STRENGTHENING PRIVATE SECTOR PARTICIPATION FOR IMPROVED OPERATION IN MAINTENANCE IN THE RURAL WATER SECTOR IN UGANDA

A Case Study on Establishing an Association of Hand-pump Mechanics, in Adjumani District, West Nile Region, Uganda

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Sector: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

CHALLENGE

The investments made by Adjumani District on water source development have increased over the last two consecutive financial years. During the financial year 2006-2007[1], a total of 167 million was invested in hardware development compared to UgSH260 million during 2007-2008. However during 2006-2007, 10 new boreholes were drilled compared to five new boreholes and one gravity system during 2007-2008. Moreover the total number of boreholes reported, went down from a total of 512 in 2007 to 486 boreholes in 2008. The total number of functional boreholes reported, went down from 463 in 2007 to a total of 451 in 2008. This has resulted into a decline of the safe water coverage from 71% in 2007 to 68% in 2008. The decline clearly indicates that the MDGs are not going to be met and creates a need to search for alternative modalities to increase the safe water coverage.

An alternative to increase the safe water coverage without increasing the number of facilities is the aspect of functionality. Official figures indicate that the functionality rates gradually went up from 83% in 2005, to 94% in 2008[2], which makes Adjumani District having one of the highest functionality rates in the country. However this figure is in sharp contrast with the decline of the real number of functional protected water sources reported as mentioned in the previous section. Moreover, discussions with the District Water Officer (DWO) in 2007, identified that the *factual* functionality rate was probably much lower than the official statistics presented, strengthening the presumption to focus on functionality as one of the modality to achieve the MDGs.

Figure 1: Non-functionality of boreholes, reducing the safe water coverage

The line ministry of Water and Environment identifies *efforts to improve functionality* as; the supply of spare parts, the role of hand pumps Mechanics and the role of Water User Committees as key elements. Adding on, the policy analysis carried out by SNV in 2008, recommends to expand and strengthen the role of the private sector as on of its strategies to increase functionality rates[3]

CLIENTS

Adjumani district is located in the West Nile Region in Uganda and has a projected rural population size of 263,559 in 2008[4]. Out of this population an estimated

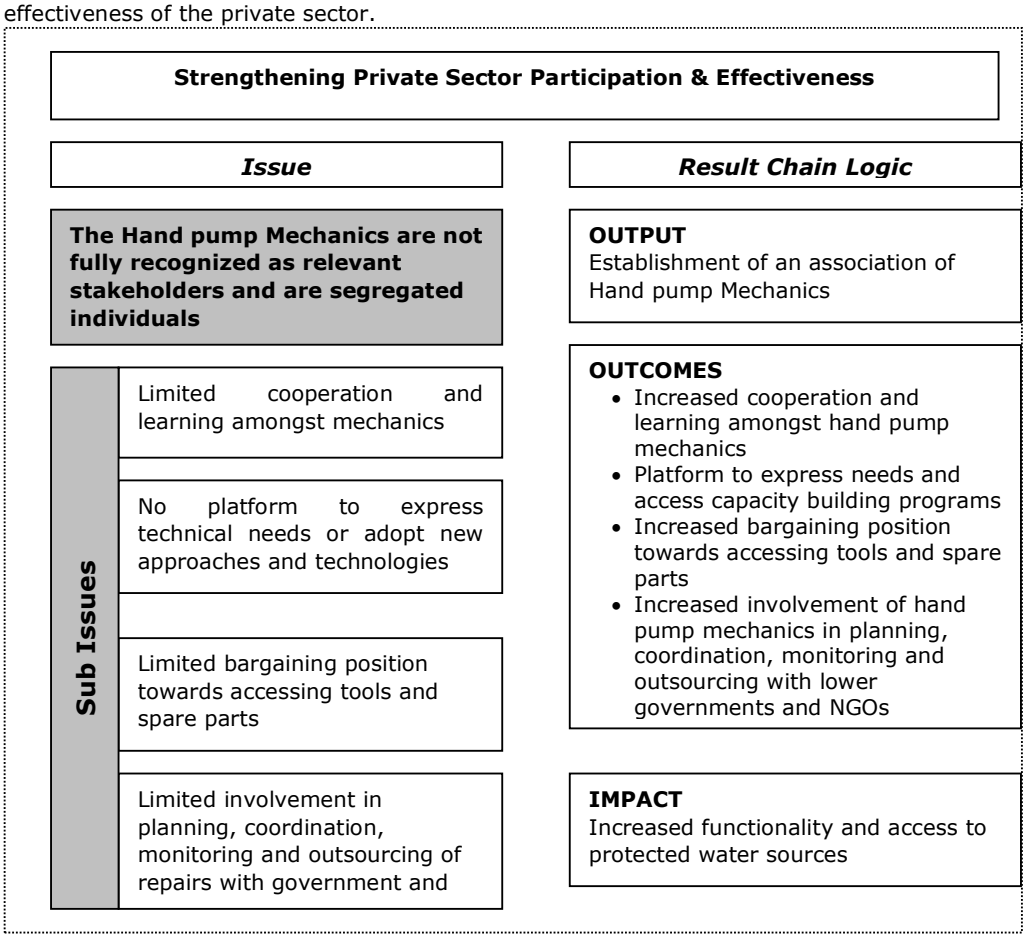
[1] Water and Sanitation Sector Performance Report 2007, Government of Uganda, Ministry of Water and Environment
[2] 83% (04-05), 89,3% (05-06), 90,0% (06-07), 94% (07-08)
[3] Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Sector Policy Analysis, SNV Uganda, September 2008, Roz Saad
[4] Water and Sanitation Sector Performance Report 2008, Government of Uganda, Ministry of Water and Environment

180,471 people are served with protected water sources, which is 68% of the rural population in 2008. The majority of this population, 75%, is served is by boreholes. There are 451 functional boreholes compared to 35 non-functional boreholes, which is a functionality rate of 93%. The overall functionality rate of protected sources stood in 2008 at 94%.

METHOD / SNV INTERVENTION

Goal of the assignment

To inrease functionality of boreholes and access to safe water by the rural population of Adjumani District through the increased involvement and effectiveness of the private sector.



To achieve our goal, the following Result Chain Logic was developed for this assignment as given in **Error! Reference source not found.**. It was estimated that the first outcomes can be generated within a period of six months, such as increased cooperation between the Hand pump Mechanics, while others, like an increased bargaining position, will be a long term process.

Main activities + time period

Based on the analysis, terms of reference were drafted to facilitate the establishment of an association of Hand Pump Mechanics. The major steps of this intervention are summarised as follows:

a. Identify & Validate the Hand Pump Mechanics within Adjumani District, to ensure all hand pump mechanics are consulted and can be represented in this association, and collect a baseline of functional water sources.
b. Establish Democratic Leadership amongst the Hand pump Mechanics, with representatives from each sub county. The selection of this leadership composes of a steering committee, which can spearhead the development of this association from the initial stages.

c. Establish an AHPM with constitution and policy, in consultation with the steering committee, which is being ratified by the members in an AGM and is registered at the district,
d. Validate the organization by paid memberships of Hand Pump Mechanics and start an internal needs assessment of the members. After validation, the association is a fully recognized organization which can represent the members.

This assignment was given to an NGO called *Consultancy for Rural Enterprises and Activity Management* (CREAM). The assignment started in the beginning of September 2008 and was expected to finish beginning of 2009 and included 30 LCB days.

OUTCOME

- At the first general meeting it became clear that most of the mechanics weren't aware of each others existence and it was appreciated to know each other, specially given that some repairs require two skilled mechanics to work together. After this meeting it has been reported that the hand pump mechanics have been more actively working together, which could indicate an increased effectiveness.

- The assignment revealed that 48% of the people involved in hand pump repairs hadn't received any form of training, but learned the skills on the job, while 10% of the mechanics received training before 2000 and expressed the need for a refresher course. To get a detailed overview of the training needs of these various groups, SNV will facilitate knowledge brokering for the AHPM, so their capacity gaps can be addressed by the relevant stakeholders. As a response on these initial findings, the leadership of this association was selected by the DWO to attend a training for Hand pump mechanics organized by Technical Support Unit 1[5] held in November 2009 for the West Nile region. Moreover, DWO has planned to use the budget line for "software" to provide a technical training in 2009-2010.

- One of the biggest problems experienced by the mechanics was the lack of tools and spares. The toolkits are generally kept at the Sub County offices and are sometimes hard to access and some of these kits are incomplete. An organization, called the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), which attended the AGM meeting, responded and handed over eight toolkits to the association. Spare parts are generally purchased at Adjumani Town at hardware shops. These spares are high priced and sometimes not available. As a result of the establishment of this association, a dialog was established with one of the manufactures of these spare parts, *Victoria Pumps Ltd* to address the supply chain of spare parts. The assignment on strengthening the association will focus on exploring economic models and supply chains to access spare parts and tools, together with the sector stakeholders including private companies.

- Coordination and collaboration between the district and the association has improved. The first result of this assignment was the obtained detailed data on the number of functional and non-functional boreholes, which has been collected by their members. This baseline present number of boreholes, functionality rates and number of repairs and maintenance work carried out per Sub County. This detailed information, recorded by the members, was presented to the District Water and Sanitation Coordination Committee (DWSCC). This data was not available before the intervention and is vital for planning purposes. The DWO has acknowledged the importance of this data, but also stressed the lack of reporting skills of the association. SNV will support this association on institutional development and reporting skills.

- Outsourcing repairs to the association has been awarded by the district. The DWO has used the association to repair a borehole which had been broken-down for a longer period of time. Furthermore, the DWO has contracted the

[5] The Technical Support Units are the regional support units of the Directorate of Water Development.

AHPM to repair 31 boreholes within the financial year 2009-2010 using the existing funding from the Peace Recovery and Development Plan[6].

IMPACT

As given in the Result Chain Logic, there are multiple outcomes anticipated, which requires a longer period of time. However some of the outcomes have been achieved within this timeframe and are reflected in impacts.

The hand pump mechanics reported to have repaired 45 boreholes within the six sub counties since the intervention started[7]. This has secured the safe water coverage of 13,500 people[8] within this timeframe. As it is unknown if these boreholes were broken down before the intervention started or broke down within this time frame, it is not possible to accurately determine how this has influenced the total functionality rate.

At the national level, the line Ministry, has reported on a change of trend. The sector report[9] indicates, for the first time since 2007, an increase in the number of functional boreholes. The number of functional boreholes reported in the 2009 report is 471, compared to 451 in 2008 and 463 in 2007. The intervention seems to have changed the negative trend of the decline (3% previous year) into an increase of functional rates (4%) this year. According to the DWO of Adjumani, the Hand Pump Mechanics have significantly contributed to this increase in functionality[10].

The intervention has also influenced policy at the national level. The case was presented at the National Learning Forum in Kampala October 2009, as a "best practice" to improve Operation and Maintenance (O&M) and recommended as an approach to increase functionality at the national level[11]. This recommendation was reported to the Joint Sector Review 2009 meeting and accepted as an approach to improve O&M. It has influenced policy at the national level, as the O&M framework will be reviewed, *including availability of spare parts and possible privatization through the hand pump mechanics*[12].

Note should be taken that the long-term impacts and sustainability of these increased functionality rates are mostly related to the sustainability of this association and its expected outcomes. The association needs to be able to address the needs of their members over a longer period of time in order to deliver long term impacts. The strategy developed by the association to ensure sustainability is to have regular events for all members and economic models to ensure income generation.

LESSONS LEARNED

The key element of forming this association and its success is related to the ownership of this association and its ability to address the needs of its members (empowerment), instead of looking for outsiders to change their issues (dependency). To ensure this, the process was made highly participatory and all focus was put on *what the members can do for their own benefit*. This has been achieved by using a local NGO, which was known to have supported farm groups in the district, to facilitate the establishment of this association.

Using (learning) platforms has ensured recognition of the DWO in Adjumani towards this association and has increased the interest of the sector players. The intervention was shared at an Inter District Meeting (IDM), organized by the Directorate of Water Development (DWD) and the National Learning Forum in Kampala. Both platform meetings recommended the intervention as an effective

[6] Work plan for Rehabilitation of Boreholes under PRDP F/Y 2009/2010, DWO Adjumani
[7] Statement given by Christopher Gule, Adjumani TC representative of AHPM 12th of November 2009
[8] The standards of line ministry reports that one borehole serves 300 people.
[9] Water and Sanitation Sector Performance Report 2009, Government of Uganda, Ministry of Water and Environment
[10] Statement of Assistant Water Officer, Mr Latigo Collins on 12th of November 2009
[11] National WASH Learning Forum 2009, daily news- day 1. 12th of October 2009
[12] The agreed Minutes of the 2009 Joint Sector Review Water and Environment Sector 14th-16th of October 2009, Kampala,

approach to increase functionality. The IDM triggered the DWO of Yumbe to initiate the establishment of an association of Hand Pump Mechanics. The national learning forum recommended this approach to improve O&M and reported this to the Joint Sector Review 2009, which is reflected in the agreed minutes[12].

The lessons learned while implementing this assignment are listed as:

- There is an interest of the hand pump mechanics to be united into an association, since they see the benefits. This association has increased the service delivery of the members and has resulted in improved functionality rates throughout the district.
- Functionality rates given from the national level have a large discrepancy with the *factual* functionality rates, as the *factual* rates were 15% lower than the official statistics used at the national level. This could be applicable for all districts in Uganda.
- The major issues the hand pump mechanics are challenged with are the lack of tools and the accessibility of spare parts.
- Using learning platforms and sharing "best practices" with sector stakeholders has informed, involved and was accepted as a strategy to improve functionality by the sector stakeholders. Furthermore it has influenced policy at the national level.
- Opening a joint bank account has proven to be difficult for the AHPM due to bank procedures, though having a bank account is crucial for the accountability of the association and the ability to receive contracts to repair boreholes on behalf of the district.
- Establishing an association has taken more time than initially estimated. To ensure ownership it is crucial to allow the members the time they need to develop this association, instead of following a strict implementation plan.

Recommendations for learning and follow up

Based on the lessons learned the following recommendations have been made:

- Establishing and strengthening an AHPM can create desirable outcomes and impacts if the members identify their personal benefit in establishing such an association. This can be duplicated in other districts and could be used in other countries where functionality and limited participation of the private sector is an issue.
- Functionality rates given from the national level should be treated as indicative since they could be (highly) unreliable. The factual functionality is probably lower than the national statistics indicate.
- The Water and Sanitation sector stakeholders should investigate modalities of addressing the issues of lack of spare parts and access to tools including *Public Private Partnerships* with roles and responsibilities.
- Sharing "best practices" is a modality to catalyze change and improve service delivery. Capacity building programs therefore should be linked with Multi Stakeholder Processes / Learning Alliances since it can influence the practice of the other stakeholders. Moreover "the owners" can take credit for their interventions which is a strong motivational factor.