



Civil Society  
**WASH**  
Learning Fund

Strengthening Government



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.



## Strengthening Government

Through the Civil Society WASH Fund, several CSOs are working to strengthen government agencies and WASH service providers. They are providing support to government departments planning and implementing WASH programs and are building links between communities, government agencies and service providers. By working on the enabling environment, CSOs are supporting longer term service provision and health outcomes. Six of the eleven agencies involved in the Fund are engaged in activities that support development of an enabling environment for WASH services for the poor, such as social accountability, broad information dissemination, policy input and dialogue and sector coordination.

### Highlights

Partnerships between CSOs, communities, service providers and government

agencies emerged as a strong theme at the learning events. There was much discussion around the role of government agencies in delivering WASH services beyond CSO program timeframes, and CSO efforts to support and strengthen government were identified as critical for sustainability of WASH programs.

Participants shared their perspectives on different aspects of CSO/government partnerships including networking, information sharing and direct collaboration on program implementation. They spoke about CSO and government skills being complementary and emphasised the value of working together to ensure the right mix of technical know-how, community engagement skills and project planning and budgeting.

A number of government representatives attended the learning events together with their CSO partners and shared their experiences working with CSOs to promote access to WASH.

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## Participant Stories

### SNV Supporting Government In Sanitation And Hygiene

The Civil Society WASH Fund is supporting SNV's Sustainable Sanitation and Hygiene for All program across five countries: Cambodia, Lao PDR, Vietnam, Nepal and Bhutan. SNV staff from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Vietnam and Bhutan attended the Dhaka learning event, each bringing a government partner.

Phetmany Cheuasongkham, Sanitation and Hygiene Advisor with SNV Lao PDR and Dr Soutsakhone Chanthaphone, Director of Nam Saat – the Lao National Centre of Environmental Health and Water Supply spoke about their partnership.



**Phetmany Cheuasongkham**  
Sanitation and Hygiene Advisor with SNV Lao PDR

“We are working in Savannakhet province and our program has 5 components: building demand for sanitation, strengthening sanitation supply chains, developing effective behaviour change communication, improving WASH governance and learning and sharing. SNV is really focused on building the strength and capacity of the government. We don't only work with the community, we partner with the provincial rural development committee, with the health department, education department and we also work with the planning and investment department. We discuss with them how to ensure sustainable service

delivery by the government, considering all the constraints that they are facing in terms of capacities and resources. We work closely with the provincial level on planning so we share clear ideas about what our target is, and we also work closely on reporting. We have regular meetings at least once per month, and we always share information about what is going on between meetings by phone or email. Also, we work to a three month plan that we develop with the province and district agencies involved in the program. Then later we share information with the central level about progress.”

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

“SNV provides support at the central level as well as district level. They have so many capacity building components. They organised training on leadership, computer skills, project preparation and so on. This program in Savannakhet province follows many years of work together.

I think basically both of us – SNV and our central or provincial Nam Saat authority – understand that this coordination, this communication should come first so that we're prepared for planning, budgeting and the implementation phase. We plan detailed budget and activities together looking at this year or this quarter. We share information and monitor how we're going according to the implementation plan that we developed together with the province, the district and the central level agencies.”

Mr Doan Trieu Thanh, WASH Advisor with SNV Vietnam attended the Dhaka learning event with Dr Nguyen Thi Thu, Director of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) with the Lao Cai Province Department of Health.

**Mr Doan Trieu Thanh**  
WASH Advisor, SNV Vietnam

“This is a program of the government, not SNV. The strong commitment of the local government is what we see as the most successful factor of our program, and this

will ensure its sustainability. One example of what our partnership has achieved is the allocation of budget to support hygiene behaviour change. Before our partnership the government mentioned hygiene behaviour change and sanitation promotion in the annual workplan for sanitation and hygiene. But in terms of budget and human resources, previously the government allocated 1% of the sanitation budget for IEC compared with 99% for hardware. Now this has changed completely. The focus of government is now much more on communication. Dr Thu has said that by 2020 they are aiming for 20% of the sanitation budget to go to IEC.”

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## Plan International Strengthening Government In Tanzania, Uganda And Indonesia

Across the seven countries in which Plan International is implementing Civil Society WASH Fund activities, Plan staff and their government counterparts work closely together in the design, planning and implementation of Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) activities. Representatives from Plan and their partner government agencies in Tanzania, Uganda and Indonesia shared their experiences of collaboration.

### Listen Materu Kisaware and Grace Semawaiko

**Listen:** “I am a district government representative working with Plan. The government is aware of the importance of providing ongoing support to communities and we make sure that we involve the community in planning, implementation, operation and maintenance. In doing so we assure that sustainability will be there. The support we get from Plan is really a big help. We have a very nice arrangement because neither the government nor Plan is working alone, we are working in collaboration. Through this collaboration we have a management structure guided by a Memorandum of Understanding. This includes the district council, Plan International and the project steering committee. Within the steering committee we have a technical team (which is Plan staff), district council and water management committees. Plan provides a link between the district council and communities.”

**Grace:** “I’m really proud of the collaboration and the closer coordination between the community and the district authority. We have come to the point where the district government can now provide funds for the project implementation, previously they focused on monitoring. And this is not the central government, the funds are coming from the district government. They are investing in this project and we are moving together.

As Listen said, we are working to link communities with the district council.

We are able to follow up on whether the district government has responded to community demands, for example around repairing a borehole. Now the community can demand their rights.”



**John Nelson Opio**

working with Lira District Government as a partner to Plan in Uganda

“Networking, working with the government and other partners is essential for sustainability, and that’s what Plan Uganda is really trying to do. Achieving sustainability in returnee [ex-child soldier] areas particularly in northern Uganda where I work is challenging as we have just emerged from emergency operations. Communities were getting free or subsidy based services so were not encouraged to use their potential. In order to reorient WASH services in these areas, Plan Uganda provided training for government staff, the village health teams and other CSO’s on CLTS approach. I think Plan Uganda’s approach and networking is good. Our role is to continue mobilising communities while recognising that investment in changing behaviour shouldn’t be a one-off thing. It needs ongoing support and reinforcement. We need more prolonged investment in the software to empower people to realise a meaningful change in behaviour.”



Alit with Rohan Nandan, AusAID Director of Infrastructure, Water and Sanitation

### Alit Aviane

Team Leader, Plan International

“The Plan team are based in the Grobogan Health Department District Office. This is a new approach for Plan in Indonesia. We’ve chosen this approach to strengthen the way we work together with government. It makes it much easier to integrate our program within government programs and this will make the project more sustainable.

Plan has worked to develop the capacity of government staff at the sub-district level. We work together on strategic planning and action planning. We have also helped provide baseline information for the communities the project is targeting, building up the government’s monitoring and evaluation system. Plan also supports the government to hear from the community, because information is sometimes lost between the two groups.

The district government and Plan have the same road map for the project and work from the same documents. The project is due to end around June 2012, but because we work together with government from the start to the end when Plan leaves the government will know what to do. They have more capacity and will be able to continue the work, manage the budget and so on.”



## Oxfam Zambia Supporting The Development Of WASH Policies And Strategies

CSOs can play a crucial role in piloting different approaches and building an evidence base around what works to promote access to WASH. Many organisations represented at the learning events talked about the ways in which they engage with government, sharing their experiences to support the development of national level WASH policies and strategies. David Nonde Mwamba, Program Manager for the Oxfam Great Britain project in Zambia, spoke about Oxfam's role advocating for the inclusion of CLTS in the Zambian national sanitation strategy.



David Nonde Mwamba  
Oxfam Zambia

“We are proud of our engagement at different levels, because that gives us greater leverage. We want to gain greater impact from project activities and in order to do that, we are engaging at community, sub district and district levels, with a wide range of partners including community structures, CSOs,

Local Authorities, and ministries of local government and housing, education, health and so on. We also have capacity at the national level to engage with national level partners including government.

In Zambia, one of our successes is that the Ministry of Local Government is adopting CLTS as a sanitation strategy for the country. Previously the national rural water and sanitation program did not have a comprehensive strategy on sanitation. As a result of our experiences and experiences of other partners in implementing CLTS, particularly in Kaoma district, the Ministry of Local Government and Housing has adopted and is actively promoting this strategy for the whole country. This shows that through our work and the evidence it produces, we can be big in terms of influencing significant changes in national programs.”

## Messages For WASH Sustainability

Government agencies are ultimately responsible for sustainable WASH service provision. Working to support and strengthen government agencies and service providers is critical for sustainable WASH.

Partnerships require significant investment of time and energy, and ultimately depend on both CSO and government staff nurturing and building relationships. Developing a shared vision and plan or partnership agreement and making time to work closely together will underpin successful collaboration.

Explicitly working to support government requires a very different approach, skills and strategy as compared with direct service provision. CSOs need to consider carefully how they can best add value in light of the unique needs of the institutional and policy context in their country and locality.

CSO contributions to building an enabling environment for sustainable WASH services for the poor requires both advocacy work with communities and collaborative work with government. It is important to seek an appropriate balance between these activities, and this will differ between countries and locations.

As well as engaging with government to support service delivery, CSOs can promote WASH sustainability by informing national level WASH policies and programs. They can draw on their experiences working with communities and local government, and communicate messages about what works to national agencies.