The 2nd National Water, Sanitation & Hygiene Learning Forum -Kampala August 18 - 19, 2010
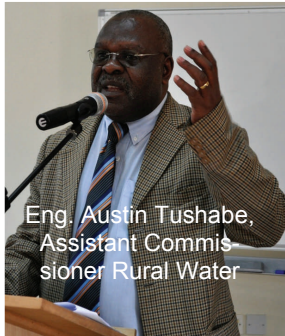
Organized by Sanitation and Water Alliance - SAWA

Enhancing sustainability in Rural Water Supplies and WASH Governance in Uganda

August 18, 2010 marked day one of the 2nd National WASH Learning Forum focused at sharing and analyzing sustainability issues of rural water supply in relation to institutional support for Community Based Management Systems (CBMS) and WASH governance in the WASH sector. This learning forum is organized by Sanitation and Water Alliance (SAWA). The forum was opened in Kampala, having participants from donor agencies, district local governments, policy makers, NGO's and private WASH operators.

Eng. Austin Tushabe, Assistant Commissioner Rural Water

In the opening remarks, Cate Zziwa Nimanya Programme Manager - NETWAS Uganda noted that there are many players in the WASH sector doing wonderful things, "there are many good practices and innovations but these are rarely documented or shared widely within the sector thus limited learning from each other."

She also urged more policy makers to join the National Learning Forum to enable them incorporate the shared experiences and learning when making policy decisions.

Eng. Austin Tushabe, Assistant Commissioner Rural Water from the Ministry of Water and Environment in his key note address emphasized the need for sustainability of rural water supplies on a cost sharing basis, where government and community members each have a role to play. " Sometimes borehole repairs are very expensive, beyond what a rural poor community can raise and supply chains in most cases are very poor ", he said. " Water and sanitation is a human right, where the community based management system fails, government should come in."

Since water and sanitation is a fundamental right for human survival, participants appealed to government to put in place a water maintenance fund at sub county level where government and community members can each contribute 50% as a measure of bridging the gaps left by community based management system which is premised on voluntarism.

Who is SAWA?

Cate Zziwa Nimanya

SAWA stands for Sanitation and Water Alliance; it is a consortium of NGOs in the WASH sector and includes; Uganda Water and Sanitation NGO Network (UWASNET), Network for Water and Sanitation Uganda NETWAS (the host), WaterAid Uganda, Uganda Rain Water association (URWA), Plan Uganda and SNV.

SAWA aims at promoting learning, knowledge management and generating lessons from WASH practices that can inform decision making processes at different levels, and also promote replication and adoption of these practices by other actors in the sector.

SAWA receives technical guidance and support from the Netherlands Development Organization (SNV), and IRC - International Water & Sanitation Center

Mile stone
Since 2005, SAWA has developed a functional website for easy access to information , organized learning forums, events and journeys, staged a number of exhibitions and disseminated information throughout Uganda.

Why are we so concerned with sector learning?
♦ Cope with the dynamism in the sector
♦ Be more cost effective and efficient
♦ Recognize diversity of Institutions, approaches , methodologies and technologies
♦ Improve on practices and strategies
♦ Develop synergies and make use of comparative advantage
♦ Influence sector policies

Picture 1 participants at the NLF trying out a hand washing facility developed by San Tap Ltd which is durable, affordable and water saving . Pic.2 & 3 showing broken down hand pumps. Sustainability of rural water systems at scale in Uganda can only achieve through addressing the high rate failure of hand pumps in different regions of the country

Some of the participants at the 2nd National Learning Forum

Case Studies on Sustainability

On day one five case studies related to rural water supply were presented and thereafter participants embarked on analysis to identify cross cutting issues with emphasis on factors behind the success, failure and how best the identified issues can be addressed or scaled up.

The presentations were on;

- Rural water management models and supply chain by UNICEF
- Experiences of a Hand Pump Mechanics Association in Kibaale district.
- Innovations in community management in Amuria District by WEDA
- Governance in community based management in Kyenjonjo district
- Harmonization and coordination of WASH sector in Amuria district.

Participants were divided into six groups each examining one of the emerging issues identified from each case analysis before sharing.

Areas identified by participants as critical for sustainability of rural water supplies

- Institutional support mechanisms for private sector involvement in operation and maintenance.
- Institutional support mechanisms for community based management systems—community involvement and empowerment at all levels
- Transparency and accountability of support structures and leadership commitment.
- Private sector engagement in operation and maintenance of water supplies taking into consideration quality and affordability issues
- Coordination and collaboration of stake holders-learning and sharing from experiences, involving documentation of cases that have worked and failed.
- Climate change trends-technology options and adaptability issues.

General success factors identifies from the analysis of case studies

- ♦ Community empowerment in monitoring of WASH facilities is key to sustainability of rural water points and schemes.
- ♦ Provision of tool kits to community maintenance structure
- ♦ Provision of incentives to hand pump mechanics
- ♦ Availability and adherence to O&M policy guidelines
- ♦ Regular coordination meetings and improved information flow for more accountability
- ♦ Good record keeping
- ♦ Enabling policy support from government.
- ♦ Availability of monitoring systems/ structures at all level

Factors that account for failure identified from case studies presented

- ♦ Inappropriate technologies
- ♦ Limited learning opportunities to bring about desired change in practice
- ♦ Inadequate staff and motivation of available staff
- ♦ Rampant misuse of funds (corruption) at all levels
- ♦ Limited outlets for spare parts in a number of districts
- ♦ Poor documentation and sharing of practices

Recommendations on Sustainability

- There is need for institutionalize support of Community Based Management Structures
- Improve O&M through Public Private Partnership (PPP).
- Establish Management Information Systems for better accountability and transparency.
- Adopt full life cycle planning, costing and financing for sustainability of rural water supply systems.
- Avail resources for operation and maintenance, to complement community contribution.

Case studies on WASH governance in Uganda

Day two of the National Learning Forum focused on field based experiences and lessons on WASH governance. Improving transparency, integrity and accountability are key to better WASH governance and delivery of services that reach the poor.
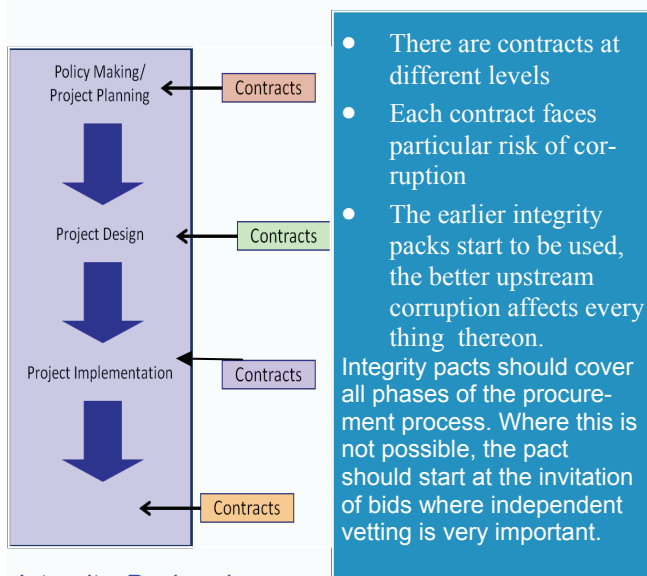
Case studies shared include;

- Integrity Pact - a powerful tool for clean bidding, by Transparency International
- Enhancing Quality WASH service delivery and sustainability through empowered grass root structures, by Joint Effort to Save the Environment (JESE)
- Process and achievements of the initiative "Improved WASH Governance in West Nile through Dialogue and Concerted Action", by IRC and CEFORD
- Case study 1 from the West Nile initiative: "People's voices, the leader's response", Nebbi/Zombo District
- Case study 2 from the West Nile initiative: "Community scorecard exposes water user loans worth UGX 2,000,000", Adjumani District

Integrity Pack Approach (IP)

These are formal agreements between government agencies and bidders for public contracts. In the procurement process, they establish rights and obligations between parties provide for alternative dispute resolutions and sanctions when violated. When used, they lead to increased transparency, early detection of risks and facilitation of collective measures in addressing corruption / extortion.

Project Cycle: When and Where can IP work best

- There are contracts at different levels
- Each contract faces particular risk of corruption
- The earlier integrity packs start to be used, the better upstream corruption affects every thing thereon.

Integrity pacts should cover all phases of the procurement process. Where this is not possible, the pact should start at the invitation of bids where independent vetting is very important.

Integrity Packs increase value for money by reducing risks in the procurement processes

Case Study on Community Score Cards:

In Adjumani District, Ciforo Sub County, Liru village, the use of community scorecards at Oku be lu borehole exposed a UGX 2,000,000 water user loan.

On a monthly basis, each household in the village contributes a user fee of UGX 500. If the borehole doesn't require repairs, water users can borrow money from the maintenance fund at an interest rate of 20%. In 2009 there was a terrible famine, all the money collected was lent out and the borrowers failed to pay back.

On July 15, 2010, the village water user's committee working hand in hand with Community Development Officer and the Health Assistant convened a meeting where water source and sanitation committee (WSSC) self assessment cards and community scorecards were used.
In the meeting, various issues came up when a joint work plan was being drawn, books of accounts were balanced and to their surprise, two million Uganda shillings were all in debt.

This was communicated and a village meeting was held on July 21, 2010 to set a dead line and a strategy of recovering the money.

Case Study on "Peoples Voices, the leader's response"

In Akworo and Paidha Sub Counties located in Nebbi district, IRC, NETWAS and CEFORD (a local NGO) are supporting a good governance project focusing on the promotion of WASH accountability and transparency through creating platform to improved communication between community members and their leaders.

In the project area a series of dialogue meetings were organized at Sub County, District and Inter-District levels, involving all stakeholders, including area political leadership. Joint action was agreed. A number of tools were experimented to improve transparency and accountability at district, sub-county and system levels: mapping of planned WASH activities, drawing a Ghatt chart, use of Water Source and Sanitation Committees (WSSC) self assessment cards, community score cards, etc.

Thanks to the availability of community platforms, which stimulated dialogue and engagement from the leaders, there is an increased response from area local leaders in the two sub counties to address WASH issues identified within communities.

On the other hand, community members have gained confidence in articulating their WASH issues with the sub county leadership and the WSSCs are more accountable to the community. This is evidenced through conducting regular meetings with the communities.

Emerging Issues that affect WASH Governance

From all the case studies presented, analysis was made and a number of issues were identified. Thereafter participants went into groups to discuss how the identified issues can be addressed.

- Creating and sustaining demand for WASH accountability and transparency at all levels
- Building public trust is essential in improving WASH governance
- Institutionalizing accountability tools
- Establishing structures and platforms for promoting good governance.

Group Analysis of emerging issues

On structures: It emerged from the group discussions that a number of already established structures can be used to promote good governance in the WASH sector at district levels: District Water and Sanitation Coordinating Committees, Village Water Users Committees, Village Health Teams (VHTs) among others.

However, to succeed these structures need capacity building of their members in governance issues; while stakeholder must be willing to participate consistently. Clear definition of roles and responsibilities are also necessary, as well as holding regular meetings to disseminate information

Institutionalizing Social Accountability Tools:

A number of tools identified can be harmonized and institutionalized, including Gantt charts, water and sanitation planning and monitoring maps, community score cards, photos/video and community voices.

For these to be successful, community resource persons such as the VHTs and the water user's committees have to be involved. The tools must be simplified and translated into local languages for community utilization, while on the other hand both community resource persons and technocrats' capacity must be build on how the tools work.

Building Public trust: This starts by involving all stakeholders in WASH planning processes, it also means considering priorities of different target groups. To build public trust', there is need for information sharing (on plans, budgets, reports etc), delivery of quality services and above all exemplary leadership.

Recommendations on WASH governance

1. Improving WASH governance at local community levels starts with stakeholder capacity building in participatory planning and budgeting.
2. Establishing and strengthening coordination structures at different levels for effective information flow.
3. Putting in place mechanisms to keep track of progress and also give feedback.
4. Capacity building in community led lobbying and advocacy.

At the end of the day, participants draw recommendations based on the two days of National Learning Forum

Summary recommendations from the Learning Forum

- Resources allocation for WASH be based on need rather than purely political influence
- Standardization and dissemination of social accountability tools
- Institutionalizing social accountability tools with clear guidelines endorsed by Ministry of Water and Environment.
- There should be strong monitoring systems in place at all levels
- Effective enforcement of anti–corruption policies.
- Community skills enhancement in resource monitoring.
- Establishment of effective mechanisms for documentation of experiences and information sharing in a timely manner among networking institutions.
- Increase public awareness on the need for policy implementation at all levels
- Need for community empowerment to take ownership of development projects.
- Capacity building of Management structures
- Public Private Partnerships in rural water supply and management

Closing remarks Acting Chief Administrative Officer (ACAO) Adjumani

Not all present at this National Learning Forum will have the opportunity to attend the Joint Sector Review (JSR), but this forum offers participants an opportunity to send their voices to the JSR.

The issue of commitment and each stakeholder playing a role. The ACAO also observed that the forum allowed interactions between people from various regions, giving the opportunity to learn from others sector actor. He commended participants to apply the knowledge acquired and also share with others who could not make it to the forum. Thanked all the participants for their contributions.