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INNOVATION, ADAPTATION AND ENGAGEMENT IN A CHANGING WORLD

**Improving WASH governance through advocacy:
lessons learned from Afghanistan**

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Advocacy is an important tool, as it lays a foundation for sustainable change, with its impact at the highest level being the influencing and change of unfavorable or out-dated government policies, legal and regulatory frameworks. This paper illustrates how advocacy can be used in Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) programming in post-conflict recovery to enhance good governance in the WASH sector. In this practice, the engagement of government at national and local level directly and through networks as well as the engagement of the community and strengthening of advocacy work at the grass root level is strong. In this case study, the inclusion of advocacy in Tearfund's WASH programming, led to inclusion of Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) and Household Water Treatment (Biosand filters) as possible interventions during the revision of the Afghan National WASH Policy.

Introduction

In looking towards the future of WASH in order to ensure proper engagement in a changing world, linking the WASH sector to governance is a path that needs to be considered in programming. When examining governance in the WASH sector, two core values can be highlighted; inclusiveness- ensuring access for all; and accountability-ensuring those in authority answer to their citizens (Environment Matters 2006). Many Donors- EU, DFID, USAID, the World Bank and UNDP-are looking at good governance as an area that can help spur economic growth and development and enhance accessibility for the poor to basic services¹. In many states, that have ensued ongoing conflict, policies may be lacking or, even if in place are out-dated. It is important to ensure that interventions carried out by NGOs and other non-state actors' link up to a well drafted and updated strong policy, legal and regulatory framework and where policies are lacking, advocacy carried out towards governments to encourage appropriate frameworks. The case study presented from Afghanistan illustrates how advocacy was used as a tool in Tearfund's WASH programming in Afghanistan, with outcomes contributing greatly to the revision of the National WASH policy.

Context

Bako Kham village is located in Kohistan District at the centre of Kapisa Province. Like most Afghan villages, it has a Community Development Council (CDC), which is responsible for managing the ongoing government-funded National Solidarity Programme as well as other development projects funded by agencies like Tearfund. Like many Afghan villages, Bako Kham lies in mountainous terrain. It enjoys an abundant but seasonal water supply, strongest during the spring snow melt; effective water management has been a challenge. Two key water challenges are crop irrigation and safe water and sanitation. The canals that irrigate the fields also pass through the residential areas and are used as a primary drinking water source. Contamination in the water has resulted in significant health issues in the community. Due to the high incidence of diarrheal disease, Tearfund targeted this village as part of its wider water, sanitation, and hygiene promotion (WASH) program to provide basic water and sanitation services, with the advocacy component of the program contributing greatly not only to the local programs success, but to a change in the Afghan national WASH policy.

Advocacy definition

- Tearfund's defines advocacy as:
'Seeking with and on behalf of the poor to address underlying causes of poverty, bringing justice and support good development through **influencing** the **policies** and **practices** of the **powerful**' (Tearfund 2002).
- The Global Wash Cluster defines advocacy as:
'Deliberate efforts based on demonstrated evidence, to **persuade** those in **authority** to adopt certain **policies** or **actions** in order to protect people affected by disasters or by conflicts' (Global WASH Cluster 2009).

There are many definitions for advocacy, even so, they are similar and focus on highlighting the main impact which is influencing/ persuading those in power to adopt/ adapt certain policies or practices for the benefit of the affected populations.

A tool for assessing governance in WASH

Between 2008- 2010, Tearfund carried out research and field testing to explore the link between good governance and the WASH sector and adapted DFID's Capability Accountability and Responsiveness (CAR) tool- focusing on general governance- to have a focus on the WASH sector. The development of a toolkit '*Understanding the WASH Sector: how to carry out an analysis of the capability, accountability, and responsiveness (CAR) of the water sanitation and hygiene sector in your country*' being the outcome of the research and field testing. The main purpose of the tool is to help develop a much better understanding of the WASH policy and political context in which an organisation is working, either programmatically or in advocacy. In Afghanistan, the tool was tested and assisted Tearfund in gaining a better understanding of the general WASH sector. It highlighted the areas which Tearfund could focus on in its advocacy as well as programming and assisted in the mapping out of various allies and targets a crucial component in creation of the Tearfund Afghanistan WASH advocacy strategy.

Success of the WASH technical aspects of the programme

The CLTS approach and the increase of latrine use showed that CLTS was acceptable in the community with 99% of targeted households constructing their own latrine. While the biosand filter programme which was not subsidized showed acceptability by growing to 85% coverage in the pilot villages and with increasing demand from surrounding villages as well, so that after two years, more than 6000 filters had been sold, at an exponentially growing rate of demand. In the section below, we explore how advocacy was carried out in both the CLTS and biosand filter programmes and how this contributed to the successes of both programmes.

Advocacy methods

In engaging in advocacy, there are many methods one can use. A method used in isolation that does not bring about an outcome of influencing the policies and practices of the powerful, is not necessarily considered as advocacy. Usually a combination of various methods is what leads to the higher impact and change of policies.

Advocacy targets and allies: local government officials, religious leaders and the business community

As part of Tearfund's WASH programming, various targets and allies were formed when carrying out the WASH programme in Bako Kham village, Kohistan District in Kapisa Province. In Afghanistan, the ability to have all groups including vulnerable groups participate in the CLTS and biosand filter programme could not have been possible without the mobilization, information sharing and lobbying of key stakeholders. The regular meetings held during programme implementation aided greatly in influencing decision makers within the community. Working closely with the business community and religious leaders as allies during various stages of programme implementation led to the influencing of targets that included the local development councils (CDCs) and communities. Evidence of this was the inclusion of marginalised groups including women and children as part of key processes in the implementation of the demand-led CLTS and biosand filter programmes.

Key points of learning of incorporating advocacy in to the WASH programme have been: Firstly, communities in fragile states need not be seen as beneficiaries alone, but as stakeholders as this enhances sustainability of projects. Secondly, the programme was also of great value when incorporating practice to policy. During the revision of the Afghan WASH policy, Tearfund was a member of the Gender Taskforce formed to ensure gender issues were covered. Good practice and learning from the field from both the outcomes from advocacy done during the CLTS and the biosand filter programmes were used to inform discussions and decisions.

Table 1.		
Method	Explanation	Examples
Networking	Building Alliances with as many people as possible Creating a movement for change	Meeting with community leaders Joint Conferences
Lobbying	Speaking directly to the target to explain in detail the problem and proposed solution	Meetings Public Meetings
Raising Awareness	Informing people of the situation so that they are aware if the issues- often the first step in an advocacy process	Training Community meetings
Mobilising	Closely connected with awareness raising and media	Marches and Rallies
Media	Using Radio, newspapers and television	Radio phone-in Briefing Journalists

Source: Practical Action in Advocacy Pg 43

Close collaboration

Tearfund during the piloting of the WASH programme also worked as part of the UNICEF led WASH cluster network, whose members comprise of the Afghanistan Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development and various International NGOs. The WASH cluster members were invited as part of the programme, to observe an improvement in the health and well being of the communities through joint visits with Tearfund. When space opened up that allowed for the WASH cluster to input during the revision of the Afghan WASH Policy, Tearfund was able to link practice to policy with the support of the WASH cluster members, following the successes witnessed during the joint visits. This led to the inclusion of CLTS as a possible approach to safe sanitation and biosand filters as an acceptable household water treatment for the provision of safe drinking water in the Revised WASH policy.

Close collaboration with the WASH cluster also led to the sharing of lessons learned with donors. This led to an increase in funding from international donors to scale up similar CLTS and biosand filter WASH interventions across Afghanistan.

In Afghanistan, Tearfund has been a champion in the celebration of global WASH celebration days such as the Global Handwashing Day, World Toilet Day and World Water Day. This has boosted information dissemination to the Afghan government, its citizens and international donors on various issues regarding WASH. Outcomes witnessed have included; firstly, the improvement of hygiene practices especially in the increase of use of soap during hand washing in communities; Secondly, an increase in donor funding and participation of INGOs in global WASH international day celebration collaborations; lastly, an increase in the participation of government officials in the celebration of the global days. Evidence of impact has been recorded through statements made by government officials in villages and on radio, teachings from religious leaders in mosques, random individual interviews as well as interactive radio WASH programmes held across various provinces in Afghanistan.

Lessons learned

- Knowledge management and learning from the field is a good tool to use in lobbying governments to revise existing unfavourable WASH policies.
- Advocacy should also be channelled towards donors at country level, to increase funding in the WASH sector. Sharing learning from the field and illustrating a good working relationship with governments can influence donors to increase their funding and support more programmes in the WASH sector.
- Communities in fragile states need not be seen as beneficiaries of WASH programmes, but as key stakeholders as well; this increases the chances of sustainability. In Afghanistan, working closely with allies to influence the target groups led to the participation of marginalized groups in communities.
- In fragile states, advocacy can play a big role in ensuring the transition from emergency responses to development is well managed. It offers good platforms to ensure WASH policies are in place that will ensure a government's accountability to its citizens even as the government enters the development stage.
- Linking practice to policy through advocacy is important since this ensures easy roll out/ expansion of programmes based on learning.
- Influencing policy change in emergencies is important, since it ensures all players in the field adhere to particular standards in their implementation. It also gives governments a framework to ensure accountability of players as they carry out their operations in a country.
- There is the strength of working in clusters/ networks. Working in networks proved a good strategy in boosting credibility and sharing of information and learning and influencing the government for change. It also allowed the easy replicability of the CLTS and biosand filter programmes through other agencies in other areas in Afghanistan.

Conclusion

Having appropriate policies, a legal and regulatory framework is a first step in enhancing good governance in the WASH sector. In fragile states, where engagement channels with governments is possible this ensures as governments move from relief stages to more development focused programmes, the structures, guidelines and frameworks are in place giving citizens a better chance of access to WASH services and frameworks to hold their governments accountable in the future.

References

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Notes

Refer to the Human Development Report (2006) and Governance, development and democratic politics: DFID's work in building more effective states (2007).

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