

WASH sector learning and sharing in Nepal and the way forward

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It is evident that learning and sharing activities in the WASH sector in Nepal is very limited. Information management has not been a priority and there is no proper mechanism to receive feedback from grassroots to the policy making resulting into ad hoc planning.

Sharing on WASH policies, technological options and good practices among stakeholders is essential to achieve the targets of Sanitation and Water for All. For this, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene-Resource Centre Network Nepal (WASH-RCNN) has been bringing together information and knowledge and created regular learning and sharing platform for sector stakeholders both at central and decentralized level.

Learning and sharing through interaction programmes and partnership with media professionals has been useful in highlighting gaps and challenges in the sector. The WASH-RCNN, initially an informal network, now a semi-formal network is being transformed into an autonomous formal registered network of organisations working in the WASH sector and intends to facilitate effective sharing of information and promote the use thereof to improve the performance of the WASH sector as a whole.

The WASH-RCNN will continue to utilize its capacity and potential at national level to engage knowledge sharing activities. Our experience in production and dissemination of information products and support to decentralized WASH resource centres and the website and e-newsletter will play a key role in linking knowledge at different administrative levels.

The network, in the past two years, primarily aimed at enhancing network's capacities for facilitation of learning processes in the WASH sector in Nepal. IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre, The Netherlands under PSO capacity building programme supported this initiative.

Institutionalisation of the network

The Strategic Plan of the network has been developed. The network members signed a Charter leading it to a semi-formal network. Another important development in WASH-RCNN's institutionalisation process is that members have now agreed to formally register the network as an autonomous organisation. The network's constitution including

"Regional WASH Resource Centres essential"

Gajendra Kumar Thakur, Director General of Department of Water Supply and Sewerage (<http://www.dwss.gov.np>) mentioned the importance and need of WASH Resource Centres in all development regions of Nepal while delivering a speech during an inauguration programme of Regional WASH Resource Centre in Surkhet. This resource centre will be a secretariat of Regional WASH Coordination Committee (R-WASH-CC) in the Mid-western region.

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membership policy, governance structure, administrative and financial policies and procedures have been drafted. The network will now gradually increase members.

Networking and sector learning

The WASH-RCNN has been enhancing networking and sector learning through interaction programmes



and maintaining communication and sharing among stakeholders through e-learning (website and newsletter etc.). Since 2009, fifteen major interaction programmes were organised on themes such as total sanitation movement, drinking water quality standard, knowledge management for disaster risk reduction, sustainable sanitation, safe drinking water for people living with HIV/AIDS, climate change etc. Members and WASH sector partners worked together to organise these programmes.

The WASH sector news from Nepal, network's news, and information products and services on sustainable sanitation have been updated every month in the website (www.nepal.watsan.net). Nepal Node for Sustainable Sanitation (NNSS) hosted by Environment and Public Health Organisation (ENPHO) provides sustainable sanitation related content for website. The network is also producing *PANEE ra SARSAFAI: WASH sector E-Bulletin of Nepal* every month from January 2010. This E-Bulletin has been appreciated by national and international WASH sector organisations. Discussions with key sector stakeholders who have shown interest to make this E-Bulletin a common publication of the WASH sector is ongoing.

The national coordinator of the network and representatives from member organisations participated in various national workshops, meetings and international conferences to establish relationships with national and international partners and networks, and also to increase WASH-RCNN's visibility. Building on the contacts and relationship established, a team building event was organised to bring key WASH sector stakeholders in Nepal closer together and bring about synergy in their efforts.

Capacity building for better sharing

Knowledge managers at member organisations of the network participated in a four-day training workshop on 'Managing Information in a Digital Age' organised by Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), New Delhi. A training session on Information Management was organised in association with the British Council in Nepal for staff members of key WASH sector organisations (Government and NGOs). The training need assessment on information management of participating organisations was done before the training sessions. Altogether 30 people were trained on different aspects of information management. The monitoring and evaluation of outcomes of the trainings is planned this year.

Another important activity in 2010 included WASH media fellowship for journalists. Seventeen journalists were awarded the fellowship through which interesting stories on WASH issues from eastern to far western part of Nepal have been produced. The media fellowship under WASH-RCNN programme supported by IRC and NNSS/ENPHO programme supported by Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI)

were merged together.

Furthermore, Regional WASH Resource Centre (RC) has been established at Regional Monitoring and Supervision Office (RMSO), Surkhet under Department of Water Supply and Sewerage (DWSS). The MOU has been signed among RMSO, WASH-RCNN/ENPHO, UNICEF, WHO and SNV Nepal to run this regional level WASH RC in Surkhet. This Regional WASH RC will also be the Secretariat of Regional WASH Coordination Committee (R-WASH-CC) of Mid-western Region of Nepal. Surkhet is a hub for hilly districts in Mid-western part of Nepal that were heavily affected due to diarrhoea and cholera epidemics in 2009 which took more than 300 lives of people.



The network also supported the strengthening of WASH Resource Centres in Water Supply and Sanitation Divisional Office (WSSDO), Chitwan and NGO Friends Service Council Nepal (FSCN), Rupandehi district. Chitwan district has been selected as a Sanitation Model District (SMD) by the government and has a plan to announce Open Defecation Free (ODF) district in early 2011.

The way forward

The WASH-RCNN has been able to establish itself as an important network in the WASH sector to advocate for knowledge sharing and effective information management. Sector professionals have recognised it as a potential network to develop itself as a knowledge sharing hub. The network is having discussions with key WASH sector stakeholders in Nepal for long term partnership for knowledge sharing on WASH which can potentially help to raise funds for future activities.

The network is a key member of the Nepal WASH Alliance (NWA) which provides additional strength in bringing together WASH sector experiences and financial support to knowledge management initiatives in Nepal through Dutch WASH Alliance (DWA). Partnership with IRC provides opportunity for conceptual support on strategy/documentation/monitoring and channels to share experiences beyond Nepal. IRC has ensured to continue support for sector learning and KM in Nepal and will contribute towards producing case studies, knowledge sharing events and capacity building together with WASH-RCNN.

Efforts will be made for secured funding to continue with the production of existing knowledge products and services and develop new knowledge products for effective learning in the WASH sector. The priority activities of the network for 2011-2012 will be:

Strengthening Regional WASH Resource Centres

The WASH-RCNN has plans to provide support to regional resource centre(s) for next two years. The Director General of DWSS mentioned the importance and need of WASH Resource Centres in all development regions of Nepal in his inaugural speech during the inauguration of Regional WASH Resource Centre in Surkhet. Other stakeholders recognized the value of decentralized WASH resource centres too and are hopeful that the Regional WASH Resource Centre will fulfill information gap required for effective planning and monitoring. The network will analyse,

document and publish experiences of setting up of decentralised resource centres and assess how effective has the approach of establishing regional resource centres been to meet knowledge demand in the sector.

Internet based learning and sharing

In order to utilize the potential of internet based learning and sharing, the network will continue to update/produce website and newsletters and evaluate the use of information, looking in particular at the use different products and services (e.g. web site, newsletters). Also provide training on e-learning and internet based advocacy to its staff and members which will help in maintaining effective communication with members, sector professionals and support organizations. The effectiveness of the internet based communication channels used by the network will also be analysed in the coming year.

Knowledge sharing platform

The WASH-RCNN will organize interaction programmes in Kathmandu as well as outside Kathmandu to inform people on the latest developments or interesting case studies in the sector and also provide a forum for the people to discuss various issues related to the WASH sector with relevant officials and other stakeholders. These forums will provide a platform for effective networking as well as sector learning on a regular basis.

Explore avenues for partnership with media

The network will monitor, document and publish the results of media fellowship provided to seventeen journalists in 2010. How effective has the approach of providing these fellowships been to meet knowledge demand by sector players? To what extent have the fellowships supported sector learning in an effective manner? Discussions with media houses/professionals for possible partnership will be done based on the findings of this review.

We believe these initiatives will help the network to establish an enabling environment for effective WASH sector learning and sharing which will eventually lead towards better coordination and knowledge management for improved WASH services in Nepal.

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