

# Community participation, a catalyst for durability and success?

## A case study from Ekxang village, Vientiane Province Lao PDR.

### Research objective & methods

A sense of responsibility in groundwater irrigation projects leads to more successful and durable projects. This sense could effectively be achieved through community participation. The main objective of this research is therefore to foster the type and level in which community participation leads to an increased sense of responsibility in groundwater irrigation projects in Lao PDR.

This will be reviewed through a pilot case study in Ekxang village in Lao PDR, where a project to increase groundwater irrigation will be implemented, led by International Water Management Institute. Interviews were conducted with 7 villagers - including the village head - living in Ekxang village, through semi-structured interviews. Also meetings were organized with several district and provincial level officials to get a better general understanding through open interviews.

### Involvement so far

#### The villagers of Ekxang Village:

- - mostly the ones with some status - were involved in the project through 4 meetings and 5 field visits.
- To: → Inform and to receive feedback.  
For example, where the wells should be placed  
→ Ask local information.
- were informed through media and various brochures.
- would all like more involvement.

### Sense of responsibility

#### The villagers of Ekxang Village:

- all feel happy with the project
- currently seem to feel little responsibility, but all think they will feel more responsible once the project is visibly there in the form of wells.
- would want to be part of water user groups and funds, once established in the future, to maintain the wells.

### Role of community participation

#### The villagers of Ekxang Village:

- say that if they would be more involved in planning and especially in decision-making they would feel more responsible for the pilot project.
- say that if they would receive more information they would feel more responsible.
- who have been to a less extent involved in the project seem to feel less responsible for the project.

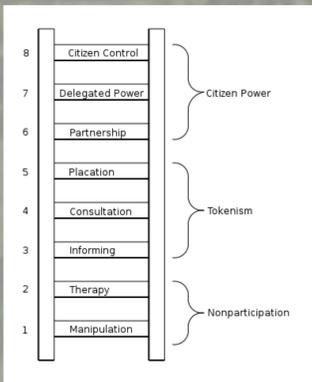
### Conclusion

Although a great effort has been made to have various forms of community participation, the local community still wishes for more involvement. All respondents said they would want more information and more influence in decision-making. Some villagers explicitly said to want technical information on how to repair the wells and where to buy new parts if the wells break down, before taking full ownership and full responsibility for the wells. The villagers of Ekxang village are happy with the project. They currently do not seem to feel very responsible for the project, but they will most likely in the future, as they all would like to contribute to various aspects once the wells are there and as their capacity will be built.

### Recommendations and further research

It can be recommended to involve the entire local community in all aspects of the project that happen in their village by: increasing their say in planning and decision-making activities, giving them regular updates and information and by building community capacity.

Further research on the most effective methods of community participation should first be conducted.



Ladder of Arnstein, used to identify ways of community participation



Ekxang Village

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Special thanks to: Villagers of Ekxang village  
International Water Management Institute  
Utrecht University