

WORKING THROUGH AND WITH LOCAL CAPACITY BUILDERS: A DREAM OR REALITY? THE CASE OF COFORWA, RWANDA

Author: Béatrice Mukakalisa and Béatrice Mukasine

Country: Rwanda

Sector: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Summary

This case study focuses on the fruitful experience SNV has had with 'Les Compagnons Fontainiers du Rwanda' (COFORWA), a Local Capacity Builder organisation in water and sanitation. The study's aim is to demonstrate how SNV, through and with COFORWA, enhances capacity building of local WaSH communities in rural areas. Such capacity building mainly consists of the organization and execution of trainings for water, sanitation and hygiene committees as well as for water technicians. The outcome of these trainings has been positive: local WaSH committees are now capable of designing action plans, making sound financial reports and putting in place monitoring and evaluation systems. Water technicians can now identify water systems which need maintenance as well as undertake reparations, ensuring enhanced access and quality.

Furthermore, training participants have acquired skills that allow them to train the population at grassroots level, disseminating their knowledge.

CHALLENGE

Introduction

In Rwanda, the lack of access to water and sanitation and the prevalent unhygienic conditions pose high costs to society and are denying the rural population a dignified life. Poor sanitation and hygiene related diseases such as worms, malaria, diarrhea and typhoid are highly frequent killers. Children, especially girls, waste a lot of time fetching water instead of attending school, which negatively influences school attendance and dropout rates of girls. Similarly, women spend remarkable time fetching water instead of performing revenue generating activities.

In 2008 the water and sanitation sector performed well, achieving the objectives set under the Economic Development Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS). In line with these objectives, 72% of the population now has access to safe drinking water, and 45% of households use hygienic sanitation facilities. 30% of water systems are managed by private operators; the others by associations and districts. Private Public Partnerships are emphasized by the government for the mobilization of investments for the sustainability of services.

Local organizations like COFORWA are implementing capacity building programs at all levels. Such programs target the development of technical and human capacities of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WaSH) community organizations through trainings, information exchange, technology transfer and equipments supply. In 2008 SNV and UNICEF signed an agreement comprising two components; a baseline survey and capacity development for WaSH organizations in 4 districts (Burera and Musanze in the Northern Province, and Rubavu and Nyabihu in the Western Province). COFORWA was hence contracted by SNV to implement the capacity development part of the agreement.

Rationale

Supplying enough drinking water to the people is of great concern to both the international community and the Government of Rwanda (GoR). Halving the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water by 2015 is one of the MDGs, and the GoR has ranked water among its national priorities as established in Vision 2020 and the EDPRS (Economic Development Poverty Reduction Strategy).

SNV's intervention in WaSH is very conducive to the attainment of the MDGs and sustainable development, as it contributes to improving overall health and education, especially for girls, and to freeing up time for women for productive activities. Furthermore, SNV assists local authorities responsible for delivering WaSH supplies to the people to be more responsive and accountable to the population in general, and to vulnerable groups in particular.

CLIENTS

COFORWA, as a member of 'Conseil de Concertation des Organisation d'Appui aux Initiatives de Base (CCOAIB)', is the most highly recognized local capacity builder in the WaSH field, having more than thirty years of experience in training local people to change hygiene behavior and in constructing and maintaining water infrastructures.

METHOD / SNV INTERVENTION

Aim

The main goal of this study is to describe the extent to which SNV interventions through and with the local capacity builder, COFORWA, in supporting local WaSH organizations have led to changes at client level. Participatory Hygiene And Sanitation Transformation (PHAST), Hygiène et Assainissement en Milieu Scolaire (HAMS), water management committees and water technicians have increased their knowledge and skills in terms of water management and hygiene promotion; besides changes in attitude and behavior will ensure long term improvements in the sector.

Pupils after hygiene training



Activities and Outputs

As mentioned above, in 2008 COFORWA was contracted by SNV as a local capacity builder to pilot experience in WaSH to build the capacity of WaSH organizations in four districts targeted by the UNICEF partnership. The main activities of the contract concerned the implementation of various training courses.

Firstly, water management committees were trained in organizational and financial management, report writing and in monitoring and evaluation tools. Secondly, PHAST committees were given training on PHAST methodology, water-borne diseases and public private partnership. Thirdly, HAMS committees and environmental clubs were trained on child to child approaches, sensitization techniques and environmental protection. Finally, water technicians were trained in water spring catchment, water resources management and maintenance of infrastructure. In addition, tool kits were made available to technicians to enable them to put into practice what they have learned.

Also, in order to link theory to practice, a study tour in Muhanga and Ruhango districts was organized for trainees enabling them to engage in information and experience sharing. Visited sites included a water treatment unit, a privately managed water system as well as other locations where COFORWA had booked achievements.

Table1: **Participation to trainings and study tour**

N°	Themes	Attendance of participants		Total	% of women
		Men	Women		
1	PHAST methodology, water borne diseases, PPP	263	116	379	30.6
2	organisation and financial management	40	18	58	31.03
3	water spring catchment, water resources management and maintenance of infrastructure for Masons	34	2	36	5.5
4	child to child approach, sensitisation techniques and environmental protection for hygiene and environmental clubs	37	23	60	38.33
5	Monitoring and evaluation for water management committees	42	16	58	27.58
Total		416	175	591	29.62
	Study tour	43	17	60	28

In total 591 people were trained in various themes, 30 % of whom were women. For technical training for technicians, however, only 5% of the participants were women.

Although COFORWA actually carried out the trainings, SNV personnel was actively involved in the preparation, implementation, monitoring and joint evaluation of activities. Also, SNV strengthened COFORWA's information sources on WaSH by transferring 18 publications on relevant WaSH issues.

Through its collaboration with SNV, COFORWA has been able to demonstrate its competencies and strengthen its reputation. COFORWA recognizes SNV as a competent partner to enhance its products and services notably for more innovative methodologies, up-dating of training materials and enhancement of training courses vis-à-vis learning programs in upcoming projects.

Thus, in terms of outputs, it is clear that COFORWA is now a well functioning local capacity builder. They give training and reach people in the communities. Besides providing training COFORWA has also started providing advisory services. The abovementioned study tour is one example of such services; others include facilitation of workshops, implementation monitoring of WaSH organisations' action plans and meeting specific requests for coaching and advice.

OUTCOME

COFORWA has actively promoted full participation of local government and/or districts in the organization, facilitation and operationalization of the training courses. District officials were also sensitized in issues surrounding water sanitation and hygiene.

The results of these capacity building activities are evident:

- Managers of water committees are now able to write good financial reports and correctly fill out financial documents. WaSH committee members who were trained on PHAST methodology elaborated their plans of action on water, sanitation and hygiene. They are also able to conduct PHAST trainings at local level, applying the acquired methodology and tools.
- PHAST and HAMS committees' leaders have put in place a monitoring and evaluation system for their activities. Technicians are able to identify water

systems which need maintenance, as well as to undertake regular reparations. An association of teachers committed to HAMS has been set up, with the objective to promote hygiene and sanitation and to protect schools and their environment.

- Participants of the trainings have acquired skills that allow them to train the population at the grassroots level. It is advised, therefore, that trainers be assisted in their training job to scale up capacity building in WaSH. All these elements lead to a better functioning of service delivery in the WaSH sector.

Critical Success Factors

Which factors underlie the successful and effective relationship between COFORWA and SNV?

Firstly, SNV used to work with COFORWA as a client. Having this prior relationship facilitated the contracting process.

A second success factor was SNV advisors' close follow-up of COFORWA's activities. SNV was directly involved in the planning, implementation, report and quality control of local capacity builder activities. It is also important to acknowledge the participation of district officials, especially of the director of infrastructure who has water and sanitation under his/her responsibilities.

Thirdly, COFORWA is a well-functioning and well-managed organization. They have qualified personnel with expertise and experience in the water sector. Furthermore, they are well equipped in terms of training materials as well as equipments like cars and computers. Finally COFORWA has a good network with WaSH partners and, importantly, they share the same vision on capacity development services as SNV.

IMPACT

In terms of impact of the partnership, it was envisaged that an additional 120,150 people would gain access to water, while an additional 202,500 people would gain access to improved sanitation. It is believed that COFORWA's capacity building activities have contributed to the improvement of hygiene behavior.

LESSONS LEARNED

This pilot experience has shown that working with local capacity builders in the WaSH sector is fundamental. It was learnt that, compared with SNV working on its own, it is of added value to work with a local capacity builder local capacity builder.

First of all, while SNV works mostly at meso-level (i.e. District level in the Rwandan context), local capacity builders also focus on the community-level. This implies that local capacity builders can reach more people directly. Secondly, local capacity builder facilitators tend to be less expensive than SNV Advisors, implying that more people can be reached with a limited amount of resources.

COFORWA has abilities to become a very performing local capacity builder, but still needs to improve its communication/facilitation skills and scale up the training modules in a professional way.

The local government has an important role to play in providing sustainable WaSH services. It is responsible for the planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of WaSH projects.

It has been learned that capacity building is not only about acquiring skills, but also about building capacity in the humans so that they can stand on their own feet; the work of local capacity builders is crucial in this sense. Hence, capacity building combines information and knowledge as well as empowerment and change towards positive attitudes that should be the focus on building capacity at local level.

Challenges

One major challenge is the extent to which the quality of COFORWA's activities hinges on a few individuals. There is demand for additional SNV capacity development components towards COFORWA in order to upgrade the training and build a critical mass of well formed and experienced trainers.

Opportunities

It is an important opportunity that the water and sanitation policy of both the GoR and most of its development partners is in favor of increasing capacity through and with local capacity builders.

Next, the existence of local WaSH organization throughout the country is another opportunity for capacity development services in the sector.

Finally, SNV's ambition to stimulate the enabling environment and to work closely with local capacity builders as clients and partners cannot be ignored.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This case study shows that working with and local capacity builder is of great benefit to micro WaSH organisations.

COFORWA's implementation of WaSH trainings has contributed to the realisation of the specific water related MDG for Rwanda.

The assumption was that SNV development strategies would be hindered if it does not collaborate with local capacity builders. Based on that assumption, the report with COFORWA reiterates that local capacity building is the key stone for sustainable development at a large scale.

COFORWA is the most highly recognized local capacity builder in this sector having more than thirty years of experience in training of local people in Rwanda to change hygiene behaviour. Consequently it has developed approaches and training materials and adapted them to the Rwandan context.

Therefore, COFORWA as an local capacity builder is the driving example that can stimulate the use of local capacity builders in the WaSH sector.