



Civil Society **WASH** Learning Fund

Learning For Effective
WASH



Australian Government
AusAID

These documents were compiled by Naomi Carrard of the Institute for Sustainable Futures, UTS with the assistance of Kajute O'Riordan from WaterAid in Australia. The three learning workshops were an Australian Government AusAID initiative, managed by WaterAid in Australia.



Learning For Effective WASH

The AusAID Civil Society WASH Fund has invested in learning, supporting activities that facilitate learning both within and between organisations implementing WASH programs. The Civil Society WASH Fund Learning Events provided opportunity for participants from 11 organisations working across 21 countries to come together, share experiences and learn from one another. In addition, Oxfam and SNV are supporting learning and research as part of their Civil Society WASH Fund programs. They have established mechanisms that facilitate exchange of information and peer support across their different country activities, with partners and the wider WASH sector. The Fund also has a dedicated Monitoring Review Panel able to synthesise information and learning from across the Fund and reflect this back to implementing organisations and partners. The

Panel provides support to improve monitoring and evaluation of activities in order to facilitate improved learning.

Highlights

There are 44 separate activities being implemented through the Civil Society WASH Fund, each in a different context and adapting a variety of WASH approaches. Learning activities bring coherence to the separate activities, and a sense that each is part of a significant WASH program. They create space for participants to reflect on how their approaches differ and what they might revise or adapt in their work based on experiences elsewhere.

One of the most effective mechanisms for promoting learning is simply bringing WASH practitioners together. CSO staff, government partners and local implementing organisations from different countries and regions have a wealth of knowledge and experience to contribute. They benefit greatly from sharing and reflecting on their different approaches,

successes, challenges and lessons learned. Despite differences in context, there are many common approaches and experiences across countries and regions. Lessons learnt and innovative approaches in one location can inform good practice in others.

Learning encourages WASH practitioners to focus outward, looking beyond their particular project or program to the wider sector. Learning activities provide a space for sharing sector news, resources and information about best practice. They facilitate knowledge sharing and help to build relationships and networks that can continue long after the events themselves. They offer a means both to develop the capacity of those participating and to explore and document practitioner experiences, building the evidence base about what works and why.

Participant Stories

The Civil Society WASH Fund Learning Events

The learning events provided opportunity for more than 100 WASH practitioners – including CSO staff and partners – to meet and share lessons learned. Over three days at each event, participants presented their WASH initiatives and discussed successes, challenges and issues related to WASH sustainability.

The program was designed to provide a framework for peer learning, placing the experience, knowledge and expertise of participants at the centre of the process. Many of the participants already had a wealth of experience implementing WASH programs, while others were newer to the sector. Significant time was allowed for pair and small group work, providing space for participants to question each other, seek guidance, offer advice and provide peer support.

The learning events were broadly themed around WASH sustainability. At the start and end of each event participants were asked to undertake a visioning process, imagining 20 years into the future and reflecting on whether the infrastructure, institutions and/or practices being implemented or supported through their work will still be functioning in 20 years time. This process prompted significant discussion about what sustainability means in WASH, and how best to ensure success beyond project timelines and budgets.

A member of the Monitoring Review Panel offered a session at each learning event that provided an overview of the breadth of the Fund, the diversity of approaches visible across the Fund and other findings from a recent 'Independent Progress Review'. As part of this session, participants situated their activity in the context of the wider Fund.

Representatives from each of the 44 Civil Society WASH Fund activities



presented posters responding to the question 'what is something you are proud of in your work, and how does it relate to WASH sustainability'? This encouraged participants to bring a personal perspective to their presentations and reflect on the links between short term successes and



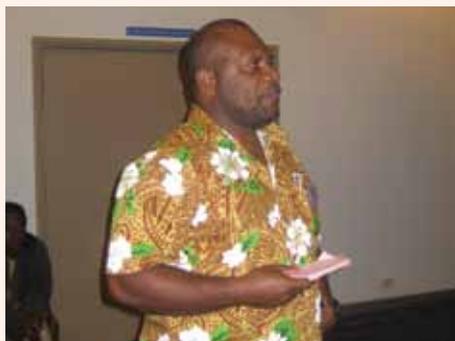
long term sustainability. Participants identified 'key messages for sustainability' from their presentations, many of which emphasised the critical nature of partnerships, responding to local drivers (whether cultural, institutional or environmental), developing the capacity of communities and service providers and working to support the development of local supply chains.

In addition to presentations, significant time was allowed for participants to talk less formally and get to know each

other, as many had not previously had opportunity to meet colleagues from different countries or organisations. Participants worked in pairs and groups comparing their programs and sharing stories of success. An affinity process was used to identify common challenges faced and small groups provided a supportive space for peer reflection and advice. An open session was reserved for discussing questions or issues arising through the learning events. In Maputo this was used to debate critical questions relating to subsidies and the role of the private sector. In Dhaka a world café process allowed groups to discuss diverse topics including WASH technologies, behaviour change approaches, monitoring and evaluation, gender equality and inclusive WASH.

Throughout each event, participants were encouraged to think about the relevance of discussions and presentations for their own programs. Questioning 'what does this mean for my work' and sharing insights and new ideas ensured a focus beyond the events, linking reflection and learning back to program implementation.

Participants shared their perspectives about what the learning events meant to them.



Joseph Joel
ADRA Vanuatu

"I've learned a lot of things and I'm really proud of that, especially about sanitation issues, because in remote areas there are big issues relating to sanitation that are affecting the communities. I've learned a lot from colleagues from other places. Of course different approaches are needed for different areas, but I've picked up ideas about how to approach situations in my environment. I'm very interested in sanitation marketing, because I think that will be a good way to motivate the community to get into income generating activities to provide funds for maintenance and other things. I've been talking to the Live and Learn group and we're planning to meet when we go back to Vanuatu, I think they will be able to support us in the sanitation program and we can provide support for them on water or other things."

Dr Soutsakhone Chanthaphone,
Director of Nam Saat
the Lao National Centre of Environmental Health
and Water Supply

"I learned a lot from this event. There were so many sessions for participants to share their views, comments, information about projects, lessons learned. I was particularly satisfied with the process used, this kind of process is new for me, it's something I'll take away and try to use at home in Lao."

Ugyen Rinzin
Ministry of Health Bhutan

"I think we are learning a lot from each other. We've really had an opportunity to interact with others working on similar programs. I think this helps us to affirm what we're doing – think about how we are going, what we are doing right or wrong. So we can build up our own confidence."

Raymundo Rodriguez and Chris Wardle
CARE Lao

"During the emergency phase we were focused more on the hardware, it means the construction side. Now, in the recovery phase, aside from construction (hand pumps and latrines) we are also focused on the software, the hygiene part – strengthening the WASH committees, the women's group and doing hygiene promotion for communities and schools. The learning event has exposed us to examples of materials which we could adopt for Lao.

It's very easy when you're working on your own project to become very focused and involved in what you're doing. It's healthy to be able to stand back every so often and remember that it's not just you doing this. There are projects all around doing the same things, struggling with the same challenges and problems and using the same tools. To see how people are adapting different approaches is very useful. It helps us have perspective on what we are doing."

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Oxfam Linking And Learning Initiative

Oxfam has a dedicated Linking and Learning Project as part of their Civil Society WASH Fund program.

Linking and Learning brings together Oxfam's Civil Society WASH Fund projects in Zambia, Mozambique, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Timor-Leste, and Papua New Guinea (PNG) through participatory research and capacity building activities. The project is building evidence of sustainable WASH programming with a specific focus on gender equity, appropriate technologies and capacity building. Information is collected, analysed and shared through an online discussion forum, workshops, and cross team peer reviews with the six country teams. Additionally field research on these focus areas is being conducted in Zambia, Bangladesh and PNG (the Linking and Learning focus countries). Findings from the project are being shared across focus countries and the Australian and global WASH sectors.

Baseline visits conducted in the focus countries in 2010 involved community surveys and focus groups, interviews with CSOs and local government partners, and team analysis.

Linking and Learning took the opportunity created by the Civil Society WASH Fund Learning Events to conduct regional Oxfam reflection days. These allowed Oxfam teams to reflect on the diverse WASH methods and approaches presented by other organisations in each region, to use these as a basis for reflection on their own programs, and to progress the discussion in more depth for practicable program learning.

David Nonde Mwamba Program Manager Oxfam in Zambia spoke about the value of the Linking and Learning initiative for him and his team.



David Nonde Mwamba
Program Manager Oxfam in Zambia's Western Province

“The Oxfam WASH project in the Western Province of Zambia is funded by AusAID through Oxfam Australia. It has five objectives. The first objective is around increasing access to WASH services. The second one is around reducing practical gender inequalities. The third one is around building the capacity of partner institutions and communities in managing and sustaining WASH services. The fourth one is around improving governance. This relates to the advocacy work Oxfam is doing at a national, district, sub-district and community levels. The fifth one is around linking and learning, ensuring that the evidence, the information from communities, is shared widely with other funded countries under the Civil Society WASH Fund throughout the world.

The internet-based Linking and Learning component of our project, although new, has proved worthwhile so far. Although we are not able to contribute as often as we would like, we are able to see discussions from other countries and are able to draw lessons from there. The Linking and Learning workspace has also provided an opportunity for us to share lessons from the field in real-time whenever we are ready.

I believe that besides sharing field experiences, the facility also gives us an opportunity to solve problems collectively. We may have a problem that may seem relatively intractable, and maybe somewhere else they sorted that out. When we share our problems on the Linking and Learning workspace, others from different countries may be in a position to assist. So I believe it's a very useful tool.

So far we've followed discussions on gender, on sustainability, and mulled over questions from Timor Leste and other places. We believe that the lessons we're generating now in Zambia will be readily shared through that space. So for us, we see it as a great opportunity.”





SNV Working With International Water And Sanitation Centre (IRC) To Support Learning And Engage The WASH Sector

SNV's 'Sustainable Sanitation and Hygiene for All' program works across five countries in Asia: Cambodia, Lao PDR, Vietnam, Nepal and Bhutan. There is also a regional component focused on learning and sharing, documenting experiences and facilitating exchange between country offices, local partners and other agencies active in the WASH sector. To maximise the reach and relevance of learning events and their role in sector strengthening, SNV ensures that more than half the participants in learning activities – including online discussions and workshops – are from partner agencies and other WASH sector groups. The learning component of SNV's program is being coordinated in partnership with IRC, the International Water and Sanitation Centre.

Two regional learning activities have been organised so far. Each activity is built around a topic and runs for about 1.5 months. The activity consists of a preparatory email discussion, a face-to-face workshop with joint field work and in-country follow-up. The preparatory mail discussions engage about 100 WASH practitioners from different organisations in Asia (and a few from Africa) in a moderated online discussion. Learnings from the moderated discussion are then documented and brought to the workshop, which brings SNV advisors from five countries, the regional advisors, local NGO partners and government partners together. Both the email discussions and events are open to other WASH practitioners and provide a means for SNV staff and partners to link with the broader WASH sector.

The first learning activity was around performance monitoring of hygiene behaviour change and ran from July to August 2010 with a workshop in

Lao PDR in August. As a result of the discussions and the workshop, guidelines for performance monitoring were circulated and guidelines for the work on hygiene behavioural change communication were developed.

The second topic was around Rural Sanitation Supply Chains and Finance, running from November 2010 to January 2011. Resource people from the World Bank Water and Sanitation Program, WaterSHED Asia and International Development Enterprises (IDE) participated in the email discussion and workshop. After the workshop all countries started to introduce new concepts and tools for sanitation supply chains into their programs. A second version of guidelines for Sanitation Supply chain strengthening is under development.

Bimal Tandukar
Senior WASH Advisor, SNV Nepal

"I've found these processes extremely useful. They help us to share learning among SNV Asia countries and other international organisations in the region. It was useful to share the CSO learning and talk about policy with agencies at the national level such as ministries and other international organisations active in our country such as UNICEF. It has also been important for the sub-national level, linking both district and national level agencies. The beauty of this kind of process is that it connects the grass root level to the regional and international with diverse participants from different programs representing different countries.

The event in Lao focused on behaviour change communication and performance monitoring indicators was very useful for me. A number of program leaders gathered together and we developed performance monitoring indicators based on qualitative information systems (QIS). After the workshop I shared this with the government agencies both at central level, sub-national level and also with UNICEF

and UN-Habitat. They are very interested in performance monitoring and keen to look at how they can adapt it and apply it."



Raj Kumar Bhatrai
WASH Advisor, SNV Bhutan – participating in the online discussion

"I wasn't able to attend the regional event in Vietnam, but I was part of the online discussion before and during the event. During the event I was actually in the field, and I would open my emails in the evenings and be able to see what was happening at the event through short summaries of discussions, blogs and so on. It was exciting to be able to read about what was happening and what the group discussed, and if I wanted to comment I could write back. So even though I wasn't there I was able to participate."

'I wasn't able to attend the regional event in Vietnam, but I was part of the online discussion before and during the event.'

In addition to regional learning events SNV also support an exchange program so staff in different countries can meet, visit project sites and share their approaches and lessons learned.



Raj Kumar Bhattra

WASH Advisor, SNV Bhutan participated in an exchange visit to Lao PDR to learn about CLTS

“Last year I participated in an exchange visit to see how things were going in Laos and also share our experience of working in Bhutan. It was great being able to present to Laos and visit the areas where they were piloting CLTS. It was interesting to see what was similar and different between our two countries and approaches and to learn from each other. At the time we were both in the pilot phase of our projects, working at different scales and with different groups. One thing that I remember finding very interesting was the way they were trying to mobilise communities using lively songs and behaviour change communication materials. They were making it lively, trying to make it fun. That’s something I learned and so back in Bhutan we started making the CLTS more fun and lively.”



Messages For WASH Sustainability

Simply bringing WASH practitioners together is valuable. There is not often opportunity for them to meet each other in person and talk about their work. Learning events create space for participants to reflect on how their approaches differ and what they might revise or adapt in their work based on experiences elsewhere.

Learning can bring coherence to separate and sometimes disparate WASH activities and as such adds significant value to a CSO WASH program.

‘Learning can bring coherence to separate and sometimes disparate WASH activities...’

Peer learning can be a powerful tool, linking people and facilitating exchange of ideas and information. Supporting mechanisms for peer-to-peer learning within and between organisations will develop the capacity of WASH practitioners, build the evidence base about what works and why, and ensure more effective and sustainable programs.

Only through learning will it be possible to improve and evolve more effective approaches to WASH.