

Mozambique Country Programme Evaluation

Overview

The evaluation of the WaterAid Mozambique Country Programme (CP or WAMoz) was conducted in November 2014 by a team of four people comprising one international consultant and three WaterAid staff – one from headquarters, one from the Regional Office and one from the CP. A fifth member, a local consultant, was forced to withdraw just before the start of the field work and could not be replaced in time. This evaluation comes at an opportune moment as WaterAid launches its new Global Strategy which triggers the need for CPs to develop new country-level strategies.

The previous programme evaluation was conducted in 2011. During the intervening period, the CP has continued to operate in the same geographic areas but has shifted some of its thematic foci and developed a few new partnerships. The programme has also recently begun expanding into new small town areas, with significant grant funding. The country context has not changed significantly since 2011, in terms of socio economic indicators, the political situation, sector policies and institutional arrangements and water supply and sanitation coverage.

The Mozambique CP works with Government partners at central, provincial, municipal and district levels, and with a number of non-governmental partners in civil society and academia. Activities are organised into four programmes: i) the rural programme, implemented through partnerships with local NGOs and local government in five districts; ii) the urban programme, with a similar model, working in the informal peri-urban neighbourhoods in Maputo and three small towns; iii) the learning and advocacy programme; and iv) the organisational effectiveness programme which comprises the management of the other programmes.

This evaluation was guided by WaterAid's standard terms of reference for CP evaluations which define its overarching aims to assess and guide the CP at two different levels: a) at strategic level, focusing mainly on its relevance and strategic direction; and b) at operational level, analysing its service delivery work, partnerships and policy and influencing work. It was carried out as a joint activity with Country Programme and partner staff, led by the evaluation team, in a participative manner, which included a stakeholder feedback workshop.

The overall impression that the Mozambique CP gives is positive, particularly at local and provincial levels. The Country Strategy (CS) is very relevant and mostly well designed. WaterAid has maintained its good reputation as an effective project implementer and reliable partner at local and provincial levels, and is well regarded by all stakeholders as a key contributor to the sector-wide effort to increase water and sanitation coverage, particularly in the most challenging sub-sectors. Its

partnership approach and the related on-the-job capacity building of partners are particularly valued.

However, with regard to the other objectives of the CS – namely innovation, learning and policy advocacy, and internal organisational strengthening – the achievements have fallen short of expectations. These are not new challenges, and the general findings and conclusions of this evaluation are similar in a number of key aspects to those of the previous exercise in 2011.

WaterAid Mozambique is perceived at national level, and to some extent also at provincial level, to have changed its approach to one focussed on numerical targets, at the expense of qualitative aspects such as sustainability, systematic learning and documenting, taking time to reflect, innovating, networking and advocacy. WAMoz is no longer perceived to be playing an influential policy role in the sector.

The analysis and recommendations of the evaluation begin with the cross-cutting obstacles that have hindered the implementation of the recommendations made over three years ago. More decisive action is required to deal with these obstacles if the achievement of some of the qualitative objectives of the CS is not to be further postponed.

Human resource constraints

The inability of WAMoz to build a solid team with the right number of staff with the experience and skills required has become a chronic weakness of the CP. These difficulties fall into three broad categories, namely vacant posts, inadequate strategic thinking capacity, and insufficient technical capacity for innovation, particularly in rural and urban sanitation.

WAMoz is understaffed, and has been for many years already, mainly due to the fact that a number of the additional posts created to overcome this problem have not been filled.

The problem is aggravated by WaterAid's relatively onerous reporting requirements and administrative procedures. The impact of the resulting work overload of most staff, particularly the Senior Management Team, is felt in all activities, mainly as a lack of time to pay due attention to soft issues.

The shortcomings in strategic thinking capacity in the WAMoz team seem to involve a combination of lack of skills and a lack of time to focus on analytical work. In this regard too filling vacant posts and redesigning the organogram could free up staff whose job it is to do analytical work and policy advocacy, to spend less time on administrative tasks.

Most of the weaknesses of the CP in technical design, quality of construction and technical innovation can be traced to gaps in technical innovation skills and experience of staff.

Management structure

Management arrangements have been designed around the four programmes, with a senior manager in charge of each. In principle this is a sensible structure, but it is complicated by the geographical spread of the CP which requires decentralised line management at provincial level.

The result is the co-existence of parallel structures for programme management (urban and rural WASH), geographical line management (Maputo, Zambezia and Niassa) and project management of large projects (Zambezia-Niassa urban and Boane), which do not appear to make management any smoother.

On the contrary, the structures add to overhead costs and difficulties in filling posts, besides increasing the complexity of reporting lines. In addition, the lack of a Senior Programme Manager means that the Country Representative (CR) manages too many senior managers and is not able to focus enough on national-level networking and advocacy.

The rationale behind the creation of senior manager posts for the urban and rural WASH programmes is based on the need to have the right technical skills available in these programmes. In practice, however, it would probably be more efficient to structure the management arrangements separately from technical support, prioritising in the former a rational hierarchy from CR down to province and district. This was the previous arrangement.

Focus on numerical targets at the expense of qualitative aspects

WaterAid's excessive focus on numerical targets in the Mozambique CP, at the expense of qualitative aspects, cannot be explained by the excessive workloads on staff alone. When forced to prioritise between hard and soft issues, staff seem to be strongly influenced by an organisational culture at global level which is driven by the Global Strategy's numerical targets.

The fact that this situation has been allowed to exist for over five years without more decisive support being provided to the WAMoz team to resolve the problems, would seem to be explained by the fact that the CP has done relatively well in meeting numerical targets.

Relevance

In general the CP is assessed as highly relevant by the evaluation team and by stakeholders, in terms of the criteria defined in the terms of reference, requiring only relatively minor adjustments and fine-tuning. The rural programme is generally well aligned with sector priorities as defined by PRONASAR. The urban programme is also relatively well aligned, both in terms of thematic priorities and working with the right structures. The relatively recent addition of a component of work in small towns is fully in line with priorities expressed by a range of stakeholders.

The CP's geographic focus is mostly appropriate and in line with both Government priorities and the CS. The rural programme has targeted two provinces that are among those with the lowest water and sanitation coverage in the country. In those provinces districts were targeted where coverage is particularly low. The urban programme targets low-income, informal neighbourhoods in peri-urban areas. The thematic focus is also generally very relevant.

In the urban sanitation programme WAMoz has been innovative in taking a holistic approach to sanitation by including solid waste management and storm water drainage. The School WASH component is also strongly endorsed. In general the technologies used in both the water and sanitation programmes have been appropriate.

There are a number of areas in which innovation could improve the appropriateness of technologies and management approaches, for example: analysing the potential for following up on the rope pump experience; piloting small piped schemes in larger, densely populated villages; formalising area-based O&M support for water committees in rural areas; investigating financing options to subsidise yard connections for low-income households; and developing more secure, vandal-proof, practical and inclusive school toilet designs.

In both rural and urban sanitation there are some challenges with the technologies and approaches being used, which are negatively affecting progress. However, a change in strategy has already been agreed which seems sound. WAMoz is playing a leading role in the sector in starting to mainstream E&I (equity and inclusion), and this is recognised and supported by a number of key sector stakeholders.

WaterAid's partnership approach is highly appreciated in the sector, in particular the partnerships with local government, which are seen as an important contribution to decentralisation and related capacity building.

Effectiveness

The Mozambique CP has been particularly effective in achieving its numerical targets for providing access to water and sanitation services. In terms of water supply, the targets have in fact been exceeded overall. Rural sanitation performance has also been excellent, but a downward trend in urban sanitation in recent years is clear. With regard to hygiene behaviour, a similar comparison is not possible due to changes in objectives and monitoring approaches over the years.

The current goal is to achieve a 25% adoption rate of good practices; in 2013/14 an adoption rate of approximately 24% was achieved in the rural programme.

Most of the partnerships that have been developed work very well as an implementation strategy. However, the stronger NGO partners feel very strongly that their relationship is not a genuine partnership in practice, but one of contractor and client. WAMoz managers do not have the time to discuss problems with them and are dismissive of their explanations for slow progress. Some partners also feel that

they do not get enough help to implement their sustainability strategies, specifically with diversifying their funding sources.

Difficulties are also being experienced with WAMoz's financial management procedures, which require that funding tranches be made on a monthly basis, as opposed to quarterly as was the case some years ago. This creates an additional administrative burden, and any processing delays seriously affect work progress.

The ultimate goal of the partnership strategy is to assist partners to develop to a level where they can become independent of WAMoz. So far two partnerships have been terminated with this in mind (ESTAMOS in Niassa and CECOHAS in Zambezia) and both organisations are still functioning well independently. In relation to the small neighbourhood community-based organisations set up to manage sludge and solid waste removal in Maputo and Quelimane, there are some positive indications that they are developing and strengthening and could be sustainable.

The district authorities are very satisfied with WAMoz's strategy of supporting them to implement programmes. As with the NGO partners, they sign annual memoranda of understanding with WAMoz which specify the activities to be undertaken and the budget. The funds are deposited into a dedicated bank account controlled by the district authorities and managed in accordance with the same procedures used for Government funds. Planning is done jointly, as is procurement and monitoring of activities.

At provincial level there is a perception among some stakeholders in Government and civil society that WAMoz's profile has diminished. This is more acute at national level where the relationships are weakest and where WAMoz's profile is perceived to have diminished markedly over the past five years or more. However, effective partnerships have been developed with Municipalities and para-state agencies at the level of project implementation.

The effectiveness of capacity building of partners is uneven. For example, adherence to financial management procedures is good, but the quality of facilitation work, specifically using PHAST to influence hygiene behaviour and motivate people to invest in sanitation, is not always up to standard. Technical skills, including in relation to school WASH, are also weak.

In the learning and advocacy programme some effective isolated pieces of advocacy have been achieved, albeit not all followed through. However, the general perception is that WAMoz's advocacy work has diminished or become less visible over time, whereas the ultimate purpose should be this and programmes should be designed towards this end. This is done reasonably well in the Country Strategy and Multi-year Plans and Budgets but many of the planned activities cannot be carried out.

In terms of operational efficiency, WA is considered to be an over bureaucratic organisation with cumbersome procedures and slow decision-making processes. The latter appears to be mainly caused by excessive centralisation of decision making both at country level and between country and global levels. While rigorous

procedures and risk-averse centralisation do enhance compliance – and WAMoz is well regarded by at least one major donor for this – they do not make for an agile, innovative organisation.

The trend in sanitation, particularly in the urban programme, is a widening of the gap between planned and actual numbers, even with a reduction in the urban target. The proposed solution is to modify the current PHAST-based methodology by incorporating the triggering aspects of Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) and the sanitation marketing approach post-triggering. This is appropriate and likely to be more effective and sustainable than the current approach, or a “pure” CLTS approach as stipulated by Government policy. One vital aspect of the new strategy which does not appear to have been clearly articulated yet is that of sustainability and replicability.

Approaches which require ever more intensive social facilitation over many years from external facilitators are unlikely to be replicable by government in the foreseeable future, and are thus not sustainable. The role of sanitation entrepreneurs as the main facilitators and “marketers” of sanitation will be crucial and needs to be emphasised in the strategy.

Other findings in relation to sanitation include a number of problems with design and quality of construction which are not being detected by WAMoz or partner staff, in both urban and rural programmes. Some of the shortcomings include poorly fitting sanplat lids, flimsy superstructures that provide inadequate privacy and shelter, lack of recording of self-built upgrades such as pour flush and solid superstructures, and no guidance to manage disposal of sullage water. One major conclusion is that it does not seem to be feasible to continue to promote only the sanplat latrine; WAMoz should pilot appropriate higher levels of service.

In hygiene promotion the same difficulties as with sanitation demand creation have been identified, but even if the quality of facilitation work is improved, once-off interventions, even over a number of years, can only make a relatively temporary impact. It would seem worthwhile to approach the health authorities at different levels to develop a hygiene promotion strategy based on their staff rather than relying only on externally funded CBOs.

In the school WASH component the issue of O&M has not been resolved and as a result the level of functionality and positive impact of the facilities built is very low. The programme cannot continue without serious attention being paid to this and solutions being found. The main problem is lack of security at most schools and resulting vandalism of facilities. There are also problems with the different designs being used.

In the rural water supply programme the sustainability of the model of O&M of water points is the weakest link, as it is in most programmes. While the effectiveness of the programme as a whole is rated as high, both in terms of increased coverage achieved and the relatively high level of functionality (76%), recent monitoring data shows that in 2012 only 47% of water committees were functioning and this dropped

to 37% in 2014. A stronger focus is required on strengthening the O&M model through area based approaches.

Technical review

In this section the findings are summarised in terms of different aspects of six themes, namely: rural water, rural sanitation and hygiene, urban water, urban sanitation and hygiene, partnerships and capacity, and practice-policy linkages. Examples of good practice are identified in all six themes, the extent to which the target groups are benefitting is described for the first four, staff constraints in partnerships pinpointed and recommendations made to improve practice-policy linkages.

Summary of recommendations

Over 35 recommendations are made, both general and detailed. The most important are summarised as follows:

1. Provide more support from the UK and the region to fill posts, starting with assistance to explore all short and long term options (e.g. regional support, consultants etc.
2. Revert back to the previous organogram as in the CS, with the addition of a technical support unit headed by a senior technical expert reporting to the CR.
3. WAUK and Regional Office should exert more influence to restore balance between numerical targets and soft issues, including sensitising donors in this regard.
4. Strengthen advocacy work through ensuring that it is integral to the CP and to the design of all its programmes, and by developing the advocacy strategy further by a) defining messages, target groups, communication strategies, tools and action plans; b) reinforcing dual strategies of partnering directly with Government in implementation while undertaking public advocacy at national level through partnerships with NGOs; c) developing a programme of one or two regular annual events to bring together sector stakeholders to debate policy issues, and presenting WA case studies; and d) reviving the former practice of having a focal person in the National Directorate for Water with whom to work, and having him/her accompany SMT managers on field visits.
5. Innovate more in water, e.g. by: a) piloting small piped schemes in larger, densely populated rural villages where they are potentially more sustainable; b) developing models of area-based O&M support for water committees by CBOs on behalf of District Authorities; and c) developing financing models to subsidise yard connections for low-income households in urban areas.
6. Innovation in sanitation should consider: a) partnering with WSUP to develop innovative urban sanitation solutions in Maputo; b) piloting low-cost options to

deal with sullage water; c) partnering with UNICEF in rural areas in Zambezia; and d) intensifying the debate on sanitation promotion approaches.

7. Strengthen NGO partnerships through: a) spending more time discussing problems with partners and finding solutions together; b) provide more support to partners to implement their sustainability strategies; and c) revert back to quarterly funding tranches, at least in the case of the more competent and experienced NGOs.
8. Strengthen action learning, e.g. by getting support from the Region and the UK to provide more training to develop skills of observation and critical analysis, in the context of an organisational culture of systematised action learning.
9. In the new sanitation approach, ensure: a) that the role of sanitation entrepreneurs as the main facilitators and “marketers” of sanitation to households is prioritised; b) messages to encourage the improvement of latrine superstructures are reinforced; c) the role of latrines as barriers to flies is emphasised by better promoting the use of ash and ensuring sanplat squat hole covers fit properly; and d) recording numbers of latrines that have been upgraded by owners, either with pour-flush pedestals or solid superstructures and rooves.
10. In the School WASH programme: a) do not continue before developing a better strategy for O&M and sustainability, starting with finding solutions to protect facilities from vandalism; b) allocate a budget to go back to all facilities previously built to make them secure and strengthen O&M arrangements; and c) use better designs (i.e. sound, tried and tested designs from elsewhere) to improve functionality and protection from vandalism.

Lessons learned

Not surprisingly, the main lesson learned from this evaluation of the Mozambique CP is similar to that learnt in other CP evaluations – namely that, because of WaterAid’s global approach, driven by the Global Strategy’s numerical targets and the way it manages donor expectations, there is an excessive focus on numerical targets at the expense of soft issues. One of the effects of this trend, and one which will be difficult to correct, is the loss of an internal culture of critical analysis and learning among field staff, with this being increasingly seen as the responsibility of specialists. A major effort is needed to address this.

On the other hand, another major lesson learned has been the very positive experience with the partnership model being used at district level, between WA, local government and civil society organisations. Apart from some shortcomings related to not enough attention being paid by WA to soft issues in its relationship with NGOs, the model is working well in all respects and deserves to be well documented and disseminated.

With regard to technical and methodological issues, an important lesson learned in the sanitation programme is that a focus on numbers by itself does not necessarily deliver those numbers. Without a sound methodological approach, backed up by the right skills, both of which can only be developed through analysis, learning and innovation, physical targets cannot be met either.

The final general lesson that can thus be drawn from the experience of the Mozambique CP over the past four years is that one of the main organisational priorities of WA must be to ensure all CPs have a team with the right set of skills and experience and with adequate support from the rest of the organisation. WA has the human and financial resources to ensure that this is achieved.