Rural Water Supply in Developing Countries

Readings of a workshop on held in Zomba, Malawi, August 1980
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Rural Water Supply in Developing Countries

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Manpower Surveys in Tanzania

R.M.A. Swere¹

It is common, in many organizations, to make plans for the future without first assessing the present situation. This often leads to doing things that are not necessary or useful. What should be done before making any plans is to determine what resources are available. It is then possible to determine whether or not the presently available resources are sufficient for a particular purpose. Having obtained information on the present situation, one can accurately plan the action to be taken to reach a required target.

Similarly, with respect to manpower, taking stock of the people available in a given area or organization is essential if any manpower planning is required. Such an exercise, commonly known as a manpower survey, consists of taking stock of the people available in terms of quantity and quality.

There are several methods of conducting a manpower survey. The method employed varies with the type and organization of the institution being dealt with. Surveys in Tanzania are commonly conducted by a team of interviewers, departmentally, or through correspondence.

Survey Conducted by a Team of Interviewers

This method of conducting a manpower survey is used extensively in Tanzania. It is also, in the opinion of the author, the method which provides the most accurate results in comparison with the other methods. It involves a group of people selected and trained to carry out the survey. Generally, the survey consists of a questionnaire, which contains all the questions to be asked and provides spaces for answers to the questions.

The training normally takes 2–4 weeks depending upon the complexity of the survey. Techniques of approaching people, the psychology of getting answers from people, and a knowledge of the information required are very important and must be taught thoroughly if accurate results are to be obtained. Upon completion of the training, the surveyors are sent into the field, each one to their respective area, to carry out the survey. The disadvantage of this type of survey is that it is the most expensive method.

Survey Conducted Departmentally

A departmental survey is the cheapest type of survey and can be carried out conveniently within the office where the people who are to be interviewed are employed. Questionnaires are sent to the officer in charge of an organization along with a request for those people from whom information is required to respond to the questionnaire. In this type of survey the officer in charge is required to verify, in each case, that the information supplied is correct. The officer in charge may also be

required to comment or supply certain information about each person who has completed the questionnaire. The accuracy of the data supplied and the time taken to conduct the survey depend upon the importance the officer in charge attributes to the survey.

Survey Conducted Through Correspondence

When the survey involves selected people who are scattered over a large area, it becomes convenient and cheaper to write to the people involved and ask them to provide the information required. This is normally done only when representative information is required. In this case, it is not necessary to interview each person in the particular group. The questionnaire is sent either to the specific (named) person or to anonymous people. If the questionnaire is being sent to a specific person, then it is addressed to that person’s mailing address. In cases where the questionnaires are sent to unspecified people, they are distributed randomly through post office box numbers, house numbers, or through other means of communication. The disadvantages of this method are that the information received may not be very accurate or a reply may not be received at all.

Information Collected and its Significance

There may be many alternate methods of collecting manpower information in use in other countries, particularly in developed countries. In Tanzania, however, the most commonly used methods are those described here, with departmental surveys being utilized most within the water sector. Currently, another survey is being organized with the assistance of the World Health Organization and the International Reference Centre for Community Water Supply. This survey will employ the use of interviewers.

Although every manpower survey may have its own purpose and the specific information required may vary from one survey to another, there is a certain amount of general information required when carrying out any manpower survey. This information consists of name, age (birth), sex, marital status, basic education, training, profession, date of first employment and designation, various employment to date, date and nature of present employment, reasons for changing employment (i.e., previous employment), membership in professional bodies (institutions), present duties, persons you report to in the organization, the number of people reporting to you, and your future plans. In addition to the information supplied by the person being interviewed, the supervising officer is required to comment on the person responding to the questionnaire.

The above information is supplied by the employee. There is also information that must be supplied by the organization. The information generally required from the organization includes the name of the organization, type of business, date of establishment, organizational structure, total number of employees by grades, total number of vacant posts, number of employees undergoing training (and fields) within the organization and outside, posts designated for those persons receiving training, number of people leaving the organization during a specified time period, number of people joining the organization during a specified time period, reasons for leaving (retirement, expulsion, resignation, transfer), and staff development programs (training programs, promotions, insurance schemes, pension schemes, and other incentives) available.

To complete a manpower survey, information about the nature and extent of activities carried out by an organization is required. An analysis of the tasks carried out by each cadre of people is essential. From this information it is possible to determine what skills are involved in performing certain tasks and the manpower required to complete the tasks within a specified time
period. It is then possible to determine the total manpower required, in terms of skills and qualifications, within the organization. In addition to information about current activities, an organization's future activities should also be surveyed.

All of this data can then be analyzed to provide the following information about a given organization: the total number of people employed; the number of people at various categories (levels) of education; the number of trained (in different skills) employees; the number of people leaving the organization per specified time period; the number of people currently required by the organization; the number of people with various skills (training) currently required by the organization; the future manpower requirements (in terms of number and quality); and the present surplus or deficit of manpower within the organization.

Having obtained this information, it is then possible to begin filling any gaps in present or future manpower requirements. In cases where employees' skills are below those required for the tasks they are performing, additional training will be necessary. Similarly, if there is a shortage of personnel within an organization, it would be necessary to recruit people from the market and train them. In such cases, the organization is said to have a "training need." Where people can be employed from the market, a training need does not exist. In cases where a training need exists and the training is likely to take a long time, temporary recruitment measures from abroad are taken to enable the organization to function.

In 1976, a manpower survey was carried out for technicians working in the water sector throughout the country. This survey was carried out through departmental heads. Questionnaires were prepared and dispatched to the regional water engineers' offices with a request that the questionnaires be completed and returned to the ministry's headquarters within a month from the date of issue. Several points of interest were observed from this particular survey: not all questionnaires were completed and returned within the specified time period; some questionnaires were completed incorrectly; some questionnaires were not completed and, therefore, not returned at all; and the questionnaires which were completed incorrectly and those which were not completed at all were completed after a second request to do so was made. These observations revealed some of the disadvantages of the departmental method of conducting a manpower survey. The survey revealed that (1) the head of the office must be interested enough in the surveys so as to persuade those people being surveyed to complete the questionnaire correctly and on time; (2) the people being surveyed must understand the purpose and the importance of the survey; otherwise, they may get the impression that the survey may result in dismissals; and (3) the questionnaires should be simple enough to enable those persons completing them to do so with ease and without making errors.

Conclusions

It is important to remember that regardless of the method used to conduct a survey, the people involved in it should be made aware of its purpose so that accurate results are obtained. It is also recommended that where training is being organized and/or where recruiting of additional staff is being planned, surveys of available manpower should first be carried out to determine exactly what training is needed and what type and number of additional personnel are required.