ANNEX I

SUGGESTIONS FOR A FIELD VISIT

This course has not been originally designed to included a field visit, mainly due to the time factor, however if the facilitator wishes to include such an exercise, the following pages give an outline on how to organize a short field visit.
The ideal time for it would be during the weekend separating the two weeks, right after the modules on community management and involvement of women.

FIELD VISIT

OBJECTIVE

To give participants the opportunity to investigate the O & M aspects of a water supply scheme. The experience can be used in course sessions to provide practical examples for the discussion of methods considered in the course.

OUTLINE OF FIELD VISIT

1. Field visit programme
2. Preparation of participants
3. Preparation of the receiving community

HAND-OUTS

Interview and observation sheets

1. FIELD VISIT PROGRAMME

The purpose of the visit is to give the participants an opportunity to look at the operation and maintenance arrangements in a particular community. The field visit programme will depend on the proximity, size and willingness of local communities to be involved in the course in this way. The course group will have to divide into smaller groups in order to work efficiently and to reduce the disturbance of the community to a minimum.

If a community is large enough to accept the complete group then only one community need be contacted and prepared for the visit. However, if the course group is large and communities small then it may be necessary to allocate course sub-groups to different communities. This may entail more time in preparation but it will be better for the purposes of the field visit. It will also allow participants to compare their findings from different communities within the same locality. This, in itself, may indicate different aspects of O & M and therefore be of value to the course.

It is suggested that visits by the sub-groups can be made in the morning. This will be followed by a general meeting in the afternoon where all the sub-groups meet with district staff of the government agency responsible for water. This will give an opportunity for participants to meet separately with users, local operators and caretakers, community leaders and government staff. Within each community visited, participants should divide into smaller groups in such a way that each of the above actors can be observed and interviewed on their own, if possible, to avoid them influencing each others responses.

The timing of the morning visit may be crucial to the usefulness of the field visit as a whole. Many of the activities associated with rural water supply take place very early in the morning. Women may traditionally collect water before, or at, sunrise. Operators will open valves, start pumps, dose tanks with chlorine, etc. at the start of the day to have sufficient water for early collection. The next peak of water collection may be in the late afternoon/early evening which will be too late for the field visit. Arrangements may have to be made to ensure an early arrival in the community, or communities, selected to visit and participants should appreciate the importance of an early start!

Participants will not be asked to give a formal report back on the visit. It is intended they should use the experience and the information gained in discussions and groupwork which will follow in the remaining modules of the course. It will also help to focus some of the issues already considered in the previous modules.

2. PREPARATION OF PARTICIPANTS

1. Introduction

Participants should see the field visit as a way of focusing on practical O & M issues but not to become involved in a detailed criticism of the specific scheme visited.

It is important to have an approach to the field visit which will allow participants to concentrate on the O & M issues. There are techniques of information collection which are appropriate to a short group visit and these should be outlined by the facilitator as discussed later.

A large group of people arriving in a rural community can be disruptive to the normal pattern of life in a village. Participants should be aware of the need to minimise this impact as far as possible. This can be done by preparing the community for the visit (discussed later) and dividing the course participants into small groups working separately. Participants may decide that each sub-group will concentrate on specific issues on which to gather information and this can be arranged beforehand in this preparation session.

2. Information Collection

During the field visit each group will collect information concerning community water supply O & M activities. What techniques of information collection can be used in a short field visit? Detailed questionnaires are inappropriate due to the time required for preparing, completing and analysing questionnaires. For this field visit, therefore, the techniques of observation and interviews are considered.

2.1 Observation

Observation can be used for the collection of information on physical conditions and behaviour patterns. The technique is illustrated by the following series of sample observation questions. The questions correspond to the sample cases considered in module 4.

• ***Physical conditions***

What is the physical condition of the water supply - is the supply designed for efficient operation and is it maintained?

Efficient operation:

- is the pulley on the hand dug well positioned correctly; is a full bucket of water too heavy for children to raise?
- is the handpump handle at the correct height for users, both adults and children?
- can the operator of the electric submersible pump read the ammeter when the pump is started?
- can containers be placed close enough under standpost taps to avoid undue splashing and water loss?
- do the arrangements for mixing hypochlorite solution allow for easy and safe handling of the hypochlorite granules?
- can the flow indicator of a slow sand filter be easily read by the operator?
- can a pit latrine be safely used by a small child?

Adequately maintained:

- is the well drainage clear and free flowing?
- is the oil level in the diesel engine correct?
- are there any dripping or broken taps?
- are the pipes in the chlorine dosing equipment kept clean?
- is there too much algae floating in the slow sand filter?
- are there any cracks between the latrine floor and lining?

• ***Behaviour patterns***

Careful observation can provide valuable information about behaviour patterns. Do people use the facilities and how do they use and operate them? There may be limited time to observe maintenance activities but operators can be asked to demonstrate procedures which can then be observed.

Operational use of facilities:

- a general observation for all schemes will be: do people use the facility? If not, is it an operational problem?
- is the well bucket placed on the ground or kept in the well?
- is the handpump handle operated in the correct manner, too fast, jerky, short strokes, etc.?
- is the outlet valve closed before stopping the electric submersible pump?
- are taps left open for any length of time?

- is the test for residual chlorine done correctly?
- is the slow sand filtration rate set correctly?
- is there any evidence of pit latrines being used for the disposal of solid waste?

Maintenance procedures:

- is the procedure for well pulley repair satisfactory?
- does the handpump caretaker know how to use the maintenance tools correctly?
- does the operator wash the oil bath air cleaner when changing the oil?
- is the correct procedure followed to repair a leaking tap?
- are the correct safety precautions taken when mixing hypochlorite solution?
- how does the slow sand filter operator adjust the filtration rate?

• Factors influencing observation

Observation is not as straightforward as it might seem if we are to use what we see to analyse a situation. For example, if several people are asked to describe a picture they will mention and emphasise different aspects of the picture. This reaction is because we select different aspects of the picture due to our individual preferences. In addition, we interpret what we see in a variety of ways. This leads to different conclusions.

It may be that the more familiar we are with a situation the better will be our observations. However, familiarity might lead to carelessness as we might assume we know what is happening - check to see if it really is happening. Unfamiliarity with a situation may mean we do not know what to look for and important things can be missed. Alternatively, we may be more curious over a new situation which may lead to more careful observation.

It is not possible to remember everything, especially when making many observations in a short period of time. Therefore, a notebook is recommended for recording observations during the field visit. Recording observations almost immediately means there is less pressure to make an interpretation before all the facts are known. Observations should be recorded, interpretation will come later.

There may be no time available to prepare observation sheets for the field visit. However, simple sheets can be an aid to systematic recording of observations. An observation sheet for latrines is included in the background information as an example.

Finally, it must be stressed that the situation observed is influenced by the observer. Participants must be aware that their presence alone will influence the behaviour of people in the community. The fact that the field visit has been organised in advance may mean that the community have made a special effort to, for example, clean the well surround. Visitors will attract attention. People may react in a way which they feel will satisfy the visitor rather than react in their natural manner. Participants should remember this when making their observations and drawing conclusions.

OBSERVATION SHEET - LATRINES

Community:

Date:

1. Type of latrine:	simple pit	.....
	VIP	.....
2. Floor material		.....
3. Floor condition	good	.....
	cracked	.....
	holes	.....
4. Floor cleanliness	clean	.....
	soiled with faeces	.....
	soiled with urine	.....

	material	*condition good or bad*
5. Wall	.....	.....
6. Roof	.....	.....
7. Ventilation pipe	.....	.....
8. Pipe screen	.....	.....
9. Door	.....	.....
10. Squatting hole cover	.....	.....

11. Flies present	yes/no
12. Gaps between cover slab and lining	yes/no
13. Subsidence around latrine	yes/no
14. Level of faeces in the latrine pit	full/not full

2.2 Interviews

There are several types of interviews which can be used in information collection.

- ***Free interviews***

In a free interview the topic is introduced but then the discussion and subjects covered are left to the respondent to decide. In this way the interviewer gets a good idea of what the respondent thinks is important, not what the interviewer has decided is important. However, the interviewer has to be a good listener and questioner. Questions have to motivate the respondent and need to be followed up with carefully worded responses and further questions which do not reflect any bias the interviewer may have. This type of interview is for experienced field workers with interviewing experience.

- ***Focused interviews***

For a focused interview a checklist is prepared and the respondent is asked to provide information about the items on the list. A checklist will help to ensure that all items are covered, and that the interviewer is not diverted away from the essential information required.

In the course of a focused interview it may happen that the respondent may give information or want to discuss an issue not on the list. It is important to give respondents the opportunity to contribute their own thoughts and this can be done at the end of the interview after going through the checklist first.

In the short time available it will not be possible to collect a great deal of quantitative data. Questions requiring numbers for answers might be included in a focused interview. However, participants must be realistic about the information they will be able to gather. They should not expect, for example, community members and supply caretakers to be able to readily give such information. Records may contain sensitive information. Only if people seem willing to show them should participants ask to see any log books and record sheets.

Participants should choose people to interview carefully. Ask caretakers about the difficulties they encounter in their maintenance activities, and ask the users how often the system is broken down. The same questions can be asked of different people. If the caretaker and then a user are asked the question: "how often is the system broken down?" the answers may be different. The caretaker may want to give the impression of a job well done. A user will want to indicate the difficulties in the hope of improving the supply.

• *Aids to effective interviewing*
The following suggestions are to aid the collection of information through interviewing.

Prepare a checklist
As in the focused interview, prepare a checklist of the information required. The list need not be in great detail but used as a prompt and guide. Use key words as a reminder of the main issues and particularly important bits of information required.

Introduce yourself
Participants may feel under pressure to gather as much information as they can in a short period of time. But they should not rush in with a long list of questions. Participants should at first introduce themselves and explain what the field visit is about. It is important to explain how the information will be used. If people feel, for example, their answers may result in higher water bills then responses may be affected as a result.

General to the specific
It is recommended to start with general questions and move to more specific questions later. General questions help to set the scene and put into context the more specific questions. This helps to avoid misunderstandings about what it is the questions are about.

3. Follow-up
In a plenary session, participants with the facilitator discuss on what lessons can we learn on O&M constraints, and on what can be done to impose the situation.