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Cross-country learning about innovative WASH cost and financing strategies for sustainability of WASH in schools

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TRANSFORMATION TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE
AND RESILIENT WASH SERVICES

Cross-country learning about innovative WASH cost and financing strategies for sustainability of WASH in schools

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PAPER 2887

The innovative cross-country 'WASH & Learn Programme' that Simavi implements in East Africa integrates different sustainability aspects in the use of Cost Recovery Planning and Risk Assessment/Mitigation tools to trigger WASH financing and investments in the sustainability of WASH infrastructure. Through this operational mix of sector tools and principles, results are becoming evident: Communities, schools and governments are working together to generate income, to grow local funds for WASH and especially for operation and maintenance of the WASH investment. The stakeholder engagement has scaled up from initial discussion to active involvement through public private partnerships, fostering the target group from beneficiaries to stakeholders.

Introduction

Having a water tap does not necessarily ensure sustainable access to safe water, as observations of a 2011 OECD report show. In the same way it could be argued that having a toilet does not ensure access to sustainable access to sanitation. This is the starting point for implementing the 'WASH & Learn Programme', where planning for the long-term sustainability is key to every single activity.

The WASH & Learn Programme is an ongoing three year 'WASH[i] in Schools programme', that is being implemented by Simavi and six local partners in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. The main aim is to encourage schools to actively engage with the surrounding communities in developing WASH infrastructure and to achieve positive and sustainable change. The programme is funded by *Walking for Water 2016-2018, Rotary district 1570, Aqua for All* and *Waterloo Foundation.* Organisational learning is at the core of the programme, where the implementing partners are being encouraged to pilot innovations which are believed to improve the sustainability of the programme. Furthermore cross-partner learning is encouraged by the organisation of learning meetings, where every time one of the partners is hosting the meeting.

The overall targets of the programme are to reach about 20,000 children and 26,500 community members. The programme started in 2016 and will be finalised by the end of 2018.

Figure 1. Area of intervention

Source: Researchgate, 2018

Situation scope

A 2013 UNICEF review of WASH in the East Southern Africa Region indicates that the sustainability of constructed facilities warrants further investigation as new construction will not improve coverage rates if existing services are breaking down or abandoned (Chatterley & Thomas, 2013). Increased efforts are needed to meet targets, including consideration of the quality and long-term functionality of services, as well as the needs of girls and students with physical disabilities. This situation is best described by Walter (2013): "Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Education (WASH) in Schools programmes often lack the ownership necessary to sustain services after infrastructure and training is provided by entities such as the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, an implementing non-governmental organisation (NGO), or a combination of partners. Poorly defined roles and responsibilities lead to confused or no ownership, which often results in poor or failed water and sanitation services in schools. Should responsibility for ensuring on-going services fall to one or more of the following actors: parent-teacher associations, principals and teachers, communities, government authorities, NGOs, or the private sector?" The funding of operation and maintenance of these WASH investment after projects are implement remain uncertainty that goes on to affect sustainability.

Whereas development efforts have had focus on providing schools with WASH facilities in order to meet the development goals on water access and health, the recurring qualms (such as achieving funding for operation and maintenance) on sustainability from the millennium development goals continues to affect the WASH investment in schools. Facilities are often mismanaged which renders them non-functional and without remedial measures to restore their effective usage, in the short run. This guarantees the endemic occurrence of WASH challenges in the schools and neighbouring communities, which the WASH & Learn Programme aims to resolve through its triad approach in which the FIETS sustainability principles underlying risk assessment and mitigation action as well as cost recovery planning and activities are conducted.

Discussion scope

The paper examines a location scope of the experiences of six local implementing organisations from three East African countries: JESE, HEWASA and EMESCO based in Uganda, UFUNDIKO and TDFT based in Tanzania and CABDA in Kenya. It also hinges its discussion on these experiences and aligning them to global discussions on WASH financing. The key objectives are:

- To present WASH financing tools and approaches used within the WASH & Learn Programme

- To explore the challenges in sustaining WASH investments
- To critically review evidence-based solutions to these challenges

Applied methods

The paper entails a qualitative presentation of field experiences from the WASH & Learn partner organisations in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, as well as some documented perspective on WASH financing to inform the ongoing discourse and applications for sustainable WASH financing strategies targeting meeting of SDG Goal 6 on sustainable water and sanitation for all.

Paper insights

WASH Financing strategies

In the OECD (2011) studies on a framework for financing water resource management identified some key principles of WASH financing, including the 'polluters-pay-principle' that aims to make pollution costly and as means to generate income to address pollution problems. Beneficiary-paying-principles allow the sharing of the financial burden of water resource management, which indicates the provision of private goods that users could afford. The study stipulated that economic instruments such as abstraction and pollution charges, water pricing and user charges all have a critical role to play in water resource management.

Based on the above observation the need for financing options is imminent and exploring cost recovery option plays a significant role in it. The International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED, 2010) opine "financing and cost recovery are key issues for sustainable water and sanitation schemes, considering the importance of household- and community action and investment improving water and sanitation, there is need to develop appropriate financing mechanisms."

The WASH & Learn Programme in East Africa has employed the use of Cost Recovery Planning as a tool to improve WASH financing and sustaining the WASH investments in schools. All the six implementing partners are using the tool, which shows that Cost Recovery Planning is indeed an effective tool. It enables the school to bring on board all resourceful stakeholders, including the community near the school/parents, local government, local leaders, school management and pupils. Including those stakeholders' results in increased capacity of the planning, construction, maintenance and sustenance of WASH investments in the school. The Cost Recovery Planning tool creates space for the stakeholders to discuss, give ideas, lay strategies and procedures that bring financial returns to support the WASH investments in the long run. When applied by the stakeholders the tool helps them to clearly identify the cost and revenue streams during implementation as well as maintaining and sustaining of WASH investments within the school, and the gap between these costs and revenue streams. The tool enables the school and WASH facilities' stakeholders, to identify required operation and maintenance costs/prospective expenditures per WASH facility/investment in the school, as well as estimate finances to be generated in cost recovery initiatives and the expenditure plan of those funds.

For example in Kyabasaija Primary School supported by EMESCO in Kibale district (Western Uganda) the projection for operation and maintenance is set at 1,480,000 Uganda Shilling (UGX) per term (including latrine emptying, water tank cleaning and water treatment). Among its cost recovery projects food crops are grown for the local market. From the schools agriculture project, the school estimates to sell a bananas (small bunch at 8,000 UGX big bunch at 12,000 UGX), pineapples (3,000 UGX each), cabbages (Big size 2,000 UGX medium 1,000 UGX small 500 UGX) tomatoes (a basin 10,000 UGX) among other crops. It is noted that in a good season the school would get 500,000 UGX just from the sale of tomatoes alone. The income projections for their projects indicate the schools capacity to generate funds to meet their operation and maintenance expenses per term. This ensures sustainability of the WASH investment.

Often the government funding schools receive is not enough to cover all the expenses that schools incur. Using the tool schools make a specific plan for the sustainability of WASH investments. This helps the schools to think ahead and to plan for operation and maintenance of the WASH facilities, with help of the relevant stakeholders. With the tool schools identify the required actions for implementation, maintenance and sustenance.

When applying the Cost Recovery Planning tool, the FIETS Sustainability principles are integrated by creating a collaborative process where stakeholders learn about the objectives and importance of cost recovery and how this can be achieved taking financial, institutional, environmental, technological and social support systems into account (Simavi, 2018). Through brainstorm sessions the stakeholders identify requirements, opportunities, challenges and activities; then they collectively plan who will carry them out,

when and where. These Cost Recovery Plans as designed within the WASH & Learn Programme are all context-specific, based on the opportunities within each school and the operation and maintenance needs based on the required WASH facilities.

Some examples of cost recovery strategies that were developed in the programme are the integration of parent-led projects for fundraising, such as the introduction of Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) among parents-teachers associations in schools in Uganda. A VSLA is a group of people who save together on an agreed interval with a fixed amount, where the members can take a small loan from the joint savings. These boost the income of parents and teachers making them potential fund donors for the WASH projects in schools. For instance with support of EMESCO, the VSLA approach has led to a situation in Kyamujundo Primary School and Kyabasaija Primary School in Kakumiro Uganda, where the VSLA groups of parents managed to contribute finances to the school for WASH related expenses based on the interest collected from the VSLA loans. Part of the interest is used for welfare purposes within the community, such as assisting the school, but also making contribution for funerals and weddings.

Through cost recovery from proceeds from children's school gardens in Dodoma, Tanzania, the Wangazi Primary School is able to generate income that is used for operation and maintenance costs of the WASH facilities within the school. This has been done with support of UFUNDIKO. TDFT has supported the Kizigo Primary School in Tabora in setting up a poultry project as well as set aside and commercialize toilet facilities that are open to the public for a fee (since the school is on the road side, to prevent the public from mishandling the school toilets and share them with pupils toilets were reserved for public use only). This allows them to raise funds for the operation and maintenance of the WASH facilities within the school. At the same time, the agricultural activities within the school provide an opportunity for life skills training to the pupils. As the target schools of the WASH & Learn programme are based in rural farming communities, agricultural practices are relevant for the pupils to learn.

In her past engagements CABDA (Kenya) has upheld football as a WASH promotion tool in the Football for Water Programme[ii]. In the WASH & Learn programme CABDA is looking into prospects of scaling it up into a private public partnership for generating WASH funds in schools. Meanwhile HEWASA and JESE in Western Uganda apply agriculture as well as the production of crafts among the schools to yield finance resources that are channelled to sustaining the WASH facilities and software component.

Additionally to developing cost recovery strategies, a risk assessment and -mitigation tool has been incorporated into the programme to enable stakeholders to identify potential threats and weaknesses that endanger the sustainability of WASH investments. At the start of an engagement in each school, the local partner, head teacher of the school and community leadership sit down together to assess the financial, institutional, environmental, technological and social risks that a school can face before, during and after the project. The risks that are identified and based on their respective impact are marked as 'low', 'medium' or 'high', determining the need for and prioritisation of mitigation strategies. These are closely linked to the cost recovery planning; stakeholders equip themselves with mitigation strategies for the identified risks by developing appropriate cost recovery mechanisms.

Challenges and solutions in sustaining WASH investments

Combining social or public forces in attaining a desired need is envisaged as the way forward in overcoming scanty support government offers in water and sanitation financing as well as the focussed pursuit for profit the private sector would be tempted to undertake at the expense of the poor. In this case the local community/school is targeted to be groom its own into private entrepreneurship that meets their public WASH needs. For as much as poor schools have limited funds creating a range of small financing generating initiatives can add up to form a resourceful funding base.

Engagement of the Local Government Authorities and local private sector parties is hereby essential to create a sustainable solution for management, operation and maintenance of WASH facilities in schools. The capacity of the community around the school and school to value WASH, and willingly input for the FIETS sustainability; eliminates the hurdle of poor tariff collections as well as inadequate operation and maintenance of the WASH facilities. Where the burden of sustainability is ingrained among all stakeholders and government supervision becomes a core for enforcement the WASH investment might yet stand a chance of being maintained through stakeholder financial, institutional, environmental, technological and social interventions.

A case of how poor quality building material at Kisomoro Primary School in Kabarole District Western Uganda was handled is notable to share. Weighing out the risk of utilizing the poor quality sand the school had a contingency fund generated from the school WASH projects. Though parents had contributed to the construction of the WASH facilities (tank and toilets) the sand bought would not yield good work. Parents could not contribute again but the school had the opportunity of utilizing funds obtained from the income generating projects including crafts and cash crop growing.

Leveraging local capacity to undertake a public-private partnership with the government and the private sector surveillance, espouses the required support to tackle WASH financing concerns. The WASH & Learn Programme is applying a combination of the above described tools, all incorporating the FIETS Sustainability principles, to ensure that the WASH infrastructural investments within the schools and communities can be sustained by the schools and communities themselves.

Conclusion

Priming the stakeholders to sustain and maintain a WASH investment despite meagre financial resources, challenging realities regarding safe water access as well as effective management and planning of operation and maintains; falls to the cliché 'where there is a will there is a way'. This is proved through the application of the triad methodology the WASH & Learn Programme applies. The dilemma of creating enthusiastic buy in, ownership and transforming beneficiaries into stakeholders sets the yardstick where the method is applied. In the programmes two years of operation success, yields have been realised in the area of cost recovery initiatives, derived from the plans stakeholders make in their respective schools. Income generating activities are ongoing and income is being realised, but mostly used for short term WASH requirements (hygiene items). The programme therefore still carries the obligation to ensure that the component of planning for operation and maintenance is both in the short and long term, implemented and funds are saved in that regard, where the tool has been applied so far in order to ensure the sustainability of the WASH infrastructure constructed within the Programme. There is also the aspiration to scale up the triad approach (FIETS sustainability principles, Risk Assessment and Cost Recovery Planning) to other schools within East Africa in order to achieve sustainable WASH, based on the experiences of the WASH & Learn Programme.

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Notes

[i] WASH: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

[ii] For more information on the Football for Water Programme, check http://footballforwater.nl/

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