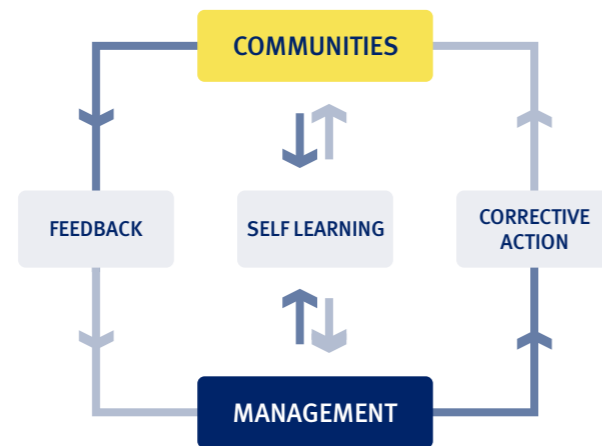


**Local communities:** QIS can support participatory planning and management of local services, and also generate data which are accessible and valuable for situation analysis and problem solving.

**QIS: MAKING SURE EVERY VOICE COUNTS**

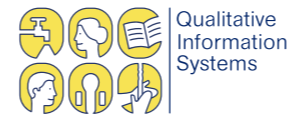
Since QIS facilitates systematic feedback from the field, over time, and connects such feedback with corrective action, QIS can be a powerful monitoring tool for both management and communities. Providing a continuous view of project progress - in contrast to disjointed baseline, mid-term and post implementation surveys. But perhaps more importantly, the QIS helps monitor whether or not everyone - especially the poorest - is fully and equitably involved in implementation. QIS gives a voice to all stakeholders, and involves them in a purposeful dialogue for effective project management and, ultimately, sustainability.



<sup>1</sup>Gross, van Wijk and Mukherjee, (2001). Linking sustainability with demand, gender and poverty: A study in community-managed water supply projects in 15 countries. World Bank Water and Sanitation Program, USA. [http://www.worldbank.org/gender/resources/briefing/watersanitation.pdf]

<sup>2</sup>James, A. J. (2003). 'Quantified Participatory Assessment: Capturing Qualitative Information in Large-Scale Development Projects', WHIRL Project.

<sup>3</sup>James, Postma, and Otte (2003) 'Qualitative Information Appraisal: Using people's perceptions in large development projects', unpublished concept note, IRC international Water and Sanitation Centre.



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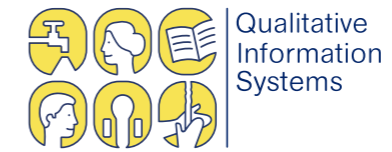


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QIS is a system to quantify peoples' perceptions for the effective and efficient planning of new services and for the monitoring of existing ones, at both community level and intermediate levels

**MAKING SURE EVERY VOICE COUNTS**

Listen to and have a true dialogue with the poorest segments of the society.

Enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of your project interventions.

Know how gender and poverty sensitive your programme really is.

Use qualitative information to plan new services and to monitor existing ones?

A simple QIS might help...



Participatory methods have been shown to empower men and women to plan new services and make existing services more sustainable and equitable. Participatory methods, however, take time and often generate only qualitative information - which can be difficult to analyse and compare over time and space, especially in large development projects and programmes.

#### METHODOLOGY FOR PARTICIPATORY ASSESSMENT

The Methodology for Participatory Assessment (MPA), a ground-breaking methodology which quantifies qualitative data, was originally designed for a global study carried out by WSP, IRC, their partners and the women and men of 88 rural communities in 15 countries (1997-2000)<sup>1</sup>. The study aimed to test whether communities with more participatory, demand responsive and gender and poverty sensitive projects have better sustained and used water services. The results showed that this was indeed so. Also, the study found that at least three management conditions were associated with better results:

1. Projects with better sustained services had local

planning and management that was more gender and poverty sensitive.

2. Projects that provided more demand-responsive services had higher participation in local design and planning decisions as well as in responsive management structures.

3. Projects with better results also had teams comprising both technical and social staff and were supported by management armed with agency policies on gender and poverty, support for more participatory-, gender- and poverty- sensitive project approaches and more comprehensive staff training.

#### FROM MPA TO QIS

The MPA was designed for one-off studies and evaluations of water supply services. New experiences in Indonesia, Kenya and other countries, indicate that, when adapted to suit local situations and needs, the MPA could also be used to plan new services and make existing services more sustainable and equitable. The methodology was adapted for use in different sectors in India (the Quantified Participatory Assessment (QPA))<sup>2</sup> and modified for conditions in Nepal (the NEWAH Participatory Assessment (NPA)). Based on these experiences, IRC together with Pragmatix in India, expanded the methodology into the Qualitative Information System (QIS) to capture and manage qualitative information.<sup>3</sup>

#### QUALITATIVE INFORMATION SYSTEM

The QIS is a system to quantify people's perceptions for the effective and efficient planning of new services and for the monitoring of existing ones, at both community and intermediate levels.

The focus is on developing and using assessment methods that build on the advantages of participatory approaches, allowing results to be quantified and analysed statistically.

It consists of:

1. **Qualitative Information Appraisal:** Comprising a QPA at community level, multi stakeholder meetings to discuss findings, and identify corrective actions for an Action Planning Report.

2. **Computerised database:** To store information, facilitate repeated data collection and analysis, and streamline data collection needs.

3. **Village information system:** To enable communities to store information, monitor progress and plan corrective actions.

4. **Adaptive management:** To trigger speedy, appropriate responses by management and communities to implementation problems.

The QIS is a flexible system for project management and communities that can:

- capture and manage qualitative information,
- be tailored to suit local conditions and needs,
- generate uniform and comparable qualitative information,
- link assessment and action.

#### QIS: FOR PARTICIPATORY MANAGEMENT

**Intermediate/District level staff:** the QIS can help to set up a simple, yet comparable and gender-and poverty-sensitive database on how well- sustained and used completed systems are and on the nature of planning and training processes. The database can be used for upward reporting as well as to support planning by communities.