

Sustainable WASH Systems Learning Partnership

# COLLECTIVE ACTION IN WASH: LESSONS AND FINDINGS FROM 11 COLLABORATIVE APPROACHES

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 **SUSTAINABLE  
WASH SYSTEMS**  
A LEARNING PARTNERSHIP



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**Front cover:** SWS partners talk with the communal latrine manager in Oromia, Ethiopia.  
Photo credit: Tetra Tech.

**About the Sustainable WASH Systems Learning Partnership:** The Sustainable WASH Systems Learning Partnership is a global United States Agency for International Development (USAID) cooperative agreement with the University of Colorado Boulder (UCB) to identify locally driven solutions to the challenge of developing robust local systems capable of sustaining water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) service delivery. The consortium of partners — Environmental Incentives, IRC, LINC, Oxford University, Tetra Tech, WaterSHED, Whave, and UCB — are demonstrating, learning about, and sharing evidence on systems-based approaches for improving the sustainability of WASH services in four countries.

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## Acronyms

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<b>ASP</b>	Area Service Provider
<b>fsQCA</b>	Fuzzy-Set Qualitative Comparative Analysis
<b>GTP II</b>	Ethiopia's Growth and Transformation Plan II
<b>MWA</b>	Millennium Water Alliance
<b>ONA</b>	Organizational Network Analysis
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>PPP</b>	Public-Private Partnership
<b>QCA</b>	Qualitative Comparative Analysis
<b>SWS</b>	Sustainable WASH Systems Learning Partnership
<b>UCB</b>	University of Colorado Boulder
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>USHA</b>	USAID Uganda Sanitation for Health Activity
<b>WASH</b>	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

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## Glossary

This research describes actions by a number of organizations and groups. For consistency and clarity, the following terms will be used:

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<b>Case</b>	The documented story of a coalition.
<b>Coalition</b>	A group of local stakeholders meeting regularly as members of a collective action approach.
<b>Factor</b>	An element or aspect of a collective action approach or the local content, or intermediate results. Examples include engagement of decision-makers, incentives or motivations to engage, and capacity of the hub organization. Factors are <i>italicized</i> throughout this report.
<b>Coalitions</b>	An alliance of stakeholders and/or organizations formed for combined action and knowledge sharing (e.g. Learning Alliance, sector working group).
<b>Hub</b>	An entity that manages the logistics, facilitation, leadership, and administrative functions of the coalition.
<b>Program Lead</b>	The entity receiving funding to convene a collective action approach or strengthen an existing platform.
<b>Research Team</b>	The authors of this report, consisting of representatives from the implementation teams and dedicated researchers who synthesized and analyzed data from each case.

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# Executive Summary

In the water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) sector, collective action approaches are increasingly being applied to challenges related to the sustainability of WASH services. However, these under-studied approaches lack evidence and guidance on conditions that contribute to their success. This report's analysis of the Sustainable WASH Systems Learning Partnership (SWS) experience applying collective action approaches to the WASH sector contributes to the evidence base on these approaches and provides recommendations to better support programming.

From 2016 to 2021, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded SWS implemented collective action approaches on WASH issues in nine geographic locations in Ethiopia, Uganda, and Kenya. Researchers from the University of Colorado Boulder (UCB) and Environmental Incentives worked with implementing teams to collect and analyze data on these approaches, adding two non-SWS cases (Sanitation for Health in Uganda (USHA) and Millennium Water Alliance (MWA) in Ethiopia) to the analysis, for a total of 11 cases. Research focused on (1) defining collective action approaches, (2) investigating the factors that drive progress, and (3) identifying resource requirements.

## Defining Collective Action

SWS defines collective action as a process in which a hub regularly convenes sector stakeholders who take joint actions to address shared problems, in which:

- Problems are complex and their solutions require deliberation and action by many actors
- Members agree on a shared vision and shared problem definition
- Stakeholders clarify responsibilities and hold each other accountable for actions

To develop a common definition for collective action approaches, the research team conducted an extensive literature review and consulted with experts and local SWS facilitators leading collective action efforts. To identify a list of factors that influence the success of collective action approaches in WASH, the research team convened 17 experts with experience from more than 70 collective action coalitions spread across 20 countries. The research team compiled evidence about each factor through interviews and review of the extensive documentation from each case. The research team conducted more than 40 interviews with coalition facilitators and other program support organization experts over the 3 years of the study. To identify case outcomes, the research team worked with coalition

facilitators to define a small set of discrete outcomes that could be assessed for progress and compared to one another according to their relative difficulty. Progress was measured toward successful implementation of activities agreed upon by the coalition, from planning to gaining stakeholder buy-in, to mobilizing the stakeholders and resources, to beginning implementation and to completion. Outcomes were weighted by difficulty in order to better compare progress across cases. A successful case was one that made significant progress on difficult outcomes.

The research team coded and compared data on each individual factor across cases to understand the range of variation across the cases and any trends or insights related to how or why decisions about those factors were made. After coding, they used qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) techniques to

filter, combine, and prioritize the factors into a smaller number of variables that differed across cases and could be used to analyze combinations of factors. Specifically, the research team integrated 18 factors into others. In addition, across the cases, 13 of the original factors did not vary and thus could not be included in a cross-case analysis. Thus, the research team ultimately analyzed five factors: hub structure, problem identification, use of external funds for coalition activities, membership continuity and accountability, and government uptake.

## Key Findings

The analysis of factors revealed several insights related to the drivers of progress for collective action approaches.

**Different starting points for collaboration carry different benefits and risks.** The analysis compared two distinct starting points for collective action approaches, each with different benefits and risks: *collective problem identification* by stakeholders and *applying or demonstrating an existing concept*. In collective problem identification, the coalitions identified the key problems, identified broad solution areas to address those problems, and planned detailed activities under those solution areas. In other cases, the lead support organization, often in collaboration with a few government officials, identified an existing concept or solution and then organized a coalition of local stakeholders to collaboratively explore and implement that concept or solution.

Contrary to some of the literature on collective action, SWS found that collective problem identification is not always required for progress. Rather, risks are associated with each starting point, and the research team observed less progress on outcomes when stakeholders failed to recognize or mitigate these risks.

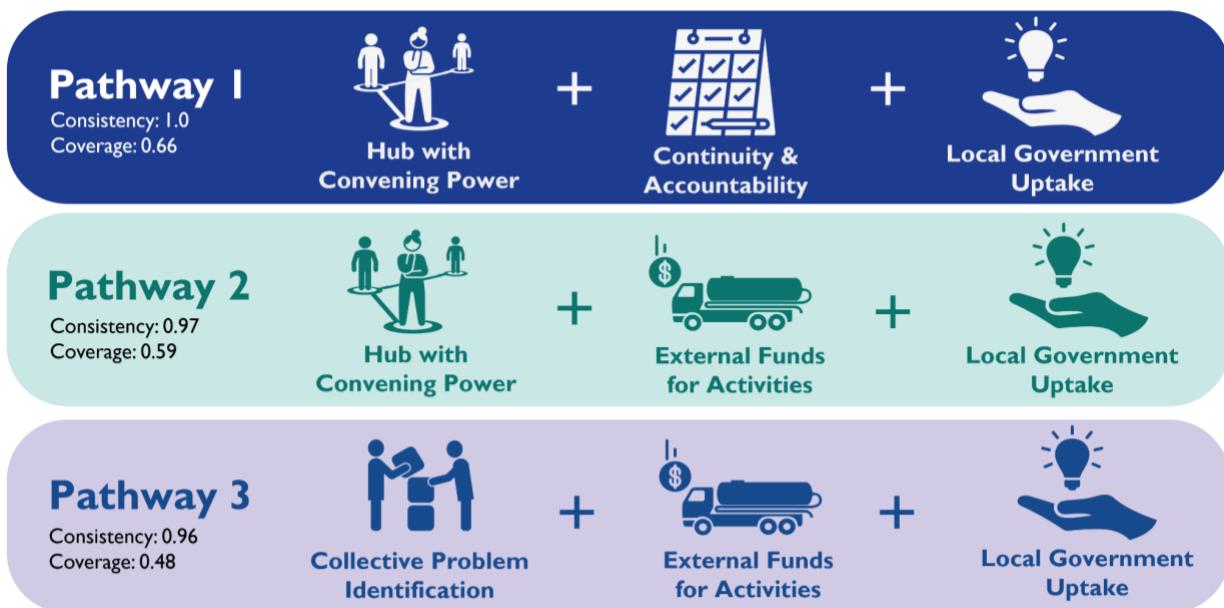
**Effective hubs have convening power and capacity.** A hub is the entity that manages the logistics, facilitation, leadership, and administrative functions of the coalition (i.e., the group of local stakeholders collaborating as members of a collaborative approach). Hub roles can be concentrated within one organization, such as an independent organization (e.g., a non-governmental organization (NGO) or community-based organization) or government agency, or they can be shared between groups. There are advantages and disadvantages to different hub structures, and decisions about how to structure the hub depend on the capacity and convening power of potential hub entities. Where governance systems and institutions are reliable and consistent, institutionalized government hubs are recommended. Where governance systems or institutions are weak and the lead support organization has strong convening power in the area, an independent hub is recommended. Where governance systems and institutions are reliable and consistent but capacity is low, and long-term funding for the coalition is not secured, a supported government hub is recommended.

**Government support is critical but requires sustained effort.** Across the 11 cases analyzed, getting government decision-makers (e.g., district water offices or town authorities) to see value in collective action efforts and to allocate their budgets differently or shift their priorities proved a critical step toward progress. Program leads reported that acquiring and maintaining government support through frequent communication and engagement with government officials, continuous demonstration

of the value of the topic area, alignment of activities with government-mandated objectives, and demonstrating legitimacy of the coalition helped build government support.

## Pathways to Progress

The cross-case analysis revealed three pathways, or combinations of factors, that contributed to coalitions' progress on difficult outcomes.



*The Summary of the Identified Pathways That Explain How Cases Made Progress.<sup>1</sup>*

The three pathways show that progress can be made when a hub has convening power, is able to gain support through local government uptake, and either has external funds for coalition activities or has continuity and accountability of its members. Other cases were able to make progress through collective problem identification, securing external funds, and obtaining local government uptake.

## Resources Needed for Collective Action Approaches

Collective action approaches require extensive staff time, as well as investments in direct costs (i.e., logistics, travel, and other operational costs). Actual resource needs were not available, but SWS partners provided rough estimates for the resources that would be needed to apply a collective action

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from: Pugel, K., Javernick-Will, A., Peabody, S., Nyaga, C., Mussa, M., Mekonta, L., Dimtse, D., Watsisi, M., Buhungiro, E., Mulatu, T., Annis, J., Jordan, E., Sandifer, E., Linden, K. 2021. "Pathways for Collaboratively Strengthening Water and Sanitation Systems." *Science of The Total Environment*. 149854. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0048969721049299?via%3Dhub>

approach in a similar context as they did for SWS. The range of total resource estimates was 540–760 days of staff time and \$142,000–\$222,000 in direct costs.<sup>2</sup>

The research team compared resource estimates for collective action approaches from each of the SWS implementers. More than half of the costs (52 percent of direct costs and 53 percent of staff time) were associated with recurring coalition meetings, including preparation, meeting costs, and follow-up. Other major costs included efforts to monitor progress of the coalition and document activities (15 percent of direct costs and 20 percent of staff time), as well as initial systems analysis such as building blocks analyses or asset inventories (16 percent of direct costs and 9 percent of staff time). Smaller costs included conducting learning exchange visits (e.g., coalition members traveling to another district to tour a functioning fecal sludge disposal site) and multidistrict meetings (e.g., representatives from multiple neighboring districts coming together to discuss regional issues and learn from each other); these were averaged together and accounted for 24 percent of direct expenses and 11 percent of staff time.

Separate from the costs related to establishment and facilitation of collective action platforms, several cases included funding for activities that could be carried out by the coalition. These activities ranged from supporting a district WASH master planning process to demonstrating a professionalized maintenance service delivery model. These activities were estimated to cost between \$30,000 and \$130,000 over the project duration.

## Conclusion

Through strategic combinations of factors, including hub structure, continuity and accountability, external funds for activities, and local government uptake, collective action approaches can make progress on shared, complex problems. At the same time, they require significant resources and long time frames. While many of the cases achieved important outcomes in the 3 years covered by the study, implementation teams acknowledged that several more years were required to fully achieve their coalition's vision. Moreover, every coalition struggled with common challenges such as turnover of key representatives, changing member priorities, and political dynamics. Many of these challenges arise from factors outside the control of the implementing organization and can only partially be mitigated.

While no cut-and-paste strategies exist for collective action approaches due to their complexity and sensitivity to local conditions, there is a wide experience base to draw on, and clear lessons from the cases explored in this analysis should be of use to anyone designing or implementing collaborative systems approaches.

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<sup>2</sup> Resource estimates are only for costs directly associated with implementing a collective action approach and do not include funding for the activities (e.g., piloting a professionalized maintenance scheme or developing an asset monitoring system) that the coalition implements through the collective action platform.

## Introduction

Sustainable services are a serious challenge in the WASH sector. National and local governments, service providers, and development organizations have traditionally focused on improving access and service expansion, often using a “go it alone” approach or only loosely coordinating with each other in order to reduce duplication of efforts.<sup>3</sup> The institutions responsible for WASH services are highly fragmented, such that there are often both gaps and overlaps of responsibility, especially when it comes to sustaining services. This creates a deficit of political and financial support for reforms that would address the systemic challenges that lead to infrastructure breakdowns and long repair times. As described in [USAID's Local Systems Framework](#), systems-level challenges often exceed the mandates and capabilities of any single government agency or organization, creating an acute need for collaborative approaches among multiple stakeholders (public and private).

### Box 1. Sustainable WASH Systems Learning Partnership

SWS is a 5-year cooperative agreement testing systems-based approaches, concepts, and tools to improve WASH service sustainability. SWS includes four project teams, each with a different focus (rural water and small town sanitation) and country context (Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, and Cambodia). The project’s underlying theory of change is that by understanding local WASH systems and using systems-based analytical tools and processes, interventions can be identified to strengthen these systems, which can lead to an improvement in the sustainability of local services.

Recognizing the need for systems-strengthening interventions through multi-stakeholder cooperation, the WASH sector has begun to adopt collective action approaches, but these approaches are under-studied.<sup>4</sup> As a result, there is a stark need for case examples and evidence-based guidance for funders, government officials, and implementers.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded SWS is a consortium of seven partners working in four countries (see Box 1). From 2016 to 2021, SWS implemented several collective action approaches in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Meek, J. W. (Ed.) 2021. *Handbook of Collaborative Public Management*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

<sup>4</sup> Pugel, K., Javernick-Will, A., Koschmann, M., Peabody, S., Linden, K. 2020. “Adapting Collaborative Approaches for Service Provision to Low-Income Countries: Expert Panel Results.” *Sustainability*. 12(7). 10.3390/su12072612.

<sup>5</sup> In addition to Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda, SWS also had a program in Cambodia that drew upon the principles of collective impact and systems thinking to facilitate locally led and owned efforts to strengthen rural sanitation and hygiene service delivery. However, because SWS completed its activities in Cambodia in December 2018, it was not included as a case in this study.

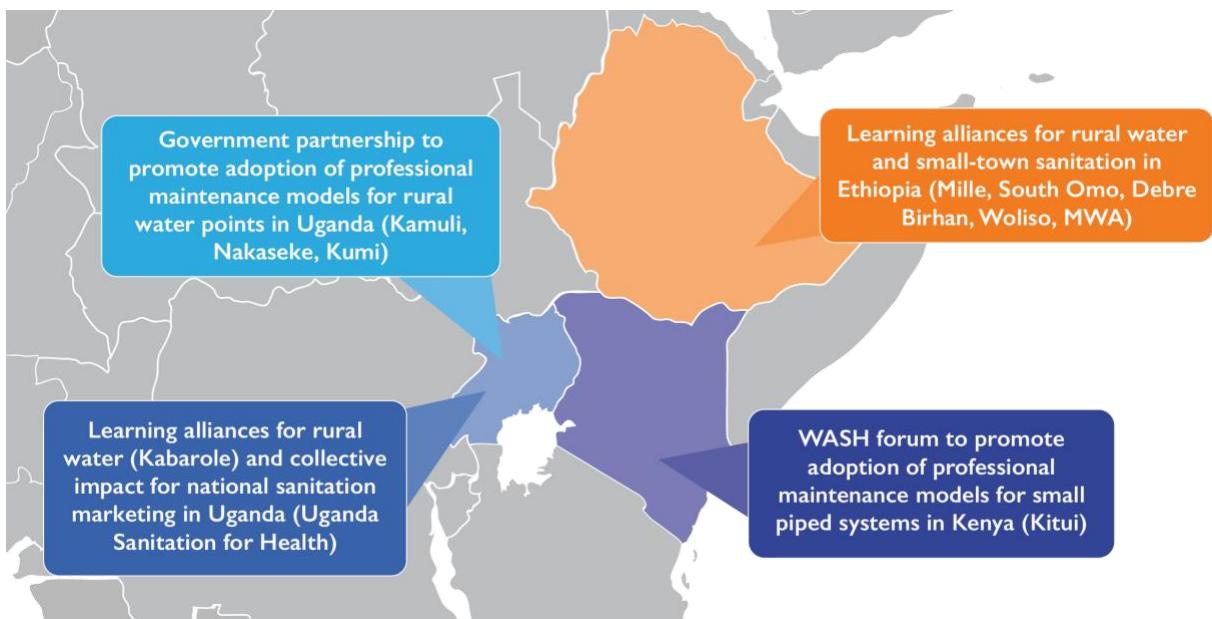


Figure 1. Cases Included in This Research

Eleven cases from three countries were included in this research (see Figure 1). Appendix A contains more information on each of these cases.

Cases differ in multiple dimensions, including administrative level (national, county, town, district), population size (rural, peri-urban, urban), country of operation (Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda), and sub-sector (water, sanitation). SWS researchers tracked these cases for approximately 3 years, beginning in March 2017 and extending to September 2020.

In Ethiopia, IRC partnered with local district governments in South Ari and Mille to establish collaboration platforms, called learning alliances, where local stakeholders in the rural water sector were invited to meet regularly, explore challenges, and work together to develop solutions such as a capacity building of water user associations to reinforce regular maintenance practices. Tetra Tech also established learning alliances to address sanitation challenges in the small towns of Woliso and Debre Birhan, such as construction of a fecal sludge dumping site and improved management of public latrines.

In Kenya, Oxford University collaborated with UNICEF Kenya and Rural Focus Ltd. to strengthen an existing multistakeholder platform in Kitui County, called the Kitui WASH Forum. SWS carried out systems analysis, developed infrastructure monitoring capacity to generate evidence on rural water services and inform coordination efforts, and demonstrated a new model for professionalized rural water maintenance services.

In Uganda, a local maintenance service provider, Whave, worked with three district governments in Kumi, Kamuli, and Nakaseke to establish a regular structure for collaboration via public-private partnership (PPP) review meetings. These forums support problem solving and joint action related to the establishment of professionalized rural water maintenance services. In Kabarole, IRC partnered with

the district government to establish a learning alliance to explore challenges and potential solutions to rural water service delivery.

There are two additional cases, not part of the SWS program, included in the research summarized in this report: (1) collective action approaches in the Farta, North Mecha, and Dera districts in Ethiopia implemented by MWA, and (2) a national-level sanitation marketing initiative implemented by USAID's Uganda Sanitation for Health Activity (USHA).

## Background on Collaborative Approaches

Collaboration with and among local stakeholders has often been an objective of WASH programs. Over the last decade, however, many organizations have begun to place greater emphasis on collaboration and raised expectations for what it can accomplish. Whereas proactive communication and coordination with other entities in the sector was the assumed norm, these principles were often difficult to achieve in practice, especially in situations where no entity took responsibility for facilitating collaboration among stakeholder organizations.

A new trend of approaches, often called collective action, emerged with a more intense focus on the establishment or development of a centralized collaboration platform to bring local-level stakeholders together to address shared, complex problems through joint action and mutual responsibility (see Box 3). While these approaches constitute a recent and growing trend in international development and the WASH sector, they stem from a broad literature and experience base that goes back decades and crosses many fields of academic and professional study.

Implementers and scholars refer to a range of approaches that bring together sector stakeholders, termed collaborative approaches; these include coordination, collaboration, collective impact, and collective action. Among the different approaches, there is a spectrum of intensity of collaboration. In some approaches, which are less resource intensive, stakeholders meet primarily to share information about their activities. At the other extreme, stakeholders are focused on solving common problems through joint planning and interdependent actions.<sup>6</sup> More intensive approaches have more connectedness of action among stakeholders, stronger accountability mechanisms, and more shared risks. For this research, SWS aimed to study cases at higher levels of collaboration intensity.

### Box 2. Key Research Questions

1. What are the key factors in collective action approaches, and what makes factors successful in different contexts?
2. What combinations of factors contribute to progress of collaborative approaches in local WASH systems in Eastern Africa?
3. How much do these approaches cost (in staff time and direct costs) and what are the main cost drivers?

<sup>6</sup> For more information about the typology of approaches, see:

<https://www.globalwaters.org/resources/assets/sws/defining-collective-action-approaches-wash>

## Research Methods

### Box 3. Defining Collective Action

SWS defines collective action as a process in which a hub regularly convenes sector stakeholders who take joint actions to address shared problems, in which:

- Problems are complex and their solutions require deliberation and action by many actors
- Members agree on a shared vision and shared problem definition
- Stakeholders clarify responsibilities and hold each other accountable for actions

The research team used a combination of approaches to determine lessons and insights from the cases included in the study. First, to identify a list of factors that influence the success of collective action approaches in WASH, the research team convened 17 experts with experience from more than 70 collective action coalitions spread across 20 countries. Using Delphi panel methods, the panel reached consensus on the relative importance of more than 60 success factors and intermediate outcomes. Expert ratings and perspectives were then used by the research team to combine and prioritize the 60 factors, resulting in 36 key factors related to aspects of collective action approaches.<sup>7</sup>

Evidence about each factor was compiled through interviews and review of the extensive documentation from each case. The research team conducted more than

40 interviews with coalition facilitators and other program support organization experts over the 3 years of the study. Implementation teams meticulously documented their contexts, approaches, and learning in a digital library of meeting minutes, coalition documents, and systems analyses. For SWS cases, the research team employed two complexity-aware monitoring approaches: annual likelihood of sustainability scorecards and semi-annual outcome mapping reporting.<sup>8</sup> Using the likelihood of sustainability scorecards, teams recorded observed progress and challenges related to financial, institutional, environmental, technical, and social aspects of sustainability. Using outcome mapping, teams recorded progress in influencing the decisions and behaviors of local people and organizations involved in service delivery. The research team coded and compared data on each individual factor across cases to understand the range of variation across the cases and any trends or insights related to how or why decisions about those factors were made. To identify case outcomes, the research team worked with coalition facilitators to define a small set of discrete outcomes that could be assessed for progress and compared to one another according to their relative difficulty.

After coding, the research team used QCA techniques to filter, combine, and prioritize the factors into a smaller number of variables that differed across cases and could be used to analyze combinations of factors. Specifically, the research team integrated 18 factors into others.<sup>9</sup> In addition, across the cases, 13 of the original factors did not vary and thus could not be included in a cross-case analysis. Thus, the

<sup>7</sup> Pugel, K. et al. 2020.

<sup>8</sup> For more information on these complexity-aware monitoring approaches, see: “Measuring Systems Change in WASH: A Practical Application of Two Tools.” Available at: <https://www.globalwaters.org/resources/assets/sws/measuring-systems-change-wash-programming-practical-application-two-tools>

<sup>9</sup> For example, original factors *political stability* and *government turnover rates* both led to an inconsistent membership; thus, these were covered by the condition *continuity and accountability of members*.

research team ultimately analyzed five factors: *hub structure*, *problem identification*, *use of external funds for coalition activities*, *membership continuity and accountability*, and *government uptake*.

The research team investigated both individually and in combination the roles these five factors played in either driving or stalling progress. They investigated individual factors using traditional cross-case comparative techniques to identify any patterns of variation across all 11 cases.<sup>10</sup>

To investigate all possible combinations of conditions and their effect on progress, more rigorous comparative methods were required. The research team used fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA) to identify relationships between combinations of factors and case outcomes.<sup>11</sup>

To assess resource requirements for collective action approaches, the research team asked SWS partners for estimated costs, in staff time and direct expenses, for establishing and supporting collective action approaches.

## Key Factors of Collective Action and Variations Across Cases

This section identifies key individual factors of collective action approaches and summarizes findings for selected factors across the cases; the next section focuses on combinations of factors that lead to progress. The primary method used was cross-case analysis, where individual factors are compared across cases to identify commonalities and differences. Lessons and recommendations build on trends from interviews with local facilitators.

Factors are organized into those that varied significantly across the studied cases (variant factors) and those that did not (common factors). The five variant factors that resulted from factor minimization were investigated in detail, because they represent important tradeoffs that must be weighed where contextual conditions are critical, and include the same factors investigated under QCA.

Across all cases, common factors included members who were *autonomous stakeholders*, each of whom played a role in water or sanitation service provision. Because of this, their *roles depended on one another* to some degree. *Members voluntarily showed up to meetings* and felt *decent external or internal motivations* to be a member. *Power differences existed*, but members generally did not explicitly leverage them to influence decisions or discussions. In every case, both *technical and decision-making government entities* were either members or were highly engaged in the coalition. Under the guidance of a hub entity with strong capacity, members *frequently interacted* both in and between meetings. In all cases, facilitation processes were *transparent*. All cases attained some *small achievements early* in the process and found ways to *adapt their process*. Appendix E provides more detailed definitions for each of these factors.

The research team selected two of the common factors to cover in-depth in this report: (1) representative, motivated membership, and (2) buy-in to a common vision. These factors are central to

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<sup>10</sup> Miles, M. B. and Huberman, A. M. 1994. *The SAGE Extended Sourcebook: Qualitative Data Analysis*. Sage Publications, Inc, Thousand Oaks, California.

<sup>11</sup> For more information on these methods, see: Pugel, K. et al. 2021.

the SWS definition of collective action and included data that, while similar in extent across cases, could still be easily compared.

As an important note, the classification of the common factors does not imply that they are more or less important, that key lessons are not to be gained from their study, or that they are not key to success. Rather, the selected methods for this research make use of differences between cases in order to identify lessons.

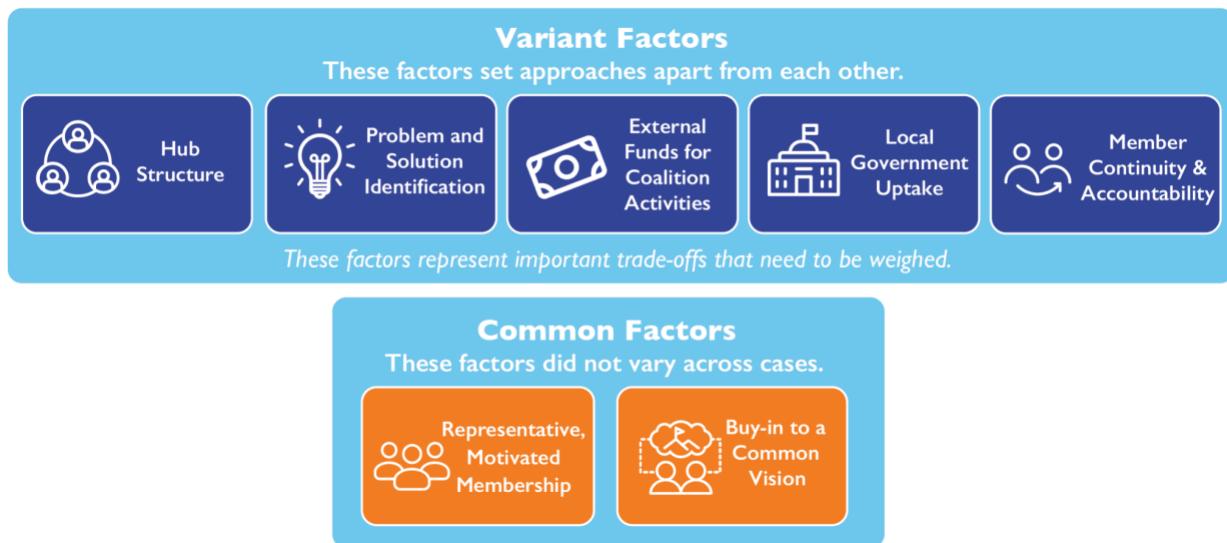


Figure 2. Organizing Structure for Findings and Lessons on Select Individual Factors

## Common Factors

### Representative, Motivated Membership



**Description:** Inclusion of a range of stakeholders and incentives for participants to engage.

**Variance across cases:** In all cases, relevant local government officials, NGO representatives, and private sector representatives participated in the coalition. Program leads prioritized technical staff from local government agencies for inclusion in coalitions, given their mandates for WASH services delivery. Working together, they defined the initial structure and vision for the coalition and organized initial meetings and activities. Elected officials were often invited to meetings but generally participated less directly. For example, it was common for elected officials or other high-level decision-makers to skip meetings or to present opening remarks and then depart, or for them to delay in carrying out agreed-upon action points. Program leads found other ways to engage these decision-makers, either through bilateral meetings or special meetings specifically aimed at briefing these officials.

Across the cases, participants were mainly motivated to engage by a desire to be present and have access to important decisions that would affect their agency or organization. Additionally, many participants appreciated having a platform to communicate their organization's accomplishments and

needs to influential government officials. For coalitions with access to external financing for coalition activities, participation also provided an opportunity to shape the direction of that funding.

**Trends and insights:** Local facilitators and collective action experts emphasized that representative, motivational membership is foundational to establishing and maintaining momentum. In Debre Birhan and Woliso, Ethiopia, when participation by higher-level government officials waned, the program lead pivoted by organizing an annual high-level coalition meeting. During these meetings, influential decision-makers who were unable to regularly attend coalition meetings were briefed on activities and given a chance to provide input on upcoming actions. These meetings were successful in building trust and keeping communication flowing where the incentives for those participants to engage in regular meetings were weak.

Program support organizations took an inclusive approach in deciding who to invite to participate in coalitions. They often invited known organizations and agencies that were active in the relevant sector (rural water, small town sanitation, etc.) and area. Martin Watsisi, Regional WASH Advisor in Kabarole, described this reasoning: “The group needs to be designed for broad discussion, it can’t just be technical people talking to themselves and wondering where someone else might make a decision. For example, for the work on the Kabarole WASH Master Plan, if the group just included the technical team, I think we would just have a nice document that would just sit on the shelf because none of us would be able to bring it to the district council and have the council take it up.”

SWS used organizational network analysis (ONA) in several cases to identify the full range stakeholders who could be included and to reveal connections and relationships among them (see Box 4).<sup>12</sup> For instance, in Kitui County, Kenya, SWS completed a baseline ONA exercise in 2018 that identified an additional 50 organizations to the 25 actively present in the Kitui WASH Forum, bringing the total number of organizations working on water-related programs and projects in the county to 75. This information informed wider targeting of meeting invitations and, with a progressively strengthened hub organization, resulted in double the participation at quarterly WASH forum meetings.

In one case, a stakeholder group was uninvited from a coalition. In Woliso, Ethiopia, the district Greenery Department was initially invited to coalition meetings. However, after several meetings, the representative and coalition members decided that because the department had very little practical involvement in sanitation issues, it was better for them not to attend but rather to be informed any time coordination was needed.

#### **Recommendations for representative, motivated membership:**

- When regular participation of key decision-makers is not possible through regular coalition meetings, consider using individual briefings or separate, less-frequent meetings to keep these individuals engaged and build support for coalition actions.
- Membership in coalitions can be left flexible, with organizations joining and withdrawing as the primary topics of discussion and action evolve. Rigid membership boundaries may only be useful

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<sup>12</sup> For more information on how ONA was used in SWS, see: Using Social Network Analysis in WASH Programs. Available at: [https://www.globalwaters.org/sites/default/files/using\\_social\\_network\\_analysis\\_in\\_wash\\_programs.pdf](https://www.globalwaters.org/sites/default/files/using_social_network_analysis_in_wash_programs.pdf)

when the inclusion of some individuals or groups might undermine open and honest communication or undermine the group's pursuit of a common agenda.

- ONA can be a useful tool to identify the full range of relevant stakeholders, the key decision-makers that need to be engaged, and any communication bottlenecks within the network.

#### **Box 4. Engaging Community Members and Decision-Makers in Kabarole, Uganda**

In Kabarole, Uganda, IRC used ONA and factor analysis to understand and monitor interactions among local stakeholders. After a baseline assessment,<sup>1</sup> the learning alliance identified a disconnect between communities and sub-county and district stakeholders. To address this gap, the learning alliance added two local officials from the two sub-counties who frequently and directly interface with communities.

In 2021, IRC conducted an endline ONA that showed improvement in the quality of connections among stakeholders, with the learning alliance as a central node in the local network. This improvement was largely attributed to the success of the learning alliance in coordinating among stakeholders and decision-makers. One local NGO staff member summarized how this happened, “[The learning alliance supported] advocacy in the district since [WASH] has a political component, especially with district budgets. [Learning alliance] discussions were forwarded to district leadership for action...which frequently resulted in WASH budget increases.”

#### Common Vision



**Description:** Establishment of a shared understanding among stakeholders of the end goal of collaboration.

**Variance across cases:** In all cases, vision statements were articulated in coalition documents such as meeting reports, memorandums of understanding with the local government, and annual work plans. A selection of these vision statements is included in Table I, and the remainder are in Appendix D.

In some cases, the program lead made development of a common vision statement an explicit focus of early coalition meetings. For example, in Kabarole, Uganda, the coalition developed a vision statement and determined focal areas during an initial “orientation meeting.”

In other cases, the program lead organization drafted the vision statement through the consultative process with the local government and presented it to stakeholders for validation during one of the first meetings. For instance, in Kitui County, Kenya, the County Water Directorate initiated a visioning process in 2014 while preparing the county’s first water services strategic plan for the period of 2015–2019. The process provided medium-term areas of focus for the county to realize universal water service access by 2030. However, the process included few stakeholders, only the ones already carrying out WASH activities in Kitui County. The first few WASH forum meetings therefore sought to refresh and build consensus around a more expansive common vision.

With the cases in Kumi, Kamuli, and Nakaseke in Uganda, a common vision was developed prior to the formation of the coalitions. Following a series of dialogue workshops with national and local government officials, Whave organized a multi-district workshop with representatives from five district local governments. This workshop resulted in a call to action where the district local governments would work together with Whave to operate a comprehensive rural water supply pilot PPP. Included in this call to action was a mandate for quarterly meetings and a common vision for what would be achieved.

*Table 1. Select Vision Statements From Cases*

Case	Coalition Vision Statement
Kitui, Kenya	Progressing sustainability of rural water service delivery is a common vision for all water sector organizations/actors in the county. Priorities may differ among organizations, but ultimately interventions and priorities are aimed at the common goal of working toward achieving sustainability.
Mille, Ethiopia	The learning alliance will gain more understanding on the woreda's water systems and coordinate toward achieving Ethiopia's Growth and Transformation Plan II (GTP II) targets by 2020 and sustainable development goals in the long run, where only 5 percent of rural population have no access, by gaining experiences through sharing best practices within the woreda and by working on functionality, finance, and maintenance for the schemes for sustainability services.
Debre Birhan, Ethiopia	The Debre Birhan learning platform on sustainable sanitation services works toward establishing a partnership that promotes improved sanitation services in the town.
Kabarole, Uganda	By 2030, politicians are knowledgeable and proactive about the WASH system and about specific strategies and actions to improve WASH service delivery. The district local government is a one-stop center with functional structures where one can go and find information and people with the skills and knowledge to answer questions. Communities are empowered with knowledge, clear leadership, and active community structures through which they can demand and contribute toward sustainable WASH services.
Kumi, Kamuli, and Nakaseke, Uganda	By 2030, each district will have a self-financing and sustainable maintenance service for safely managed rural and non-NWSC (national utility) water supply in five or more districts reaching a nationally agreed-upon percentage of their populations. This maintenance service will include piped supply and will be replicable in other districts through user-friendly guideline documents and a cadre of local trainers. It will be self-financing through a combination of affordable government budgets for regulation, scaling subsidy, and water user payments.

**Trends and insights:** Whether applying a pre-existing solution or facilitating collective problem identification, coalitions created a shared vision as an initial step to guide decisions about who should be included in the group and what issues should be explored.

Context should guide the amount of effort dedicated to developing a common vision. Where stakeholders are skeptical of the value of a coalition or where they have differing ideas of what a coalition should achieve, more time is needed to bring the group to consensus.

Vision statements were used to set expectations about the focus and long-term goal of the group's actions. For some groups, a specific outcome was included in the vision, such as a target infrastructure functionality rate or achievement of an existing government mandate. By tying the group's vision with an existing government commitment or mandate, the group reinforces government leadership and alignment. This may help to get the local government on board and to more quickly orient new government officials after staff turnover.

In other cases, the vision broadly describes future qualities of the local system, such as the existence of a vibrant market for sanitation services, the government established as a one-stop center for information, or community structures that can demand and contribute to sustainable services. Where there is no clear government mandate or the mandate is controversial or disconnected from the desires of several stakeholders, these kinds of descriptive vision statements may be more useful.

For a few of the cases, the vision statement is a general summary of what the coalition will do and where. For example, in Debre Birhan, Ethiopia, the vision was "to establish a partnership that promotes improved sanitation services in the town." The learning alliance discussed adding more specific targets for sanitation but decided against it due to not having sufficient baseline data. Regardless, this vision was sufficient for the group to use to define priority areas for their first-year work plan.

#### **Recommendations for common vision:**

- During facilitation, implementing organizations should encourage alignment between the coalition's vision and existing government mandates to help instill government leadership and confidence in the platform
- The vision should be revisited at least once a year. Evaluating the coalition's activities and outcomes toward the vision provides an opportunity to learn from the process and adapt. By setting an expectation that the vision may evolve, there will be less pressure from stakeholders to get the vision exactly right. This should allow the group to get moving, while also providing an opportunity for the group to expand the vision later on.

## Variant Factors

### Hub Structure



**Description:** A hub is the entity that manages the logistics, facilitation, leadership, and administrative functions of the coalition. Hub roles can be concentrated within one organization, such as an independent organization led by the program lead or a government agency, or they can be shared between the groups (see Box 5).

**Variance across cases:** Using convening power and capacity, the research team classified hubs into four categories:

- **Institutionalized government hub:** The hub role is formalized in government policy, including the role of government as the lead organization. The government has convening power and strong capacity.
- **Independent hub with convening power:** An independent organization takes on all facilitation roles and leadership roles. The organization has significant convening power — a result of long history in the area before the coalition began, established working relationships, high respect and influence, social capital, and/or strong local knowledge.
- **Supported government hub:** The government convenes; an independent organization provides moderate levels of administration, logistical, and advisory support.
- **Independent hub with limited convening power:** An independent organization convenes and performs nearly all facilitation, leadership, administrative, and logistical roles. The organization has low convening power due to a less-established presence in the area, fewer working relationships, less context-specific knowledge, or a less-proven track record of interventions locally, especially compared to other development partners in the area.

Four of the cases began with a supported government hub or established government ownership within the first year. For example, in Debre Birhan and Woliso, Ethiopia, a committee composed of municipal representatives and technical staff from water and sanitation-related technical offices was established as the leader of the learning alliance. The program lead conducted facilitation and leadership training for committee members in the first year and subsequently provided behind-the-scenes support on meeting organization, documentation, and follow-up. As SWS closes, the committee will continue to lead the coalition without close support from project partners.

### Box 5. Key Terms Related to Hub Structure

**Convening power:** “The influence and ability to bring people together for meetings and other activities.”<sup>1</sup> Significant convening power can come from either (1) a government entity that is respected, has decision-making power, and holds a mandate related to the topic of the coalition or (2) a non-government entity that has a long history in the area before the coalition began, established working relationships, high respect and influence, social capital, and strong local knowledge.

**Capacity:** The ability to effectively perform logistics, facilitation, leadership, and administrative functions of the hub. Capacity comes from experience leading multi-stakeholder groups and training in skills such as facilitation and administration.

In the remaining cases, an independent hub was established, while government entities were involved as members of the coalition. For example, in Ethiopia's Mille District, the program lead (IRC) convenes and supports the meetings but also extensively consults with government and other stakeholders in advance of meetings to develop the agendas.

The MWA case is unique in that MWA serves as a neutral, non-implementing hub and facilitates a number of inter-related forums. They frequently convene NGO partners to work together on planning, problem solving, learning, and joint advocacy as part of a funded grant. They also host larger meetings that include government representatives from regional, zonal, and district offices who are considered key partners and leaders of the district-wide work. Additionally, MWA convenes smaller working groups to discuss technical topic areas like monitoring and learning and WASH in health facilities and pulls in other partners and stakeholders as needed.

For cases without substantial turnover or disruption, the local government increased its capacity and leadership within the coalitions over time. Additionally, for two of the cases that started with government ownership (Kitui County, Kenya and Nakaseke, Uganda), the role of the hub and the government entities within the hub was formalized through government policy or an expanded government mandate to improve sustainability of the coalition.

#### **Box 6. Collective Action Approaches as Pilots for Large-Scale Change**

For some of the approaches in the study, the program lead intended for the collective action approaches to pilot district-level innovations that could then be scaled to other districts through national policy or other mechanisms. John Butterworth, an implementing partner with IRC said, “We do a lot of system monitoring and invest in the learning alliances because we’re trying to pilot a change in a few areas to catalyze change on a massive scale. So if we can improve mechanisms for maintenance or monitoring, for example, you would expect those to scale without replicating the same kind of learning alliance platform.”

In these cases, the sustainability of the collective action platform may be less critical because it is the identification and refinement of successful innovations and their widespread adoption that are the ultimate goal. For these kinds of efforts, government leadership of the hub may also be less desirable because local officials may be less willing or able to lead experimentation. The program lead may be a better hub lead for these situations if they are more willing to take responsibility for negative outcomes or have more experience with other approaches, for example from staff who have worked in areas where the innovations have been successful.

#### **Trends and insights:**

Whether housed in government or in a separate organization, an entity with high capacity and convening power needs to be accountable for handling the logistical and administrative duties that keep a coalition functioning. That said, there are advantages and disadvantages to different hub structures. The main component of a hub is its ability to convene appropriate members. Hosting the hub within a government entity that is respected, has decision-making power, and holds a mandate related to the topic of the

coalition allows for increased participation, accountability, and authority. Institutionalizing hub functions within the government supports broad development goals of strengthening and supporting government-led systems by growing the capacity of the agency and aligning the priorities of the group toward the agenda of the agency. Having a formalized hub structure embedded in government processes can also contribute to long-term sustainability of the platform, when this is desired (see Box 6). Often, the government may have the interest to convene, lead, and facilitate the coalition but may lack the capacity to perform logistical, advisory, and administrative functions. Close support from an independent organization with high capacity can help fill this gap.

On the other hand, housing the hub within one government agency can increase reliance on bureaucratic processes and exacerbate jurisdictional conflicts if responsibility is split across multiple agencies. There is also a risk that the agency will wield undue influence over other stakeholders, challenging their ability to maintain neutrality and preventing the group from honestly and openly discussing issues. Additionally, a government-led hub may be more severely disrupted from turnover in government staff, which in our cases was far more frequent than turnover within independent, non-government entities. In this case, an independent organization with high capacity and high convening power (a result of a long history in the area before the coalition began, established working relationships, high respect and influence, social capital, and/or strong local knowledge) serving as the hub has proven to be an effective way to still ensure progress with strong participation and commitment from relevant stakeholders (see Box 7).

### **Box 7. Kitui WASH Forum**

The Kitui WASH forum was established in 2016 with funding and support from UNICEF Kenya to coordinate WASH stakeholders working in the county. For the first year, the platform focused on information sharing among members. The forum was government-led, with the Kitui County Water Directorate leading meetings, albeit with capacity gaps.

In 2018, SWS partner the University of Oxford started supporting the forum to be the central platform for stakeholder coordination in the sector, which involved completing a suite of systems analysis activities to generate evidence on sector issues and drive evidence-based debate at forum meetings. To strengthen the forum, SWS helped establish a governance structure with more-formal leadership that includes a secretariat, an inclusive agenda that integrates the health and education sectors, standardized tools to track sector progress, action-oriented meetings, and clear roles and responsibilities for members. Early in the process, SWS also provided administrative support for the secretariat, which included planning meetings, sending invitations and follow-up communication, documenting meetings, and more.

With the Kitui WASH forum gaining support among government and local stakeholders, a county water policy and bill development process in 2020 and 2021 formalized the platform by institutionalizing its governance structure and role within government and by funding its activities. The process of enacting the bill into law is ongoing.

In some scenarios, the independent organization serving as the hub has high capacity but does not benefit from high convening power, such as if they are new to the area. To gain enough convening power for people to participate in coalitions, the hub needs to secure early support from the government so that relevant government entities can send invites, welcome participants to meetings, and strengthen member accountability. Although the government does not take on key hub roles, this structure still allows them to lend some of their convening power to the hub organization. For the cases studied, this was the most vulnerable hub structure, because it relies on government actors but, by design, government support of the hub is not formalized. The three cases that did not make progress on difficult outcomes used this hub structure; however, two of the cases that made progress also used this hub structure.

#### **Recommendations for hub structures:**

- Consider convening power and capacity when considering how to structure a coalition's hub.
- For any structure, there are tradeoffs and different risks to be mitigated. See Appendix B for more details on the benefits, risks, and suggested uses for different hub structures.

#### **Problem and Solution Identification**



**Description:** This factor describes how a coalition will identify problems that will be addressed collectively. The program lead organization can either use a collaborative process with stakeholders to identify problems or rally stakeholders around a problem (or solution) that was pre-determined by the organization, the government, or the funding organization.

**Variance across cases:** Five cases in the study used collective problem identification, five applied an existing concept or solution, and two used collective problem identification for some problems and applied existing solutions for others. An example of collective problem identification is in Kabarole, Uganda, where very little was determined prior to the formation of the coalition. SWS partner IRC held an initial visioning meeting, during which participants identified broad problem areas and decided on the coalition membership.

An example of applying an existing solution is in Nakaseke, Uganda. As a rural water maintenance service provider, SWS partner Whave worked with local government agencies and other stakeholders to establish a PPP platform with the explicit goal of establishing the district government as a regulator for professionalized rural water services.

**Trends and insights:** Organizations such as local NGOs or service providers who have been working in a region for many years with knowledge of the system may have well-justified ideas for key entry points for systems strengthening. Applying or demonstrating an existing concept or solution can provide up-front clarity for government and program funders on intended outcomes and allow for advanced approval of activity plans. This allows an implementer to focus the collaborative effort on the implementation stage of the program cycle. However, for this to happen, the selected problems should be (1) high priority for the group and (2) feasible for the group to take action on, and solutions should have a “proof of concept” so that stakeholders see their value. Because the group is not involved in the

selection of the solution, they may not be as committed to participating in the coalition, and it may take significant effort to generate buy-in on the topic. This approach may also miss important perspectives or creative options that would have been identified through a more thorough stakeholder-led exploration of the problem and its solutions.

In other situations, organizations seeking to strengthen a local system may have less knowledge of the area or may prioritize involving stakeholders in the early stages of the program cycle. Collective problem identification allows stakeholders to define the problem specifically for their context, can result in more stakeholder buy-in to the agreed-upon solutions, and can help garner government support if key government officials are involved. Due to its collaborative and open-ended nature, this type of problem identification is often thought of as a defining cornerstone of a collective action approach. However, collective problem identification does come with its own risks: (1) consensus solutions may fall outside of the scope or resources of the hub or its funder; (2) it can take significant time (1–2 years) to effectively facilitate the process, which could delay quick wins and overall progress; and (3) the government or funder may not support an open-ended process because of expectations about advanced approval or because a strategy has already been developed. For example, USAID USHA used a collective impact approach (a form of collective action that typically starts with problem exploration) to instead collaboratively focus on a pre-determined thematic area. USHA Chief of Party Jonathan Annis said, “Stakeholders preferred that the coalition focus on the issue of increasing access to basic sanitation through market-based approaches. Uganda already had a national Improved Sanitation and Hygiene Strategy underway, which contained three pillars: demand creation, supply improvement, and strengthening the enabling environment. However, up to this point, most investment was focused on demand creation through Community Led Total Sanitation. The government and sector stakeholders were open for innovation, social research, and collaborative efforts in the market-based ‘supply’ pillar of the Strategy. So USHA adapted to have a more targeted exploration (i.e., research) phase while letting stakeholders — using the results of the analyses — guide decision making in terms of which aspects of market-based sanitation to focus on and which market segments to prioritize with the early interventions.”

Importantly, neither approach to problem and solution identification was clearly more successful than the other. Cases that selected a form of problem identification based on their local context and mitigated the associated risks made substantial progress on difficult outcomes (see Box 8).

In the majority of cases, for both forms of problem identification, the program lead carried out systems analyses to help stakeholders form a common understanding of the local context, challenges, and opportunities. Analyses are particularly useful when stakeholders hold different views about the scale or severity of the challenge or the feasibility of possible solutions. However, they also come with their own risks: they can be resource intensive (\$5,000–\$150,000, see Resource section), require an up-front commitment from the stakeholders themselves, do not always clearly define the problem or inform solutions, can be unintentionally biased by outside researchers who are less familiar with the context, and can be overwhelming for stakeholders to interpret the results.

### **Recommendations for problem and solution identification:**

- Organizations should use the form of problem identification that makes the most sense for their

context, considering the different risks and benefits of each approach. Annex C provides details on the benefits, risks, and suggested uses of each approach.

Systems analyses can help stakeholders form a common understanding of the context, challenges, and possible solutions. Involving stakeholders in scoping the analyses and presenting results clearly and with consideration for the audience's interests can make these analyses more useful.

#### **Box 8. A Hybrid Approach to Problem and Solution Identification in Ethiopia**

In Ethiopia's Farta, North Mecha, and Dera districts, MWA used a 15-month “Bridge Program” in 2018–2019 to develop high-level goals and collaboratively design activities with stakeholders. The short duration provided the opportunity for the hub to work with NGOs, government partners, and other stakeholders to build a strong foundation of partnership from which to build the longer-term work of achieving the vision. MWA and the regional government agreed to a few key activities in a memorandum of understanding, without, at that point, committing to a longer-term set of objectives. This Bridge Phase allowed for baseline assessment and analysis, from which the long-term plans could be collaboratively developed for each district. During this time, program partners also continued pilots carried out in previous work, including implementation of dispensers for safe water, aligned with government priorities. This hybrid approach allowed MWA to satisfy government requirements through the process of developing a memorandum of understanding yet also provided the time and space to define the vision and core activities collaboratively with stakeholders, based on the results of systems analyses. Laura Brunson, Deputy Director for MWA, noted, “MWA was lucky to have a funder in the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, who was willing to provide time and funding for the Bridge with the understanding that building partnerships [and] developing a shared vision and long-term collaborative plans takes time, support, and leadership.”

#### **External Funds for Coalition Activities**



**Description:** This factor describes the availability of external funds for coalition activities beyond the costs of setting up a hub and funding regular meetings.

**Variance across cases:** In six of the cases, the program lead made smaller amounts of funding (up to \$40,000) available for coalition activities. Activities included developing a county-wide asset monitoring system, technical training for coalition members, drafting national policy, and drafting district WASH master plans. The program lead secured the external funds, either from SWS or other funders.

In one case, external funding was only available for coalition learning activities such as learning visits, systems analyses, and facilitation training. In the remaining five cases, significant funding for activities was not available and the coalition was expected to source funding for joint activities from the member organizations. Small amounts of funds were available for coalition meetings and baseline data collection.

**Trends and insights:** Securing external funds for coalition activities motivated participation in the coalition, at least when the group was deciding on allocation of funding and, for those receiving funding, through the period of implementation. Therefore, external funding may support faster group formation

and accelerate joint action because coalition members do not need to wait on fundraising efforts. It is also something that tends to be expected in the WASH sector. As one facilitator from Tetra Tech said, “In Ethiopia, we usually have infrastructure projects where investments will be made and a partnership is put in place to [facilitate] that. Many of the members said they would have preferred a parallel intervention, and I agree. If there were a parallel intervention, regardless of the size, even if it were a model for public latrine management or something else that’s small, then I believe we could have gotten a better commitment from members and also be free to experiment more on that intervention.”

External funding can also increase accountability and participation in the coalition. In the MWA case, partners are primarily funded through a single grant. Laura Brunson of MWA described the effects: “Partners understand that if their organization fails then the whole group fails together. And so I've actually seen a case where one partner was struggling because of temporary staffing issues and another organization stepped in and helped out because it was for the good of all the partners on the grant and helped to continue making positive progress towards the collaborative WASH service delivery goals.”

There is a risk, however, that external funds may undermine the post-project functioning of the group by creating dependency on external aid for meetings, facilitation, and activities. Further, the priorities and regulations of the funding organization may undermine the group's autonomy. One way to reduce the risk of dependency is to route external funds for activities through existing governmental funding mechanisms. Another path is to agree on a transition plan early in implementation in which the government takes over funding facilitation and other meeting costs.

#### **Recommendations for external funds for coalition activities:**

- External funds for coalition activities can incentivize collaboration but may also undermine a group's autonomy or exacerbate existing conflicts.
- When external funds are used for activities, program leads and funders should set clear expectations about the long-term availability of funds and work with members to plan for a smooth transition to government (or other) funding.
- Routing external funds through an existing government funding mechanism or forming a coalition in response to a specific allocation of government funds, such as to carry out a national plan or strategy, are two potential strategies to reduce dependency of the coalition on external funds for activities.

#### **Continuity and Accountability**



**Description:** Member organizations consistently send the right representatives to meetings and members feel accountable for actions.

**Variance across cases:** Four cases had relatively strong member continuity and accountability, as measured by consistent participation, relevant representatives attending, and representatives reliably carrying out follow-up actions. For example, in Nakaseke, Uganda, quarterly PPP review meetings were well attended, with approximately 80 percent of invitees participating but sometimes sending a different representative from one meeting to the next. Having different representatives from meeting to meeting can slow down meetings because it disrupts continuity as new

representatives need to be brought up to speed and action items may be dropped in the handover between staff. In Nakaseke, member accountability for action items was a challenge early in the project but improved over time, especially after meeting facilitation was handed over to a district councilor who kept in regular contact with members between meetings.

An example of a coalition lacking continuity and accountability is in Mille, Ethiopia. In this case, several member organizations were based in a distant town (the regional capital, Semera), which made travel to coalition meetings difficult and therefore lowered attendance. Often, organizations sent attendees that could not effectively represent their organization's priorities or did not have the authority to make decisions. Members did not feel a strong sense of accountability to group decisions, and it was common for action items to stall from meeting to meeting.

**Trends and insights:** With less continuity and accountability, groups struggle to maintain group cohesion and to carry forward actions decided in previous meetings. Valuable meeting time is spent bringing new members up to speed and getting them comfortable with the group, resulting in less time spent preparing for the activities needed to accomplish the group's vision.

Low continuity and accountability are largely caused by challenges in the operating environment, such as staff turnover, changing member priorities, and other political dynamics. It is common for local government agencies to suffer high turnover through staffing rotations, political appointments, and staff voluntarily leaving public service at high rates. Turnover can also affect the private sector and NGOs. When staff who represent an organization in a coalition change jobs, organizations have to appoint new members to participate. Often, members attending the coalition for the first time are poorly briefed on the history of the coalition and their organization's interests and priorities for participation.

#### **Box 9. Funding Sanitation Activities in Debre Birhan and Woliso, Ethiopia**

In Debre Birhan and Woliso, Ethiopia, SWS partner Tetra Tech is facilitating learning alliances to plot a path toward safer town sanitation. The two cases highlight how important an external source of funding can be for moving coalition actions forward. Both learning alliances selected the development of a fecal sludge disposal site as a priority for collective action. In both towns, the World Bank had also made funding available to the town administration for sanitation-related projects. However, the World Bank requires that funded projects are included in the town master plan. This was not a problem in Debre Birhan, where a breakdown at the previous disposal site had triggered local officials to include a disposal site in their plan. This external funding helped incentivize action because stakeholders knew that once other hurdles like land acquisition were cleared, the project could move forward. However, in Woliso, the existing town master plan did not include a disposal site, so progress was much slower because funding was not yet available.

The priorities of members and their organizations change over time, especially in relation to significant events such as natural disasters, health crises, and elections. When this happens, members may become more or less willing to participate in certain coalition activities. For example, in response to the COVID-

19 pandemic, several of the WASH-focused coalitions were either paused or temporarily re-purposed to address the health crisis.

Elections and other government dynamics can also affect coalition continuity. In South Ari, Ethiopia, the district was re-zoned into three smaller districts, necessitating the split of one coalition into three. In some of the cases in Uganda, election season changed incentives for politicians — some who had been supportive of coalition actions to further professionalized maintenance<sup>13</sup> suddenly switched to promoting the status quo system of government or NGO-provided (free) infrastructure construction and repair. Elections can also impact coalition membership directly, as when new administrations appoint different regional and local officials in the agencies that participate in the coalition.

It is important to note that some cases with relatively low continuity and accountability were able to make progress, which indicates that difficulties in this area can be mitigated or overcome. For example, in cases where the representative of a member organization changes frequently, over time there is an increased chance that the representative has attended at least one meeting in the past and therefore has some knowledge of the meeting purpose and their institutional role. It is easier to brief them on recent events or decisions by reading out major decisions and action points at the start of each meeting.

For higher-level officials, turnover can be more disruptive because they have a strong influence on the direction of the group. At the same time, it is generally hard for these officials to regularly attend meetings, so turnover in these positions may not immediately impact coalition meetings. To mitigate the eventual impacts, the implementing organization or other coalition members can meet individually with key decision-makers. Muhammed Ebrahim, a local facilitator for four learning alliances in Ethiopia, indicated how this was done: “After meetings, we would look at the action items and look for what would be most important for those who didn’t attend to know about. We’d then set up a meeting before the next learning alliance meeting so that we could brief them and get any feedback for the next meeting.”

#### **Recommendations for continuity and accountability:**

- When possible, local facilitators should meet with new members in advance of coalition meetings to bring them up to speed on the purpose, structure, and recent decisions of the group. This accelerates their entry into the group and prevents the need for a detailed review of past activities or decisions during coalition meetings. When appropriate, selecting influential members to help onboard new members may improve the perceived legitimacy of the coalition for the new members and increase buy-in and accountability.
- Documenting significant coalition decisions and actions in easily understood materials (handouts, briefs, or PowerPoint slides) also speeds up the process of introducing new members. These

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<sup>13</sup> SWS defines professionalized maintenance as involving trained personnel, working within clear legal, policy, contractual, and accountability frameworks, who are monitored and evaluated against performance indicators and with agreed-upon financing arrangements and transparent, regulated pricing structures to carry out repairs and support services for rural water infrastructure. For more, see:

<https://www.globalwaters.org/resources/assets/sws/professionalized-maintenance-rural-water-service-provision-toward-common-language>

materials can be presented to new members in advance of meetings, either in a packet or through discussion with a facilitator.

### Local Government Uptake



**Description:** This factor is related to the relevant local government decision-makers carrying out recommendations made by the coalition. Strong government uptake is obtained when, in response to recommendations made by the coalition, government decision-makers take significant actions that impact the achievement of the coalition's vision.

Examples include passing policies, making financial or in-kind contributions to activities, and shifting budget allocations.

**Variance across cases:** In the cases studied, the program lead used a variety of approaches to gain and maintain government support and to promote uptake of coalition recommendations. Uptake consists of two main steps: (1) obtaining buy-in and building political will of relevant decision-makers and (2) turning commitment into action by ensuring that relevant decision-makers have the financing, staffing, and other capacities to carry out their commitments.

#### *Building Political Will*

For the cases studies, key decision-makers viewed the coalitions as legitimate, credible entities and trustworthy sources of information. Coalitions built this credibility and legitimacy by demonstrating a long-term commitment, getting permission from higher-level government entities before initiating activities, including government entities in the coalition, and involving government entities in the problem and solution identification processes.

When planning activities, some coalitions purposefully aligned their activities with clear government mandates as a way to secure buy-in. When decision-makers see a coalition's activity as helping fulfill a government mandate, it is easier for them to support the group using existing programs and financing mechanisms. When agency mandates are not clear, the coalition may need to spend time clarifying the mandates so that appropriate roles and responsibilities among agencies can be assigned. The cases that tackled sanitation-related issues in Debre Birhan and Woliso, Ethiopia spent a lot of effort clearing up confusion and overlapping mandates across the health office, water utility, municipality, and environmental protection office.

Some coalitions obtained government buy-in by demonstrating the value, impact, and urgency of coalition activities early on and continuously. Coalitions used comprehensive baseline assessments and evidence-based advocacy, paired with consistent, repeated messaging. Delivering “quick wins” through early, smaller projects also helped demonstrate the value of the approach. The South Ari learning alliance used their baseline assessment to train local government officials in an mWater platform and collect comprehensive functionality data about their zone, which built a lot of interest and motivation among the members. Coalitions that are applying an existing concept may require additional convincing (via “proof of concept” or evidence) that the problems the coalition seeks to address are priorities. In Uganda’s Nakaseke, Kumi, and Kamuli districts, district-level efforts received a major boost when a new

national framework for operations and maintenance was released that endorsed the approach being piloted by the coalitions.

#### *Turning Commitment to Action*

Although many coalitions built some political will for their activities, follow-through on commitments was not guaranteed. Many district governments did not have requisite financing mechanisms to enable action. For example, the town of Woliso, Ethiopia was not able to use World Bank funds to develop a fecal sludge disposal site, despite being selected as a town for funding, because the newly selected disposal site was not in the town's master plan (see Box 9 on page 21). Despite significant political will, work to develop the disposal site has stalled until the master plan can be amended and financing is secured.

In many cases, government capacity — including skills, equipment, and staffing levels — was lacking. Although capacity-building efforts have shown promise, they move slowly when turnover is high. For example, in South Ari and Mille, Ethiopia, local officials repeatedly requested training on the online database platform because staff who were previously trained moved to other positions or districts.

**Trends and insights:** Government action, resources, and policies are critical to functioning WASH systems. Government support requires more than just verbal statements supporting the coalition's priorities or noting the coalition's value. Meaningful support occurs when the government actually takes up decisions or recommendations made by the coalition, financially contributes to coalition activities, or expands annual government budgets related to the coalition topic.

All eight cases in the study that made progress on difficult outcomes also gained government support for those outcomes. Teams reported that government support was acquired and maintained through frequent communication and engagement with government officials and continuous demonstration of the value of the coalition and alignment of its activities with government-mandated objectives. Inclusion of both technical government staff and elected officials was also a key factor, despite the potential risk that elected officials would try to politicize the coalition. Joel Mukanga, a program coordinator at Whave, explained how this can be done: "You have to emphasize the importance of including in the coalition the position that the elected officials occupy rather than them individually. It is important to state clearly that whomever is elected to that office will be welcome to work with the coalition members. It is also important to walk the talk and desist from campaigning for any candidate, including the incumbent. This might require slowing down activities and minimizing meetings with the incumbent during the electioneering period."

#### **Recommendations for local government uptake:**

- Consider working at the district or town level in order to build rigorous examples that will influence regional and national governments. Throughout implementation, keep higher levels of government informed of progress, challenges, and milestones.
- Align the coalition's vision and focal areas to long-term government mandates and priorities.
- Continually engage government stakeholders, including outside coalition meetings, to keep them well informed on coalition activities and to check that their needs are being met.

- Build a reputation for proactive communication and consistent response and follow-up to requests from government officials.
- Keep elected officials engaged in efforts by finding ways in which coalition activities align with their priorities (see Box 10).

#### **Box 10. Government Uptake in Nakaseke, Uganda**

For SWS partner Whave, a key component of the vision for the PPP in Nakaseke District in Uganda was to appoint Whave as the area service provider (ASP) for maintenance of rural water points. The coalition achieved this outcome through consistent engagement with district local government authorities. Before each coalition meeting, the group's facilitator would speak with district government officials by telephone to consult on the agenda and build support for ASP designation.

After several coalition meetings on the topic, Whave drafted a memorandum of understanding and shared it with district officials for review and input via email in May 2020. This led to a district works committee meeting in June 2020 where the memorandum of understanding was officially presented in detail and ultimately approved, largely based on Whave's track record of more than 7 years of effective service within the district and other service areas. Joel Mukanga from Whave said, "We were able to show proof of concept by collecting and presenting data on functionality, which clearly indicates that in areas where Whave is providing professional maintenance services, water point functionality is consistently near 100 percent. Nakaseke also heard from neighboring local officials that the initial efforts with Whave were working well. This, combined with the new national operations and maintenance policy for rural water services that adopted Whave's ASP approach, convinced them to work toward institutional change for sustainable rural water service delivery."

### **Combinations of Factors Contributing to Progress**

The research team employed fsQCA to identify pathways or groupings of factors present in cases that made progress on difficult outcomes. The rigor of the methodology, when combined with deep case knowledge, particularly in cross-comparative work with a smaller number of cases, revealed deep insights, particularly regarding how factors combined to allow progress to be made.

In QCA, a series of scoring rubrics are developed for each factor and the outcome. Scoring rubrics convert qualitative data about the cases into scores from 0 to 1 based on case data, set logic, and literature. Scoring is oriented so that 0 means the factor or outcome is absent in the case and 1 means it is fully present in the case. The result is a large data matrix summarizing the extent to which each factor and the outcome are present in all 11 cases. With the aid of computer software, fsQCA, the research team systematically investigated all possible combinations of factors and their influence on the outcome. The software uses set theory and Boolean minimization to quantify the extent to which various combinations of factor presence/absence coincide with outcome presence/absence, while also minimizing logical redundancies and calculating validity metrics. Using case knowledge and fsQCA software, the research team identified combinations of factors that contribute to progress. Common

factors (see Appendix E) could not be investigated because they did not vary across cases. For additional details on this method, see “Pathways for collaboratively strengthening water and sanitation systems.”<sup>14</sup>

## Comparison of Outcomes

As a first step in the analysis, SWS identified significant outcomes for each coalition and assessed the level of progress made in the study’s time period. Outcomes were defined as tangible actions being taken and activities being implemented by the coalition. A broad range of outcomes was achieved, including:

- Resolving a long-standing conflict between a water supply and sanitation utility and a municipality to construct a fecal sludge disposal site.
- Developing and implementing nation-wide guidance for market-based sanitation.
- Collectively developing 10-year master plans for a district.
- Advocating for greater resource allocation and staffing for a district water office.
- Establishing a district-level professionalized maintenance service provider for rural water.

Outcomes were calibrated by their difficulty to give more weight to progress made on more arduous ones. A review of literature helped to prioritize aspects of difficulty, including being unfamiliar, being multifaceted, being controversial, requiring widespread change throughout the sector, requiring government policy or mandate changes, or being dependent on stakeholders distributed horizontally or vertically. A difficulty score was assigned based on how many of these aspects applied to each outcome, and any outcome with more than three difficulty aspects was considered to be “difficult.”

The research team assessed 22 outcomes across the 11 case studies. Table 2 shows the relative presence of different measures of difficulty, with *multifaceted outcomes* and *dependence on stakeholders distributed vertically* being the most common.

Table 2. Presence of Difficulty Measures for Assessed Outcomes

Difficulty Measure*	Number of Outcomes (out of 22)
Multifaceted	15
Vertical Dependence	12
Widespread Changes	9
Controversial	8
Government Policy Change	8
Horizontal Dependence	7
Unfamiliar	6

\*To be scored as “difficult,” an outcome needed the presence of three or more difficulty measures.

<sup>14</sup> Pugel, K. et al. 2021.

Outcomes were also coded to broad topic areas (principles) of sustainability in WASH using the FIETS<sup>15</sup> framework that includes financial, institutional, environmental, technical, and social principles.

Nearly all of the outcomes (95 percent) were linked to institutional changes, such as redefining the role of local government as a regulator rather than a maintenance provider or supporting passage of a national sanitation marketing policy. Financial system-related outcomes were also common (59 percent), such as development of a district WASH master plan or construction of a disposal site, which require significant investment. The least common outcome area was environmental, with only 9 percent of outcomes relating to this area.

As of September 2020, coalitions made progress on 14 of the 22 outcomes, and 16 of the 22 outcomes were considered “difficult.” Because each coalition worked on multiple outcomes, ultimately, eight coalitions made progress on difficult outcomes. Looking across the outcomes, there was no clear trend between difficulty and progress. Many of the most difficult outcomes made progress, while some of the less difficult outcomes did not.

## Pathways to Progress

The eight cases that made progress on difficult outcomes fell into three pathways, or combinations of factors (see Figure 3). Cases were distributed fairly equally among these pathways. In one pathway, progress was made when the *hub had convening power*, which allowed the hub to rally stakeholders around the effort and strengthen the *continuity and accountability* of members, which ensured members followed up on the action items they were assigned. Cases established this accountability either through activity tracking, such as an annual work plan, or by progress tracking, such as through agreed-upon performance indicators. However, these two factors alone were not sufficient for progress — *government uptake* was critical. Cases in this pathway benefited from a stable enough political environment that *continuity and accountability* could be established. In contexts with high turnover or unpredictable political dynamics, it was harder to gain *continuity and accountability*. Weaker continuity and accountability did not preclude progress in all pathways.

In the second pathway, the *hub with convening power* was able to effectively leverage incentives from *external funds for activities* and *local government uptake* to keep members motivated and involved. This pathway, interestingly, did not require continuity of membership and accountability to make significant progress.

In the third pathway, cases made progress through *collective problem identification*, *external funds for activities*, and *local government uptake*. Notably, this pathway did not rely on strong convening power to make progress. For cases following this pathway, collective problem identification may function as a substitute for *convening power* by bringing stakeholders to the table and supporting the development of a common group identity.

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<sup>15</sup> WASH Alliance International. 2016. “Accelerating Sustainable WASH.” Available at: [https://wash-alliance.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/36/2015/12/Accelerating-Sustainable-WASH-WASH-Alliance-International-Programme-2016\\_DEF\\_SMALL.pdf](https://wash-alliance.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/36/2015/12/Accelerating-Sustainable-WASH-WASH-Alliance-International-Programme-2016_DEF_SMALL.pdf)

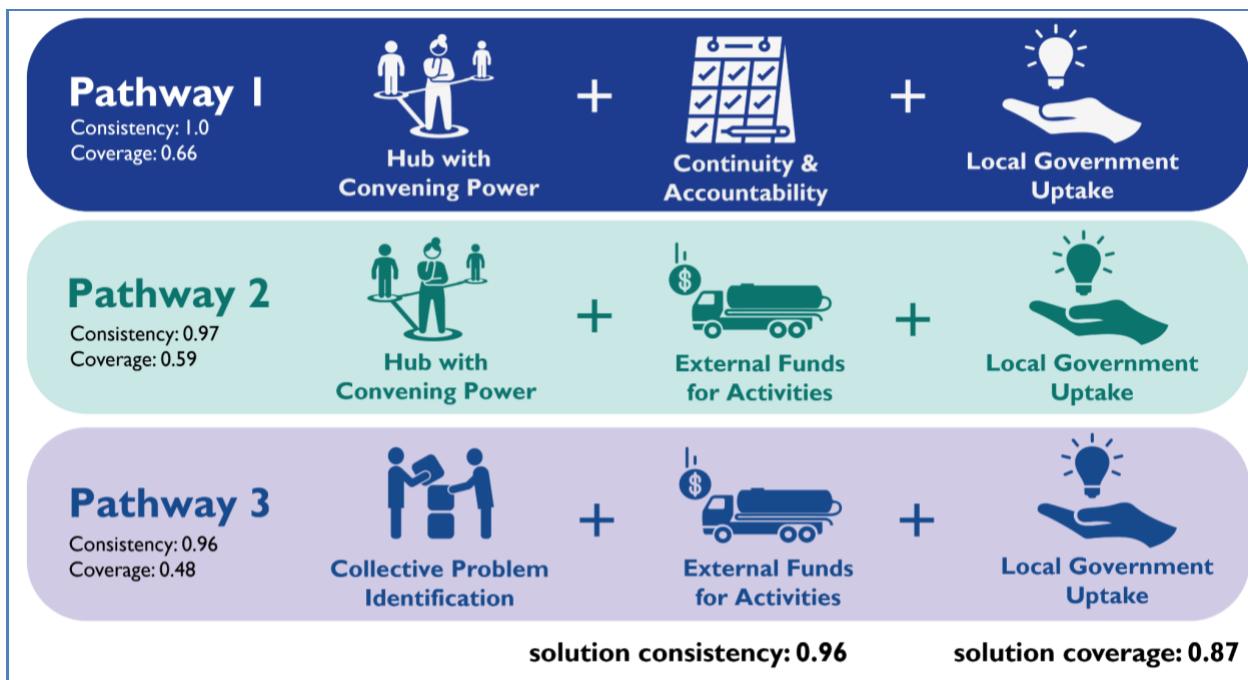


Figure 3. Summary of the Identified Pathways (Combinations of Factors) That Explain How Cases Made Progress<sup>16</sup>

The research team also used QCA to identify combinations of factors that inhibit progress on difficult outcomes (leveraging 3 out of the 11 cases that did not achieve progress on outcomes). A single pathway was found to reliably explain stalled progress, consisting of a lack of *continuity and accountability*, *pre-defined problem scope*, and limited *local government uptake*. These conditions are all connected to each other, working together to stall progress. In all three of the cases, a lack of *continuity and accountability* was linked to a political environment plagued by disruptive political dynamics, shifting priorities of members, and unmanageable turnover. *Local government uptake* was inhibited by an emergency context (e.g., natural disasters, COVID-19) where the attention of decision-makers was urgently directed toward emergency response. The program lead decided on a *pre-defined problem scope* because the government was unable to participate in problem selection. In one of the cases, collective problem identification was scrapped when emergency response limited the government's ability to participate.

## Recommendations on Combinations of Factors

- Making progress on difficult outcomes hinges on gaining local government commitment and uptake of recommendations.
- For contexts in which a hub organization has convening power, the hub will need to gain local government uptake and either foster continuity and accountability of members or secure external funds for activities to make progress.

<sup>16</sup> Adapted from: Pugel, K., et al. 2021

- For contexts in which the hub organization lacks convening power and cannot acquire it through other means, such as supporting the government as the hub or building on existing platforms, collective problem identification may provide a substitute if external funds and local government uptake can be acquired.
- Collective problem identification is not always required for progress.
- Program leads should avoid contexts that are likely to encounter instability (disruptive political dynamics, shifting priorities, or conditions that exacerbate turnover) or plan for slower progress and longer program timelines.

## Resource Analysis

To determine resource requirements for collective action, SWS partners compiled estimated budgets for collective action activities undertaken during the project. Specifically, partners used their experience and lessons from SWS implementation to estimate the **cost to replicate** their approach in a similar district or county.<sup>17</sup> Costs were split between staff time and direct expenses such as meeting venue rental, travel costs, and use of outside experts to conduct analysis. An important consideration is that the cost of staff time (salaries, fringe, etc.) is difficult to standardize due to contextual differences in salaries and cost of living across different countries. For this reason, staff time was reported directly. However, staff time is a major cost driver — at least as expensive as the direct expenses that were provided.

Another critical consideration is that resource estimates included here are **only for collective action activities conducted at the district level**. SWS partners implemented collective action in conjunction with advocacy efforts (especially at the national level) and research. The aim of these complementary approaches was to turn district-level proofs of concept into national-level systems change through new policies, changed mandates, altered funding flows, etc. The resource estimates provided here are only a piece of this larger effort.

Table 3 lists the estimates from the different partners that are aggregated for each sub-activity. Not every SWS partner included each sub-activity line. For example, Whave did not include an estimate for initial systems analysis because, in their model, initial data collection is part of the scoping process for service delivery and is not part of their collective action activities. Where multiple teams provided estimates, costs were averaged. Overall, the range of cost estimates is somewhat narrow, with all individual estimates falling between 540–760 days and \$142,000–\$222,000, excluding external funding for coalition activities.

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<sup>17</sup> These estimates don't take into account administrative, overhead, or start-up costs, which would make the total resources required substantially higher. Additionally, resource requirements would also be even higher for an organization entering a new country.

Table 3. Average Cost Estimate to Replicate SWS Collective Action Approaches Over a 5-Year Time Span

Activity	Days of Staff Time	Direct Costs
Initial Stakeholder Consultations	9	\$3,500
Launch Event or Meeting	6	\$3,500
Initial Systems Analyses	118	\$16,000
Regular Coalition Meetings	125	\$83,000
Follow-Up and Coordination Between Meetings	270	\$9,000
Ongoing Systems Monitoring	147	\$27,000
Exchange Trips and Multidistrict Coordination Meetings	85	\$42,500
<b>Total without External Funds</b>	<b>739</b>	<b>\$173,500</b>
Coalition Activity (with External Funding)	<i>Included</i>	\$218,000
<b>Total 5 Year Costs Including External Funds for Coalition Activities</b>	<b>739</b>	<b>\$392,000</b>

The largest cost drivers for collective action under SWS were regular meetings and follow-up, which combined made up a total of 52 percent of the direct costs and 53 percent of the staff time. All SWS partners suggested a quarterly meeting frequency with a participant range of 25–50 people.

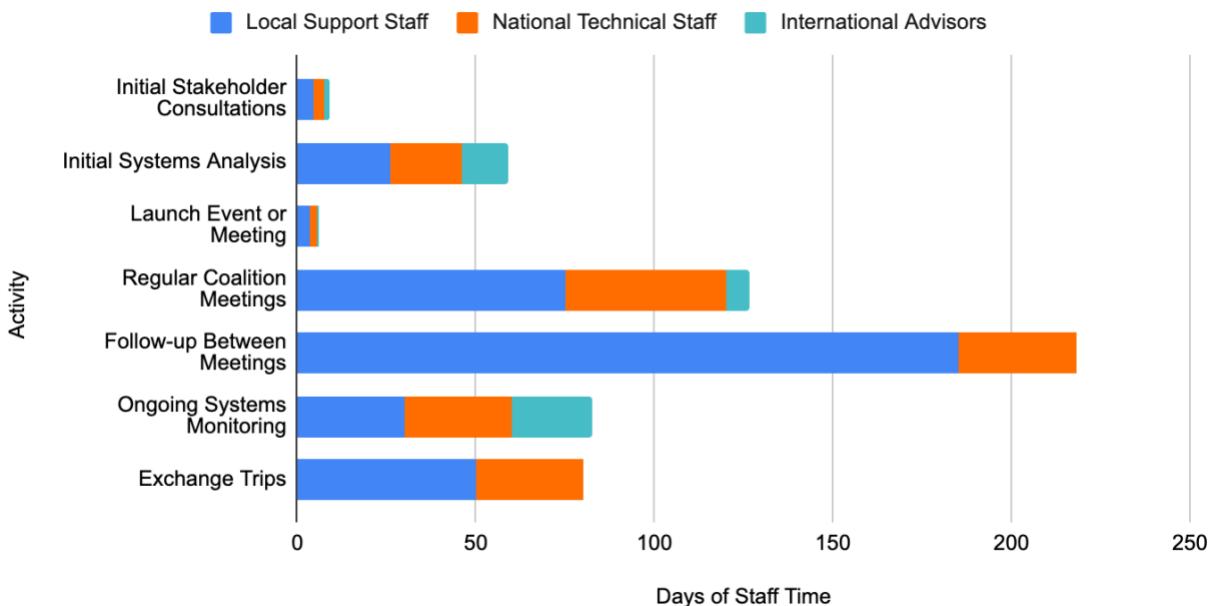
Ongoing systems monitoring was also a major cost driver, at 15 percent of the direct costs and 20 percent of staff costs. Project monitoring activities included quarterly outcome mapping and semi-annual likelihood of sustainability scorecards. Initial systems analyses were estimated to take 16 percent of direct costs and 9 percent of total staff time, which is significant considering these only take place in the first year. The initial systems analysis SWS partners recommended were infrastructure inventories, ONA, factor analysis, and context analysis using WASH building blocks.<sup>18</sup> These analyses were the only activities with a significant amount of international advisor staff time (13 days on average per analysis).

Exchange trips, where the program leads bring coalition members to visit other coalitions or learn about other service delivery models, were combined with multidistrict meetings, where coalitions from neighboring districts come together with regional authorities to learn from each other and discuss shared challenges and opportunities. SWS partners suggested an annual frequency for both activities, with multidistrict meetings including a larger number of stakeholders (60) and at substantially higher costs (2–3 times) than the smaller exchange trips where 4–5 members might attend. Averaged together, these activities account for 24 percent of direct expenses and 11 percent of staff time.

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<sup>18</sup> Reports summarizing these analyses are available at: <https://www.globalwaters.org/tags/sws>

The initial setup activities of stakeholder consultations and a launch event (or meeting) were the smallest cost drivers due to their single frequency and, for the launch event, a smaller number of expected participants than regular coalition meetings (average of 23 participants).



*Figure 4. Average Estimated Staff Time (Days) Required for Collective Action Activities Under SWS*

## Costs of Different Models of Collective Action

Costs did not vary significantly across the different partners or models of collaboration, with the exception of meeting costs and initial data collection and systems analyses. The SWS team in Kenya estimated meeting costs as more than twice as high than elsewhere; they estimated an average of 50 participants at their coalition meetings, compared with 25–40 for the other teams. Other meeting costs (room rental, food service, travel costs) were higher in Kitui County, Kenya, likely due to differences in the relative costs of local goods and services.

Initial systems analyses were included in the estimates from all partners except for Whave in Uganda, who account for this cost as part of their service delivery rather than collective action. The estimates ranged from \$5,200 and 28 days of staff time for a factor analysis of stakeholder perceptions of the system components that affect WASH sustainability to \$150,000 and 80 days of staff time for a water audit of a large rural Kenyan county (total land area of 27,000 km<sup>2</sup>), including schools and institutions. The necessity and scale of initial analysis depends on the availability of existing data, the cost of collecting additional data that are needed, and the level of detail required for decision making.

## External Funding for Coalition Activities

The largest costs estimated by the teams beyond coalition formation, coordination, and meetings were funding for coalition activities. These costs are indirectly connected to the collective action approaches and differ by planned actions; thus, the consortium team separated them from the rest of the cost analysis. More information on the utility and risks of external funding for coalition activities is described in the variant factors section.

SWS coalition activities included developing district WASH master plans, establishing shared district-wide monitoring systems for infrastructure, and strengthening rural water supply management and operations. The total 5-year cost of these activities, which include staff time for each coalition, ranged from \$30,000 to \$130,000 (see Table 4).

*Table 4. External Funding for Coalition Activities*

<b>Country and Sector</b>	<b>Coalition Activity (with External Funding)</b>	<b>Total Cost (Staff and Direct Expenses)</b>
Ethiopia Rural Water; Learning Alliance	District WASH master planning	\$30,000
	Monitoring (functionality, service level, etc.), including database establishment and continuous updating	\$80,000
	Strengthening rural water supply management, including operation and maintenance	\$90,000
Ethiopia Small Town Sanitation; Learning Alliance	Consensus building around improved Fecal Sludge Disposal site	\$100,000
	Improving communal latrine management	\$90,000
Kenya Rural Water; WASH Forum	Asset monitoring system (live database)	\$40,000
	Annual sectoral performance reviews (using monitoring data)	\$60,000
	Water bill and policy review to respond to emerging issues	\$40,000
	Demonstration of a service delivery model (e.g., FundiFix for Kitui, Kenya)	\$130,000

## Recommendations for Collective Action Approaches

Recommendations on how to design or adapt collective action approaches are split among different organization types.

### WASH Implementing Organizations

Consult but do not aim to closely replicate collective action approaches from other places. Instead, work with local stakeholders to develop a common understanding of the local system and align the approach with local experience and contextual constraints. The recommendations in this report can help to identify tradeoffs and risks relevant to some of the decisions.

Rigid timelines and structures are difficult to maintain because local systems are unpredictable and subject to frequent disruption. Programs need to have flexibility to adapt and shift as needed.

Encourage attendance by representatives knowledgeable in the subject who are authorized to make decisions. Ensure that key local government agencies attend, lead, and participate. When issues arise, proactively engage with leadership of those entities to identify and resolve issues.

Make government leadership of the group a priority, whether or not the government is the “owner” of the hub. When feasible, intentionally build government capacity for facilitation, follow-up, and other hub-related skills. Work with local governments to identify and address threats to government leadership, such as drivers of agency turnover, resource shortfalls, or unclear agency jurisdictions.

### Government Agencies

Recognize that collective action platforms can enhance local government leadership and help government officials fulfill their mandates. In the studied cases, local government officials regularly praised collective action efforts and, in a few instances, moved to formalize them as official government structures. Government officials appreciate that the platforms help them know what others are doing, foster agreement and coordination between stakeholders, understand current challenges and opportunities, and reinforce government authority.

Mandated government agencies can successfully lead coalition platforms when staff capacity is available and government turnover is manageable or when leadership functions are institutionalized or formalized through policy. A collective action coalition can supplement government staff capacity, especially with facilitation and follow-up between meetings. However, when there is a lot of government turnover or officials lack the capacity or bandwidth to lead coalitions, then a program lead can fill in. Due to their strong convening power, it is still critical that government actors are involved in the coalition, especially in convening the stakeholders, ensuring that the right people attend meetings, and aligning group

priorities with those of government. Tedla Mulatu, a facilitator with MWA in Ethiopia said, “It is the government’s role to align national and local WASH service delivery with NGOs and private actors. This alignment is critical, especially in sustaining the results attained by the work of the coalition. For this reason, government must be at the center of collective action efforts.”

## Funders

When reviewing proposals from program leads, look for knowledge of the local area, connections with local actors, and experience with collaborative approaches. If they are proposing work in a new area, ask how do they propose to gain convening power. Find out if they understand the strengths and gaps in local government capacities. Determine whether they have the capacity to provide facilitation, event planning, consultation, and systems analyses and to build these skills with local stakeholders. Ask them to describe strategies to gain and obtain government uptake.

Funders should also look to see that the proposed form of problem identification (collaborative versus pre-existing solution) matches with the local context and their organizational role. For example, if they intend to implement a pre-determined solution but are proposing collective problem identification, then funders might flag that they risk delays and stakeholder frustration if the agreed-upon solution conflicts with the program scope.

Funders should set expectations that include realistic timelines. It takes several years for coalitions to build trust and strong relationships and to establish accountability mechanisms, even if the approach builds on existing platforms and networks. While quick wins are possible (and indeed can help build confidence and momentum), the complexity of challenges often means that it takes years or decades for coalitions to achieve their vision. Along the way, setbacks are to be expected, especially from factors such as turnover, emergency situations, or political dynamics, all of which are often largely outside of the control of members and the program lead. That said, in the time span of 3–5 years, barring major disruptions, collective action approaches can be expected to establish robust collaboration platforms, foster strong personal relationships among members, and make significant progress on select outcomes.

It can be useful in some contexts for coalitions to track progress toward defined milestones and a long-term vision. This information should inform group reflection, learning, and adaptive management efforts and can also be used for program reporting. That said, funders need to expect that progress toward milestones may be uneven or even regress in some areas at times due to contextual changes, turnover of key staff, funding limitations, or changing political priorities.

A reliable metric that could serve as a proxy for progress is local government uptake of recommendations from the coalition. This can be used as a measure of progress for both monitoring and evaluation. Government uptake means their commitment and action, and this can be shown through allocation of budget, financial or in-kind support for activity implementation, or the passing of policies. It is more than involvement or endorsements (i.e., it is more than participation in coalition meetings, the

signing of agreements about the roles of government and other stakeholders with regards to a coalition, and public praise or letters of support). Outcome mapping is one way of tracking progress in this area.<sup>19</sup>

Consider making a pool of funding available for the coalition to use for collaborative activities beyond hub functions and the costs of regular meetings. Having an external source of funding for activities can jump start member engagement with the collective action platform by giving organizations a clear incentive to participate. This will also expand the possibilities for actions the group can undertake collectively, because funding will be quickly available. At the same time, clear expectations need to be set about the amount and duration of available funds so as not to undercut the sustainability of the platform. If communicated clearly and provided in conjunction with capacity building, having external funds available for short-term coalition activities should not prevent members from seeking longer-term sources of funding for their activities from member organizations, other funders, or higher-level government sources.

## Conclusion

Globally, the WASH sector is increasingly focusing on building and strengthening the complex local systems required to provide and maintain WASH services. At the same time, global climate change is adding more stress on the natural systems that WASH services depend on. These trends are increasing the complexity of challenges to be addressed by WASH sector actors, who are recognizing that many or perhaps most problems lie beyond the reach of any single organization or entity. Collaboration among WASH sector actors is more important than ever, and more and better approaches to foster collective action are needed.

The research summarized here is one of the first to take an in-depth, multi-case analysis of collective action approaches to address systemic issues in WASH. Results show that collective action can be an effective strategy for building relationships, achieving buy-in from government and stakeholders, and testing and adapting complex solutions in the WASH sector. At the same time, collective action approaches require significant resources and long timescales, can be challenging to make work, and are subject to risks outside of the control of implementing organizations (staff turnover, changing member priorities, political dynamics). This research also shows that there are no cut-and-paste strategies for collective action approaches. The complexity of local systems and the intensely personal aspects of these approaches that are built on personal relationships, trust, and mutual understanding means that each approach needs to be tailored to the network of stakeholders and then adapted as the situation changes. On the other hand, collective action approaches do not need to be designed entirely anew in each situation. Implementers should use the lessons and findings from this report to widen their view of available options and better understand potential benefits and risks of decisions related to individual factors and their combinations.

By leveraging expert knowledge, case experiences, and rigorous research methods, SWS has provided a wide experience base to draw on and clear lessons from the cases that should be of use to any

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<sup>19</sup> For more information on outcome mapping, see “Measuring Systems Change in WASH: A Practical Application of Two Tools.” Available at: <https://www.globalwaters.org/resources/assets/sws/measuring-systems-change-wash-programming-practical-application-two-tools>

organization designing or implementing collaborative systems approaches. The 11 cases analyzed in this research allowed the team to determine combined factors that led to progress in collective action approaches, based upon the factors that varied across them. Future research could add cases from regions outside of Eastern Africa to test the generalizability of these results to different contexts. Additionally, common factors that did not vary in the cases studied may be equally important for progress and could be studied in additional contexts where there is variance. Future studies can adapt the interview and calibration guide developed for these 11 cases, including the already-identified important variant factors.

#### **Box 11. Other Resources on Collective Action**

For more information and resources on collective action in WASH, visit <https://www.globalwaters.org/sws>. For more detailed information on the research summarized in this report, see the following journal articles:

- Pugel, K., Javernick-Will, A., Peabody, S., Nyaga, C., Mussa, M., Mekonta, L., Dimtse, D., Watsisi, M., Buhungiro, E., Mulatu, T., Annis, J., Jordan, E., Sandifer, E., Linden, K. 2021. “Pathways for Collaboratively Strengthening Water and Sanitation Systems.” *Science of The Total Environment*, 149854. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2021.149854>
- Pugel, K., Javernick-Will, A., Koschmann, M., Peabody, S., & Linden, K. 2020. “Adapting Collaborative Approaches for Service Provision to Low-Income Countries: Expert Panel Results.” *Sustainability*, 12(7), 2612. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12072612>
- SWS. Driving Change: Strengthening Local Systems for Better Public Services. 2021. IRC. Available at <https://www.globalwaters.org/sws> in October 2021.

Making progress on difficult outcomes can take many years to achieve. The researchers strongly suggest that documentation of the 11 cases in this study continue for several more years. This research already represents the most comprehensive longitudinal study of collective action approaches in WASH, but much remains to be learned about the sustainability of these approaches, their ability to achieve even higher-level systemic impact, and their ultimate effects on long-term functionality of WASH systems.

## **Annex I. Case Fact Sheets**



Photo credit: University of Oxford

## Collective Action Flagship Report

### Case Study: Kitui

Kitui County is home to more than a million people (1,221,000 people), most of which (86 percent) reside in rural areas. More than 3,126 water sources exist in the county and provided a basic water service to an estimated 42 percent of the population in 2018. At the time of a county water audit in 2018, 60 percent of rural water sources were functioning. Regarding management, users or community-based water management committees manage 82 percent of the rural piped schemes.

**Name of Coalition:**

Kitui Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) Forum

**Implementing Organization:**

University of Oxford, UNICEF Kenya, Rural Focus, Ltd.

**Country of Operation:**

Kenya

**Scale of Focus:**

County

**Sector of Focus:**

Rural Water Services

**Study Timeframe:**

3.4 years, June 2017–September 2020

# Timeline of Key Activities

	<b>Main Activities</b> <b>Major Learning Activities and Milestones</b> <b>Notable Challenges</b>
June 2017	1st Meeting with SWS Kenya's participation in the forum
February 2018	<p><b>Baseline survey to establish stakeholders' priorities for collective action</b></p> <p><i>New county leadership following 2017 national elections, leading to change in leadership at Kitui County Water Directorate and county assembly</i></p>
September 2018	<p>Introduced shared progress markers for monitoring system</p>
December 2018	<p><b>WASH Stakeholders Forum:</b> Stakeholders call for a task team to improve leadership structure and create standardized reporting template</p>
March 2019	<p><b>WASH Stakeholders Forum:</b> Reporting template presented and used for reporting sub-county progress going forward; WASH forum secretariat formed to support WASH coordinator</p> <p><i>Retirement of several county government staff over the SWS period and reassessments and/or transfers to new stations or offices</i></p> <p><i>NGO programs' intermittency due to close-outs and new programs starting up, causing instability of the Kitui WASH forum stakeholder group</i></p>
Q3 2020 Q2 2020	<p>mWater platform for monitoring database identified, contract in discussion</p> <p>Information set-up and training complete</p> <p>Data Collection cut-off</p>
September 2020	

## Statement of Vision

"Progressing sustainability of rural water service delivery is a common [vision] for all water sector organizations and actors in the county. Priorities may differ among organizations but ultimately interventions and priorities are aimed at the common goal of working towards achieving sustainability."

- *Organizational Network Analysis Validation Workshop Report*

## Main Outcomes

The Kitui WASH forum established an online monitoring system to share information on water infrastructure functionality. The system is being used to inform decision-making and improve reporting to donors and the national government.

Additionally, WASH forum participants contributed to the process to pass a Water Bill that is currently in the final stages of enactment (county assembly). The bill will enhance the enabling environment for WASH services by: recognizing the role of private sector models, such as FundiFix, institutionalizing the WASH forum as the main sector coordination platform, mandating the county to establish and fund a water services monitoring database, and establishing a trust fund to fund or subsidize rural water operations and maintenance.

## Problem Identification Approach

- Collective Problem Identification
- Applying Existing Concept or Solution

## Hub Structure



**Convening Power:**  
**County Water Office**



**Capacity:**  
**County Water Office**

## Stakeholders

Decision-Makers

Community Groups

National Government Officials

Technical Government Officials

Academic Institutions

Private Sector

Local Government Officials

International NGOs



Photo credit: IRC

# Collective Action Flagship Report

## Case Study: South Ari

South Ari woreda (district) is one of the 11 woredas under the South Omo Zone of the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Region (SNNPR) in the southwest of Ethiopia and is subdivided into 50 kebeles (lower level of government administration). South Ari, a woreda of South Omo, is home to 279,574 people, only 26 percent of which have access to water services via a patchwork of 245 water schemes, 334 point sources, and 334 household connections. Where infrastructure exists, it is managed primarily through community management by Water User Associations, WUA, (35 percent) except for in Gazer town where a utility manages household connections and communal sources (2 percent). In July 2019, South Ari split into three woredas.

**Name of Coalition:**

South Ari Learning Alliance

**Implementing Organization:**

IRC

**Country of Operation:**

Ethiopia

**Scale of Focus:**

District, Zone

**Sector of Focus:**

Rural Water

**Study Timeframe:**

2.8 years, November 2017–September 2020

# Timeline of Key Activities

## Main Activity

### Major Learning Activities and Milestones

### Notable Challenges

November 2017	— 1st Learning Alliance Meeting
March 2018	— 2nd Learning Alliance Meeting, Common vision established
July 2018	Learning alliance splits into zone and woreda levels at 3rd Learning Alliance Meeting
August 2018	Seven high-level officials trained, training cascaded to 165 WUA members; Learning visit to Tigray on Rural Water Supply Maintenance
May 2019	Refresher training for zone and woreda office staff
July 2019	South Ari Woreda splits into three woredas
September 2019	Local facilitator begins work
October 2019	Woreda WASH SDG master plan process started
November 2019	Utility Management Board established
February 2020	Hand pump caretaker training
March 2020	WUAs started formally reporting to woreda offices, woreda implements community mobilization activities
August 2020	South Ari Maintenance and Spare Part Supply Enterprise established
September 2020	Data Collection cut-off

## Statement of Vision

To achieve 100 percent coverage of at least basic water supply, sanitation, and hygiene services by 2030, including all schools and health care facilities.

## Main Outcomes

The South Ari Learning Alliance improved the capacity of the WUAs in the woreda to conduct maintenance of rural water infrastructure. Additionally, the coalition established a monitoring system for water schemes in the woreda.

## Problem Identification Approach

- ✓ Collective Problem Identification
- Applying Existing Concept or Solution

## Hub Structure



Convening Power:  
Woreda Water, Mines,  
and Energy Office



Capacity:  
IRC

## Stakeholders

Decision-Makers

Community Groups

Academic Institutions

Local NGOs

Private Sector

Technical  
Government Officials

International NGOs

Local Government  
Officials



Photo credit: IRC

# Collective Action Flagship Report

## Case Study: Mille

Mille woreda (district) is located in the Afar Region along the Addis Ababa-Djibouti highway. There are 12 kebeles (government lower level of administration) in Mille, and 75 percent of its population is nomadic. It is home to an estimated 117,960 people, of which only 15 to 21 percent have access to water services. The aridity of the region limits water availability and thus water access is not consistent. Access to basic services according to the Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) definition is closer to zero. Of the 29 water supply schemes found in Mille, 23 percent were not functional at the time of an asset inventory conducted by IRC in 2017.

**Name of Coalition:**

Mille Learning Alliance

**Implementing Organization:**

IRC

**Country of Operation:**

Ethiopia

**Scale of Focus:**

District

**Sector of Focus:**

Rural Water

**Study Timeframe:**

2.75 years, December 2017–September 2020

## Timeline of Key Activities

	<b>Main Activities</b> <b>Major Learning Activities and Milestones</b> <b>Notable Challenges</b>
December 2017	1st Learning Alliance Meeting
April 2018	2nd Learning Alliance Meeting, Common vision established
August 2018	Learning visit to Tigray on Rural Water Supply Maintenance, Woreda administrator questions Learning Alliance legitimacy during 3rd Learning Alliance meeting
November 2018	Training of trainers on WASH Community Organization (WASHCO) water scheme management, asset management system learning workshop
February 2019	Training of trainers for woreda maintenance technicians on preventive and minor maintenance, asset management system learning workshop
March 2019	Set up of Maintenance and Spare Parts Enterprise for Mille
September 2019	SDG planning review workshop
December 2019	Decision-makers' attendance reduced due to state of emergency in area
February 2020	SDG planning review workshop, small microenterprise start selling spare parts for the local market
September 2020	Data Collection cut-off, decision-makers' attendance reduced due to state of emergency in area

## Statement of Vision

To achieve 100 percent coverage of at least basic water supply, sanitation, and hygiene services by 2030 including all schools and health care facilities.

## Main Outcomes

The Mille Learning Alliance trained WASHCOs and water point caretakers, supported the establishment of local maintenance and spare parts supply enterprises, and supplied caretakers with better hand tools. Through the activities of these organizations, water users changed their behavior to start paying for water use and contributed to water maintenance schemes. Some caretakers also started to undertake minor preventive maintenance with little support from the woreda maintenance technicians.

## Problem Identification Approach

- Collective Problem Identification
- Applying Existing Concept or Solution

## Hub Structure



Convening Power:  
Woreda Water, Irrigation,  
and Energy Office



Capacity:  
IRC

## Stakeholders

Woreda-Level  
Decision-Makers

Technical  
Government Staff

Community Groups  
(WASHCOs)

International NGOs

Afar Regional Water, Irrigation,  
and Energy Bureau

Private Sector (Maintenance  
and Spare Parts Enterprise)



Photo credit:Tetra Tech

# Collective Action Flagship Report

## Case Study: Woliso

Woliso is located in the Oromia Region of Ethiopia. It is the capital of the South West Shewa Zone along the Addis Ababa–Jima road. It has an official population of 61,140 according to the 2007 census but current estimates approximate more than 100,000 residents. According to a Tetra Tech assessment performed in 2017, only 40 percent of residents have access to an improved latrine and 44 percent report using an unimproved facility. Beyond access to infrastructure, safe containment of fecal sludge is of concern. The city has a state-owned utility, the Woliso Water Supply and Sewerage Enterprise (WWSSE), which provides emptying services to private households and commercial entities, but only to a small percent of residents. Private service providers also serve customers in the town.

Only 18 percent of fecal sludge generated in the town is safely contained all the way through the emptying chain (containment, emptying, transport, disposal) and disposed of safely, with the majority (66 percent) being released or unsafely disposed at the emptying stage.<sup>19</sup>

**Name of Coalition:**

Woliso Learning Alliance

**Implementing Organization:**

Tetra Tech

**Country of Operation:**

Ethiopia

**Scale of Focus:**

Small Town

**Sector of Focus:**

Sanitation

**Study Timeframe:**

2.8 years, November 2017–September 2020

<sup>19</sup>Henry, L., and Annis, J. 2018. Sanitation in Small Towns - Woliso, Ethiopia: Baseline Assessment Synthesis Report. Sustainable WASH Systems Learning Partnership.

# Timeline of Key Activities

		Main Activities Major Learning Activities and Milestones Notable Challenges
November 2017		1st Learning Alliance Meeting, Common Vision Established
May 2018		High level annual plan created, 2nd Learning Alliance Meeting
July 2018		Survey of communal latrines completed
October 2018		Learning Visit to Addis Ababa
January 2019		Facilitation and leadership training, LA core members trained
March 2019		Started implementation; monitoring template created for communal latrines
May 2019		Facilitation and leadership training, facilitated by past trainees
June 2019		High-level meeting increases decision-maker involvement
October 2019		Awareness creation/public engagement workshop
December 2019		7th LA meeting, shifted facilitation to government
February 2020		Learning Visit to Hawassa, Municipality Manager turnover
August 2020		Monitoring Template used for 25 latrines, federal and regional unrest
September 2020		Data Collection cut-off

## Statement of Vision

The Woliso Learning Alliance for sustainable sanitation services works to establish a partnership that will help promote improved and sustainable sanitation services in the town.

## Main Outcomes

The Learning Alliance strengthened management of public and communal latrines by creating a monitoring system and reinvigorating communal latrine operating committees. The Learning Alliance also successfully built consensus among stakeholders on the need for a fecal sludge dumping site and catalyzed actions that allowed for the purchase of land for the dumping site.

## Problem Identification Approach

- Collective Problem Identification
- Applying Existing Concept or Solution

## Hub Structure



Convening Power:  
**Municipality**



Capacity:  
**Tetra Tech**

## Stakeholders





Photo credit:Tetra Tech

## Collective Action Flagship Report

### Case Study: Debre Birhan

Debre Birhan is located in the Amhara Region of central Ethiopia, the town of Debre Birhan is home to 113,693 people. Without a centralized sewer system, sanitation is provided through individual and public latrines that are emptied via vacuum trucks. Fifty percent of the sanitation infrastructure in the town can be considered as improved sanitation. A Tetra Tech sanitation assessment conducted in 2018 found that despite having a well-performing public utility, which owns two vacuum trucks and provides emptying services for latrines, it only performs 36 percent of the fecal sludge generated in Debre

Birhan. Downtime of vacuum trucks and a lack of a dumping site severely limit the utility and other private service providers. In the end, only 18 percent of the fecal sludge is disposed of safely according to Joint Monitoring Programme definitions.

**Name of Coalition:**

Debre Birhan Learning Alliance

**Implementing Organization:**

Tetra Tech

**Country of Operation:**

Ethiopia

**Scale of Focus:**

Small Town

**Sector of Focus:**

Sanitation

**Study Timeframe:**

2 years, September 2018–September 2020

# Timeline of Key Activities

Turnover in the important decision-making role  
of municipality managers

	<b>Main Activities</b> <b>Major Learning Activities and Milestones</b> <b>Notable Challenges</b>
April 2018	Baseline data collection completed
May 2018	Validation of baseline results workshop
September 2018	1st Learning Alliance Meeting, Common Vision Established
December 2018	A working group of Learning Alliance members selected to work on development of a fecal sludge dumping site, 2nd Learning Alliance meeting
January 2019	Woliso facilitation and leadership training, government starts to take on facilitation roles after the facilitation training
April 2019	Learning visit to Addis Ababa public latrines
August 2019	Midterm Organizational Network Analysis review workshop
December 2019	High-level meeting with decision-makers
January 2020	Community rep. training on hygiene and sanitation issues
February 2020	Learning visit to Hawassa, with Woliso
April 2020	Dumping site construction is completed and starts to provide services
July 2020	Dumping site is full and unusable, town administration granted access to factories outside the originally planned contributors to the dumping site
August 2020	Learning Alliance works to secure funding for new site during 6th Learning Alliance Meeting
September 2020	Data Collection cut-off

## Statement of Vision

Debre Birhan Learning Platform on Sustainable Sanitation Services works toward establishing partnerships that promote improved sanitation services in the town.

## Main Outcomes

The Learning Alliance facilitated the design, siting, and construction of a temporary liquid waste disposal facility. This involved consultation and negotiation across numerous stakeholders including multiple government offices, private landowners, and private businesses. The Learning Alliance also strengthened management of public and communal latrines by creating a monitoring system and reinvigorating communal latrine operating committees.

## Problem Identification Approach

- Collective Problem Identification
- Applying Existing Concept or Solution

## Hub Structure



**Convening Power:**  
**Debre Birhan Water Supply and Sewerage Enterprise**



**Capacity:**  
**Tetra Tech**

## Stakeholders





Photo credit: IRC

# Collective Action Flagship Report

## Case Study: Kabarole

In midwestern Uganda, Kabarole District has a population of 325,261 people supported by 1,204 water supply facilities, which cover 58 percent of the population. However, only 59 percent of the rural water supply facilities are functional and only 45 percent were reliably functioning without failure for longer than 10 days. Amidst this, 64 percent of the water points that produce water were contaminated with E. coli bacteria. Regarding sanitation, only 16 percent of rural households have basic sanitation services while 65 percent of the urban population enjoy basic or improved sanitation service levels.

**Name of Coalition:**

Kabarole District Task Team

**Implementing Organization:**

IRC

**Country of Operation:**

Uganda

**Scale of Focus:**

District

**Sector of Focus:**

Rural Water

**Study Timeframe:**

3.5 years, March 2017–September 2020

# Timeline of Key Activities

Change in personnel in water officer stalls progress

## Main Activities

### Major Learning Activities and Milestones

#### Notable Challenges

March 2017	District-wide WASH meeting, common vision established
May 2017	First official task team meeting
July 2017	Kabarole District divided into two administrative districts, causing staffing gaps
July 2018	Master plan presented to and adopted by the District Executive Committee
December 2018	Master plan reviewed by Works and Technical Service Committee
January 2019	Master plan approved by District Council
February 2019	Master plan launched
March 2019	Uganda Water and Environment Week Event
April 2019	Harmonization of national WASH indicators workshop in Kabarole led by district water officer
June 2019	Learning visit to Whave, Kamuli, and Kamwenge
December 2019	Kabarole District chairperson organizes stakeholder meeting to disseminate WASH master plan
September 2020	Data Collection cut-off

## Statement of Vision

By 2030, politicians are knowledgeable and proactive about the WASH systems and specific strategies and actions to improve WASH service delivery. The district local government is a one-stop center with functional structures where one can go and find information and people with the skills and knowledge to answer questions. Communities are empowered with knowledge, clear leadership, and active community structures through which they can demand and contribute to sustainable WASH services.

—WASH Task Team Meeting, April 2019

## Main Outcomes

The District WASH Task Team worked closely with local government to develop and enact a WASH master plan that lays out the roles, responsibilities, and resource needs for the district to achieve its goals of universal access to sustainable water services. The Learning Alliance also improved local government capacity to direct WASH service provision in the district through evidence-based planning and resource allocation or prioritization.

## Problem Identification Approach

- Collective Problem Identification
- Applying Existing Concept or Solution

## Hub Structure



Convening Power:  
IRC



Capacity:  
IRC

## Stakeholders

Decision-Makers

Private Sector

Community Groups

Technical  
Government Officials

Local Government  
Officials

International NGOs



Photo credit: Whave

## Collective Action Flagship Report

### Case Study: Kumi

In rural Uganda, in 2017, only 40 percent of the population had access to basic levels of water services, and official figures for spot functionality show that functionality of infrastructure hovers between 70 percent and 80 percent. Kumi District has an estimated population of 284,200 people and is located in eastern Uganda.

**Name of Coalition:**

Whave-Kumi District Public-Private Partnership

**Implementing Organization:**

Whave

**Country of Operation:**

Uganda

**Scale of Focus:**

District

**Sector of Focus:**

Rural Water

**Study Timeframe:**

2.67 years, January 2018–September 2020

## Timeline of Key Activities

	<b>Main Activities</b> <b>Major Learning Activities and Milestones</b> <b>Notable Challenges</b>
August 2017	Uganda Sustainable WASH Systems Multi-District Workshop, Common Vision Established
January 2018	First meeting, <b>Key Performance Indicators</b> reviewed
July 2018	Five sub-counties have resolution that every community water source must have a preventive maintenance service agreement
September 2018	MOU renewed between Whave and Kumi District government
May 2019	Area Service Provider concept introduced at Multi-district meeting in Jinja
August 2019	Election season causes gvt. officials who previously showed support to withdraw in hopes of gaining support by offering free repairs
September 2019	Whave removed discount from services; active service agreements decrease by 25 percent
November 2019	Whave holds meeting with district government to introduce the concept of appointing approved Area Service Provider
March 2020	District government gives verbal support for a formal appointment of Whave as Area Service Provider; finalization still underway.
September 2020	Data Collection cut-off

## Statement of Vision

By 2030 Uganda will have a self-financing and sustainable maintenance service for safely managed rural and non-NWSC [national utility] water supply in five or more districts reaching a nationally agreed percentage of their populations. This maintenance service will include piped supply and will be replicable in other districts through user-friendly guideline documents and a cadre of local trainers. It will be self-financing through a combination of affordable government budgets for regulation, scaling subsidy, and water user payments.\*

—Uganda Sustainable WASH Systems Multi-District Workshop, Aug 31st, 2017

\*Note: Vision for Kumi, Kamuli, and Nakaseke was developed prior to the first coalition meeting as part of a multi-district workshop

## Main Outcomes

The PPP coalition established professionalized rural water maintenance services and built the capacity of the district local government to regulate rural water service provision.

## Problem Identification Approach

- Collective Problem Identification
- Applying Existing Concept or Solution

## Hub Structure



**Convening Power:**  
**District Local Government**



**Capacity:**  
**Whave**

## Stakeholders

Decision-Makers

Local NGOs

Technical  
Government Officials

Local Government  
Officials

National Government  
Officials



Photo credit: Whave

# Collective Action Flagship Report

## Case Study: Kamuli

In rural Uganda, in 2017, only 40 percent of the population had access to basic levels of water services (UNICEF and WHO 2019) and official figures of spot functionality show that functionality of infrastructure hovers between 70 percent and 80 percent. Kamuli District has an estimated population of 558,500 people and is located in eastern Uganda.

**Name of Coalition:**

Whave-Kamuli District Public-Private Partnership

**Implementing Organization:**

Whave

**Country of Operation:**

Uganda

**Scale of Focus:**

District

**Sector of Focus:**

Rural Water

**Study Timeframe:**

2.67 years, January 2018–September 2020

# Timeline of Key Activities

	<b>Main Activities</b> <b>Major Learning Activities and Milestones</b> <b>Notable Challenges</b>
August 2017	Uganda Sustainable WASH Systems Multi-district Workshop, Common Vision Established
January 2018	1st Meeting
July 2018	14 of 18 sub-counties adopt resolution that Whave is appointed the improved service provider and every community must have a preventive maintenance agreement and pay service fees
September 2018	PPP MOU renewed between Whave and Kamuli District
October 2018	14 of 18 sub-counties sign resolution with Whave
May 2019	Area Service Provider concept introduced at Multi-district meeting in Jinja
Mid 2019	Support for professionalized maintenance by some politicians wanes as the national elections approach and some start to offer free repairs. This undercuts the coalition's activities.
November 2019	High-level meeting to formally propose appointment of Whave as district ASP
December 2019	Turnover in district water officer position
January 2020	PPP members bypass the open bidding process and give preferential treatment to Whave in a performance contract for rural water service provision, Works committee meeting to draft an district ASP performance contract
September 2020	Data Collection cut-off

## Statement of Vision

By 2030 Uganda will have a self-financing and sustainable maintenance service for safely managed rural and non-NWSC [national utility] water supply in five or more districts reaching a nationally agreed percentage of their populations. This maintenance service will include piped supply and will be replicable in other districts through user-friendly guideline documents and a cadre of local trainers. It will be self-financing through a combination of affordable government budgets for regulation, scaling subsidy, and water user payments.\*

—Uganda Sustainable WASH Systems Multi-District Workshop, August 31, 2017

\*Note: Vision for Kumi, Kamuli, and Nakaseke was developed prior to the first coalition meeting as part of a multi-district workshop.

## Main Outcomes

The PPP coalition established professionalized maintenance services and built the capacity of the district local government to regulate rural water service provision.

## Problem Identification Approach

- Collective Problem Identification
- Applying Existing Concept or Solution

## Hub Structure



Convening Power:  
**District Local Government**



Capacity:  
**Whave**

## Stakeholders

Decision-Makers

Local NGOs

National Government Officials

Local Government Officials

Technical Government Officials



Photo credit: Whave

# Collective Action Flagship Report

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## Case Study: Nakaseke

Nakaseke District has an estimated population of 234,600 people and is located in central Uganda. In rural Uganda, in 2017, only 40 percent of the population had access to basic levels of water services (UNICEF and WHO 2019), and official figures for spot functionality show that functionality of infrastructure hovers between 70 percent and 80 percent.

**Name of Coalition:**

Whave-Nakaseke District Public-Private Partnership

**Implementing Organization:**

Whave

**Country of Operation:**

Uganda

**Scale of Focus:**

District

**Sector of Focus:**

Rural Water

**Study Timeframe:**

2.67 years, January 2018–September 2020

## Timeline of Key Activities

	<b>Main Activities</b> <b>Major Learning Activities and Milestones</b> <b>Notable Challenges</b>
August 2017	Uganda Sustainable WASH Systems Multi-District Workshop, Common Vision Established Initial District PPP MOU signed: 2018
January 2018	1st Meeting
May 2019	ASP concept introduced at Multi-District meeting in Jinja
June 2019	District councillor appointed as PPP coordinator, takes on PPP meeting facilitation; sub-county government extension workers take over community signup and renewal of preventive maintenance agreement, <b>PPP appoints coordinator to oversee preventive maintenance in district</b>
October 2019	District gvt. creates fundraising committee for preventive maintenance
June 2020	Whave appointed as the ASP by the Nakaseke District gvt., <b>District gvt. issues a pre-investment protocol for rural water service implementers requiring communities be introduced to an ASP before any infrastructure work is carried out</b>
September 2020	Data Collection cut-off, <b>District gvt. provides spare parts for rehabilitation of water sources due for signing preventive maintenance agreements</b>

## Statement of Vision

By 2030 Uganda will have a self-financing and sustainable maintenance service for safely managed rural and non-NWSC [national utility] water supply in five or more districts reaching a nationally agreed percentage of their populations. This maintenance service will include piped supply and will be replicable in other districts through user-friendly guideline documents and a cadre of local trainers. It will be self-financing through a combination of affordable government budgets for regulation, scaling subsidy, and water user payments.\*

*—Uganda Sustainable WASH Systems Multi-District Workshop, August 31, 2017*

\*Note: Vision for Kumi, Kamuli, and Nakaseke was developed prior to the first coalition meeting as part of a multi-district workshop.

## Main Outcomes

The PPP coalition helped to establish professionalized rural water maintenance services and to build the capacity of the district local government to regulate rural water maintenance services by appointing and regulating Whave as a pilot ASP.

## Problem Identification Approach

- Collective Problem Identification
- Applying Existing Concept or Solution

## Hub Structure



**Convening Power:  
District Local Government**



**Capacity:  
Whave**

## Stakeholders

Local NGOs

Local Government Officials

Technical Government Officials

Decision-Makers

National Government Officials



Photo credit: Uganda Sanitation for Health

# Collective Action Flagship Report

## Case Study: Sanitation for Health

Residents in the capital (Kampala) region of Uganda have the greatest access to basic sanitation services in the country, however, that is still only 32 percent of residents. Country-wide, only 18 percent of the population has at least basic levels of sanitation.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup>UNICEF, and WHO. (2019). Progress on household drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene 2000 - 2017: Special focus on inequalities. New York.

**Name of Coalition:**

Uganda Sanitation for Health Activity

**Implementing Organization:**

Tetra Tech

**Country of Operation:**

Uganda

**Scale of Focus:**

National

**Sector of Focus:**

Urban Sanitation

**Study Timeframe:**

2.8 years, May 2018–March 2021

## Timeline of Key Activities

### Main Activities Major Learning Activities and Milestones Notable Challenges

May 2018	1st Meeting Common vision established at National Sanitation Marketing Services (NSMS) Collective Impact Steering Committee Workshop
June 2018	Common vision voted on at NSMS Collective Impact Steering Committee Workshop
August 2018	The National Sanitation Working Group (NSWG) endorsed the Steering Committee as its own market-based sanitation subcommittee
September 2018	Shared measurement concept introduced to the group at NSMS Collective Impact Steering Committee Workshop
December 2018	Task forces introduced at NSMS Collective Impact Steering Committee Workshop
April 2019	Coalition started process of defining a shared measurement system, task forces and Steering Committee work on defining metrics
June 2019	NSMG has passed Ministry of Health technical and senior management review; USAID approves the NSWG
July 2019	<b>Overarching challenges:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Shared measurement system has yet to be utilized showing lack of buy-in/commitment</li><li>While growing in interest, market-based sanitation is still a new concept especially for district governments to implement</li><li>Some of the task forces have been more dynamic than others</li></ul>
March 2021	Data Collection cut-off (extended timeframe)

### Statement of Vision

A vibrant market providing accessible, affordable, and high-quality sanitation products and services for all Ugandans.

—Common Agenda

### Main Outcomes

The Collective Impact Steering Committee developed National Sanitation Marketing Guidelines (NSMG), which its members and USAID approved. The technical and senior management review committees at the Ministry of Health have also endorsed the guidelines. The guidelines are a strategic roadmap directing stakeholders on how to use market-based sanitation principles to increase access to basic sanitation services, an explicit government priority under the National Development Plan III. The coalition is also working to help national stakeholders and local governments implement the guidelines.

### Problem Identification Approach

- Collective Problem Identification
- Applying Existing Concept or Solution

### Hub Structure



Convening Power:  
**Uganda Sanitation for Health**



Capacity:  
**Uganda Sanitation for Health**

### Stakeholders

National Government Officials

Academic Institutions

Private Sector

Technical Government Officials

International NGOs



Photo credit: MWA

## Collective Action Flagship Report

### Case Study: Millennium Water Alliance

Within the Amhara Region, MWA is working within the Farta, North Mecha, and Dera districts, which have an approximate total population of 959,000. Water coverage in the area is 36 percent.

**Name of Coalition:**

Sustainable WASH Program Partnership

**Implementing Organization:**

Millennium Water Alliance (MWA)

**Country of Operation:**

Ethiopia

**Scale of Focus:**

District

**Sector of Focus:**

Rural Water

**Study Timeframe:**

2.75 years, December 2017–September 2020

# Timeline of Key Activities

		Main Activities <b>Major Learning Activities and Milestones</b> <b>Notable Challenges</b>
December 2017		1st meeting, Common vision established at core program team retreat; <b>bridge program started</b>
June 2018		Long-term strategic planning process with woreda started
		Excel-based planning tool implemented and introduced to woreda
January 2019		<b>Woreda master plans finalized</b>
July 2019		Root cause analysis workshop for WASH in health care facilities
August 2019		Five-year plan started Overarching notable challenges: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Political instability in Ethiopia &amp; Amhara Region affected capacity and budget.</li><li>The long-term planning process was challenging as some capacity for strategic planning and management had to be developed along the way.</li><li>Shifting the thinking from hardware to systems was difficult and took repeated efforts.</li></ul>
January 2020		Learning together workshop
June 2020		Implementation starts on woreda master plans
September 2020		Data Collection cut-off

## Statement of Vision

Universal, safe and sustainable water supply coverage with reliable sanitation and hygiene for people living in the target woredas by 2030.

## Main Outcomes

The Sustainable WASH Program Partnership (composed of local government and NGOs) developed district WASH master plans to guide implementation planning and financing of activities for achievement of WASH full coverage in target woredas. The master plans identify funding gaps and potential sources of financing, suggest improved service delivery models, and propose system strengthening activities that will build capacity of local actors to expand and maintain WASH services.

## Problem Identification Approach

- Collective Problem Identification
- Applying Existing Concept or Solution

## Hub Structure



Convening Power:  
**MWA**



Capacity:  
**MWA**

## Stakeholders

Community Groups

Technical  
Government Officials

International NGOs

Academic  
Institutions

Local/Regional  
Government Officials

Data collected for inputs to planning tool

## Annex 2. Considerations for Different Hub Structures

Classification	Suggested Uses	Benefits	Risks
<p><b>Institutionalized Government Hub:</b> A government actor that is respected, has decision-making power and holds a mandate related to the topic of the coalition serves all hub functions. Some hub functions have been institutionalized into government processes, such as through funding meetings or assigning a coordinator who is mandated to provide hub functions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where governance systems and institutions are reliable and consistent</li> <li>Where coalition can build on an existing coordination platform already under government management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Government role provides <b>convening power</b></li> <li>Government can be held accountable by the public</li> <li>Aligns with existing mandates for services</li> <li>Supports USAID local systems framework, USAID journey to self-reliance objectives, and USAID good governance practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relies on governmental processes, which are susceptible to longer timelines, bureaucracy, and stalled progress with election seasons</li> <li>Not suited for sectors in which government is antagonistic to the aims of the group, such as in other applications or sectors (i.e., human rights sectors)</li> <li>Interconnectedness with other government systems makes it vulnerable to weaknesses of those other government systems</li> </ul>
<p><b>Independent Hub with High Convening Power and High Capacity:</b> An independent organization takes on all facilitation roles and leadership roles. The organization has significant convening power — a result of a long history in the area before the coalition began, established working relationships, high respect and influence, social capital, and/or strong local knowledge. Government entities are involved as members of the coalition.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where governance systems or institutions are weak</li> <li>Where lead support organization has <b>strong convening power</b> in the area</li> <li>Where hub funding timelines are not limited</li> <li>When explicitly trying to change the existing ways of working or to disrupt government</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Independent organization can provide consistency during high turnover</li> <li>If the government is disrupted or antagonistic to the aims of the group, such as in other applications or sectors (i.e., human rights sectors), this format could allow for action separate from government</li> <li>May be better able to lead on innovative solutions for which a government hub might be more risk averse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Convening power of the supporting organization can change over time depending on a variety of factors</li> </ul>

<p><b>Supported Government Hub:</b> The government convenes; an independent organization provides moderate levels of administration, logistical, and advisory support.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where governance systems and institutions are reliable and consistent, but where government <b>capacity</b> is low, requiring support for some hub functions</li> <li>When long-term funding is not expected</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Can begin the process of institutionalizing hub roles</b> if the government doesn't have enough capacity</li> <li>Government role provides convening power</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Turnover or other forms of instability can disrupt the platform if all facilitation and leadership roles are not institutionalized</li> <li>Time-intensive, can take 2–3 years before the government starts to see value in the coalition, and the clock can restart often if turnover is high</li> <li>May be less willing to experiment with innovative approaches or to lead “pilot” endeavors</li> </ul>
<p><b>Independent Hub with Low Convening Power and High Capacity:</b> An independent organization convenes and performs nearly all facilitation, leadership, administrative, and logistical roles. The organization has low convening power due to a less-established presence in the area, fewer working relationships, less context-specific knowledge, or a less-proven track record of interventions locally, especially compared to other development partners in the area. Government performs advisory and key leadership roles.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Where governance systems or institutions are weak</b></li> <li>Where the independent hub organization is <b>new to the area and thus has limited convening power</b></li> <li>Where hub funding timelines are not limited</li> <li>When explicitly trying to change the existing ways of working or to disrupt government</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some convening power is provided by government's involvement</li> <li><b>Independent organization can provide consistency during high turnover</b></li> <li><b>If the independent organization has higher capacity than local government, this model may lead to faster action or “quicker wins” than a government-supported or institutionalized hub</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>May create dependencies on the independent organization or projects, which is not sustainable</b></li> </ul>

## Annex 3. Summary of Benefits, Risks, and Suggested Uses for Different Starting Points for Collaboration

Classification	Suggested Uses	Benefits	Risks
<p><b>Collective problem identification by stakeholders</b></p> <p>(Cases: WaterSHED, Kabarole, MWA, South Ari maintenance, Debre Birhan, Woliso, Mille maintenance)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where there is <b>low initial agreement among the stakeholders</b> about the scale of the problem, its drivers, and “best” solutions</li> <li>When stakeholders are likely to agree on the scale and severity of the challenge and the feasibility of different solutions</li> <li>When the scope is only bound to a certain sector (i.e., water or sanitation)</li> <li>When stakeholders (especially government, funders) are <b>open to a variety of approaches</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Generates commitment and buy-in</b>, including from government if they are involved</li> <li>Allows <b>stakeholders to define the problem</b> specifically for their context</li> <li>Can still incorporate or be advised by data or assessments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The <b>exploration process may be uncomfortable or unfamiliar to stakeholders</b> (especially if the group explores sensitive issues)</li> <li>Consensus solutions may fall outside of the scope or resources of the hub (or its funder)</li> <li>Lack of ability to support open-ended processes due to expectations about advanced approval or activity plans</li> <li><b>Time-intensive</b>, potentially delaying action and “quick wins”</li> <li>Could result in withdrawal of government support if government opinions are not given deference</li> <li>Reliant on stakeholders being able to be (and stay) involved in the process</li> <li>Dependent on the technical capacity and influence of the coalition members</li> </ul>
<p><b>Applying/demonstrating an existing concept or solution</b></p> <p>(Cases: Kumi, Kamuli, Nakaseke, Kitui, USHA, South Ari master planning, Mille master planning)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When a <b>specific problem and solution is already identified by the group</b>, such as when applying or advocating for a specific concept (either by the funder, supporting organization, or other constraints)</li> <li>When <b>conflicting factors or priorities exist</b>, limiting the extent to which facilitated discussion among stakeholders would lead to consensus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Provides clarity for government and program funders on intended outcomes</b>, allows for advanced approval of activity plans</li> <li><b>Can lead to faster progress on activities</b> (because starting farther ahead), but not a guarantee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Less initial commitment by stakeholders</b>, which still requires great effort to earn sufficient buy-in</li> <li>Susceptible to turnover, sometimes need to constantly be earning buy-in</li> <li>Sometimes it can still feel like starting from scratch</li> <li><b>May miss important perspectives or creative options</b></li> <li>Must be sure that the solution can be adapted successfully to the new context</li> </ul>

## Annex 4. Coalition Vision Statements

Case	Coalition Vision Statement
Kitui, Kenya	Progressing sustainability of rural water service delivery is a common vision for all water sector organizations and actors in the county. Priorities may differ among organizations, but ultimately interventions and priorities are aimed at the common goal of working toward achieving sustainability.
South Ari/South Omo, Ethiopia	To achieve 100 percent coverage of at least basic water supply, sanitation, and hygiene services by 2030, including all schools and health care facilities.
Mille, Ethiopia	To achieve 100 percent coverage of at least basic water supply, sanitation, and hygiene services by 2030, including all schools and health care facilities.
Woliso, Ethiopia	The Woliso Learning Alliance for sustainable sanitation services works to establish a partnership that will help promote improved and sustainable sanitation services in the town.
Debre Birhan, Ethiopia	Debre Birhan Learning Platform on Sustainable Sanitation Services works toward establishing a partnership that promotes improved sanitation services in the town.
Kabarole, Uganda	By 2030, politicians are knowledgeable and proactive about the WASH system and specific strategies and actions to improve WASH service delivery. The district local government is a one-stop center with functional structures where one can go and find information and people with the skills and knowledge to answer questions. Communities are empowered with knowledge, clear leadership, and active community structures through which they can demand and contribute toward sustainable WASH services.
Kumi, Uganda	By 2030, Kumi has self-financing maintenance service for safely managed rural water in at least 80 percent of its rural communities. District and sub-county governments implement and enforce resolutions, publicly support a preventive maintenance approach, and dedicate a portion of rural water funds to preventive maintenance. Communities trust local technicians and community water committees. They renew their preventive maintenance service agreements and regularly pay maintenance bills.
Kamuli, Uganda	By 2030, Kamuli District will have self-financing maintenance service for safely managed rural water in at least 80 percent of its rural communities. District and sub-county governments are implementing and enforcing resolutions, publicly supporting a preventive maintenance approach, and dedicating a portion of rural water funds to preventive maintenance. Communities trust local technicians and community water committees. They are renewing their preventive maintenance service agreements and regularly paying maintenance bills.
Nakaseke,	By 2030, Nakaseke will have self-financing maintenance service for safely managed rural water in at least 80 percent of its rural communities. District and

Uganda	sub-county governments are implementing and enforcing resolutions, publicly supporting a preventive maintenance approach, and dedicating a portion of rural water funds to preventive maintenance. Communities trust local technicians and community water committees. They are renewing their preventive maintenance service agreements and regularly paying maintenance bills.
Sanitation for Health (National-Level) Uganda	A vibrant market providing accessible, affordable, and high-quality sanitation products and services for all Ugandans.
Millennium Water Alliance, Amhara, Ethiopia	Universal, safe and sustainable water supply coverage with reliable sanitation and hygiene for people living in the target woredas by 2030.

## Annex 5. Glossary of Factors

Factor	Definition
<b>Variant Factors</b>	
Local Government Uptake	Relevant decision-making entities in the local government take up decisions or recommendations made by the coalition, contribute financial or in-kind resources to their activities, or expand annual government budgets related to the topic. Formal agreements or policies, directly influenced by the coalition, are adopted.
Hub with Convening Power	The entity that manages all logistics, facilitation, leadership, and administrative functions of the coalition (the “hub”) has significant convening power. Convening power is defined as “the influence and ability to bring people together for meetings and other activities.” (Lasker, et al. 2001) Significant convening power can come from either (1) a government entity that is respected, has decision-making power, and holds a mandate related to the topic of the coalition or (2) a non-government entity that has a long history in the area before the coalition began, established working relationships, high respect and influence, social capital, and strong local knowledge.
Collective Problem and Solution Identification	The coalition is involved in identifying key problems, determining the broad solution areas to address those problems, planning detailed activities under those solution areas, and implementing those activities.
External Funds for Activities	Funding is available to the coalition from external sources specifically for their outcomes, including databases, policy development, master planning, or infrastructure construction. This funding is available for at least 3 years.
Continuity and Accountability	Member organizations consistently send the right representatives and members feel accountable for actions.
<b>Common Factors</b>	
Member Autonomy	All members remain autonomous entities, though the collaborative or individual members may slightly influence some members.
Interdependence	Most or all members rely on one another to get their jobs done.
Motivations to Engage	Members have moderate or strong motivations to engage in the coalition, through either internal or external motivators.
Voluntary Participation	Membership is voluntary; no one is mandated or required to show up.
Power Differences	Some power differences exist between members.
Engagement of Technical Officials	Technical government officials are substantively engaged in the collaborative process. They are updated regularly and are highly involved in meetings, discussions, and decisions.
Engagement of Decision-Makers	The relevant decision-makers or high-level government officials are updated regularly and are highly involved in meetings, discussions, and decisions of the coalition.
Transparent Processes	Fundamental processes are opaque and known to most members, including decisions, discussions, and funding shifts.
Hub with Capacity	The entity that manages all logistics, facilitation, leadership, and administrative functions of the coalition (the “hub”) is an entity with a high capacity to perform those roles.
Common Vision	A visioning process is followed, which results in a vision statement that all members agree to.
Interaction between Members	Time is set aside in meetings for back-and-forth discussions, and in between meetings, there is either moderate or strong interaction.
Early Wins	Small wins or achievements are attained early on in the process.
Adaptation	The coalition has moderate to high flexibility for their plans and processes.