

## Article

# Grassroot participation and management for rural water-related environmental problems in Ebo Itumbonuso, Ini Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

Iniobong Eyibio

Chairman, African Youth Movement on the Environment, #42 Dibue Road, P.O. BOX 263, Ikot Ekpene, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. TeleFax: +234-80-23292432. E-mail: [africanyouthforum@yahoo.com](mailto:africanyouthforum@yahoo.com)

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Grassroots' participation in the management of rural water-related environmental problems aimed at providing sustainable and safe water for drinking, farming and other domestic and public uses is hereby discussed. The scheme integrates the rural water stakeholders comprising the women, youths and elders into a network for the containment and abatement of water-related environmental problems that includes flooding of river line communities, silting of rivers and water bodies from overlying farmlands, pollution of water bodies from refuse dumps and animal grazing activities, erosional hazards, and outbreaks of diseases such as Typhoid fever, Polio, Hepatitis, Diarrhoea, Dysentery and Cholera. It x-rays the participatory approach to include sustained public awareness and education programmes hinged on a values-based approach using TV, Radio, Newsletter, Magazines, and Illustrative Drama as well as the creation of a water sanitation agency (within the local government authority), a training scheme to develop manpower as well as a knowledge enhancement programme with detailed drafting of a curriculum for the primary and secondary schools and the setting up of water use and rights groups in these schools.

## Key elements of the project included:

The political, technical and non-technical concepts. The political aspects of the framework consider close collaboration between the peoples representatives at the village council, clubs, associations, peer groups, church hierarchy and pressure groups, This particular framework centered basically on the ways and means of reducing and managing refuse and waste right from the source to minimize its effects on water and the environment when disposed off carelessly. The non-technical includes institutional and attitudinal aspects. Institutional involves institutional structure, institutional arrangement, organizational procedures and capacity of responsible institutions (still lacking).

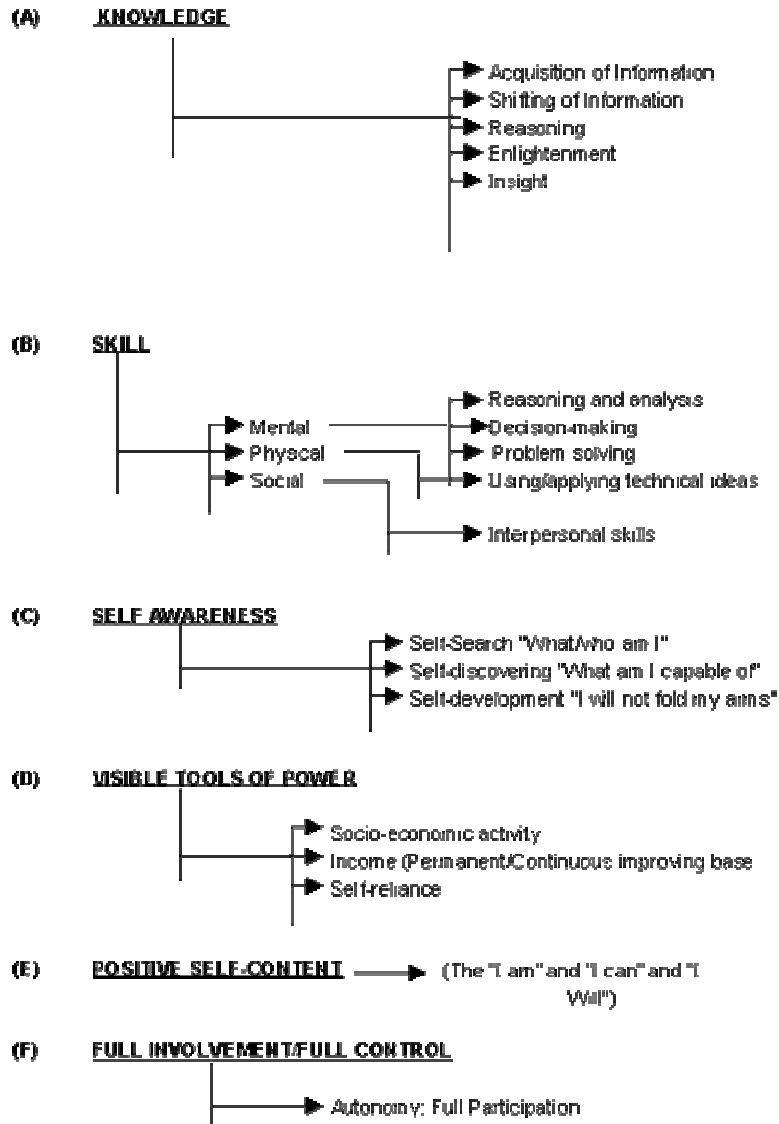
## Sustainability

Sustainability means ensuring that achievements of the plan last for the benefits of the present and future generations. In sustainability, we look at the technical sustaina-

bility and financial sustainability. Financial sustainability focuses on functionality and effectiveness. In other words, we looked at these questions: will the identified plan or action work? And for how long? Technical sustainability answers health and safety regulations.

## Strategies

- a) Aggressive education and awareness of the need for waste reduction,
- b) Encourage community and private sector participation in waste reduction at source,
- c) Initiate integrated management of waste and promote the development and identification of markets/outlets for recovered waste products,
- d) Review, strengthen and update periodically existing laws and regulations for the environmentally sound management of solid waste,
- e) Ensure compliance with existing laws and regulations



Notation: (A) – (F) = EMPOWERMENT PROCESS

The Conceptual Framework for the public education and awareness campaigns.

- on waste management through effective monitoring and enforcement,
- f) Provide, upgrade and maintain infrastructures needed for the collection, transportation, treatment and disposal of waste,
  - g) Encourage community and private sector participation in the commercialization and privatization of waste,
  - h) Foster cooperation among all tiers of government, the private sector, CBO's, CDA's and NGO's in the effective management of waste.

The only impediment in the near future will be adequate funds to ensure that these objectives are pursued to

fruition namely:

- a) Encourage and mobilize all stakeholders including CDO's, CBA's and NGO's to ensure wastes minimization, reuse, recycling and recovery strategies,
- b) Develop an infrastructural capacity building process involving women directly in the sound environmental management of waste,
- c) Mandate the organized private sector to adopt waste reduction techniques,
- d) Encourage and fund existing though limited research into waste related pollution control technologies as well as new means of effectively dealing with the falling standards of health and agriculture within the

- community,
- e) Adopt the polluter-pay-principle in the management of waste,
  - f) Carry out periodic evaluation of progress achieved in the implementation of the objectives listed herein.

The scheme incorporated developing literacy skills, creating lasting awareness on major issues of development activities in the fight against poverty, disease, ignorance, environmental degradation, uphill farming, promoting self image and economic development, thus enhancing the earning capabilities of the women and their active participatory role in these projects. The use of illustrative

situational drama was also applied to create increased understanding and awareness of water issues and the nature and root causes of water problems. These skills gained enabled participants to apply their energies and talents to solve water problems.

The Conceptual Framework for the public education and awareness campaigns.