

DOES A BASELINE EXERCISE STRENGTHEN CAPACITIES FOR WASH?

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Sector: Water and Sanitation

INTRODUCTION

UNICEF and SNV joined forces to implement capacity building activities in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in four districts of Burera and Musanze in Northern Province and Nyabihu and Rubavu in Western Province.

A plan of action aimed at empowering local organisations involved in Water Sanitation & Hygiene (WASH) service was formulated. This involved training of district officials, PHAST committees, water committees in technical elements such as behaviour change. The districts in collaboration with SNV also adopted an advocacy role to mobilise sector organisations to engage in more capacity development initiatives.

Generally, there was need to design a simple system for districts to carry out a baseline "snap shot" WaSH survey in order to clearly understand their needs and effectively design and implement a WASH capacity building programme and measure the impact of the programme interventions.

For this purpose, a household WaSH survey was developed together with a set of interview guidelines to conduct in-depth enquiries with key actors at the local level (PHAST, HAMS, District, water management organisations). A draft questionnaire for the household survey was developed. After data collection, the data processing and analysis phase followed and this created a general picture of the water sanitation and hygiene situation in the four districts.

This activity contributed to the strengthening of the districts through an accessible and user friendly baseline data collection system to update districts and partners with regular information (annually or bi-annually). In addition, the four districts and SNV formulated a monitoring and evaluation system with the possibility of upscaling it in other districts.

CHALLENGE

According to the 2005/6 Integrated Living Conditions Survey report (EICV II), there was little overall change in the provision of safe of drinking water to households in Rwanda.

Between 2002 and 2006, 64 percent of households nationally had access to improved sources. However, in 2007, 71 percent of the population had access to safe drinking water; an increment of 7 percentile points Cf. 2007 Joint Sector Review, Ministry of Natural Resources).

Though, access to safe drinking water supply and sanitation is still lacking, 8 percent of Rwanda's total area 26.338 KM2 is naturally endowed with good rainfall patterns that would otherwise be adequate for community water supply for safe drinking and sanitation and for economic production. Moreover, the sub-sector enjoys great political, technical and financial support, both nationally and internationally.

Nevertheless, access to sanitation is problematic especially in collective sanitation. Though latrines are common (+80%), it is assumed that less than 10 percent meet hygienic standards with the overall target for 2007 at 38 percent thus creating a, considerable gap. Approximately 6.4 million people live in precariously unhygienic conditions with unsafe and poor sanitation and hygiene related diseases like worms, malaria, diarrhoea, typhoid, etc identified as the major killers. Children, especially girls, waste a lot of time fetching water instead of attending school while women spend remarkable time fetching water instead of engaging in revenue generating activities.

CLIENT

Major challenges in the sub-sector include:

- Low access to quality WaSH services and low sustainability of the infrastructure.
- Creation of genuine demand for WaSH services
- Weak institutional linkages and coordination mechanisms
- Weak monitoring and evaluation mechanisms at national and local level,
- Underdeveloped community management for water supply and sanitation,
- Weak role of women and youth in WaSH decision making processes.
- Sanitation habits of the public are not health prone.
- Financial resources at district level are insufficient to satisfy the demands.
- Implementation of administrative decentralisation and privatisation of water supply.

Local district authorities are responsible for planning, implementing and monitoring of WaSH services. The privatisation process of the sub sector is in full swing meaning that there is a more different role for the districts in governing and managing the sector.

The districts had severally aired the need to have proper information system on the state of WaSH affairs in their districts. Their primary aim was to identify the needs to design new projects.

In response to this big WaSH access challenge at the district level, in November 2006, SNV Rwanda in cooperation with UNICEF developed a capacity building programme for water, sanitation and hygiene promotion in the volcanic region of Rwanda to facilitate collaboration between them and the four districts. Its intention is to complement each organisation's reach to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as well as the Government of Rwanda's Vision 2020 and the thrust of the ongoing Economic Development Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS 2008-2012) design process in the water, sanitation and hygiene (WaSH) sector.

The programme which also included other activities was only approved at the end of the year 2007. Several factors contributed to the delayed implementation. A significant change was that the project implementation time was reduced from original six months to only three.

That collaborative proposal with UNICEF had two main components such as baseline survey and capacity development activities.

METHOD

The overall objective of this activity was to design a simple system for conducting baseline studies for monitoring and evaluation of water, sanitation and hygiene conditions at the district level. The baseline will be applied to the four districts and the outcome should facilitate easy access to information for all stakeholders in the Sector.

The specific objectives were the following:

1. Get the numbers and the story behind the numbers on the table (what happened after the census in 2002) and add some detailed WaSH indicators.
2. Design a simple monitoring system which can be implemented by the Districts themselves.

EXPECTED RESULTS

- An accessible and use friendly baseline data collection system is put in place to update the information regularly (annually or bi-annually) by districts and partners
- A monitoring and evaluation system is put in place in the four districts with possibilities for upscaling to other districts

The baseline survey was earmarked for the four Districts: Rubavu, Nyabihu, Musanze and Burera. A consultancy firm was contracted to handle the overall organisation and guarantee the statistical representativeness and rigour of the survey. After the selection procedure, the consultancy firm: Centre for Economic and Social Studies CESS, was contracted to handle the survey.

The selection of a consultant to carry out the baseline was primarily based on the requirements of UNICEF, taking into account SNV's and districts' objectives.

The design of the baseline was basically starting from the programme components of the UNICEF programme and later, specific SNV and Districts' interests were added. The story behind was more of SNV interest. Also, the need for a simple system was to have a sustainable monitoring instrument for the districts themselves. The discussion with the consultants was originally to design something that could be replicated by the districts with minimal funds. However, the consultants argued that only a statistical approach with a minimum monster would provide information recognised by UNICEF and the international partners. Any other methodology was in principle rejected by the consultants.

Preparatory Work

Preparatory work consisted of the design of a WASH household questionnaire was conducted by the consultants together with SNV advisors in collaboration with the four districts and translated into English and Kinyarwanda. A representative sample of water users in the four districts was then carried out. Additionally, a documentary review facilitated the compilation of existing data from previous baselines, information on specific WASH situation in each of the districts and other general WASH sector information.

Training of survey team

A prelude meeting took place in Musanze and participants included district heads of infrastructure, education and health officers, the presidents of PHAST committees, water and sanitation professionals, representatives from ISAE amongst others. As part of the programme, various officials made presentations on how water and sanitation information is currently gathered in their respective districts. The SNV team and the consultants explained the purpose of the baseline.

Later on, a two-day meeting involving CESS consultants was held in every of the four districts. The methodology was explained and the questionnaire discussed with the survey team and district authorities, followed by a one day testing of the questionnaire. The district authorities and the consultants later designed the questionnaire and adapted the comments and experience in the piloting phase.

Each sector selected one research assistant (PHAST member, National Women Council, National Youth council) and each district selected three supervisors (director of health and director of infrastructure) (Burera 17 research assistants + 3 supervisors), Rubavu (12 research assistants + 3 supervisors), Nyabihu (12 research assistants + 3 supervisors), Musanze (15 research assistants + 3 supervisors).

Fieldwork



Data collection in Cyanika/Burera District

The baseline data collection exercise was carried out for a period of six days. A total of 2,600 questionnaires were filled out in the four districts. Each research assistant visited a number of households in his or her assigned sector. The

OUTCOME

supervisors' tasks were to support the research assistants in the implementation, check whether the methodology was well applied and whether the questionnaires countercheck were well delivered.

Meanwhile, the consultants designed interview guidelines and conducted a series of interviews with key stakeholders (district authorities, schools, health centres, PHASE committees, water committees) to collect the background information: "the story behind the figures".

Analysis and reporting

At this stage, the consultants analysed the data, processed it, and together with the SNV advisors made an elaborate analysis and summary report.

Remaining activities

Validation workshop

This activity is set for mid September. The findings and results will be presented to key stakeholders from the districts, organisations involved in WaSH and officials from the Ministry of Infrastructure for validation.

RESULTS OF ASSIGNMENT

(Number of total advisory days dedicated to this client (over the years, advisors, all total))

Since SNV together with Burera, Musanze, Nyabihu and Rubavu Districts undertook the "Baseline data collection" in 2008, two consultants contributed a total of 90 days. On the other hand, four SNV advisors together with the four districts contributed a total of 20 days in the assignment. The work conducted included the preparation of field work, training of supervisors and research assistants and the data collection itself.

Concerning output and outcome, only Burera and Musanze districts were assessed for the work conducted during the data collection phase.

The two districts appreciated the activities. Hence, the Output in terms of the number of days for the whole assignment in Burera District was 18 out of 20, while that in Musanze was 19 out of 20.

In terms of the outcome, Buera District had a score of 50% in terms of implementation of an accessible and user friendly baseline data collection system while Musanze had 53%. On the other hand, the outcome in terms of the Monitoring and Evaluation system was 50% for Burera and 47% for Musanze.

The clients and other partners demonstrated great commitment and sound understanding of the baseline data collection, the methodology used and the approach. The activity contracts signed with the four districts were implemented accordingly despite some minor hitches with the dead-lines. The distance covered to reach some of the households in some districts and the delayed appointment with the executive secretaries in some districts affected the data collection exercise.

The publication of the baseline data collection in the four districts will enhance the relationship between partners in WaSH, especially Wash sub commissions and clusters and the practice of dialogue between stakeholders. The published data will then be used in various developmental interventions in WaSH for the benefit of the whole population.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS



Supervision of data collection with SNV advisor in Rubavu District

The following factors have contributed to the success of the data collection exercise:

The baseline exercise was a response to a felt need by many actors. The district staff showed interest in the current predicament in WASH and the need to guide the WaSH planning process. UNICEF also needed the baseline to be carried out before starting the implementation of the programme.

There was a clear definition of the terms of reference for the consultants and joint elaboration of the questionnaire by SNV advisors and district representatives. The advisors took sufficient time to inform themselves on the concept of access to safe water and WASH services and were able to communicate the same to the districts. This deep understanding guided the consultants in the choice of an adapted methodology, content of questionnaire and the process.

A workshop to share the understanding of the baseline concept with the district staff and research assistants was a good learning experience and clarified a demand by districts to acquaint themselves on the current WASH situations and keep track of the development.

The consultants were chosen based on their specialisation and experience in data collection. The consultants had previously been involved in the general population census and a "quick WASH scan" by UNICEF.

The relation of SNV in the districts was critical in mobilising human resources in the data collection exercise. This helped in the recruitment of the research assistants from the communities while the district staff helped supervise them. SNV advisors coordinated the activity and the resolution of any arising drawback.

Lastly, the research assistants were well motivated to play a role in solving the water and sanitation problems within their communities.

IMPACT

To what extent did the baseline activities contribute to the strengthening of capacities of the persons that were involved in the process?

1) The district staff (main client of SNV), 2) the research assistants 3) the public that was involved 4) SNV advisors and the consultants. We used an analytical model which categorises capacities in: technical capacities, management capacities, governance capacities, entrepreneurial capacities, social and psychological capacities.

The information below is basically on appreciation of SNV advisors involved in the exercise. The framework will be used at a later stage for joint analysis with the districts.

Technical capacities: This applied to the district staff who became more aware of the total hygiene picture and related issues. The district staff and the research assistants received training in the statistical process on sampling and how to determine the persons to be interviewed. When checked, they could explain the methodology quite well.

Management capacities: the district staff gained experience regarding organisation and driving of an investigation activity. They become aware that they are responsible for monitoring of the WaSH sector, the division of the roles in the supervision and the activity coordination.

Social capacities (trust, relations, social networks)

The district officials showed each other that they do actually more work related to data collection than one would expect. They asked each other lots of questions. Also other players exchanged many ideas on the base line.

Psychological capacities: (confidence, hope, optimism, resilience)

The research assistants received training and played important roles in their community. The research assistants even requested certificates to vindicate their experience. The district staff exchanged ideas with consultants. Their ideas and proposals are on the same altitude as the ones of the consultants.

Entrepreneurial capacities

The supervisors and research assistants may carry out similar WaSH baselines in their respective districts.

The data collection exercise is in itself a capacity development tool. It stimulates discussion between various development actors about what should be measured and why. The effectiveness of the baseline as a learning tool can be enhanced by asking the right questions at the right moment.

People do know more about the sector than they originally admit. This came to the fore when the draft data were presented. They immediately pick the numbers which they think are not right and start expressing doubts. This means they have another number or knowledge. This again is a starting point to discuss and get a better common picture of the WASH situation.

The statisticians have limited understanding of the WASH theme. An analysis of statistician will render a rather "dry" report.

When you have more groups interested with different objectives in the baseline exercise, it becomes difficult to get a product which satisfies all. SNV wanted a baseline on impact level to be able to measure impact. Similarly, UNICEF wanted the same but then for a specific programme and on the programme objectives. UNICEF needed hard statistical data while SNV wanted more an appreciation of the situation. Besides, the existing data was considered unreliable so all interested parties wanted new fresh additional information. The districts yearned more for an operational tool to decide where to start implementing projects.

WASH is a very broad field of practice: water supply, water quality, sanitation, habits around house, in schools, health centres, markets - a rather long list of parameters. This is a lot of information which might be difficult to put together and carry out a thorough analysis.

In order to reach the wider public, one could use of the media to relay the results. It should be agreed upon with the districts beforehand as a key task. Thus, SNV could help in designing the messages while district officials could help in disseminating the messages through various media to different audiences within their respective sectors and districts.

Lastly, it would be more ideal not to mix the different objectives of different parties in one baseline.