

# Influencing change in Burkina Faso

## Background

Influencing is one of five key operational approaches WaterAid uses to deliver its four global strategic aims. It is understood as WaterAid's ability 'to influence governments, service providers and institutions to prioritise effective and affordable delivery of safe water, sanitation and hygiene'. It sits alongside partnerships, sustainability, capacity development and disaster resilience as a means of delivery.

## WaterAid in Burkina Faso

WaterAid has been working in Burkina Faso since 2003. From 2003-2010 it focused on improving water supply and sanitation through capacity building of civil society organisations and local government partners, service delivery, and, to a lesser extent, advocacy for resource mobilisation in eight local governments.

The 2010-2015 Global Strategy brought a major shift in strategies and approaches. Priorities shifted to communication around hygiene behaviour change and advocacy to influence policy decisions. The fundamental aim was to stimulate and support stakeholders (whether a local NGO or a district government official) to identify needs, plan, mobilise financial resources and implement activities by themselves. During this period, WaterAid Burkina Faso also strengthened its fieldwork with advocacy to increase political commitment, enhance citizens' voices, and encourage hygiene behaviour change.



## National-level context

WaterAid Burkina Faso has contributed to the design of innovative approaches to WASH programming at the local government level. The first notable contribution they triggered and championed was the development of 'Plans Communaux de Développement de l'Eau et l'Assainissement' (Community Development Plans for WASH). These community-level plans have since been adopted by the Government and stakeholders across the WASH sector and are known as PCD.

The approach was to ground the Millennium Development Goals at the local level by training civil society organisations in advocacy, and the Government's Water Sector Department staff in competence transferral. Local government staff then developed plans and mobilised resources to implement the plans.

WaterAid Burkina Faso has worked closely with the Cadre de Concertation des Acteurs de l'Eau et l'Assainissement (Forum for Policy Dialogue on WASH), to implement a training series on accountability and claiming rights to key civil society actors, including women, orphans and groups who represent people with disabilities.

The aim was for them to link decision makers and the population, to ensure vulnerable groups' needs were considered in the PCD. A success story was in the Commune of Pabré, where the board committed to the process and mobilised 2 billion West African Francs (£2.4 million) to build a water supply system and latrines.

WaterAid Burkina Faso has also implemented the 'Journée de Dialogue Communal' (local government Dialogue Days). Dialogue Days have directly contributed to increased accountability, by enabling open discussions on water and sanitation issues between local authorities and communities.

To achieve this WaterAid Burkina Faso made sure:

- Leaders and duty bearers were provided with training to improve planning to address demands. Most importantly, duty bearers were sensitised to keep their commitments, and to feel accountable to their citizens. They were encouraged to see beneficiaries as stakeholders, and to deliver against their plans as part of their duty and not as a favour or expect acknowledgement.
- Civil society was strengthened to play its role as an interface between government and beneficiaries, partly through awareness-raising sessions with around 40 journalists. This training led to the creation of the Réseau d'Information et de Communication pour l'Hygiène, l'Eau potable et l'Assainissement (Communication Network on WASH; RICHE). Once WaterAid Burkina Faso staff understood that many duty bearers did not take action because they were not aware of their constituents' concerns, it started to connect duty bearers with citizens through RICHE. For example, the network enabled citizens' voices to reach duty bearers through live interviews with beneficiaries. This grew until RICHE was broadcasting about WASH and accountability every week through local radio and papers.

## Highlight: The 2015 Presidential election campaign

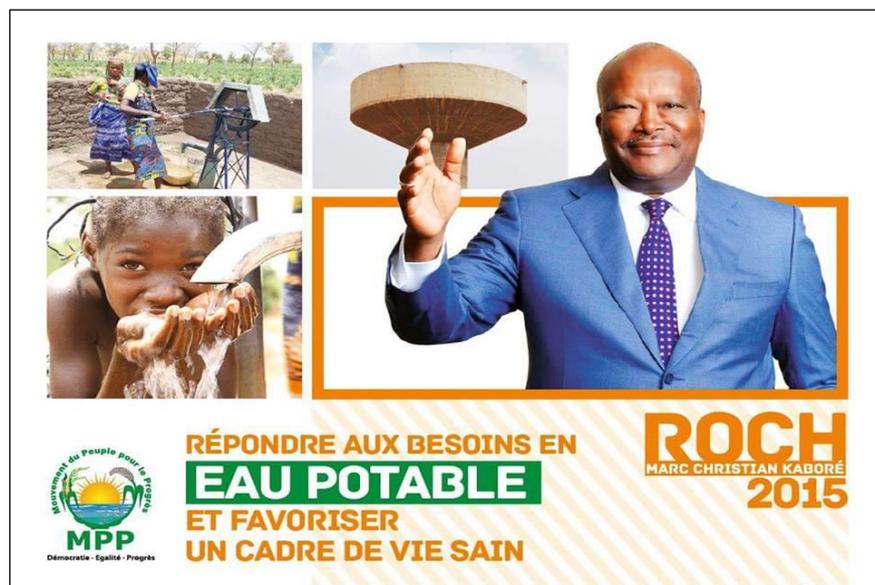
WaterAid Burkina Faso's Advocacy and Programmes Departments designed a plan to influence the Presidential candidates' programmes of actions and manifestos by documenting in a concept paper the WASH challenges their constituents faced. Evidence was collected about communities' WASH situation, and this formed the basis of a proposal to improve the rate of access to safe water and the availability of water and hygiene facilities in each candidate's constituency, including their home town or village.

This concept paper included international commitments that the Burkinabé Government had made but not yet fulfilled nationally. For example: the right to access safe water was ratified in 2010 but was only included in the country's constitution in November 2015, in contrast to the right to housing and leisure; and the AfricaSan commitment to access to safe water in schools and health facilities, ratified in May 2015.

WaterAid Burkina Faso selected the seven candidates most likely to win, and offered to help them by reviewing their action plans and manifestos through a WASH lens. Evidence-based discussions with the candidates built their understanding of the WASH sector issues and confidence, and WaterAid was asked to review candidate manifestos and ensure each included water and sanitation as a right and a duty for the leadership. All seven put WASH on their agendas, and one even campaigned solely on access to WASH. When the targets set by the different candidates were too high or unrealistic WaterAid suggested moderation. An unexpected positive result was that the Mouvement du Peuple pour le Progrès party (MPP) used posters reading 'Response to the need of safe water and enabling a safe environment'.

The resultant message voters felt the candidates delivered was stark:

**“It is your right to access safe water and hygiene facilities! It is not charity... It is indeed our duty to make this happen!”**



During the run-up to the election, TV debates and radio programmes asked WASH-related questions to all candidates who had laid out their plans for tackling WASH issues.

One of the candidates, who based his campaign on social priorities including water, is now Minister for Art, Culture & Tourism. WaterAid Burkina Faso continues to work with this Ministry to mainstream water and sanitation in its agenda. This fits with WaterAid Burkina Faso's agenda to extend reach to other sectors and mainstream WASH in these contexts. WASH campaigns are now being implemented during major sporting and cultural events.

Another lobbying success for WaterAid Burkina Faso has been their contribution to establishment of a Ministry dedicated to Water and Sanitation (as opposed to the *Ministre de l'Agriculture, des Ressources Hydrauliques, de l'Assainissement et de la Sécurité Alimentaire*) which has existed from 2014 onwards, highlighting the increased importance being given to WASH by the Government.

### Spotlight: Leader-led Total Sanitation

WaterAid Burkina Faso and other key sector actors believe local leaders are vital to making improved sanitation a reality in all Burkinabé communities. WaterAid Burkina Faso has targeted local leaders, building on the principles of integrity and solidarity.

The team created an evidence base by mapping sanitation facilities in the home villages of a number of prominent individuals (ministers, politicians, artists, sports players, religious leaders and others). The mapping showed 98% of the villages did not have latrines, and the report was shared with stakeholders through various channels and media through meetings with the community leaders and ministers' weekly meetings. The open publication of the mapping results created a sense of guilt in some of the leaders, which resulted in commitments to improve sanitation in their home villages.

WaterAid Burkina Faso then organised a 'SaniThon' – a one-day event aiming to raise funds for latrine building and increase awareness among decision makers, leaders and local government about the status of sanitation in their local villages and communities. The first SaniThon, in 2010, was a success and raised more than 100 million West African Francs (£150 000). Since then, in 2014 SaniThons raised 94 million West African Francs (£100 000).

### Looking back

2015 was a year of great success, the culmination of several years of planning and preparation. In recent years, WaterAid Burkina Faso has learned how best to influence official decision makers, and how to create space for interactions between duty bearers in the WASH sector and their communities. This link is critical to address issues of accountability and allow duty bearers to communicate their work and plans, and the population to claim their rights. WaterAid Burkina Faso believes that if communities were to deliver WASH services behaviour change would still be visible.

Study based on focus group discussions by IOD Parc held with WaterAid staff and partners, as part of the UK Department for International Development's Programme Partnership Arrangement final evaluation, 2016.

Photo: WaterAid/ Nyani Quarmyne/ Panos