WASHplus BRIEF

Good Governance: A Core Component of WASH Project Implementation

Background

Governance refers to the process of making and implementing decisions. It extends beyond government to encompass business and civil society, mobilizing participation, and creating new opportunities. Good governance is challenging to define and measure, but represents a way for development agencies to address effective management, allocation, and stewardship of resources.

Poverty often accompanies weak governance. Without effective regulation, subsidization, direction, and enforcement standards for providing basic services such as education, health care, and water and sanitation, the poor often face insurmountable challenges to advancement, even with well-intentioned nongovernmental organizations (NGO) efforts. Moreover, it is not only government's ability to provide these services that must be strengthened but also the abilities of households, communities, and civil society to engage with government at various levels. Without strong government bodies, community-level governance must manage the delivery of basic services and serve as a collective locus of engagement with government.

Achieving comprehensive, far-reaching, long-lasting change requires good governance, which can take on different forms. While WASHplus did not have an explicit governance focus, the project addressed aspects of good governance in different countries as a way to improve effectiveness, outcomes, and sustainability. WASHplus supported district governments to improve basic service delivery, strengthened community-level institutions, advocated for pro-poor policy reforms, and enhanced

The UN identifies eight major characteristics of good governance that include participation, consensus-orientation, accountability, transparency, responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, equity and inclusiveness, and following the rule of law.

WASHplus created demand for improved sanitation through the participatory process of conducting community situation analyses in Bangladesh and set the stage for developing and implementing WASH action plans and monitoring their progress over time.

collaboration at multiple levels by bringing decision makers together.

Effective governance requires coordinating and applying different competencies—budgeting, planning, and monitoring—to regulate and deliver services. When decentralization is recent, local government's capacity to provide constituents with basic social services is often not sufficient to fulfill its mandate. Districts and subdistricts often lack even rudimentary resources—infrastructure or transportation—or skills—such as budgeting—to discharge their responsibilities. Supporting good governance, therefore, requires a systems approach that focuses on areas that need strengthening.

Sustainable water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services depend on governments meeting their commitments and carrying out essential functions at federal, regional, district, and community levels. This brief examines WASHplus activities that supported or improved good governance within the project's sphere of influence. These examples demonstrate that improving competencies in governance can be a highly strategic project contribution, with or without field-level implementation, and provide a viable way to maximize impact with limited resources and contribute to a sustainable way to manage those resources long term.

Strengthening Management Systems in Uganda

WASHplus worked in southwest Uganda to strengthen local government's capacity to plan, manage, implement, and monitor WASH hardware and software activities. As a strategy for sustainability and scale, WASHplus bolstered district government and local partner services and programs, rather than implementing its own activities.

WASHplus supported USAID to offer district governments a menu of activities for WASH grants to improve WASH supply, the WASH enabling environment, and/or hygiene promotion in a comprehensive way (see box).

Kabale, Kisoro, and Kanungu districts developed strategic yet ambitious plans for improving district WASH through the USAID WASH grants. All three districts implemented a range of WASH activities: managing menstrual hygiene and installing institutional latrines, ending open defecation through community-led total sanitation (CLTS) and sanitation marketing, and addressing water shortages through do-it-yourself and commercial household and institutional rainwater harvesting.

WASHplus worked closely with the USAID Strengthening Decentralization for Sustainability (SDS) Program to support district government through formal training and ongoing mentoring of the grant process. The project facilitated the grant process through a series of planning workshops to shape the technical and budget components. As district teams worked through the grant process, they convened for joint work sessions that encouraged learning and innovation across districts, or at other times, they worked independently. WASHplus and SDS developed a multi-page budgeting template that listed line items and general unit costs for the various grant items to facilitate budgeting (e.g., installation of school rainwater harvesting systems and school latrines, support for school hygiene clubs to maintain school WASH and support MHM, development of promotional materials for Global Handwashing and Menstrual Hygiene days).

WASHplus also developed a guidance document outlining the steps for implementing the various grant menu items, highlighting critical junctures where special attention and/or technical assistance to the district might be required. This helped USAID and implementing partners provide focused support to ensure success of district activities and to build capacity to manage the grants themselves. WASH grants also supported district and subcounty level officials to disseminate and enforce sanitation and hygiene bylaws and create awareness of the sanitation policies through community radio programs, global sanitation days, and school dramas/music festivals.

WASHplus also trained district officials on forming and/or maintaining local WASH Committees. These committees are responsible for installing WASH hardware through in-kind or cash contributions, and maintaining WASH systems through community contributions of spare parts, volunteer labor for maintenance, or payment of local artisans skilled in maintenance and repairs. In most cases, district governments implemented grant-funded activities; in some cases, the district government engaged outside vendors, such as masons and engineers. Due to local USAID procurement regulations, SDS managed many of the procurement-related tasks such as purchasing equipment or contracting local vendors, while the districts managed funds to support implementation, disseminated bylaws, paid per diem and travel for outreach activities, and developed and produced support materials and job aids.

Strengthening Capacity in Provincial and District Government in Zambia

The WASHplus SPLASH (Schools Promoting Learning Achievement through Sanitation and Hygiene) project supported the Ministry of General Education (MGE) to bring safe drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene education to primary schools in Eastern Province, Zambia. SPLASH strengthened management and operations and maintenance (O&M) capacity within the local government systems by offering innovative solutions to commonly encountered technical and organizational problems and linking school efforts to community development and ownership.

Following a 2011 assessment that found weak capacity in planning, coordination, monitoring and evaluation (M&E), and resource mobilization, SPLASH helped to strengthen the District Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Education (D-WASHE) Committees. In partnership with the Ministry of Local Government and Housing/Department of Housing and Infrastructure Development (MLGH/DHID), SPLASH facilitated the capacity building process to ensure that D-WASHE members in all four districts had the required skills and systems to manage school WASH. Through D-WASHE trainings, coaching/mentoring, and exchange visits, SPLASH worked with DHID to cover: planning and coordination, M&E, resource mobilization, community-based O&M, CLTS and school-led total sanitation (SLTS), among other topics. Experiences from the four districts show that these interventions greatly improved the capacity and functionality of the D-WASHE Committees. The committees now meet regularly, and key stakeholders in the WASH sector such as the MGE, Ministry of Works and Supply, as well as NGOs and the private sector are now active members. Further, these committees have developed district WASH Total Sanitation Strategic Plans (three-year rolling plans) that include school WASH and

ELEMENTS OF GOOD GOVERNANCE IN WASHPLUS PROGRAMS

CHARACTER-ISTICS OF GOOD GOVERNANCE	SAMPLE WASHPLUS PROGRAMS
Participation	• Supported local management structures • Government-led coordination efforts • Included women, minorities, vulnerable groups
Consensus	• Joint project and host government annual work planning • Approaches and materials validated by key stakeholders
Accountability	• Financial management training for local government entities • Grant management training
Transparency	• Working with provincial education system auditors to assess small grant use in schools • WASH indicators inserted in national monitoring systems (health, education, HIV) • Publishing vendor competition, clear selection procedures
Responsiveness	• Adapting program strategy to serve objectives of Ministry of Health • Midcourse correction based on monitoring and stakeholder processes
Effectiveness/ Efficiency	• Two-way vertical and horizontal communications systems
Equity and Inclusiveness	• CLTS/SLTS

SPLASH employed a collaborative, mentoring approach and organized training opportunities for governing bodies to strengthen the government's capacity to manage school WASH infrastructure investments.

provide technical support to zonal and other subdistrict structures.

To address a gap in formal provincial-level WASH governance and coordination, SPLASH supported the MLGH to establish a Provincial Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Education (P-WASHE) Committee for the Eastern Province. This body sets the policy directions and oversees D-WASHE Committees. Other provinces across Zambia are demanding similar investments in school WASH improvement.

Managing Infrastructure Investments

To fund WASH infrastructure construction in the 108 schools receiving grants, SPLASH issued subgrants to the District Education Board Secretary (DEBS) in the four implementation districts. In closely monitoring how the DEBS implemented the grants, SPLASH encountered weak competencies in financial management, internal controls, and auditing. SPLASH also uncovered cases of misappropriated funds. These shortcomings were addressed with the provincial MGE auditors, who, in the process, also gained competencies. Schools were expected to use their grants to procure local construction services and manage building materials brought in by the DEBS. At the school level, SPLASH observed limited grants and school inventory management linked to inadequate staffing and inexperience. SPLASH staff strengthened school capacity in financial and other record keeping.

To strengthen the government's capacity to manage school WASH infrastructure investments, SPLASH employed a collaborative, mentoring approach. At district level, SPLASH staff built DEBS capacity in procurement, accounting, and financial reporting. SPLASH district engineers and DEBS buildings officers conducted joint monthly site visits to monitor and supervise construction, including use of materials and inventory. Project staff also conducted periodic monitoring visits to verify school records on storage, handling, and use of project materials and funds, as well as progress in rasing the 25 percent required in-kind contributions. This encouraged school and PTA involvement, and created a sense of ownership for the infrastructure among schools and surrounding communities.

SPLASH also organized training opportunities for governing bodies. A training for provincial officials and DEBS on USAID rules and regulations and financial management aimed to address some risks and capacity gaps identified during the pre-award assessment. Training in project budgeting, financial management, and compliance equipped them with basic knowledge and skills in donor regulations and reporting requirements and oriented them on the key provisions of the DEBS subawards. The project also supported DEBS to train school management teams, PTAs, and Works Committees in those schools receiving DEBS grants on their roles and responsibilities, project planning, budgeting, and implementation. SPLASH continued support to both DEBS staff and schools through onsite mentoring and coaching in the newly acquired skill sets.

Promoting Systems Strengthening and Sustainability through Operations and Maintenance

When SPLASH entered Zambia, the schools in Eastern Province lacked O&M systems to manage school WASH infrastructure. Toilets and water systems

were nonfunctional or absent; schools did not have budget lines for WASH O&M or services; parents and communities were unwilling to contribute to infrastructure systems; and districts lacked links with national WASH structures. The availability of technical competencies in O&M was largely nonexistent.

SPLASH worked to embed WASH into the MGE system. The official School Monitoring Instrument now has an extensive WASH section that includes O&M and WASH as part of the new curriculum. SPLASH engaged in different types of activities to promote ongoing O&M. The results of these activities include:

- The majority of SPLASH schools have an O&M budget line for WASH infrastructure.

- Eighty percent of intervention schools have projected adequate revenue streams through innovative, self-sustaining funds to operate and maintain WASH facilities and to stock WASH consumables.

- Schools in all intervention districts received O&M guidance through zonal structures.

- Schools with WASH facilities are incorporated into the existing national O&M framework.

- All SPLASH-constructed toilets and handwashing facilities were operational when the project ended in 2015.

- Trained WASH service providers (especially Area Pump Menders) were certified and equipped.

The focus on good governance in SPLASH addressed most of the key governance characteristics, with emphasis on participation, accountability, transparency, responsiveness, effectiveness, and efficiency. The emphasis on enhanced sustainability will encourage the MGE to expand WASH efforts across the system.

Under the SPLASH project, area pump menders received technical and business training and certification. SPLASH with local authorities established 65 toolkit centers in all four SPLASH districts where the artisans are able to access the tools for a small fee.

Strengthening Local Government Committees to Sustain WASH Engagement in Bangladesh

WASHplus worked with international and local implementing partners in Bangladesh to increase poor and marginalized communities' access to WASH using locally appropriate technologies. WASHplus strengthened community and local government capacity to advocate for increased allocation of funds to reach underserved areas, and to have community contributions directed to sustaining WASH infrastructure. This included training local governments in advocacy and to strategically expend allocations on appropriate infrastructure and maintenance to achieve and maintain "pro-poor" goals.

WASHplus established or strengthened existing community development forums (CDFs), which worked with village leaders and local government implementers to trigger communities to mobilize around WASH; plan, develop, and implement WASH action plans; and monitor the sustainability of project achievements. WASH action plans helped identify community priorities in terms of constructing, repairing and/or upgrading household latrines, installing water points, and selecting schools for WASH service improvement. To start, the CDFs conducted community situation analyses (CSAs) to understand household

demographics, existing WASH infrastructure, hygiene practices, and community needs. This process empowered communities to demand basic WASH services and to engage them in activities to sustain services over time. WASHplus partner NGOs trained three executive committee members from each CDF, and to date, 653 communities have been declared ODF, exceeding the target of 512 villages.

In addition, partner NGOs reactivated Union (subcounty) WatSan Committees to review the most recent action plans from the villages, disseminate CSA findings, and develop a business plan for continued engagement.

WASHplus conducted four financial management trainings for village WASH fund committee members. The WaterAid Bangladesh finance unit supported the trainings, which focused on bank account operations, deposits and withdrawals, and the roles and responsibilities of fund committee positions. Post-training monitoring found that these trainings helped the committees better coordinate and better understand their responsibilities to both the funds and their communities.

With an eye toward sustainability, WASHplus gradually handed over independent management of all aspects of the new WASH infrastructure toward the end of 2015 to district governments and communities. WASHplus continued to engage with local government authorities to ensure the capacity to plan, budget and implement activities will be maintained. Part of the local government's commitment is also to support the WatSan Committees as a mechanism for financial and technical sustainability.

WASHplus offered refresher trainings to various government cadres to support ongoing maintenance and sustainability of the facilities and behaviors established under the WASHplus project, and emphasized coordination with the local WatSan Committees and local leaders to promote effective management and use of WASH funds. Meetings with Union WatSan Committees revealed that following the WASHplus intervention the committees now understand the benefits of WASH and the importance of maintaining these services. Committees pledged to monitor their communities and conduct regular meetings to ensure WASH issues are being addressed.

Fee-for-use WASH blocks provide crucial sanitation services in peri-urban Madagascar. WASHplus worked to strengthen their overall feasibility by providing financial management training and tools and ensuring effective supervisory committees were in place.

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Strengthening Community Engagement and Participation in Madagascar

In Madagascar, through a partnership with Water and Sanitation for the Urban Poor (WSUP), WASHplus strengthened community-level governance of Development Committees (DCs). The effort aimed to reinforce systems within existing fee-for-use public sanitation WASH blocks and new water kiosks to endure over time. Development Committee members from each commune led the implemention during the preparatory phase (identifying and securing land, confirming needs, conducting a social and technical feasibility study, and assessing environmental impact); the operation phase; and monitoring usage in key areas.

WASHplus/WSUP strengthened management structures to ensure and oversee WASH blocks' capacity to attract and retain customers and become financially viable. They convened meetings with water user associations (WUAs) and others involved in facility management—*fokontany* (village) and municipality representatives, WASH Committees, DCs, and other community-based organizations—to discuss usage levels vs. original forecasts, project planning, financial management, environmental mitigation, daily operations, and users' level of satisfaction to identify shortcomings and brainstorm how to take corrective action.

Once the facilities and management structures were established, WASHplus worked with communes to develop and implement post-project exit strategies. Activities included implementing an efficient and effective communication system; strengthening the monitoring system; improving management systems; exchanging best practices among stakeholders; advocating for effective municipal authorities; and consolidating institutions (mainly WUAs and DCs) to support stakeholder participation and engagement.

Incorporating Good Governance into Other WASHplus Activities

The above examples of WASHplus's work promoting good governance are the most comprehensive. However, applying a systems focus to all field programs enabled WASHplus to incorporate elements of governance in various ways, for example:

- In Kenya, the project supported national government efforts to bring together decision makers from different sectors and include participants from district to provincial entities to collaborate on improving access to WASH services across the nation. Technical assistance from the project enabled the government to add equity and inclusion indicators into the M&E reporting tools.

- The WASH-nutrition integration program in Mali worked closely with district governments to incorporate new approaches to latrine pit construction based on geologic considerations. This was shared with national-level actors who have incorporated new guidelines into national CLTS standards. WASHplus is providing technical guidance and tools to ensure that future WASH programs can build on the successes and strategies introduced by the project.

- In Benin, WASHplus conducted a first-ever pilot hygiene improvement program in underserved peri-urban neighborhoods of Cotonou. A key objective was to infuse the development of a national Ministry of Health Urban WASH Strategy with field experiences and lessons learned. Strong coordination between WASHplus and the ministry's Hygiene and Basic Sanitation Service ensures that the Government of Benin has ownership over the program and will provide the needed follow-up once the WASHplus project closes.

Conclusion

WASHplus focused on many of the eight characteristics of good governance. Our approach particularly invoked participation, consensus-orientation, accountability, transparency, responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, and

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equity and inclusiveness.

By integrating governance as a key program strategy rather than a sideline or afterthought, WASHplus ensured that program investments became part of existing but strengthened systems. In fact, the systems approach to WASHplus's work underpins all governance strengthening. Workshops or technical assistance visits will not have long term impact unless the whole system is assessed for areas of weakness, which are then addressed. For example, SPLASH introduced WASH into the education system in Zambia through curriculum, financing, strategic planning, monitoring tools, teacher training, and other channels, few of which had prior knowledge or experience with WASH.

In Bangladesh, WASHplus invested in building community capacity to advocate for increased funding allocations to reach underserved areas, while training local governments to strategically expend funds on appropriate infrastructure and maintenance. In Mali, where CLTS had failed repeatedly in the past, WASHplus solved problems with local government entities, which inserted these solutions into the government system. So now, across Mali, CLTS implementers will examine the soil type to determine which pits should be constructed and will be least likely to collapse.

Recommendations for future sustainable WASH programming:

- Include a governance task or result area in the design of a WASH program with adequate technical and financial support for implementation.

- Apply a systems lens when designing a governance strategy within a WASH program context. Much of WASH is integrated into other sectors or activities, and it is important to identify the various interconnected parts that need to work well to contribute to success and sustainability.

- Incorporate coaching and mentoring, which are powerful tools, to strengthen individual and group capacity in various governance skill areas.