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Sustainable WASH Systems Learning Partnership

Finding New Solutions to Strengthen Local Systems and Improve WASH Service Delivery and Sustainability

SWS partners:

IRC, Tetra Tech, and LINC

Implementing project partners:

USAID Lowland WASH Activity

Countries:

Ethiopia and Uganda

Geographic focus:

Districts and towns with zonal-, regional-, and national-level engagement

Sectors:

Rural water and small-town sanitation

Primary actors targeted:

Service providers, service authorities, development partners, policy-makers

Learning focus:

Effectiveness of learning alliances in improving coordination and information sharing

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To learn more about the consortium members, visit:

<https://www.ircwash.org/>,
<http://www.tetratech.com/en/water-supply-sanitation-and-hygiene-wash>,
and <http://linlocal.org/>

Background

In both Ethiopia and Uganda, the water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) sector faces complex challenges in sustaining service provision. With water and sanitation facilities often failing prematurely, there is a need to find new solutions to an intractable problem. Local engagement is vital for a lasting solution, while at the same time more disruptive approaches, innovations, and ideas from elsewhere – other sectors and other locations – are needed.

Solution

SWS is working with local actors in one district in Uganda and two woredas (districts) and two small-towns in Ethiopia to better understand and strengthen local systems for rural water and small-town sanitation service delivery. In each location, SWS is promoting and facilitating learning alliances as a vehicle for more sector coordination and innovation. These platforms bring together actors at the district and town levels around a shared vision to develop and execute collective actions to strengthen systems for sustaining WASH services. Inspired by principles of collective action, SWS is undertaking action research that involves researchers and implementing agencies working together to further understand the problems and test possible solutions.





In Woliso, Ethiopia, SWS is working with local actors to understand the constraints to sustainability of on-site sanitation services and fecal sludge management – such as non-enforcement of existing regulations, lack of consensus among and engagement of critical actors with competing priorities, and financing. Photo credit: Tetra Tech

progressive problem-solving, SWS aims to facilitate significant progress relieving system bottlenecks and improving coordination and information sharing within local WASH networks.

Increasing sustainability:

Through facilitating learning alliances, SWS aims to improve actors' capacity to solve problems collaboratively and introduce new innovations that contribute to strengthened system components and networks. SWS is tracking changes in system strength and measuring service levels that are achieved. SWS is also sharing lessons from implementation locally and at higher levels to inform national priorities and increase the likelihood that future WASH infrastructure investments provide sustainable services over time.

Our Approach

Understanding the system: SWS undertook baseline assessments of existing services and has conducted network and factor analyses jointly with the government and other local stakeholders to identify relationships, perceptions, leverage points, and material flows across the service delivery system. The results of these assessments inform the selection of systems-strengthening activities undertaken by the learning alliances. In all locations, mapping of stakeholder relationships and factors that enable or constrain sustainability show opportunities to improve participation and provide a basis to track changes as both physical and relational systems are strengthened.

Strengthening the system:

The learning alliances – with local government as a central actor – are identifying opportunities to do things differently and testing solutions to sustainability challenges. This approach helps practitioners find their own solutions to problems and combines understanding the problem and implementation of solutions in one continuous cycle. Interventions to date include piloting remote monitoring of motorized water supply schemes, exploring management models for communal and public latrines and fecal sludge disposal, strengthening kebele-level federations to broker maintenance services, and testing the pay-as-you-fetch model as a means to increase the revenue base and incentives for operation and maintenance of rural handpumps. Through a reflective process of

About the Sustainable WASH Systems Learning Partnership: SWS is working to identify and test locally-driven solutions to the challenge of developing robust local systems capable of sustaining water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) service delivery. For more information, visit www.globalwaters.org/SWS, or contact Elizabeth Jordan (EJordan@usaid.gov).