



CASE STUDY

Ethiopia: WASH Movement for better sanitation and hygiene

In 2004, action was taken to address some major challenges in Ethiopia through the Ethiopia Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene Movement. The objectives were to promote improved water, sanitation and hygiene practices and gain political and social commitment. The initiative has enjoyed great success. Lessons learnt include the importance of defining responsibilities and obligations of members; appointing local staff that facilitates the communication; and regular funding.

Background

Ethiopia is one of the most underprivileged countries in the world, ranking 105 out of 108 on the human poverty index. Approximately 50-70% of the population lives under the absolute poverty line, and the under-five mortality rate is 123 per 1000. Sanitation and hygiene related diseases are among the most common deadly diseases in Ethiopia. In urban slums and rural areas alike, the majority of the population does not have access to sufficient and safe sanitation.

In response to these challenges, in November 2004 the Ethiopia Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Movement was launched under Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC).

While in essence a multi-stakeholder coalition, the group chose to call itself the Ethiopia WASH Movement to emphasize the extent of the social mobilization effort which is needed to lift WASH to the level of priority it needs.

The goal of the Movement is to contribute to the reduction of morbidity and mortality caused by lack of safe and adequate water, poor sanitation and hygienic practices. The objectives are to promote improved water, sanitation and hygiene practices and gain the political and social commitment and endorsement required to make a real difference in the country's water, sanitation and hygiene situation.

Actions taken

The objectives are to promote improved water, sanitation and hygiene practices and gain the political and social commitment and endorsement required to make a real difference in the country's water, sanitation and hygiene situation. The goal of the Movement is to contribute to the reduction of morbidity and mortality caused by lack of safe and adequate water, poor sanitation, and hygienic practices. The movement was built on three major elements: advocacy and social mobilisation, monitoring, and coalition building.

Advocacy, Social Mobilisation, and the Media:

- Each year the WASH Movement in Ethiopia is launched under a new, simple, and catchy slogan, which determines the Movement's focus for the year. Each year an array of mobilisation, media and advocacy activities are carried out under the Movement's slogan.
- "Your Health is in Your Hands" (2004-2005): Distribution of roughly 100,000 bars of soap donated by the private sector throughout the country inside WASH kits; distribution of communication packages with key WASH facts and messages at the grassroots level, translated into five local languages; communication of WASH messages via Ethiopian television and radio, and through specially produced WASH music.
- "Let us Use Latrine for our Health and Dignity" (2005-2006): Direct advocacy with decision makers including the organisation of a WASH Ethiopia Movement familiarisation workshop for regional government officials; a journalist workshop; distribution of 40,000 WASH packs, containing information about proper sanitation, including latrine construction and use.
- "Keep Water Safe" (2006-2007): Launch activities including a high profile launching ceremony, stage dramas, circus, role play, street shows, and processions, broadcasted through local, private and national media outlets; organisation of a private sector briefing workshop and a regional familiarization workshop for representatives from regional health, water and education bureaus of all regions; field visit for journalists and government officials to witness firsthand the effects of WASH efforts followed by a round table discussion.

Monitoring the Movement's impact:

- Carrying out baseline surveys prior to project launch and evaluation studies at the end of each Movement project;
- Activity reports and regular WASH stakeholder meetings follow up and monitor Movement progress.

Coalition building:

- Regular meetings in which participants are actively involved, and which include special learning and sharing sessions to facilitate discussion of several sector issues;
- WASH Ethiopia's monitoring process which allowed the Movement to focus its energies on 'quick wins';
- Organisation of a WASH Revitalisation Workshop, to review its status, update stakeholders on recent achievements, and discuss and devise future means of strengthening the Movement which led to the revision of some of the procedures

Outcomes

The Ethiopian WASH Movement is a strong example of coalition building and has been exceptionally successful in spreading the WASH message and in facilitating change. The Movement contributed to the signing of Memorandum of Understanding among the three sector ministries, and the development of a National Hygiene and Sanitation Strategy and Protocol. In a survey conducted in 2007, 55% of people surveyed had access to a latrine. Of these, 82.7% were aware of the message of the WASH Movement: water, sanitation and hygiene for all.

Several reasons have been identified as contributing to this success. For one, prior to the creation of the Ethiopia WASH Movement there was no concerted, sector-wide coordination in the water, sanitation and hygiene sectors. By forming the WASH Movement, the water, sanitation and hygiene sectors were able to command attention from the government, as well as other agencies. Secondly, the Movement could count on strong commitment from member organisations and individuals; as demonstrated by the array of activities and inputs in which members took part, including the provision of funds, attending weekly meetings, providing time, expertise, materials, meeting spaces, etc. Thirdly, the Movement decided to decentralise early on, establishing Regional Chapters with regional committees, in order to facilitate activities across the country. In addition, the Movement is guided by strong general principles. The composition of the Movement, which includes donors, governmental organisations, non-governmental organisations, faith-based organisations, UN agencies, private sector organisations, media, and individuals, provides a strong base.

The Movement maintains a solid base of support from its members at all levels. Additionally, the objectives set by the Movement have been achievable, and have therefore built confidence in the coalition. For example, the decision to focus on one specific issue each year led to a step-by-step approach and manageable activities. The WASH Movement became very adept at combining social mobilization, and advocacy activities, and strategically used the media as a partner, rather than just as receivers and conduits of information. The focus on regular monitoring allowed the Movement to identify success and shortcomings in a timely manner, thus acting as a compass for the Movement, identifying the methods, programmes, and actions that provided the most positive change. Lastly, the WASH Movement's willingness and ability to reflect and re-evaluate have given it extra strength and durability for years to come.

Lessons Learned

Coalition building is challenging work that takes effort, commitment, and follow-up. To maintain strength and commitment, the coalition should re-evaluate its aims, scope and means, through revitalization workshops or other similar processes at regular intervals.

It is important to have clear guidelines/principles that define membership criteria, roles, responsibilities and obligations, and the benefits gained from membership.

There ought to be at least one full-time focal person tasked with following up on the aims of the coalition and facilitating communication and coordination among coalition members.

The coalition needs financial partners that provide regular funding, as experience has taught that financial contributions from members may not be sufficiently consistent to ensure availability of a constant budget. However, all contributors should be duly recognized.

Decision makers in member organisations should maintain active participation in the coalition. Each organisation should appoint a liaison to be the delegate to the coalition. It should be clear what mandate for decision making this delegate has within their organisation.

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