

agency news

IT Kenya: Maina Keengwe

It was with great sadness that we received news of the death of IT Kenya's Country Director, Maina Keengwe. Maina died following a shooting by armed robbers outside his home in Nairobi on 30 March.

Maina worked for Intermediate Technology for three and a half years and during this time made a huge contribution to the work of the organization.

Our sympathy goes especially to Maina's wife, Connie, and their three young children. He will be sorely missed by us all.

IT Peru

Intermediate Technology Peru is currently trying to meet the challenge of providing a suitable water-treatment technology for the country's small rural communities (defined as less than 2000 inhabitants).

Slow filtration units often break down and are abandoned because villagers have not learned how to maintain and manage them properly. Hence, engineers based in the Moyobamba office are experimenting with the conventional design of these units, hoping to make them cheaper and more user-friendly.

The principal use of slow sand filters is to remove organic matter and pathogenic organisms from raw water of relatively low turbidity (below 50 NTU). The biological treatment takes place in the *schmutzdecke*, a slimy layer which forms on the surface of the sandbed. This layer includes a large variety of biologically active micro-organisms which break down organic matter and fill the interstices of the sand. The impurities present in the raw water are removed in the upper 0.5 to 2 cm of the filter bed. Cleaning of the filter bed (which also comprises layers of gravel beneath the sand) normally involves scraping off this top layer when it becomes too clogged with impurities. The maximum filter bed depth of 1.2m is reduced by successive scrapings to a minimum of 60cm before topping up the sand.

IT Peru is monitoring a water-treatment pilot plant at which staff — in an attempt to simplify the structure of the filter without affecting operation — are examining just how filtration efficiency (the removal of bacteria) is affected if the filtration bed is reduced to a depth of

40cm. Previous studies have concluded that efficiency is reduced by only two per cent, since the greatest biological activity takes place in the few centimetres immediately below the surface of the sand. If this adaptation is acceptable, the depth of the filter, and the amount of sand needed, can be reduced — so reducing costs.

IT is also looking to adapt the 'harrowing method of washing' that is used in the EU, for use on small-scale filters. This involves decompacting and removing the biological cake and the filtered solids, and harrowing the sand surface while the water flows upwards. This method makes washing easier and requires less time and labour to complete than the usual 'scraping' method.

For more information contact Cesar Marron at IT Peru <cesar@itdg.org.pe>

Conference Call: International World Water Day

International World Water Day, Monday 22 March, saw WEDC hosting a one-day conference to launch DFID's *Guidance Manual on Water Supply and Sanitation Programmes* (see right), and to celebrate the 1998 Queen's Anniversary Prize Award to Loughborough University. The prize was awarded for 'outstanding support for developing countries', with the official presentation made by Her Majesty the Queen, at Buckingham Palace on 11 February.

The Conference itself explored ways of developing partnerships for progress in international development. Through presentations and discussion, the speakers and 90 participants — drawn from a wide range of organizations — considered approaches and projects involving partnerships between governments, NGOs, industry, consultancy companies and the private sector, communities, research institutes and resource centres.

A wide range of topics was covered, although the emphasis was on water. Discussion emphasized the need for different approaches to suit local conditions and demands, and the need for equity in partnerships with communities. The problem of scaling-up successful projects effectively remains a challenge.

DFID

Improved access to safe and affordable water supply and sanitation is an essential component of the UK Government's policy to tackle global poverty and meet poverty elimination targets worldwide. So writes Clare Short, Secretary of State for International Development, in the foreword to the ***Guidance Manual on Water Supply and Sanitation Programmes***.

'Lack of such access is a clear determinant of poverty. It results in millions of children dying annually from diarrhoea and water-related diseases. For women and children, collecting water is wearisome and time consuming and often results in children not being able to attend school. Better access to safe water and sanitation not only leads to improvements in health, but also saves time and energy and enhances livelihood opportunities.'

DFID commissioned the ***Guidance Manual*** (launched on World Water Day, 22 March 1999) to assist staff and partners in developing effective and sustainable water supply and sanitation programmes, and details interdisciplinary approaches to planning and implementation.

The sale price is £19.95 plus p&p. Free copies are available through the DFID-funded WELL document service for staff members of DFID, developing country governments, UN agencies, UK NGOs and southern NGOs.

For more information on the manual and details of availability and purchase contact Ian Smout at WEDC <i.k.smout@lboro.ac.uk>