

WaterAid in Ethiopia Country programme evaluation

The evaluation of WaterAid in Ethiopia took place between September and November 2009. It was carried out by external consultants and a WaterAid staff member and was expected to assess achievements, inform the development of the next country strategy and identify future opportunities.

In Ethiopia, the current Country Strategy was developed in 2005 for the period 2005-10 and was reviewed and streamlined in 2007. The revised Strategy has five objectives designed to reflect both the national context and WaterAid's prevailing Global Strategy.

Objective 1: Improvement in sector performance and accountability through monitoring and learning from processes and programmes.

This was demonstrated through close engagement with government at all levels in capacity strengthening, providing further opportunities for influencing policy, and WaterAid in Ethiopia is now seen as a legitimate representative of Civil Society Organisations in the WASH sector. This has enabled capacity building of community managed water boards, and helped achieve success in developing community-friendly legislation with regional government. WaterAid host four other water and sanitation focused organisations in their Addis Ababa office, which effectively supports influencing work, as well as helping partner NGOs to grow in capacity and stature.

However, at national level, WaterAid in Ethiopia lacked a holistic sector influencing strategy with clear change objectives, thus missing opportunities to capitalise on its service delivery reputation. Under staffing of the Policy Advocacy Department may be a contributing factor.

Objective 2: Build capacity of partners and support them to implement pro-poor policies, strategies and sustainable service delivery.

WaterAid in Ethiopia is building up local partners' human resources, technical competence and accountability and has helped them to leverage significant non-WaterAid funding and encourage funding from other INGOs. WaterAid in Ethiopia encourages sustainability of services by integrating with government services using its expertise in the water, sanitation and hygiene sector and developing effective mechanisms to bring community-managed water committees together for more complex, inter-linked schemes.

Nevertheless, a wide geographical spread of activities with limited strategic thinking is contributing to high supervisory costs, insufficient inter-project linkages, and inadequate application of lessons learnt into service delivery and consequently, missed opportunities for 'deepening' its impact. Technical shortcomings of some projects could have been reduced with application of standard designs, better supervision and support from the Addis office. The country programme is over-committed to direct service delivery, with insufficient use of partners in some areas, and lacks a clear strategy for project phase-out or long-term backstopping support with most partners after withdrawal.

Objective 3: ‘Encourage[s] innovative and adaptive approaches and technologies in WaterAid in Ethiopia and others programmes that can be taken to scale’.

WaterAid in Ethiopia’s work on equity and inclusion, particularly the development of inclusive designs for water systems and latrines, is a recognised strength of the country programme. However, project locations are chosen according to water needs primarily and sanitation and hygiene are automatically integrated, but the latter merit separate attention with different skills and timeframes. Various interventions show limited technological innovation, with the adoption of approaches insufficiently analysed before implementation. Sanitation and hygiene are particularly affected by a lack of innovation, with reliance on Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation (PHAST) type approaches and insufficient critique and localisation of Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) or social marketing.

Objective 4: ‘Develop further WaterAid in Ethiopia’s own organisational capacity to support delivery of the Strategy’.

The evaluation showed that the new organisational structure has been successfully adopted with the development of supportive organisational policies. Provision has been made for making staff aware of policies that are in place through induction and training and budget allocated for staff development.

Administratively, the budget-holder system operated within WaterAid in Ethiopia is bringing heavy workloads, taking staff outside their skill sets, inhibiting project cross-linkage and leading to replication of report writing. There are also overlaps in staff roles, mainly in research and in partner financial monitoring. There may be opportunities for further rationalisation of staff numbers.

Objective 5: Contribute to and guide regional and global forums and initiatives with quality evidence, case studies, research material and advocacy.

WaterAid in Ethiopia produces excellent learning publications grounded in solid research, some of which have contributed to WaterAid global policy (especially in equity and inclusion). However, research and communication work is weakened by the absence of a clear overall strategy and by insufficient collaboration with other research institutions.

Recommendations

In response to the issues highlighted in this evaluation, WaterAid in Ethiopia should ‘deepen rather than widen’; that is, do less but do it better. There is a need to focus both geographically and thematically, developing a stronger ‘brand’ with core competencies in selected areas. The scale of direct service delivery work by WaterAid in Ethiopia should be reduced in favour of implementation partnerships, limiting direct service delivery to innovation, demonstration and gap filling. More effort should be expended on influencing major sector players.

Sector monitoring and influencing requires a more coherent strategy with clear change objectives.

Partnership and service delivery should adopt a tighter geographical focus in three regions, gradually phasing out elsewhere. 'Self-implementation' should be avoided and WaterAid in Ethiopia should work through partners for service delivery, which requires a formal partnership strategy to be developed. It also needs to investigate alternative (non-Water Board) approaches for Operation and Maintenance (O&M) of scattered water sources.

In its innovation and adaptation work, WaterAid should conduct thorough and critical analysis of international experiences before introducing innovations to Ethiopia; particularly in summarising and disseminating experiences with PHAST, CLTS and sanitation marketing. Reflecting the different skills and timeframes required, there is merit in developing separate partnerships for water versus those for sanitation and hygiene. There is also justification for different geographical focuses for these components, with a rural emphasis on water supply and an urban emphasis on sanitation innovation and water utility support.

Organisational strengthening could be supported by reviewing the budget-holder system and considering other feasible options.

WaterAid in Ethiopia's research, learning and communication require clear change objectives to be developed. It also needs more effective research-practice linkages so that research findings and learning are applied more effectively into service delivery through WaterAid in Ethiopia's partners.

Looking forward

Delivering against WaterAid's new global aims requires a more tightly managed, coherent and cohesive country programme, which is soundly run and well documented. WaterAid in Ethiopia will therefore need to be clearer about what value it brings and what it will contribute to filling sector gaps. This justifies a tighter focus all round.

The evaluation suggests a re-alignment of the country programme objectives with WaterAid's four new global aims. A potential organisational structure to deliver upon those aims is also proposed.



WaterAid transforms lives by improving access to safe water, hygiene and sanitation in the world's poorest communities. We work with partners and influence decision-makers to maximise our impact.

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