

IWM project by IOCW: A case study on failure of a successful project

Two Doctorate students from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Alyssa and Manya, working as short term consultants to International Organization for Children and Women (IOCW) come across surprising facts about Intelligent Water Management (IWM) project which is said to be highly successful. They were supposed to document the stages through which the project progressed so that it can be shown as a model for future project implementations by IOCW and sister organizations. But by the end of the tenure they are left wondering whether the project was really successful or not? If not, then what could be the reasons for its actual failure while being regarded as successful?

IOCW, with its headquarters in Geneva, is one of the largest multilateral organizations supported and respected by most countries throughout the world. It has projects on alleviation of poverty, health issues and basic human rights spread all over Africa and Asia. Its donors are basically USA, Japan and the European Union. It works through its several sectoral divisions in each country – Nutrition, Health, WES (Water, Environment and Sanitation), etc.

Dr. Harry Hamilton joined IOCW in 2004 as an Assistant Program Officer after completing his doctorate in Environmental Sciences from the University of Nottingham. With a plethora of research papers behind him, Dr. Harry was highly respected in his field. After working for a year in the WES division of Somalia, he was appointed a Program Officer (WES) in India. His area of operation included all of Central India, comprising the states of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh.

Central India with all the complexities of India duly in place, was a highly water scarce area. Its rural populace was one of the poorest in the World with stark inequality from its urban brethren. This area performed badly on most of the indicators of Human Development Index (HDI).

Dr. Harry after a month long tour of the region realized that solving water problem was one of the most essential steps before any improvement in the living conditions took place. He had a solution in mind that involved Water reuse and rainwater harvesting. With the help of a Government Research Institute on Environment in India he developed a technically robust system.

After approval of a well thought out plan of action, from senior officials in New Delhi (HQ of India operations) and Geneva, the first few pilots were tested and evaluated in tribal areas of Madhya Pradesh, with the support of the State Government. Within a few months the Pilot said to be highly successful could be seen as being replicated in the rest of Central India by the Government itself. Within IOCW it was projected as a model project implementation. IOCW pushed Government to make it part of the programs for national water policy implementation. Both the state and the Central Government were keen to promote such a successful project which had emerged in a small span of time. Dr. Harry, called the rising star of the organization, was expected to be promoted to a senior position in one of the fastest promotions in IOCW history.

Along with that, IOCW, decided to document the progress of the successful IWM project by calling in temporary consultants from a top institution, like MIT, who will be working under the supervision of Dr. Harry himself.

This case has been designed to facilitate thinking on the implications of putting a well designed plan into practice without taking into full consideration the social, political and cultural aspects of stakeholders. Further to be appreciated are the complexities of organizational relations and diverse geographical settings. It is based on actual information, but the names of organizations and institutions have been changed.

This case study will throw light on three areas of management.

Basically this organization was created to enhance development and is not a business organization. But better utilization of funds, program success and implementation systems depict certain characteristics of any corporate group

1. Organizational structure
 - a. Matrix structure is a big problem. WES officer reports to the state chief who can be from any other stream while also reports to the WES national level officer.
 - b. Inter stream communication and competition is a problem.
2. Human Resource Management
 - a. The promotions and incentives linked to the program success give rise to one-upmanship between streams taking the focus away from the goal.
3. Strategic management
 - a. Program implementation structure is a problem
 - b. Contractual relationship with NGOs (intermediaries) takes the focus away from the grassroots (the actual stakeholders). Although participation is being much harped upon.
 - c. Independent audit and evaluation system is not there.

Suggested Readings and Questions

Book 1: *Human Resource Management*, Gary Dessler, 10th Edition

Chapter 9: Performance Management and Appraisal

Why Performance Management?

Why appraise performance?

Potential Rating Scale Appraisal problems?

Part 4: especially Chapter 12: Pay for performance and Financial Incentives

Chapter 17: Managing Global Human Resources

Why expatriate Assignments fail?

Book 2: *Organizational Theory, Design and Change*, Gareth R. Jones, 4th Edition

Chapter 2: Stakeholders, managers and ethics

An agency theory perspective

Creating an ethical organization

Chapter 4: Basic Challenges of organizational design

Chapter 6: Designing Organizational structure: specialization and coordination

Matrix Structure – Advantages and Disadvantages?

Chapter 14: Managing Conflict, power and politics

Book 3: *Strategic Management Competitiveness and Globalization*, Hilt, Ireland and Hoskinson, 6th Edition

Chapter 3: The Internal Environment: Resources, Capabilities and Core competencies

Strategic Focus: The use of Outsourcing: Nothing but positive outcomes?

Chapter 11: Organizational structure and controls:

Evolutionary patterns of strategy and Organizational Structure

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