

WaterAid in Zambia

Country programme evaluation

Introduction

This is a summary of the WaterAid in Zambia country programme evaluation carried out in May 2009. In Zambia, WaterAid works in Southern and Luapula Provinces, spending about ZMK8-9 billion (just over £1 million) annually. The evaluation approach concentrated on the relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability of the country programme's work in addressing barriers to development of the water and sanitation sector in Zambia; providing water and sanitation access for poor and excluded people; and whether it is effective in influencing other responsible organisations to improve access nationally.



A dish-drying rack in a community supported by WaterAid in Zambia – an example of one of the types of practical facilities promoted by the country programme to improve hygiene.

National context

Zambia is large country with low population density. Two thirds of the population live in rural areas. Rural water supply and sanitation coverage are estimated at 37% and 13% respectively, with the corresponding urban figures standing at 36% and 40%.

The National Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Programme (NRWSSP) is gradually being implemented by the Ministry of Local Government and Housing. However, the programme is severely under-staffed and under-resourced. There is a major shortage of skilled staff in Government and civil society organisations with the ability and experience to lead and drive the sector. Because of this, those who are in positions of responsibility are over-stretched and unable to engage effectively in the sector. The slow pace of decentralisation is further preventing districts from taking on their responsibilities under the NRWSSP.

Many of the bilateral and multi-lateral agencies are active as donors or cooperating partners. In urban centres, commercial utilities provide water and sewerage services, with limited water provision to peri-urban areas and small towns. Sanitation is a serious problem in these areas. In Zambia, WaterAid is the only large sector-specialised NGO, although a number of other INGOs also have water and sanitation programmes. There is little demand or competition in the private sector.

The Zambian Government allocated ZMK214 billion (approximately £26 million) to water and sanitation services in 2009. Of this total, more than 90% is from donors, showing an extraordinary dependence on external assistance. WaterAid in Zambia's own annual budget amounts to about 40% of the national government's commitment to the sector.

Despite these limitations, the situation is dynamic, and efforts are being made to strengthen the capacity of provincial and district institutions. However, progress is not fast or uniform, and there continues to be an important role for WaterAid and other external organisations.

Findings: Relevance

The country programme design is highly relevant to the national context, the identified barriers to the development of Zambia's water and sanitation sector, and the needs of Zambia's poor. However, the national context is rapidly changing, and the country programme will need to adapt to the changing environment in the coming years.

Programme design

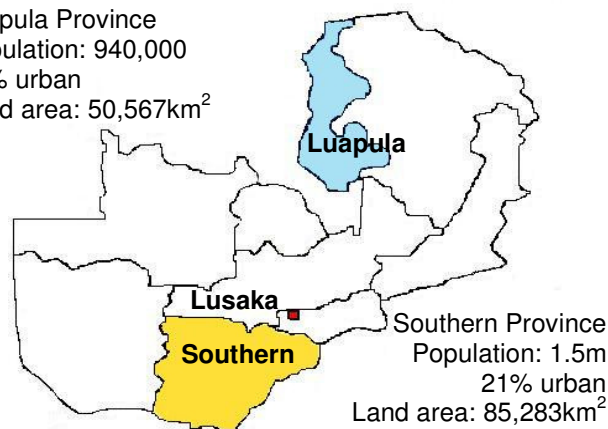
WaterAid in Zambia has identified a number of changes which it believes are needed in national policy and practice, and has designed the country programme to address these through advocating for change with local government and promoting good practice in implementation. Changes needed include a stronger national focus on sanitation and hygiene; a roll-out of the NRWSSP to districts with corresponding increases in staff, resources, and capacity building; and appropriate policies and strategies for peri-urban services, especially sanitation. WaterAid in Zambia's sub-programmes are designed to contribute to these changes by practical engagement in the operational districts. This practice gives the country programme national credibility and authority.

Poverty and exclusion

More than 50% of Zambia's population is classified as "extremely poor", with 85% of these people living in rural areas. Just over 1% of the population is physically disabled, 14.5% are infected with HIV/AIDS, and 4% are over the age of 60 years. WaterAid in Zambia uses the available statistics to identify the least well-served and to focus the country programme's efforts in the areas of greatest need. The country programme takes a pragmatic approach

Zambia

Luapula Province
Population: 940,000
13% urban
Land area: 50,567km²



to other vulnerable population groups, addressing need at the point of intervention and developing individual disability-friendly toilets as needed, although there is no standard approach for targeting the needs of disabled people. The country programme needs to increase its efforts in this area. The current approach is a strategic improvement on past efforts which were less effective and more expensive because they were spread over larger areas.

Findings: Effectiveness

Over the last three years WaterAid in Zambia has achieved a number of important successes. It has:

- Brought a significant amount of funding into the sector, and used it effectively to bring about increased service coverage;
- Built partnerships with District Councils and NGOs, contributing to their increased capacity and professionalism;
- Raised and responded to user demand for improved sanitation and hygiene;
- Undertaken a number of significant studies, although few of these have been accessibly published or disseminated.

Geographic focus

The increased geographical focus of WaterAid in Zambia's work over the last few years and its strengthened partnerships with District Councils

have enabled it to bring about significant change at both ward and district level. The focus on areas with particularly low coverage has also been effective, as coverage statistics have improved remarkably. Further effectiveness is only limited by financial and human resources. The country programme places less emphasis on Water Resource Management and water safety planning, although some research has been carried out on water conservation, harvesting, and artificial recharge.

Southern Province: Monze District

In Monze District, an important achievement of the programme has been in training community members to supervise borehole drilling. All the villages understood the process and activities of the drillers, and kept records of the operation. However, the question of community contributions for the ongoing operation and maintenance of the water supply could be an issue in the future when those schemes break down. The wide scale use of toilets¹ with concrete floors and the widespread practice of hand-washing is impressive.

Luapula Province: Milenge District

Most of WaterAid in Zambia's projects have operated according to a fairly conventional but well-executed model of subsidised service delivery. The one exception is the pilot self supply project in Milenge District financed by UNICEF. Here it has been possible to stimulate real demand which has translated into household cash investment. The implementation is under the direct control of WaterAid in Zambia rather than a partner organisation, and the project is enabling rural water supply upgrading to take place with no subsidy for materials. Initial results are very encouraging with some households now investing in concrete well-rings and others in improvements to source protection using local materials.

Urban approach

In Zambia, WaterAid supports three urban projects in Lusaka, Monze, and Livingstone. In comparison to the rural sub-programme, urban work has had a

¹Communities, programme partners and WaterAid in Zambia prefer the word "toilet" over "latrine", when referring to a modern on-site excreta disposal.

Sanitation subsidies: the arguments in Zambia

In Zambia the question of subsidies for sanitation hardware remains controversial. WaterAid in Zambia advocates for a partial subsidy approach, while others including UNICEF and DANIDA support no-subsidy approaches such as Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS).

No-subsidy approaches create demand by establishing a market in which private sector artisans supply sanitation hardware to households for a realistic price. Potential advantages of this approach are that it is likely to lead to sustainable growth of safe sanitation without further external support, and more money can be used to create demand. However the effect is limited if demand creation is incomplete or slow.

Many poor households cannot afford materials needed to construct durable and safe toilets. Hardware subsidies are a way of reaching total coverage quickly if financial resources are available. However, they require substantial external cash resources, and the approach may be less viable in the long-term if use is not sustained beyond the life-span of the original structures built.

Further studies are needed to provide evidence illustrating the success (or otherwise) of one or both of these approaches.

relatively low profile within the country programme. The urban projects have a greater focus on sanitation than water supply services. The approaches to delivering services and the technologies adopted were similar to those selected within rural communities, where sanplats and pit toilets are most common. In some of the more densely populated areas, it may be appropriate for WaterAid to consider alternative approaches to improving sanitation access, or find appropriate combined solutions to the provision of water supply and sanitation services.

In Zambia commercial utilities have the mandate to support water and sewerage services in urban areas and small towns. An important area for future exploration by the country programme will need to be the strengthening of relationships with relevant commercial utilities, which could further support the targeting of initiatives in the areas of greatest need.

Equity and inclusion

While the country programme has a systematic approach for identifying the geographical areas with the greatest needs for improvement to water and sanitation services, there is not much evidence to suggest that supported services are specifically designed to meet the individual needs of the most vulnerable members of communities. The country programme targets general needs more strongly than specific disability needs, and they try to deal with the issue pragmatically by appealing to the support structures in the communities where people with disabilities live.

Influencing

WaterAid in Zambia has been an effective influencing organisation in its participation in sector coordination and policy processes. The country programme is well respected in the sector nationally, and it has a seat at the table in the main coordination fora. With UNICEF, it initiated the set-up of the NGO Forum and raised sanitation on the national agenda.

Political commitment

A major goal of external sector players in Zambia should be to bring about greater commitment from the national Government to building stronger leadership, producing prompt action, and ensuring adequate allocation of resources in the sector. The tiny budgetary commitment from the Government and the high level of donor dependence mean that sector sustainability will continue to be a major issue for some time to come. While this situation is not a reflection on WaterAid in Zambia, more could be done by the country programme and other stakeholders to pressure high-level leadership in Zambia to improve the national water and sanitation sector.

Organisational effectiveness

WaterAid in Zambia's effectiveness has been weakened by high staff turnover. The reasons for this are complex but relate particularly to the very small pool of sector expertise in Zambia and the greater attractiveness of employers that can offer better remuneration packages.

Findings: Sustainability

Discussions in communities provide evidence of enthusiasm for the perceived benefits of water and sanitation services and facilities, ranging from dish-racks, toilets and hand-washing facilities to water points. Hand-washing facilities are evidently used (the plants which thrive on the used water are testament to this). However, this does not generally translate into adequate financial contributions for the maintenance and repair of water supplies, nor into evidence that households will take appropriate actions when pit toilets fill up, although householders indicated that they will relocate toilet slabs when their pits are full. There is some limited evidence of new householders receiving help from communities in the construction of their own facilities, although it is not clear who pays for materials in this case.

Local institutional arrangements and spare parts supply chains are often not fit for the purpose of permanent service delivery, although minor pump breakdowns are dealt with well through user committees and area pump minders. However, none of this evidence constitutes a guarantee that services and behaviour changes will prove to be truly sustainable. Continual follow-up and support by local government and the country programme will be necessary to ensure that changes brought about by the programme are sustained.

Recurrent funding

The main barrier to long-term sustainability is a lack of recurrent funding – see the inset box on the next page. Households either do not have the cash, or are unwilling to spend it on water supply maintenance and new toilets. WaterAid is not alone in providing services which will have a service life of only five to 10 years, nevertheless such a prospect is not acceptable and solutions need to be found. More could be done to explore options for recurrent funding of developments needed by rural communities. Initiatives such as savings and revolving loans schemes, animal banks, and communal farming plots could all contribute to sustainable solutions at a community level.

Sustained change among partners

As a consequence of its interventions WaterAid in

Zambia should be leaving behind stronger partners and more effective collaborators. The evaluation showed evidence of the strengthening of partner capacity including the development of individual skills, knowledge, and experience, and the organisational effectiveness of partners. Although some partners spoke of the time taken to forge an effective relationship with WaterAid in Zambia, partnerships have generally proved to be effective once the relationship is established.

While it is potentially easier to make progress in developing the capacity of NGOs, there are many issues which make this more difficult with local Government authorities. It reflects well on the country programme that the District Councils which participated in the evaluation all spoke eloquently of their commitment to their partnerships with WaterAid.

The evaluation did not reveal evidence that WaterAid in Zambia's partners have been able to attract funding and operate independently after the cessation of formal partnerships with WaterAid. However the increased organisational capacity of partners suggests that their potential to attract funding may have partially improved.

Recommendations

Increase focus on developing sector capacity and encouraging good practice at all levels, including local and national Government. The water and sanitation sector in Zambia lacks experience, and even organisations such as WaterAid in Zambia have great difficulty recruiting and retaining staff. DFID is currently undertaking a multi-country study of human resource gaps in the sector. The country programme should join with DFID on this study, with a view to influencing actions to address the problems of the sector. WaterAid in Zambia should also work with other country programmes in the Southern Africa region and beyond to systematically document experiences of partner capacity development.

Complete, publish, and disseminate research. WaterAid in Zambia has completed several studies which need to be finalised, published, and disseminated. Other areas which require further research include groundwater trends, recurrent funding of rural water supplies, and

The problem of recurrent funding – who pays?

An average rural household earns about ZMK100,000 (£12) annually, so the cost of building and maintaining sanitation and water facilities is high in relation to income.

Sanitation

As household numbers increase within a community, new toilets are needed. While the skills exist to dig pits, construct and install sanplats, and build superstructures, funding is needed to pay for cement and steel reinforcement, from ZMK 50-100,000 (£6-12) for each toilet.

Water supply

In most areas households are asked to pay a tariff for water point maintenance and repair. However not all households can afford to pay the agreed tariff, and in difficult years (when floods or droughts occur) no-one pays the agreed tariff. The money held in community funds is often only a fraction of what is needed for adequate pump maintenance and eventual replacement.

replication and replacement of toilets when they are full.

Advocate at the highest level of national Government. While commending WaterAid in Zambia for its effective advocacy role in the main sector coordination fora, a targeted campaign is needed to address the apparent problem of limited political will.

Develop urban work through partnerships with commercial utilities. WaterAid in Zambia should renew efforts in this area by establishing strong partnerships with municipalities and commercial utilities. External consultancy may be needed to guide this aspect of the programme.

Clarify country strategy in regard to inclusion of the marginalised. A study should be carried out in WaterAid's operational areas to determine the nature and extent of vulnerability and special needs, and to recommend specific types of intervention to address such needs.

Clarify country strategy on water security. A study should be undertaken to identify the most

relevant forms of water management interventions to support water and sanitation projects. This should focus on risks and threats to water resources, and practical approaches to the management of water resources and water safety.

If the results of the self-supply project in Luapula continue to be encouraging, it may be appropriate to scale-up this type of approach. The main challenge may then be to find appropriate ways to integrate self-supply with the conventional approach to rural water supply.

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WaterAid's mission is to overcome poverty by enabling the world's poorest people to gain access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene education.

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WaterAid in Zambia and the new Global Strategy

WaterAid's new (2009-2015) Global Strategy signals a number of key shifts, while retaining many proven practices and approaches. The main changes will:

- Increase the emphasis placed on influencing in all WaterAid work;
- Improve integration of implementation and advocacy under the theme of influencing;
- Place greater emphasis on inclusion, rights, and sustainability;
- Emphasise an increase in numbers of people served directly through WaterAid partners and indirectly through external programmes; and
- Allow for greater openness to take calculated risks.

There are six key questions for WaterAid in Zambia to address as the country strategy is realigned with the global strategy:

1. How can the direct implementation work which WaterAid in Zambia carries out influence other sector players to carry out more and better service delivery?
2. How can WaterAid in Zambia ensure the sustainability of services it provides, and those provided by others?
3. How can the implementation and advocacy work of WaterAid in Zambia be better integrated in future?
4. How can WaterAid in Zambia better address the issues of equity and inclusion for the most marginalised?
5. How should WaterAid in Zambia best rise to the challenge of growth, especially in relation to influencing other players to meet the needs of significant numbers of people?
6. What innovative technology or approaches can WaterAid in Zambia usefully introduce over the coming years?