue to take steps towards community improvement. In discussing changes regarding impairment of the quality of both society and the environment, Bandura (1982) found, “such changes can be achieved only through the mutual effort of people who have the skills, the sense of collective efficacy, and the incentives to shape the direction of their future environment” (p. 143). By requiring community involvement in relatively basic projects such as water implementation, a

community derives a sense of collective efficacy that allows them to feel more confident in their potential as a community.

In the same way, as Elmendorf and Buckles (1980) noticed, when AdP interviewed and directly involved community members, not only heads of household but also women and children, in the problem-solving and planning process from the beginning,

“The ‘researched’ became ‘researchers.’ When this kind of problem-solving approach accompanies the introduction of a technology, a dialogue is established between the potential users of the technology and the agency facilitators or social scientists involved in project promotion. Community participation becomes an active concept in which instead of being ‘targets’ of a delivery system, people take part in the change process.”
(p. 44)

The World Health Organization’s *Water Safety Planning for Small Communities* (2012) also detailed the importance of community participation, noting, “a successful WSP [Water Safety Plan] will have involved the community throughout the entire process and, ideally, is led at the community level” (p. 8). Sanders (1982) view of social development supports the idea of community involvement, as “it is a perspective...based on optimizing the inherent strength and capacities of individuals, families, and communities” (as cited in Bender, 1986, p. 78). Only with community initiative and involvement will projects have long-term success, since sustainable projects require a commitment to

labor, financial support, hygiene education, use of sanitation systems, and many other factors, aside from the simple joy of having potable water nearby, to fully take advantage of a water and sanitation system.

Certainly, negative outcomes can result from empowerment of communities and from the placement of significant responsibility in the hands of a committee that has not necessarily had significant training. In minor ways, a USAID evaluation of Agua del Pueblo (1986) noted cases in which “failures and interruptions of the service [led] to the loss of this important community support because the community [stopped] believing in the water committee and, even worse, in the institution that is in charge of the work” (Elmendorf, Solares, Alvarado, Hurtado, & Vielman, August 1986, p. 33). As the report continues, other cases have included criticisms of the committee because of general inefficiency, a plausible outcome if committees are not properly trained upkeep of systems, recordkeeping, and accounting (Elmendorf, Solares, Alvarado, Hurtado, & Vielman, August 1986).

On a more serious note, empowerment was an uncertain and dangerous task during the second half of the twentieth century because of the civil war that consumed Guatemala, characterized by extreme violence and human rights violations (Woodward, 2008). One AdP volunteer commented, “I’d call it a genocide rather than a civil war,” and another questioned whether the war “was civil or a massacre on one side” (H. Kestenbaum, personal communication, July 3, 2012; J. McCarthy, personal communication, July 2, 2012). With brutal guerilla warfare occurring across the country for almost forty years, the Guatemalan government did not view organized communities positively, as distinguishing between communities who were simply

organizing and communities who were organizing against the government became increasingly difficult. Therefore, as one of the early volunteers recalls, the Guatemalan government brutally obliterated some of the communities organized by Agua del Pueblo out of suspicion that those communities were organizing against the government (personal communication). Similarly, the president of the water committee of Panimaquib, Mr. Santos Gomez, was murdered due to his position of leadership within that community (personal communication).

Father Bill Woods, one of the important early supporters of Agua del Pueblo died in a suspicious air crash on 20 November 1976 (Melville, 2005). Father Woods ran a recolonization project in the Ixcán region of Guatemala. Founders of AdP visited the wreckage shortly after the crash to obtain information about the crash. The founders, including Michael Sullivan, the lead pilot of Father Woods’ operation felt that based on the wreckage, a bomb triggered by atmospheric pressure caused the crash (M. Sullivan, personal communication). Father Woods was viewed as a thorn in the Guatemalan military’s side (Falla, 1994; Garrard-Burnett, 2010).

Another of the early supporters of Agua del Pueblo, Father Stanley Rother, a Roman Catholic priest at a local parish, was targeted by the Guatemalan Army and eventually murdered in broad daylight in the center square of Santiago Atitlán in front of the entire town. Military officials feared his association with guerilla activities because of his work in the jungle regions of Guatemala (J. McCarthy, personal communication, July 2, 2012). Jim McCarthy, an Irish master plumber and early volunteer of Agua del Pueblo, also recollected an example in which a building

of the parish where he had installed plumbing was later overtaken by military officials and transformed into a torture facility of local indigenous people by the military (J. McCarthy, personal communication, July 2, 2012). Due to the intense political climate of the time, a series of what one AdP volunteer called “unintentional consequences” resulted from their philanthropic work, darkening the work of Agua del Pueblo (personal communication).

RELEVANCE OF AGUA DEL PUEBLO

The need for a case study regarding a water- and sanitation-focused non-profit is great, due to the daunting number of people across the world who still lack what the World Health Organization considers improved sources of drinking-water and sanitation. With 2.6 billion people not using improved sanitation and 884 million people lacking improved water sources, physical work and contributions are in high demand in order to make actual progress towards the eventual goal of universal sanitation (WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation, 2010). In 2005, the United Nations declared the next ten years to be the International Decade for Action, *Water for Life*, setting the goal of halving the proportion of people who lack access to basic water and sanitation. The 2006 publication by the World Health Organization and UNICEF detailing the work required to meet these goals, gave this charge:

“We call on all countries to set realistic targets, develop achievable action plans, and allocate the financial and human resources needed to bring safe drinking water and basic sanitation to their population, in a sustainable

manner, while protecting the basic needs of the poor and vulnerable people. This effort must be made, not only for humanitarian reasons, but also because it is highly cost-effective, reduces health costs enormously, and is directly related to health, equity and economic growth, which are prerequisites for poverty alleviation.” (p. 2)

However, the Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation (JMP) found in their 2010 report that the sanitation aspect of the goal is not likely to be reached by 2015 (Hutton, 2012; WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation, 2010). Now recognized by the United Nations General Assembly and the UN Human Rights Council as a human right, access to water and sanitation must become a priority for countries and organizations around the world. As a result, “the concept of progressive realization inherent to the rights-based approach will result in intensified monitoring to be able to hold governments accountable for meeting their human rights obligations” (Hutton, 2012, p. 3).

Rural areas face their own plethora of challenges, as they lag especially far behind the goals set by the United Nations. While 70% of urban households in developing countries feature piped water within the household, only 25% of rural populations are so privileged (World Health Organization and UNICEF, 2006). According to the 2006 WHO/UNICEF publication, “where a drinking water source is not available within the property and the householders have to walk over five minutes to get their water, it is likely that they will not use more than the very basic quantities

required for hygiene, drinking and cooking” (World Health Organization and UNICEF, 2006, p. 15). Women are the main beneficiaries of water systems in rural areas, since a survey by the JMP in 2010 of 45 developing countries found that women collect the water in almost two thirds of all households, with men collecting it in a quarter of the households and children in twelve percent. Even when children are not the primary collector and the burden is shared, children often make numerous trips (WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation, 2010). Indirectly, children under the age of five benefit greatly from improved water; it drastically reduces the chance they will be sick from bad water or inappropriate hygiene practices (Elmendorf, Solares, Alvarado, Hurtado, & Vielman, August 1986). Whether women are able to redirect time usually spent carrying water onto profit-making activities or not, there are “pure existence values” of water that should not be overlooked (Rogers, Bhatia, & Huber, August 1998, p. 14).

Though the sheer magnitude of the number of people who still lack water and sanitation seems to require massive efforts among countries and international organizations, the value of small-scale non-profits should not be underestimated. Though universal sanitation and water is a goal in the distant future, a 2012 World Health Organization report noted: “It is perhaps premature to start talking about universal coverage as a global policy target. Clearly there has to be a longer time horizon to attain universal access” (Hutton, 2012, p. 9). Similarly, governments and international organizations can only do so much with their resources, so a need will always exist for additional organizations to serve communities the government may overlook. In some cases, “governmental provision of a public or

private service may be inappropriate or infeasible if the service is desired by only a small portion of the populace,” while “private nonprofits can be structured more easily to serve a narrow patronage” (Hansmann, 1980, p. 895). Nonprofits serve a variety of what Moulton and Eckerd (2012) considered “core values,” including “service provision, innovation, individual expression, social capital creation, political advocacy, and citizen engagement roles” (p. 675). Nonprofits may also be more adaptable and, therefore, more sensitive to the specific needs of a community and able to respond in the most effective way. Bypassing inefficient bureaucracies, local nonprofits can employ a hands-on approach to install a water and sanitation system both quickly and cost-effectively (Hansmann, 1980).

It is not as though communities are not interested in water projects; they simply face a variety of hindrances that make installing comprehensive projects difficult. As Elmendorf and Buckles (1980) commented, “while lack of economic resources is often indicated as a reason for not having implemented ideas for improvement, lack of leadership and lack of technical knowledge are cited almost as frequently in some communities and more often in others” (p. 40). Similarly, they found it was more likely for communities to be willing to contribute labor to improve their facilities than to contribute even a small amount of money in order to do so (Elmendorf & Buckles, 1980). When small nonprofits are able to respond to these concerns and requirements in individualized ways, water projects can become increasingly effective and sustainable.

Governments in the developing world are notorious for corruption. Agua del Pueblo faced this corruption issue head-on in the

first part of this century. After the armistice of the civil war in 1996, large scale international financing was primarily directed into the “Fundo de Inversion Social” (The Social Inversion Fund). The Guatemalan government charged the Fundo de Inversion Sociales (FIS) with assisting local organizations like AdP. For several years, FIS provided “matching grants” for AdP projects. That is, for every dollar that AdP collected from the communities and external donors, FIS added 25%. Thus FIS provided a full 25% of AdP’s budget. In 2005, the FIS official liaison with AdP asked AdP for a 5% kickback. In order to ensure continued FIS funding, the official wanted AdP to return 5% of the FIS inversion. The president of AdP presented this “offer” to AdP’s Board. The Board unanimously directed the president to turn down future FIS funding that was tied to the bribe. Thus in less than a year, AdP suffered a 25% decrease in their budget. AbouAssi (2012) investigated the importance of such sources of nonprofit donations. The Board’s decision caused significant budgetary constraints including firing a number of the staff. In retrospect, the authors feel that this high moral road more than made up for the short-term budgetary constraints (personal communication with Victor Racancó, President, Board of Directors, Agua del Pueblo).

AGUA DEL PUEBLO AS PROTOTYPE

As the need for small non-profits remains, Agua del Pueblo could serve as an excellent model for potential non-profits in the water and sanitation sector because of its emphasis on community involvement, sensitivity to cultural norms, linkage of water and sanitation, and strategies of education and training; all of which are feasible to replicate in other parts of the world. Community involvement has already been heavily stressed, and essentially serves as the

foundation for many of the facets of Agua del Pueblo’s work that should be replicated. Clemens, Karp, and Papadakis (2002) conclude from their literature review that community participation “is a precondition for sustainable development initiatives based on foreign technology transfer” (p. 111). A report by USAID remarked that discussions with leaders, extensive studies of the community, and full participation from the community in making maps and promoting their goals were all “commendable and effective components of the process” (Elmendorf, Solares, Alvarado, Hurtado, & Vielman, August 1986, p. 22). Unless community members are physically involved in the leadership and installation of a project, it will be impossible to force a community to take ownership of a project; unless they take ownership, the project will likely not be used as effectively as it should.

One of the strategies that accompanies community involvement is a sensitivity to the cultural norms of particular communities, essential to the process of creating sustainable projects. Clemens, Karp, and Papadakis (2002) noted, “community participation is also critical because local knowledge of climate, customs, political structures, and culture help adapt technologies and techniques to local conditions” (p.111). Agua del Pueblo achieved this in a number of ways, including working closely with communities, establishing central offices in the rural areas where they worked, and transforming the organization into a fully Guatemalan organization. The early founders of Agua del Pueblo recollected that they intended to turn the organization over to Guatemalans as quickly as possible (personal communication). A discussion paper from 1976 outlined the purpose of what they called “Guatemalization.” “The effect is to ensure that beneficial work will be carried

out once AdP leaves, that AdP should not create a dependency, that Guatemalans will be able to develop their country for themselves as much as possible” (Raines, 4 July 1976). Through “a dedicated effort to transform itself into an indigenous non-profit organization... Agua del Pueblo provides an outstanding lesson on how to avoid the pitfalls of cultural elitism” (Clemens, Karp, & Papadakis, 2002, p. 122). Not only did the Americans transfer control of AdP to Guatemalans in 1977, but to primarily Mayan leaders, unlike many other Guatemalan organizations that often exclude indigenous people from leadership positions. Having purposefully trained numerous Guatemalans both technically and administratively, the transfer of power occurred quite smoothly (Clemens, Karp, & Papadakis, 2002). In choosing the location of the headquarters, AdP chose areas outside of the capital city to reduce cultural barriers and encourage regional development in areas that had been largely overlooked in the past, thereby making “a deliberate attempt to minimize social barriers by establishing its headquarters in towns and secondary cities that have strong cultural ties to rural areas” (Clemens, Karp, & Papadakis, 2002, p. 120); this supports a suggestion made by Elmendorf and Buckles (1980) in their report to create offices that are “conveniently accessible to consumers” (p. 49). A heightened cultural sensitivity manifested in several ways can dramatically impact the sustainability of projects.

Creating a link between water and sanitation services benefits communities in a variety of ways and proves to be a successful model as it connects water, a service that community members often desire, with sanitation, a taboo and less requested service that is nonetheless essential. Elmendorf and Buckles (1980) listed a variety of reasons why communities would be motivated to

install improved sanitation facilities, including a desire for a different service (such as water), for privacy if populations increase, or to conform to social pressures of villagers or leaders in particular. Most simply, water and sanitation can be combined in a logical way. As the Water Safety Planning guide from the World Health Organization (2012) encouraged, “it is important to discuss the benefits of safe drinking-water and good hygiene with the community and the linkages among water supply, sanitation, and hygiene...opening the door to sustained behaviour change” (p. 15). Since community members are eager to contribute labor for an improved water supply since it “offers demonstrable, immediate results for communal efforts,” attaching sanitation projects as a necessary requirement can highly effective (Elmendorf & Buckles, 1980, p. 51). As Elmendorf and Buckles (1980) continued, the community organization structures established to support water projects are certainly adaptable to the implementation of a sanitation system. When sanitation is attached to a need communities readily acknowledge, hygiene can be vastly improved by demonstrating the connection between improved water sources, improved sanitation facilities, and improved hygiene and health.

Lastly, two key components of the process include education and training for the committee members, the technicians charged with the upkeep of the water system, and the community at large. One criticism of Agua del Pueblo from a 1986 evaluation conducted by USAID was that the community members who were left with the responsibility of operation and maintenance of the system knew little more than they learned as volunteers in constructing the system, certainly insufficient to fully maintain a water system

(Elmendorf, Solares, Alvarado, Hurtado, & Vielman, August 1986). Another essential component of the process is the education component to teach community members how to use the system effectively and how to improve their general hygiene. As the same 1986 evaluation found, there was still little knowledge among community members following project completion regarding how to use the systems and the importance of changing their hygienic practices to include hand-washing and the actual use of latrines (Elmendorf, Solares, Alvarado, Hurtado, & Vielman, August 1986). Therefore, community leaders ought to be trained in ways to continue education projects and projects to monitor hygiene practices periodically (Elmendorf & Buckles, 1980). Without proper training and education, water and sanitation systems will be neither sustainable nor effective.

CHALLENGE FOR AGUA DEL PUEBLO AND OTHER NON-PROFITS: FUNDRAISING

Practically, one of the additional steps Agua del Pueblo must take in order to work as effectively as possible is fundraising. Other organizations looking to follow the AdP approach will deal with the same central issue: Even if an NGO generates the preponderance of the finances within the community, the need for external funding will always exist. As according to the Hutton (2012) publication of the World Health Organization, if countries and organizations are to begin to solve the world's water needs, "financing from current sources needs to be further increased, and new financing sources explored" (p. 48). Fundraising obviously must be a priority in order for non-profit organizations to be effective; as early as 1976, one of the early AdP founders noted, "technical expertise is useless without funds to build water systems" (Raines, 4 July

1976). Hansmann (1980) labels non-profits as either "donative" or "commercial" based upon whether they receive their income from grants or donations from larger organizations and sources or from charging for their services (p. 840). However, he notes "not all nonprofits fit neatly into one or the other of these two categories" and "should be considered polar or ideal types rather than mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories," as the case of Agua del Pueblo proves (Hansmann, 1980, p. 841). Agua del Pueblo acts as a hybrid between the two categories, as they rely upon both large grants from outside organizations and they require contributions from communities themselves (personal communication). This has established a very successful "revolving fund" in which communities contributed one third of the cost via unskilled labor and basic materials, communities paid one third over time via a low-interest loan, and a grant provided the final third (A. Karp, personal communication, June 11, 2012).

However, in order for Agua del Pueblo to continue to grow and thrive, and in order for other non-profits to begin their work, directors must seek funds from new sources. Unless nonprofits are able to acquire the necessary amount to create and sustain projects, their methodology, motivations, and goals will not be realized. One potential limitation in the work of Agua del Pueblo is the lack of a full-time fundraiser, a resource they have never employed (personal communication). As Silverman and Patterson (2011) noted, "although the diversification of funding has allowed nonprofits to attract new revenues, it has also resulted in new constraints on their staff and the pursuit of their organizational missions," creating a tension for directors between the needs of the organization in carrying out its goals and the needs of finding funds in order

to do so (p. 437). However, there must be a balance between doing little fundraising at all and spending a great deal of money on fundraising directors and costs. A literature review done by Bekkers and Wiepking (2011) found some donors have less confidence in organizations who appear to spend a large amounts on fundraising costs, causing those donors to be more cautious when giving to ensure their money will be used for the cause they intend to support instead of on fundraising. Moulton and Eckerd (2012) argued that two seemingly contradictory strategies are necessary: revenue diversification and resource alignment. By seeking both targets, nonprofits are able to maintain their autonomy while ensuring they are aligned with organizations that share their same goals (p. 664). However, nonprofit directors must be cautious in their search for funding, as “multiple funders may have incompatible expectations which can cause a non-profit to experience goal displacement and mission drift” (Silverman & Patterson, 2011, p. 437). The importance of transparency also cannot be overlooked, as it is essential for NGOs and nonprofits to demonstrate they are maximizing their funds and are publicly ensuring the effective use of their resources (Vázquez, 2011). Nonprofit directors must make fundraising from a variety of sources a clear priority without having to compromise their goals and standards for projects.

LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

The authors largely built this study of Agua del Pueblo through personal interviews with the early personalities involved in beginning Agua del Pueblo and analysis of primary documents from the early years of Agua del Pueblo. As a result, a great deal of the history and methodology comes from the founders’ recollections of how and why they chose to establish Agua del Pueblo. The methodology was adapted over time, and the

methodology in use today has been reworked and adjusted according to problems uncovered though the decades. However, the core of the methodology and its goals has remained constant. Similarly, this model proved effective for rural Guatemalan communities, but it has not been tested as a model for other types of communities. Though research by Sauer, et al (2012) confirms that AdP “demonstrates a successful return on aid dollars over the long-term using a participatory development approach,” its success is not necessarily as certain in other parts of the world in different settings (p. 6-7). Still, it offers an excellent case study to support the existing ideas of the value of small-scale non-profits, and especially those with community empowerment models.

CONCLUSION

The challenges the global water needs present certainly require large-scale efforts, but the value of small nonprofits should not be underestimated. Instead, nonprofits should strive to work alongside them, contributing all that they can to local communities, especially those that are often overlooked by other organizations. The work of the United Nations and UNICEF in declaring 2005-2015 the “Drinking Water Decade” should serve as a catalyst for increased momentum in solving the water and sanitation issues around the world. Agua del Pueblo could provide an excellent model for other nonprofits in the same sector, but this organization can only do so much, and still requires a good bit of progress in itself if it will continue to operate successfully. Vázquez (2011), furthering an idea initially encouraged by Fransman & LeComte (2004) mentioned, “to achieve the Millennium Development Goals...an important shift in the public’s awareness of the need to dedicate more economic resources to it...must take place” (p. 167). Therefore,

the need for additional nonprofits arises, offering nonprofit leaders and entrepreneurs the opportunity to both provide water and sanitation systems and empower communities in a way that demonstrates to the public that this is a growing concern that needs attention and work. The empowerment of communities is a key aspect of creating sustainable projects, and if one facet of Agua del Pueblo's methodology is duplicated, that should most certainly be the one. Communities lacking water does not imply they lack the demand or desire for water or the capability of installing systems, it simply means they might need some outside direction and leadership as to how to do so effectively and efficiently. If nonprofits take the challenge of providing water and sanitation through methods of community development alongside system implementation, universal sanitation may begin to become a realistic and feasible goal.

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NOTE:

¹The authors collected a significant portion of the data for this paper through "Skype" interviews with Guatemalan and other founders. As part of the Institutional Review Board requirements, the authors cannot attribute the sources of these individual quotes without the expressed written authorization of the interviewees. Based on the distances involved, the authors have not been able to obtain written authorization from a number of the interviewees.

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