

Strengthening Capacity for Local Government staff in Uganda through training in Monitoring for effectiveness

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Abstract

The Directorate of Water Development (DWD) is the government of Uganda sector lead agency that is responsible for managing water resources, coordinating and regulating all the sector activities that include water supply and sanitation services in Uganda. The Directorate of Water Development of Uganda works through and supports districts local governments through a decentralized arrangement in order to achieve the overall sector goals. This support focuses on planning, mobilization and training of communities for execution and maintenance of facilities and monitoring and evaluation of water, sanitation and hygiene facilities and community management systems developed. The Directorate of Water Development Uganda has over the years invested in the capacity building of district staff in various skills related to development and sustainability of water and sanitation facilities and systems. However, the monitoring and evaluation component of these activities was noted to be rather weak. Monitoring and evaluation of progress and impact of project inputs is part of a strategic approach that entails equipping implementation personnel with the necessary skills to carry out monitoring and evaluation. This was a realized need in the sector. DWD therefore has worked with a local capacity building NGO NETWAS Uganda since 2002 to design and carry out Monitoring for Effectiveness course for its local government staff. NETWAS has trained staff from over 40 Districts in the country. As a result the Districts have been able to collect data on their performance in the sector which is contained in a report every year and presented during the annual joint sector review. NETWAS also carried out a follow up study on its former participants to find out whether the training had an impact and also to find out whether the workplans made after the training were actually implemented. This study showed that in some districts it was possible to implement the workplans with support from the Districts. In most Districts community based management systems had been set up following the guides given during the training. As a result operation and maintenance of the systems had greatly improved in the Districts.

Keywords

Monitoring and Evaluation, effectiveness

Introduction

Poverty eradication is a fundamental objective of Uganda's development strategy with a resolution by Government to reduce it by 10% in the year 2017. In a multi- sectoral approach, recognizing the multi-dimensional nature of poverty and the inter linkages between the influencing factors; Government has prioritised provision of safe water among others as key in reducing poverty. Access to clean and safe water and improved sanitation facilities and practices leads to improved health and are essential

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investments in human capital and therefore have a direct and immediate impact on the quality of life and contribute to long term social and economic development, thus eliminating poverty.

The national water policy, the strategic investment plan 2000 - 2015 (SIP15) and the five year operational plan 2002 - 2007 (OP5) describe Uganda's overall water sector strategies. A decentralized, privatized, demand responsive approach with full community responsibility for source operation and maintenance is described.

The challenge of sustainability of improved water sources is being faced and addressed increasingly by government at the present time. It is clear that community based management systems without on going support has been an inadequate strategy, and there has been a great deal of learning from the successes and failures of some Districts. It remains to be seen to what extent Government will be able to provide pre and post construction support of rural water and sanitation systems in future. Also whether if everybody in the sector has knowledge to implement water and sanitation programmes.

Water and Sanitation Sector in Uganda

Uganda's population is currently estimated at 26 million of which 85% live in rural areas. The coverage of water supply and sanitation in rural areas has increased from 49.8% in 2000 to 61.3 % in June 2005 and 80% for urban areas (Water and Sanitation Sector Performance report, 2005).

Responsibility of the sector is shared between different ministries and coordinated nationally by water and sanitation Sector working group. The Ministry of Water and Environment includes the Department of water Development (DWD), the lead sector agency for rural areas and small towns. The National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSC) is responsible for the 43 large towns while the Ministry of Health (MoH), Environmental Health Division is leading the development of integrated sanitation strategy for Uganda

One of the actors at the intermediate level is the District level. Districts in Uganda play an important role in linking the national level and the community who are the end users. They are involved in planning, mobilization and training of communities for execution and maintenance of facilities and monitoring and evaluation of water, sanitation and hygiene facilities and community management systems developed. The Government of Uganda is committed to strengthening and rationalizing the framework for monitoring and evaluation at the different levels of local governments. There fore training of the District staff was a step I building their capacity to implement, monitor and evaluate their programs and also steer them basing on evidence, lessons learnt and data generated from the M&E programmes. Through government's policy of decentralization, Uganda now has over 63 Districts. As a way of taking services closer to the people new staff have been employed some of them just graduating from the University lacked skills in implementing some of the programmes.

Action monitoring for Effectiveness course

Training issues

The Action monitoring for Effectiveness course was designed to address key issues of monitoring and evaluation of water and sanitation programmes. This course was also modified to address specific gaps

identified in the internal monitoring reports from DWD. The key issues raised by the internal monitoring reports included:

- (i) Need for the multi-sectoral water sector staff to appreciate conceptual aspects of monitoring and evaluation (e.g. monitoring issues, indicators/parameters) and how these are applied in practical project situations;
- (ii) Inadequate skills in the development and use of the various participatory tools and approaches for data collection and analysis;
- (iii) Need for project staff to appreciate their roles and responsibilities for effective mobilization and empowerment of communities to carry out monitoring activities and;
- (iv) Lack of coordination and limitations in the flow of monitoring and evaluation information, its use and feed back within the districts and to community level users.

Objectives of the Course

Overall Goal: This course was aimed at enabling Water sector staff in the districts to plan and implement monitoring and evaluation activities aimed at improving performance over the short term, and ensure sustainability of community based programmes in the future.

Specific Objectives: The Action Monitoring for Effectiveness course was specifically intended to:

- (i) Refresh Water Sector staff on approaches and tools for effective monitoring and evaluation.
- (ii) Give an opportunity for those without previous exposure to monitoring and evaluation methods to learn new concepts and skills.
- (iii) Enable staff to practice the application of M&E skills.
- (iv) Prepare participants to facilitate users to assess the project progress and impact through use of participatory (or Community Based Management System) approaches.

In order to realize the targeted outcome of this training, the course content focused on understanding basic concepts in M&E, practice on the development and use of participatory monitoring and evaluation approaches/tools, sharing of experiences through case studies, development of indicators and instruments for data collection, from exposure to a carefully designed training approach used by experienced NETWAS consultants with vast experience in the monitoring of water and sanitation programmes. This involved skillful balancing of inputs from facilitators and participants as well. Learning methods included video shows, group work assignments, field visit and data analysis using the computer software all suited to adults and adapted for this course.

Immediate Outcomes of this Course

The course on Action Monitoring for Effectiveness was able to achieve the following immediate outcomes:

- Initially there were 15 Districts trained in 2001 however this number increased due to demands from other Districts to DWD to sponsor them for the same. By 2004 40 district staff had been trained and demonstrated the ability to use Monitoring and evaluation tools.
- Participants better prepared to carryout monitoring of water, sanitation and hygiene activities through acquisition of relevant skills and exposure to M&E.

- Participants appreciated the need for enhanced coordination between the Directorate of Water Development and the districts.
- The participants also understood the importance of improved information flow between the districts and Directorate of Water Development, which leads to improved decision making on issues raised by monitoring or evaluation exercises.

Shortcomings of the Course

The two weeks course was not enough for a comprehensive discussion of Action Monitoring for Effectiveness with a focus on the recent developments of the water sector in Uganda. Some key aspects like the role of the private sector participation in monitoring water supply and sanitation activities were not sufficiently discussed.

Recommendations and Next Steps for the course

Whereas Directorate of Water Development has taken a strategic step in equipping district water sector staff with skills in monitoring and evaluation, this action raises the need to continue to build up monitoring and evaluation skills within the districts.

Specific recommendations and actions after the courses include the following:

1. Putting in place a follow up mechanism for the trained staff to ensure that monitoring plans are in place and implemented.
2. An assessment of the impact of the training carried out both on the participants and their work in the districts.
3. Involve selected politicians in these courses since monitoring will now involve other stakeholders. This will contribute to strengthening the monitoring capacity of other stakeholders like the politicians.
4. There is an immediate need to have training on the use of participatory approaches and methodologies for most of the district staff. Participatory approaches particularly the PHAST approach is very vital especially in the water and sanitation sector where the communities are very important stakeholders. It was noted during the training that the participants needed to be oriented on the application of participatory approaches and methodologies as means of helping them facilitate communities during monitoring activities.

Follow Up Study after the course

- In 2005, NETWAS was requested to look at recommendations 1 and 2 above. A Consultancy was carried out with the following objectives:
- To find out the immediate effects (improvements or other changes) of the training e.g. monitoring and evaluation, reporting (frequency and quality of reporting) and the implementation of monitoring action plans developed for the various districts by the respective district staff during the training.
- To establish to what level the beneficiaries are involved in the monitoring process for water supply and sanitation services.
- To develop a way forward for supporting the district water sector staff in the supervision and sustaining of monitoring processes at all levels. The levels below include County, Subcounty, Parish and Village levels.

- To identify additional training elements in the Action Monitoring for Effectiveness.

The exercise was carried out in 5 Districts. The Districts were selected randomly. The visits included discussions with the participants, the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) and the Water User Committee members in the villages. A set of tools guided the team through all the discussions. Observations regarding the use and maintenance of the water source were also done.

Results of the Study

Discussion with the participants who attended AMFE course

Discussion with the participants revealed that most of them could remember what they had learnt and the contents of the course.

90 day action plans made by participants

At the end of the course, participants were told to make action plans, which were to be implemented when they return to work. During the field visits they were asked if these had been implemented. 4 out of 5 Districts had implemented at least $\frac{3}{4}$ of their action plans. The reports had the planned activities and their outputs and the supervisors had received reports. All Districts developed new indicators to measure performance of their programmes.

The key outputs which were realized after implementing the M & E action plans by some participants were;

- Records books are now in place for household sanitation and water sources monitoring
- Feedback to the beneficiaries after a water source has been visited by Community Development Assistant (CDA) is being carried out.
- When water sources break down, communities report immediately
- Quality of works done by contractors has improved.
- Community contribution from communities has increased greatly although the co- funding at sub county level has reduced.
- Communities have been empowered to manage their WATSAN affairs. This has been confirmed as now communities are able to take decisions on their water sources, are able to respond to the functionality of their sources, they now value their source and also take it as their own

Implementation of the community based management system (CBMS)

This system was introduced to participants during the trainings. After the training, Districts have been able to implement the system, which is widely endorsed and regarded as one of the best options in Uganda. The CBMS calls for community participation and involvement at decision-making level right from the beginning of the water supply development. Furthermore, continuous community sensitization and mobilization is required.

In some Districts like Iganga, this has been successful because; Roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders is clear, there is high commitment of communities involved, the communities are organised,

Spare parts are locally available ,O&M funds are kept in banks, Committee members have been trained and Communities are well sensitized and have high ownership spirit.

The above skills were acquired by the Districts who in turn trained the different Water and Sanitation committees.

Challenges/obstacles met by participants while carrying out M&E after the course by participants

Some of the challenges met while carrying out M&E in the districts include

- The District budget usually never allocates money specifically for M&E activities, so it's up to the field officers to do it concurrently with other funded activities. However there were challenges in implementing some of the plans, most districts had already sent in their plans and there were no budgets allocated for M &E activities. The officer from Mukono District said *"On resources to carry out the action plan, there were no funds set-aside for the planned activities. However, I was able to carry out the activities using the available funds for other activities. For example, approximately 10 million was available for promotion of Ecosan technology to improve on sanitation. While the Ecosan promotion was going on, M&E activities for other issues was also carried out since fuel was available under this budget. The officer concluded that since M&E activities are supposed to be continuous throughout the year they were done concurrently with other activities, which are funded by the Districts"*.
- The Sub-county staff also never budget for monitoring of WATSAN activities, they assume district has a big budget for that.
- Political interference is a big problem in most Districts, while staffs are sensitizing the communities on operation and maintenance contribution; the politicians refuse them to contribute.
- There are so many programs being introduced at the district and each organization wants you to implement and report in a special format e.g. the 10 golden indicators, OPS, TSU programmes, etc.
- 2% of the Local Government Development Programme (LGDP) funds were too little to implement all M & E activities

Monitoring Reports in the Sector

As a result of the training of Districts staff, DWD now receives improved monitoring Information specifically from the trained district staff, and whether there are improvements in quality of reporting from district water sector staff especially those that attended the training, one of the engineers informed us that all district staff send one monitoring report making it hard to tell who actually wrote it or contributed towards it. However, tremendous improvements had been noted in the M&E reports. The role of NETWAS in the sector has been recognized as a capacity building NGO in this field.

Conclusions from the follow up study and trainings included

- The need for M&E of all water and Sanitation projects is great and was recognized in all districts we visited. This need was expressed by the CAO themselves and the District Staff. It was also

evident in communities we visited that much as they rarely document some of their M&E activities, they actually do monitor their source functionality, water quality etc, as agreed on in the meetings.

- The communities prefer that the District train them in proper records keeping. This will go long way in ensuring transparency among the WUC and also promote trust.
- According to the Chairpersons Water User Committee talked to, M&E has helped communities understand that they are the owners of the sources and it's their responsibility to see that it continues serving them well.
- Where the Community Development Assistant (CDA) has continuously gone to monitor the O&M of the source, communities have performed very well especially with keeping their jerrycans clean.
- The Income generating Projects that have been successful in some communities have ensured a sustainable O&M fund.
- There is need to document the roles and responsibilities of communities plus any monitoring plan in place. Distribution of these documents to those who do not attend meetings.
- Political monitoring has taken over technical monitoring in most of the District and this has derailed the flow of information.
- DWD needs more staff in its department of monitoring. There is a lot of data from the Districts, which need to be analysed carefully and updated continuously.
- DWD needs to harmonies the water and environmental sanitation (WES) MIS with other Ministries like Ministry of Finance. This can be made easier especially for the officers carrying out M&E for WES learning the same format of data

References

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A well maintained borehole in Iganga District