

# BEACON PROJECT

## PROGRESS TOWARDS SDG6

LEARNING FROM PARTNERSHIPS  
AND COLLABORATIONS



WaterAid Nepal October 2021



नेपाल खानेपानी संस्थान  
Nepal Water Supply Corporation

love every drop  
anglianwater

WaterAid

THE  
BEACON  
PROJECT

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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

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<b>DJKYC</b> .....	Dalit Jana Kalyan Yuba Club
<b>DWSSM</b> .....	Department of Water Supply and Sewerage Management
<b>FSM</b> .....	Faecal Sludge Management
<b>MoWS</b> .....	Ministry of Water Supply
<b>NGO</b> .....	Non-governmental organisation
<b>NWSC</b> .....	Nepal Water Supply Corporation
<b>PSC</b> .....	Project Steering Committee
<b>SDG</b> .....	Sustainable Development Goal(s)
<b>WASH</b> .....	Water, sanitation and hygiene
<b>WSSDO</b> .....	Water Supply and Sanitation Division Office

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**Front cover photo:**  
Training NWSC staff on using  
the borehole CCTV camera

# FOREWORD

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It is my great pleasure to present this excellent review of learning from the Beacon Project, focusing on partnerships and collaborations. Everyone involved in the Beacon Project has made a collective commitment to progress towards SDG 6 in Nepal's Lahan Municipality, working to achieve sustainable and equitable municipality-wide universal WASH services. This will not only benefit people in Lahan but also, importantly, create a model that can be replicated and scaled-up.

The long-term support provided by Anglian Water and its Alliances has enabled innovation and a long-term vision in this unique partnership, generating valuable learning that will help inform WaterAid's approach in other countries. I am happy to note that the knowledge gained from the Project is increasingly being shared and used across Nepal Water Supply Corporation (NWSC), the public water utility of Nepal, with active leadership from

NWSC, and that the municipality has made a significant commitment to improve sanitation, including financing for a Faecal Sludge Treatment Plant.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the government of Nepal and Anglian Water Alliance for their commitment, collaboration and partnership, which is contributing to Nepal's journey towards achieving SDG 6: sustainable access to water and sanitation for everyone, everywhere by 2030. Finally, I would like to thank all who have been involved in establishing these effective partnerships and documenting different aspects of learning, which I'm confident will be a helpful resource not only for the partners involved in this collaboration, but also for other WASH stakeholders.

**Tim Wainwright**

Chief Executive, WaterAid

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We believe actions speak louder than words.

That's why, since 2017, Anglian Water and its Alliance partners have been working on facilitating a new type of supportive relationship between Water Aid, and the communities in Lahan. We wanted to enable capacity building for sustainable change. For a long time the company and its partners have supported the charity financially. But stronger, deeper links always promised more for marginalised communities in Nepal – and that's why we set about sharing business, engineering and development skills, as well as financial support, to really unlock the impact of our fundraising. Improving access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene has just been the starting point.

Four years on, the benefits are clear to see - and to read here. This collaboration between WaterAid, the Nepalese Government, the local Mayor and the Nepal Water Supply Corporation sets new standards for projects of this type. I am immensely proud of the role Anglian Water

and its partners have played in this project: now, we must share the story to multiply the impact we have.

We always intended this to be the case. Indeed, it's why we refer to this as 'The Beacon Project' – a beacon being something visible from distance that acts as an indicator for others. Four years of work has proven the concept, with Lahan other branches of NWSC in Nepal now adopting similar practices. With benefits so visible, it is unsurprising that we are delighted to reiterate our commitment to a further four years of engagement, development, planning and delivery.

I look forward to seeing where we can take the project – but more importantly, I look forward to seeing this collaborative approach become an increasingly common way of pursuing the development agenda.

**Peter Simpson**

Chief Executive Officer  
Anglian Water

The Beacon Project began implementation in Lahan Municipality in 2017. This multi-partnership project – involving the Nepal Water Supply Corporation, WaterAid, Anglian Water Alliance and Lahan Municipality – is helping Lahan fulfil its commitment to ensuring access for all residents to a regular supply of clean drinking water. The Project has already made significant progress in Lahan Municipality wards 1 to 10, with the supply of clean drinking water. Currently, residents have water supplied for an average of 5-6 hours a day, which is planned to increase to about 15 hours a day in the near future. Lahan Municipality is committed to working with the Beacon Project to make sure residents of all 24 wards get a clean and regular supply of drinking water.

In addition, Lahan Municipality is working with the Beacon Project and DJKYC – a local NGO – on school sanitation projects. As a result, 10 schools now have modern, separate, boys' and girls' toilets for students, and clean drinking water. The detailed project report for Faecal Sludge Management across Lahan Municipality is ready with active support from the project team as well.

WaterAid Nepal's technical knowledge, networking and project management support, Anglian Water Alliance's cutting-edge technology, regular advice and knowledge transfer to NWSC, as well as direct involvement in the Beacon Project Board and several visits to Lahan, have helped the successful implementation of this Project. In Beacon, different partners have brought their unique strengths as positive contributions, and I believe that this document has usefully captured some important learnings on partnerships and collaborations so far. These learnings can not only help improve future plans for Beacon in Lahan, but can also be used by NWSC, other municipalities, donors and other agencies working on water, sanitation and hygiene projects in other parts of Nepal. I believe that many components of the Project can be an overall model in themselves, and can be successfully replicated in other municipalities of Nepal.

**Muni Sah Sudi**

Mayor, Lahan Municipality

Nepal is committed to SDG 6, and has prepared national plans and programmes to achieve this goal. The Beacon Project is a unique partnership that brings diverse partners together to ensure access to good WASH services in line with our SDG goals for the people of Lahan.

Beacon's 'universal approach' i.e., covering the whole municipality and all its residents, is commendable. The Project's commitment to ensuring good WASH access for the highly marginalised Dalit people of Lahan, in line with leaving no one behind, is highly appreciated by the government of Nepal. We are not only committed to SDG 6, but also on undertaking pro-active initiatives to bring marginalised communities and people more into the mainstream of governance and development, so that they can get equitable access to development initiatives and services.

Since the Beacon Project was launched in Lahan, it has made good progress on improving drinking water quality in wards 1 to 10, ensuring piped water access to many local Dalit communities, reducing water leakages, constructing community toilets for Dalit settlements, and running successful sanitation programmes in 10 local schools.

I believe that the learnings from the unique and multi-partnership initiative of the Beacon Project will be important for its key partners, including the Ministry of Water Supply, in policy decisions that will help replicate the model in other parts of the country.

**Sunil Kumar Das**

Joint Secretary  
Ministry of Water Supply

The Beacon Project is a unique project for the Nepal Water Supply Corporation, because of the diverse nature of its partners: an international water utility provider based in the UK (Anglian Water and its Alliance), an international NGO (WaterAid and its Nepal chapter), NWSC (central office and Lahan Branch), Lahan Municipality, and the Ministry of Water Supply. This diversity has provided an opportunity for different partners to bring their unique strengths. However, the same factor also brought a lot of challenges, since these organisations all have their own decision-making pace and processes and other institutional systems and requirements. This means that all key partners invested significant time and energy to get this partnership off the ground and to make it work.

In a short time, the Project has been able to make significant contributions to improving water supply in Lahan, particularly in wards 1 to 10. One of the most significant contributions for NWSC has been the abundance of knowledge and technology provided by Anglian Water Alliance: whether it is about updating

the specifications for new borehole drilling, or leakage detection training and equipment support. The updating of borehole drilling specifications means all NWSC branches in Nepal are now using these updated specifications, successfully replicating a component from Beacon. I believe there will be many technical learnings in this Project that can be replicated to other branches of NWSC too.

Learnings captured in this document will be an important tool for partners to reflect on how we can further strengthen the partnership. This document can be useful for other agencies working in the WASH sector in Nepal too, as well as in other municipalities. It could also be helpful for the Ministry of Water Supply, since it is a policy-level decision to promote multi-partnership models to achieve water and sanitation related SDG goals.

**Dr Bhupendra Prasad**  
General Manager  
NWSC



Enjoying access to piped water supply in the home, Ward 1

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The Beacon Project is a long-term partnership between the UK water company Anglian Water and its Alliances,<sup>1</sup> WaterAid Nepal, the Nepal Water Supply Corporation (NWSC)<sup>2</sup> and Lahan Municipality, supported by a collaboration with the Ministry of Water Supply (MoWS), with a collective commitment to make progress towards SDG 6 in Lahan, Nepal. It aims to achieve sustainable and equitable municipality-wide universal WASH services, creating a model that can be replicated and scaled-up.

The purpose of this document is to draw out key learning from the collective experiences of a unique partnership that has been set up and evolved over the past four years, as this partnership model is core to the project's design and success. It builds on earlier documents<sup>3</sup> that focus on technical aspects of the project work. Documenting and sharing this learning with stakeholders and peers in the WASH sector and water industry is integral to the aim of creating a legacy that grows beyond Lahan and has a much wider impact.

## BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

### (i) An innovative long-term partnership that has successfully brought together diverse stakeholders

A catalyst for the Beacon Project was a commitment by WaterAid Nepal to explore more innovative and diverse partnerships (based on a political economy analysis) to foster collaboration to meet the ambitious 2030 Sustainable Development Goal on water and sanitation (SDG 6), combined with a desire by Anglian Water Alliance to do things differently, developing a greater link between fundraising and the impact it has on the ground by sharing technical expertise, shaping project design, and implementation.

### (ii) Understanding the motivations of different stakeholders has built effective ways of working

Initially, the full scale of support and potential benefits of the Beacon Project were not clear to prospective government institutions, and WaterAid Nepal played an important role in helping partners and collaborating institutions understand the opportunities, increasing the level of interest and engagement.

WaterAid Nepal's work (and that of most development

partners) previously focused on rural areas. However, rapid urbanisation in Nepal has resulted in a significant number of marginalised groups in urban areas without proper access to WASH facilities. This was a key driver for WaterAid Nepal to expand its work in urban municipalities such as Lahan. In addition, both Anglian Water and WaterAid Nepal were keen to focus on a particular geographical area to pilot a municipality-wide approach to WASH and achieving SDG 6.

### (iii) Taking time to build trust and confidence among prospective organisations has created effective partnerships

The Beacon Project brings together a diverse group of organisations and institutions – building trust between them to collaborate and work in partnership was a key element of success. Factors that helped build this trust included:

- ◆ A long-term commitment to 2030.
- ◆ Clarifying that Beacon would work to the plans and priorities of NWSC and Lahan Municipality without imposing WaterAid Nepal/Anglian Water Alliance priorities, and recognising that directly applying UK approaches would not work.
- ◆ Anglian Water Alliance staff were able to make four visits to Lahan prior to signing the Project Agreement which built confidence; visits to marginalised Dalit communities created a strong emotional connection, deepening their motivation.
- ◆ Senior MoWS staff visited Anglian Water's facilities in the UK. This enabled them to better understand the company's technical knowledge, capacity and charitable intentions, which was important as Anglian Water does not have a physical presence in Nepal and was not well known to government stakeholders.
- ◆ Engaging senior staff in WaterAid UK, WaterAid Nepal, MoWS, NWSC and Lahan Municipality provided greater confidence to Anglian Water Alliance on the dedication of partners to the project and raised their trust that funds would be put to good use.

### (iv) Being adaptable, responsive and engaging different partners and stakeholders has increased their commitment to success

<sup>1</sup> Anglian Water is a UK water company. It has set up five alliances to harness the skills and capabilities of leading construction and technology companies to deliver its investment work. These are collectively referred to as the Anglian Water Alliances and all companies involved contribute towards the Beacon Project.

<sup>2</sup> NWSC is a public utility organisation, an autonomous government body formed under Nepal Water Supply Corporation Act 2046 (1988) providing water to 24 towns in Nepal, including Lahan.

<sup>3</sup> In particular, the "From source to tap" report (2020)

What started as a potential partnership between WaterAid Nepal, Anglian Water Alliance and NWSC ended up adding Lahan Municipality as a formal partner (plus later bringing in a local NGO partner, DJKYC, and academic institutions to support the project). A strategic collaboration with MoWS was formalised with a Declaration of Intent, signalling a collective commitment to making progress towards SDG 6 in Lahan. It was important to have an agile approach and be able to forge new partnerships based on an analysis of strengths, priorities, added value and complementarity, as well as the limitations of individual partners, particularly in the new federal system of Nepal. The exercise of getting the right partners on board and getting to know each other well took considerable time, but helped create realistic mutual expectations. It also enhanced the project's credibility and legitimacy to drive change for lasting impact on people's lives.

**(v) Adjusting the project approach to accommodate the organisational and work culture of partners has built strong relationships and trust**

Although WaterAid Nepal has always had significant engagement with government agencies, Beacon presented a new way of working, whereby a public utility and local government were going to be directly part of the project's implementation. Understanding the organisational and work culture of MoWS, NWSC and Lahan Municipality – and adapting accordingly – was important. WaterAid Nepal and Anglian Water Alliance approached project negotiations in ways that gave confidence to government institutions that the project would respect their requirements, culture and ways of working. Particular steps taken by WaterAid Nepal and Anglian Water Alliance included:

- ◆ Engaging staff with prior experience of working with government institutions and knowledge of how the Nepal government's system works.
- ◆ Adapting styles of work, communication and pace of the project.
- ◆ Respect for hierarchy in government institutions, approaching the relevant people at appropriate stages.
- ◆ Providing clarity about minimum work standards, reporting arrangements and accountability mechanisms.

The long start-up period and varying nature of the organisations meant it was difficult to keep everyone equally motivated and engaged all the time. However, the project was able to build rapport and provide a clear sense of direction and open work culture, despite several changes of senior officials in government institutions.

## KEY LEARNING: DELIVERING THROUGH COMPLEX PARTNERSHIPS

**(i) Developing project governance that established a joint long-term vision and accountabilities to deliver an effective project**

The laws of Nepal do not allow a foreign utility agency without legal registration in Nepal to be a party in a project agreement for not-for-profit work. Therefore, MoWS, WaterAid and Anglian Water Alliance instead signed a Declaration of Intent (in September 2018) to establish the common vision of the project and roles of the three parties. This was then augmented by a separate Project Agreement (signed on the same day) between NWSC, WaterAid Nepal and Lahan Municipality that went into more detail and which would be legally enforceable in Nepal. A clear reference to replication in the Declaration of Intent (where MoWS was a party) and in the Project Agreement (where NWSC was a party) was vital because NWSC can take operational decisions, whereas MoWS can provide strategic-level support and resources to replicate the Beacon model.

Two tiers of project governance were set-up. Firstly, a strategic advisory Beacon Board with senior officials from MoWS, Anglian Water Alliance and WaterAid in their institutional capacities. The Mayor of Lahan Municipality and the General Manager of NWSC were later (November 2019) added to the Beacon Board, recognising that their inclusion was crucial for effective project delivery and collective accountability. The strategic Board meets every six months to provide high-level steer and to approve project plans and budgets. Secondly, a local Project Steering Committee (PSC), which would meet regularly in Lahan and be responsible for project execution. The PSC helps to create mutual accountability between Lahan Municipality and NWSC since there are currently no formal accountability lines between them, even though both are mandated for drinking water supply.

**(ii) Locally-based WaterAid project team has enabled effective communication with NWSC, the municipality and the community**

WaterAid Nepal is based in Kathmandu, and normally works remotely through local NGO partners. However, the size and complexity of the project and the fact that it was difficult for Anglian Water Alliance to communicate directly with NWSC Lahan, meant it was crucial to establish a local project team in Lahan to develop relationships and facilitate communication. Recruiting staff who were able to speak the local language (Maithili) and a local partner (DJKYC), set up by youth leaders representing the marginalised Dalit community, were also important factors in building a good rapport with local stakeholders.

It was important to monitor project progress and remain flexible on staffing requirements. Based on experience, learning and emerging project needs, WaterAid Nepal reconfigured the project team in late 2019 – this included expanding the team and appointing a full-time senior project lead and technical lead. This has enabled a more robust working relationship with Anglian Water Alliance on the ground and improved project delivery.

The flexibility and resilience of the partnership model and communication has also been demonstrated during the past 18 months when, despite the global COVID-19 pandemic, significant progress was made in project delivery with a do-no-harm approach.

**(iii) High visibility and “quick wins” to maintain commitment and engagement by all stakeholders**

Even though the project has a long-term horizon, it was important to have components that can show visible results in the short-term. This helped maintain the trust of key partners and communities, and was especially important for elected leaders who needed to deliver against people’s expectations while in office. It was also important for maintaining the commitment of Anglian Water partners to support fundraising in the UK.

**(iv) Facilitating collaboration and communication between partners has strengthened their working relationships**

Partners were able to support each other in many ways, for example:

- NWSC follows government procurement procedures which sometimes led to delays, especially in pipe laying, so WaterAid Nepal procured some of the materials urgently needed to deliver infrastructure.
- NWSC was unable to recruit more staff for Lahan, so WaterAid Nepal hired a hydrogeologist on a short-term contract as part of the technical support to oversee borehole drilling.
- Lahan Municipality allocated additional land to NWSC for drilling new boreholes, enabling an increase in water supply.
- The municipality helped with community engagement for pipeline installation, and was able to facilitate connections for marginalised Dalit people who did not have a land registration certificate.
- WaterAid facilitated a visit to Bangladesh to see some of the faecal sludge treatment facilities that WaterAid has supported there. This learning was very valuable and has helped the municipality and Beacon team in developing plans for Lahan.

**(v) An open and transparent Beacon work culture helped maintain trust between partners**

An open and transparent work culture has been cultivated in Beacon as a result of work done prior to signing the Project Agreement on creating a common purpose, being clear about mutual expectations, roles and expected deliverables, and the creation of formal governance and management structures where all parties are equal. It was supplemented by creation of the One Plan, open sharing of budgets and plans in various project structures, and the ability for any partner to ask questions and to say ‘no’ if they have to. Integrated planning between NWSC Lahan and Beacon, in coordination with Lahan Municipality, has also significantly contributed to creating this open culture.

## CREATING A LEGACY THAT GROWS

**(i) Knowledge and skills developed in Lahan are already being used in other areas of Nepal**

The Beacon Project has not only helped build the capacity of NWSC Lahan branch (by providing training, technical support and equipment), but this knowledge and expertise is increasingly being shared across NWSC with active leadership from NWSC. For example, most of the branch managers attended training on use of the borehole CCTV camera and drilling supervision, and the revised borehole drilling specification has been adopted by NWSC nationally.

Through Beacon, WaterAid Nepal has gained experience of managing a large, complex, long-term project with government and private sector partners, and also benefited from the extensive technical support provided by Anglian Water Alliance specialists. The profile and experience of the local partner DJKYC has also grown significantly which has enabled them to access further funding and expand their work with Dalit communities.

**(ii) Having built credible relationships with collaborating institutions in Nepal, the Beacon Project needs to develop further strategies that will deliver the “Legacy that Grows”**

The Beacon Project has developed credible relations with the collaborating institutions, and effective access to and trust with leaders and decision-makers in NWSC, MoWS and Lahan Municipality. This will help facilitate replication of the Beacon model in other areas of Nepal. A well-thought-out strategy is required to enable this as policy, or institutional decisions will need to be taken at the NWSC Board and MoWS, and will need to consider who can resource and take decisions on replication of key elements of the Beacon Project.

**(iii) The impact of future political changes will need to be managed, as they will present both challenges and opportunities for the project**

While political changes create uncertainty and delays in ongoing work, they can also present an opportunity for Beacon – for example, the elections next year may provide opportunities for other mayors to adopt the Beacon model, or for forming new ways of working between NWSC and municipalities that share a responsibility for water supply at the local municipal level. Nevertheless, WaterAid Nepal will need to maintain a thorough understanding of the emerging context and continue building good rapport with elected leaders to ensure continuity.

**(iv) Collaboration with academic institutions in the UK and Nepal is contributing new insight and will help develop independent learnings from the project**

The partnership model has been further diversified to include collaboration with academic institutions in both Nepal and the UK. The long timeframe of the Beacon Project provides space for such collaboration and research to contribute to learning and innovation.

**(v) The approach taken by the Beacon Project provides learning that could be incorporated into future WaterAid strategies**

Given that federalisation and the devolvement of WASH service delivery to local governments is relatively recent in Nepal, donors may be interested to learn from the Beacon experience of partnering with a local municipality and implementing the ‘universal approach’ of leaving no one behind in line with SDG 6.

As WaterAid has come to the end of its five-year strategic cycle and is currently in the process of developing a new global strategy, there is an opportunity for the Beacon Project to influence this and contribute to similar initiatives in other parts of the world.

# 1

# INTRODUCTION

# 1. INTRODUCTION

The Beacon Project is a long-term partnership between the UK water company Anglian Water and its Alliances, WaterAid Nepal, the Nepal Water Supply Corporation (NWSC), and Lahan Municipality, supported by a collaboration with the Ministry of Water Supply (MoWS) with a collective commitment to making progress towards SDG 6 in Lahan. The Beacon Project aims to achieve sustainable and equitable municipality-wide WASH services. The project seeks to strengthen capacity and accountability, deliver sustainable solutions through effective partnerships, and empower the poorest and most marginalised communities to access safe WASH. Beacon demonstrates a holistic approach to contributing to Nepal's journey towards achieving SDG 6: sustainable access to water and sanitation for everyone, everywhere by 2030.

Putting partnership at the heart of development is essential to achieving the global SDGs. WaterAid defines partnerships as follows:

A partnership is a collaborative arrangement between organisations that is based on a synergy of their goals and opportunities. Sometimes this involves a transfer of funding or resources between the organisations, but often it does not. We work in partnership to bring together complementary strengths of different stakeholders so that together we make a bigger difference.  
*WaterAid Partnership Framework (2020)*

The objective of this document is to capture key learning from Beacon's multi-stakeholder partnership, which is core to the project design. Specific technical or programmatic areas of project interventions are not covered in the scope of this study, but have been documented elsewhere, for example in the *From source to tap report* (November 2020).

This document is based on interviews with the following stakeholders:

- NWSC central office (Kathmandu) senior officials, NWSC Lahan branch office senior officials and selected managers from other NWSC branches.
- MoWS senior officials.
- Senior Department of Water Supply and Sewerage Management (DWSSM) staff.
- Lahan Municipality political and administrative leaders, as well as relevant technical staff.
- Selected staff from Dalit Jana Kalyan Yuba Club (DJKYC), Beacon's local NGO partner.
- Dalit community members in Lahan.
- Selected staff from WaterAid UK, WaterAid Nepal and Anglian Water.

In addition, relevant documents were reviewed including project-related documents, Board meeting and Project Steering Committee (PSC) minutes, Beacon-related publications, periodic reports, and other WASH-related policies and documents produced by the government of Nepal.

# 2

# BACKGROUND CONTEXT

## 2.1 SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT OF NEPAL

Nepal is one of the poorest countries in the world, with an absolute poverty rate (people earning less than \$1.90 a day) of 18.7% and multi-dimensional poverty rate standing at 28.6%.<sup>4</sup> It has a population of nearly 30 million people, made up of 125 different ethnic/caste groups. Dalit people constitute 13.6% of the population,<sup>5</sup> and are highly marginalised and disproportionately poorer than other groups. They face multiple discriminations including caste-based ‘untouchability’<sup>6</sup> in public water utilities, with such practices more entrenched in the western hills and eastern Terai (plain area), where Lahan Municipality lies.



Dalit woman on her way home after fetching water, Ward 5

In 2015, Nepal adopted a new Constitution introducing a federal system of governance and elections of local, provincial and federal governments were subsequently held in 2017. The country’s governance map was redrawn, with one federal government, seven provincial governments and 753 local governments (urban and rural municipalities) created. The Constitution provided a much higher degree of devolved authority and responsibility to local governments, including delivery of basic services such as health, sanitation and drinking water. The new Constitution recognises access to clean water and sanitation as a fundamental right,<sup>7</sup> and all three levels of government have to work in harmony to ensure key WASH-related delivery to citizens.

In 2015, the government prepared a 15-year national WASH sector development plan to achieve SDG 6 by 2030; later stipulating that each municipality should create its own 5-10 year WASH plan. The 15th five-year plan (2019/20-2023/24) set a target to increase access to basic drinking water from 88% to 99%. Significant progress has been made with regards to sanitation, with the country declared an ‘open defecation free zone’ in 2019.

The improving national policy environment on WASH, supported by a desire to achieve SDG 6, as well as local governments having significant authority and resources to deliver basic health, sanitation and drinking water, are key opportunities. However, while there is a good national level plan and regulatory environment for water supply in Nepal, there is a gap in how these national plans and policies are being delivered at local and district level. This is often seen in disjointed planning processes with gaps in delivery and capacity.

<sup>4</sup> 2019-20, National Planning Commission, 15th Plan, data from 2017-18. Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) is an international measure of acute multidimensional poverty. It complements traditional monetary poverty measures by capturing acute deprivations in health, education, and living standards that a person faces simultaneously.

<sup>5</sup> 2011 Census.

<sup>6</sup> This means they cannot take water from the same tap as high caste people, or have to wait last in line to get water, due to the discriminatory belief that if Dalits touch water it becomes impure. Though social change has happened over time, there is still marginalisation that these communities from economically poor families have to face.

<sup>7</sup> The Constitution of Nepal, Article 35 (3).

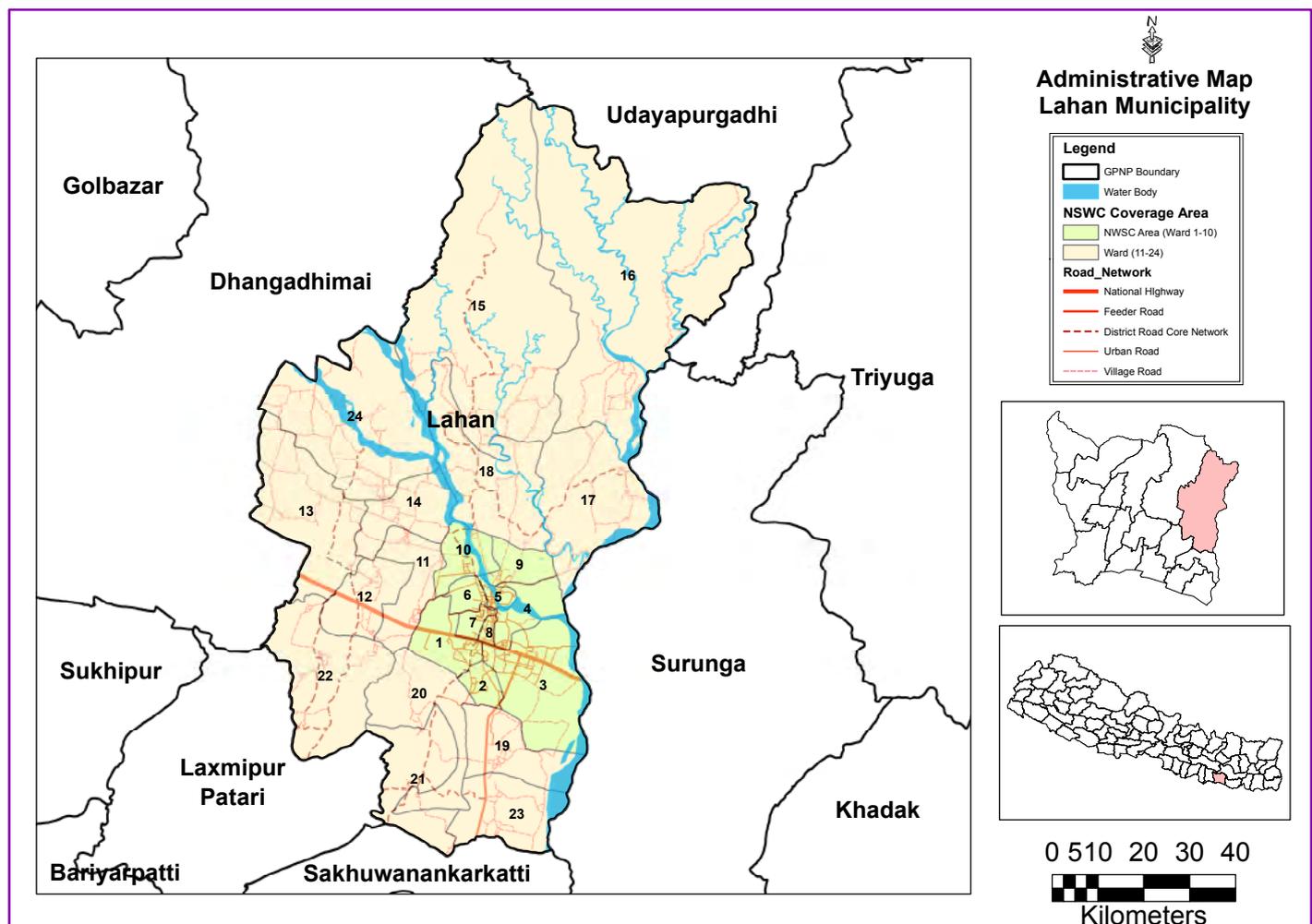
## 2.2 LAHAN MUNICIPALITY AND WASH CONTEXT

Lahan Municipality is in the southeast of Nepal. It hosts a medium-sized town (also called Lahan) and is one of 17 local governments in the Siraha district of Province 2. According to the 2011 census, Lahan Municipality has a population of 91,766 people across 24 wards, with 33,653 people living in the town (wards 1 to 10). Lahan has a sizable Dalit population, with 6,508 in wards 1 to 10 alone (2011 census). Siraha is one of eight priority Terai districts for the government's WASH interventions.

NWSC currently supply water only in wards 1-10, and a study in 2018<sup>8</sup> reported that just 35% of households in these wards were connected and received four to five hours' supply per day. Outside the urban centre, in wards 11-24 water supply systems are constructed by the Water

Supply and Sanitation Divisional Office (WSSDO) and handed over to be managed by local users' committees; although many households still rely on self-supply and have installed private tube wells. A 2020 baseline study showed that across the municipality as a whole, 52% of households (from a sample of 560) did not have access to potable water.

Water entering the distribution network is not adequately treated and disinfected, and water quality further deteriorates as it moves towards customers' taps due to an old pipeline network with a high rate of leakages. Sewage water is directly discharged into open drains leading to high contamination, especially during the rainy season. Increasing demand for water supply in wards



Map of Lahan Municipality

11-24 poses a significant challenge; low water tariffs do not provide sufficient revenue to match investment costs, and this is made worse by the high proportion of non-revenue water.

Before Beacon started, the Dalit community was not connected to the piped water network, relying instead on shared water points that were often few in number and far from their homes. Many pockets of the community depended on just one or two tubewells, which supplied poor quality water. Others relied on water from unprotected dug wells or surface water to bathe and wash their clothes and dishes. Even where getting piped water was feasible, a household would have to buy fittings and taps and contribute to the excavation and backfill for pipe laying from the main pipeline up to their house. In addition, most Dalits have no land ownership certificates (*Lalpurja*), which was originally a mandatory criterion to get new connections from NWSC.

Huge progress has been made on sanitation in Nepal, and the country was declared ODF (open-defecation free) in October 2019. However, a study by ENPHO (Environment and Public Health Organisation) in Lahan that year<sup>9</sup> showed that 6.7% of households in the municipality still did not have a toilet, with the proportion as high as 20% in some wards. Furthermore, there is currently no facility in the municipality for treating faecal sludge from pit latrines and septic tanks. Faecal sludge is either emptied into a shallow, open pit at the landfill site or disposed of directly into open land, forest, water bodies or drains. Almost a third of toilets (31%) have never been emptied to date.

With regards to hygiene, a baseline survey conducted by WaterAid Nepal in 2020 showed that nearly half (46%) of households in Lahan, 62% of schools and 79% of healthcare facilities did not have a functioning handwashing station within their premises.



Pumping water from a shallow tubewell, Ward 5

# 3

# OVERVIEW OF THE BEACON PROJECT

## 3.1 CONCEPT, OBJECTIVES AND CO-CREATION STRATEGY

The Beacon Project concept was first discussed in 2016, and from the beginning the commitment was to work until 2030 in line with SDG 6. The specific objectives of the project were to:

- Model a municipal-wide approach in Lahan promoting greater accountability and effectiveness in delivering sustainable and equitable WASH services, working with the municipality.
- Support the efficiency and expansion plans of NWSC in Lahan, with a focus on reaching marginalised and poor communities.
- Leverage the model in Lahan for wider district, national and international benefits.

In 2020, Beacon partners launched a co-creation strategy that articulated the project vision for 2020-2030. The strategy helped further clarify the direction of travel and deepened the commitment of partners. The strategy consists of five outcomes (below) that are led by various partners, demonstrating a spirit of true collaboration. These intended outcomes are broken down into actionable plans and then resourced. The strategy was created through a consultative process among key stakeholders, including local people in Lahan.



**WATER SECURITY:** long-term sustainable sources of water for all users which enable economic development (new homes and businesses, agriculture and tourism), improve public health and are resilient to future challenges around climate change and the need to protect and enhance the environment for new and future generations.

**SAFE, CLEAN WATER:** water that is available for people to use is safely managed and of a suitable quality for the purpose for which it is to be used.

**SANITATION WITH DIGNITY:** people in Lahan believe in the importance of hygiene and sanitation. They have safely managed sanitation facilities and improved hygiene practices in the home, schools and healthcare facilities.

**SUSTAINABLE FAECAL SLUDGE MANAGEMENT:** Lahan is known for having a clean environment, with faecal sludge being safely managed and contributing to the local agricultural economy.

**A LEGACY THAT GROWS:** organisations responsible for the management of water in Lahan are trusted by users and stakeholders, and use gender and caste equality as founding principles. Learning from the project is shared to increase capabilities more widely in Nepal.

## 3.2 PARTNERS, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Beacon Project is led by six key partners:

### MINISTRY OF WATER SUPPLY (MOWS)

MoWS is the governmental ministry responsible for the formulation of national WASH policies and plans, as well as planning, implementation, regulation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes. MoWS provides strategic input and support for the implementation of the Beacon Project delivered through NWSC. MoWS enables financial support to complement Lahan's NWSC services, and is responsible for ensuring adequate human resources in Lahan NWSC to enable Beacon's effective implementation. The Joint Secretary of MoWS sits on the Board of NWSC. All NWSC Board members as well as the General Manager are appointed by the government of Nepal.

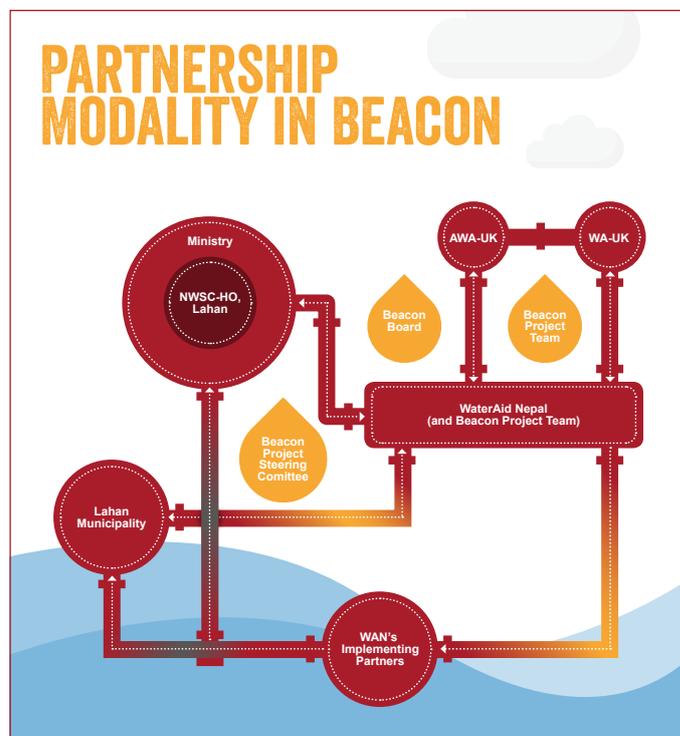
### NEPAL WATER SUPPLY CORPORATION (NWSC)

The NWSC, a public utility organisation, is a legally autonomous government body formed under the NWSC Act (1989). It functions under, and is heavily resourced by, MoWS. The NWSC is the only utility agency responsible for the combined functions of operating, delivering and managing water supply services in towns outside Kathmandu valley. It is currently delivering and managing water supply in 24 towns, including Lahan, and was thus identified as a key partner for the Beacon Project. NWSC is the primary delivery agency for water supply within the Beacon Project, working in coordination with Lahan Municipality and WaterAid Nepal. A successful project and partnership with NWSC in Lahan has the potential to create a replication effect in other towns serviced by NWSC.

### LAHAN MUNICIPALITY

Lahan Municipality is responsible for planning, implementation and management of local development efforts, as defined in Schedule 8 and 9 of the Constitution, including drinking water, basic health and sanitation. The municipality has the authority to prepare local level policy, laws and programmes in the areas of WASH, within the parameters of relevant federal and provincial laws.

Lahan Municipality leads the Beacon Project Steering Committee (PSC) as its Chair, and supports effective delivery through enabling coordination and cooperation



with relevant project stakeholders and agencies. Lahan Municipality is also responsible for the delivery of sanitation services (which are outside the remit of NWSC), and is supported in this by WaterAid Nepal and the local NGO partner<sup>10</sup> (currently DJKYC). The municipality works closely with NWSC to provide and ensure the necessary approvals at local and provincial levels, and helps to identify and extend services to unserved communities, particularly the poorest, most vulnerable and marginalised communities.

### WATERAID

WaterAid envisages a world where everyone everywhere has safe water, sanitation and hygiene by 2030. WaterAid Nepal works with NGOs, communities, experts and government institutions to enhance WASH sector capacities and support the delivery of integrated WASH services.

In the Beacon Project, WaterAid Nepal is responsible for overall project management to ensure delivery of the project plan, as approved by the Beacon Board and in line with WaterAid's policies. It provides secretarial support to the Project Steering Committee and Board

<sup>10</sup> At the start, Beacon worked with an NGO called UEMS (Urban Environment Management Society), which was replaced by DJKYC in September 2019.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES



and facilitates the necessary technical support, including key processes for the implementation of the project's collaborative partnerships. WaterAid Nepal liaises with NWSC's head office in Kathmandu and Anglian Water Alliance to ensure relevant national and international level inputs and support are provided to other partners working in Lahan Municipality.

### ANGLIAN WATER AND ITS ALLIANCE PARTNERS

Anglian Water is geographically the largest private water company in the UK, and one of the founding members of WaterAid. These two organisations have worked together for four decades, and continue to work together to support the SDGs' vision of clean water for everyone, everywhere by 2030. Anglian Water has strong links with the UK's [Institute of Water](#), and takes a global perspective for learning and leading in the industry, with a huge focus and proven track record in people and skills development. Anglian Water Alliance partners (Anglian Water's 14 key delivery partners<sup>11</sup> and associated supply chain) bring years of experience in the water sector – not only technical 'know-how' and business acumen, but also experience of making partnerships and alliances work, building effective regulatory relationships and delivering projects at scale.

Anglian Water procures key technical resources for Lahan from its alliance partners, including capacity-building through various means such as on-site coaching, designing water and sanitation sector capacity training, and immersions for project partners with WaterAid Nepal. They support research and technology that is cost-effective, sustainable and locally relevant, to demonstrate a sustainable model in Lahan. Senior Anglian Water Alliance directors sit on the Beacon Board, and as Chair Anglian Water Alliance has been providing strategic leadership, as well as principles for mobilisation and management of resources – both funding and human – to support Beacon's initiatives.

### DALIT JANA KALYAN YUBA CLUB (DJKYC)

DJKYC is a local NGO established by members of the Dalit community in 2004. The organisation has been working against caste-based untouchability, and had some exposure to WASH work before Beacon. DJKYC also has experience of working on education and women's rights. DJKYC works to support Dalit communities and runs drinking water and sanitation programmes in Dalit communities and 10 local schools under the Beacon Project.

<sup>11</sup> Anglian Water, Mott MacDonald Bentley, Skanska, MWH Treatment, Balfour Beatty, Sweco, Barhale, Danaher & Walsh, Kier, Morrison Utility Services, Capgemini, Claret Civil Engineering, Clancy Docwra and Public Sewer Services.

## 3.3 PROJECT GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The project is supported by the following structures:

### PROJECT BOARD

Beacon has a Board to govern the management of the project based on the spirit of the Declaration of Intent signed by MoWS, WaterAid Nepal and Anglian Water. It provides strategic direction and is the approval body for project plans and budgets, including fund flows. The Board also ensures that a Project Administration Document is in place with clear accountability of the parties involved. The Board consists of MoWS, NWSC, Lahan Municipality, Anglian Water Alliance and WaterAid Nepal, and meets every six months physically in Nepal (virtually since the onset of COVID-19). Senior representatives and officials from these organisations sit on the Beacon Board, providing decision-making and strategic steer.

### PROJECT STEERING COMMITTEE (PSC)

The PSC ensures effective implementation of project activities, conducts supervision and monitoring, and recommends approval of project plans, budgets and reports to the Board. The PSC consists of NWSC, Lahan

Municipality, the Water Supply and Sanitation Division Office (WSSDO), the Federal Water Supply and Sewerage Management Project in Janakpur (the state capital of Province 2), and DJKYC. Other relevant stakeholders can be invited to the PSC as invitees. The PSC generally meets every two months, or monthly if needed.

### BEACON TEAM

A Beacon Nepal project team reporting to WaterAid Nepal's Country Director oversees the day-to-day implementation of activities. The entire project team is based in Lahan, with a couple of staff sharing their time between Lahan and Kathmandu to provide national level coordination, relationship building and collaboration. The project team holds weekly and fortnightly meetings with the relevant Anglian Water support teams, including Anglian Water Alliance's Beacon Project Manager and technical workstream leads. This support team is key to the technical delivery and driving of the overall One Plan – a joint plan between NWSC and Beacon, prepared in coordination with Lahan Municipality. This platform is also important as it helps tap into and draw on the technical expertise of Anglian Water Alliance, based on the needs of the One Plan.



Repaired handwashing facility at Shree Lakshman Lalita Kushwaha Higher Secondary School, Ward 3

## 3.4 RESOURCE MOBILISATION

The project is financially resourced by Anglian Water Alliance's ongoing philanthropic support to WaterAid; their exceptional fundraising capacity has provided Beacon with consistent and generous funding to support the long-term commitment. Anglian Water Alliance also provides technical input, and staff volunteer their time for Beacon despite having full time jobs. Part of the learning has been finding ways to monitor and acknowledge these non-financial (*pro bono*) and gift-in-kind contributions.

WaterAid Nepal provides project management and implementation support through a dedicated project team in Lahan and support from the Country Office as needed. These resource inputs and the Beacon project's influence have raised MoWS and NWSC central office attention to Lahan and led to the budget for NWSC Lahan more than doubling over the project period. Lahan Municipality has also provided land to NWSC to drill new boreholes, and allocated a potential site for a faecal sludge treatment plant to be co-financed by Beacon and government resources.



Chlorine dosing system installed in the NWSC compound

## 3.5 KEY ACHIEVEMENTS SO FAR

The Beacon Project includes a diversity of partners: national and international, NGO, private sector and government. In the government partnership there is a federal ministry and a local government, as well as a utility provider that operates under the federal ministry – but with no formal accountability to the local government that is constitutionally responsible for WASH service delivery. The forging of a formal partnership of such an array of partners is, in itself, a significant achievement. These organisations all have different characteristics, work cultures, values and limitations. Any lack of mutual understanding and trust could lead to significant issues for the project if adequate time is not invested in building and sustaining the partnership. Establishing open and transparent information sharing and deep trust among partners has been one of the key successes.

Another notable achievement is that the project has been able to operate without significant delays even during

COVID-19, although the pandemic affected various aspects of work and ways of working (for example, holding quarterly board meetings remotely).



**Beacon has done the capacity building of NWSC human resources. The production, distribution and quality of drinking water has improved. Beacon helped us to improve on the current system such as leakage control, quality control of drinking water and in drilling improved boreholes.**

*NWSC senior staff*

Some of the key achievements of the Beacon Project are summarised below:

<p><b>Partnership model &amp; project governance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Innovative partnership and project governance model</li> <li>• Effective and highly collaborative Board and Project teams</li> </ul>	<p><b>Water resources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 new boreholes drilled to new specification, with high yield and low turbidity with full time supervision by hydrogeologist</li> <li>• Land allocated by the municipality for further boreholes</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategic planning &amp; budgeting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Municipality drafts its first WASH plan</li> <li>• Beacon co-creation strategy developed</li> <li>• Integrated planning between NWSC and Lahan Municipality</li> <li>• NWSC Lahan budget more than doubled, partly due to Beacon advocacy</li> <li>• Beacon supported and facilitated in budget planning of NWSC aligning with Beacon Outcomes for FY 2021/22</li> </ul>	<p><b>Water treatment/quality</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant reduction in turbidity</li> <li>• Regular water quality testing of boreholes</li> <li>• 3 inline chlorine dosing systems installed</li> <li>• Installation of dedicated sample points</li> <li>• Completion of water quality training and the establishment of a local water quality testing station</li> <li>• Recruitment of water quality chemist to carry out tests</li> </ul>
<p><b>Legacy that grows</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity building of NWSC, WaterAid Nepal &amp; DJKYC</li> <li>• Training to multiple NWSC branches on leakage detection, groundwater monitoring, CCTV camera, borehole drilling</li> <li>• New specification for borehole drilling adopted by NWSC nationally</li> <li>• Borehole CCTV camera survey used in other branches</li> <li>• Development of learning documentation</li> </ul>	<p><b>Water networks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 315 households (1,608 people) in Dalit communities connected with Beacon support; and a further 287 households (1,435 people) connected by NWSC. A total of 3,043 people accessed piped drinking water for the first time.</li> <li>• Detailed network hydraulic model created and planning for District Metered Areas</li> <li>• Over 349 leaks repaired reducing non-revenue water (2017 until July 2021)</li> <li>• Supply increased from 5 to 10 hours per day by August 2021</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sanitation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 communal toilets built in Dalit communities</li> <li>• Toilets constructed/rehabilitated in 10 schools</li> <li>• Detailed design completed for faecal sludge treatment plant and contract awarded</li> </ul>	<p><b>COVID-19 response</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supported NWSC to ensure continuity of services (eg funding for back-up generators, PPE for front-line workers, and remote technical support)</li> <li>• Supported the municipality with hygiene promotion and foot-operated handwashing facilities for public places</li> </ul>

# 4

## KEY LEARNING ON BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

## 4. KEY LEARNING ON BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

### (i) An innovative partnership that has successfully brought together diverse stakeholders

WaterAid Nepal's current Country Programme Strategy (2017-21) prioritises three key dimensions of the programmatic approach: empowerment of marginalised groups, sector strengthening, and partnerships. Based on significant changes in country context and political economy, WaterAid Nepal realised it was time to make a stronger commitment to working in innovative and diverse partnerships in order to be more effective and create a larger-scale impact. A Beacon-type initiative would not only cover the partnership aspect of the programmatic approach, but equally support the 'sector strengthening' and 'empowerment of marginalised groups' aspects.

All these developments were happening while WaterAid globally was undergoing change, with a stronger focus on making WASH work more sustainable and transformative. At the same time, Anglian Water Alliance was also seeking to do things differently, exploring piloting a new approach going beyond simply raising and providing funds to WaterAid, to being involved in implementation.

### (ii) Understanding the motivations of different stakeholders has built effective ways of working

#### Being clear first on WaterAid's own objectives and motivations

Another operational priority for WaterAid Nepal that became a catalyst for the Beacon Project was a desire to expand work in the urban WASH context. The country's new Constitution significantly changed the proportion of people categorised as living in an urban area. Under the new federal system, Nepal has 293 urban municipalities and 460 rural municipalities, with the majority of people living in urban areas; whereas until 2014 Nepal had only 58 urban municipalities<sup>12</sup> out of over 3,900 'local bodies' (as they were called then). Even in urban municipalities there are a significant number of marginalised groups without proper access to WASH facilities, and this was a key motivation for WaterAid Nepal to increase work in urban areas to contribute to SDG 6.

WaterAid Nepal wanted to learn about urban WASH interventions, and also create a model that could be replicated for wider-scale impact than could be achieved through conventional projects.

Informed by years of learning, WaterAid Nepal wanted to pilot an area-wide approach (in this case municipality-wide) to ensure water, sanitation and hygiene access to the whole population in a targeted area. The organisation was keen to work with local government institutions, since they were now responsible for WASH and had significantly more budget to provide these services. Supporting Lahan to achieve universal and sustainable access to WASH would also create a powerful model to demonstrate and hopefully replicate in other municipalities, increasing the project's scale and impact.



**WaterAid's understanding of its role had evolved: an agency which brought taps and toilets wanted to become an agent of transformation that included more than taps: transforming the broader system. We had developed a greater appreciation of the need of services that last and Beacon project development was a part of this thinking.**

*Former senior staff, WaterAid*

#### Understanding the objectives and motivations of prospective partners

Through Beacon, Anglian Water Alliance wanted to bring about changes in the lives of marginalised people in a municipality in a low-income country<sup>13</sup> by going beyond the traditional partnership of fundraising and grant support to WaterAid – to engaging directly and learning from this experience. Anglian Water wanted to work with a 'laser beam' focus on one defined geographical area, to see how much change they could bring, as well as developing a replicable model instead of undertaking small projects in many places. Slow WASH-related progress during the Millennium Development Goals acted as a catalyst for Anglian Water Alliance to engage in the Beacon partnership, to ensure good progress on SDG Goal 6. The Beacon Project also provided valuable

<sup>12</sup> Wikipedia: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Administrative\\_divisions\\_of\\_Nepal#](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Administrative_divisions_of_Nepal#) (Visited May 20, 2021)

<sup>13</sup> In 2019, Nepal became a lower-middle income country due to an increase in per capita income.

learning for Anglian Water and the Alliance partners: at an organisational level a much greater appreciation and understanding of how they can best add value and, at an individual level, development opportunities for employees building communication, IT, stakeholder and collaboration skills and experience. The long association between WaterAid and Anglian Water meant some of these motivations and incentives were already clear to WaterAid, while others became clear during initial discussions on Beacon's potential.



**In Liberia we had a partnership project but there were difficulties due to political and security situations. We wanted to learn about how do partners make a difference on the ground and simply not give money only. We wanted to test a model and see if it can be replicated.**

*Anglian Water Alliance senior staff*

However, as Beacon Project exploration started, NWSC was not yet fully clear about the extent of potential support and benefits for them. WaterAid (and Anglian Water Alliance during their visits) engaged with NWSC (and later on with MoWS) to explain about Anglian Water, its alliance partners, their knowledge of cutting-edge technologies and other expertise. The full potential of the Beacon Project was also described, including a long-term commitment until 2030 in line with SDG Goal 6, the level of financial support, the potential for NWSC and MoWS to learn new technologies on water and sanitation systems, training and capacity-building opportunities, as well as the possibility of providing some modern equipment along with practical training on the ground. Engagement with senior decision-making NWSC staff, and later on with MoWS senior staff, helped clarify not only institutional but also individual skills-share, learning motivations and opportunities that Beacon could bring.



**Initially we were anxious whether the project would be abandoned by doing only half the work. Now we feel reassured due to the long-term commitment of Beacon.**

*NWSC Lahan staff*

As the Beacon concept was being explored, improved access to clean drinking water emerged as a key political agenda in many of the 2017 local election campaigns. Lahan Municipality was identified as a potential partner since WaterAid Nepal already had a presence in the area

and the mayor had pledged, while running for office, to provide clean drinking water to all Lahan Municipality residents. At that time NWSC was only supplying water in wards 1 to 10, with the remaining wards 11 to 24 being served by a variety of communal water systems, private tubewells, and with many households/communities remaining unserved. Even in wards 1 to 10, only 35% of households were connected to NWSC's network. The water was unreliable and of poor quality, and many of the marginalised Dalit population were excluded. WaterAid Nepal realised that the leadership of Lahan Municipality had both institutional and personal reasons to engage with a project like Beacon. The project would not only improve and expand the existing network, but would help the municipality's political leadership deliver on electoral promises made to the people of Lahan. As in the cases of NWSC and MoWS, the process of bringing them on board involved making Lahan Municipality fully aware of the scale of support and potential benefits of the Beacon Project.

### **(iii) Taking time to build trust and confidence among prospective organisations has created effective partnerships**

From the beginning it was clear that all parties had a high-level objective of meeting SDG 6, which provided a common purpose and shared direction of travel. The steps taken to explain the potential benefits of the project, emphasising the long-term commitment of Anglian Water and WaterAid, helped build trust between partners.

However, there were other important factors that helped to create trust. From the outset, WaterAid Nepal and Anglian Water Alliance stated that they would work to the plans and priorities of NWSC and Lahan Municipality, and that NWSC and Lahan Municipality would be the 'face of the project' to the people. Prior to signing the Project Agreement in September 2018, Anglian Water Alliance staff visited Lahan four times to explore partnership opportunities and carry out a technical assessment. These visits, alongside discussions with MoWS, NWSC (both at the central Kathmandu office and the Lahan branch) and Lahan Municipality leadership, helped these prospective partners realise Anglian Water Alliance's dedication to the project. Anglian Water Alliance also organised training in November 2017 on Leakage Detection and Groundwater Monitoring for NWSC Lahan and staff from six nearby branch offices, which demonstrated to NWSC and MoWS staff the expertise and knowledge of Anglian Water Alliance and their commitment to the project.

The visits also allowed Anglian Water to get first-hand experience of the situation in Lahan, particularly the very poor access of the Dalit community to WASH facilities.

In March 2018, a team of senior staff from Anglian Water Alliance partners visited Lahan and interacted with Dalit communities. Several staff interviewed for this study confirmed that this opportunity to interact directly with the community and observe their very difficult life situation created a strong ‘emotional connection’, while many stakeholders interviewed in Lahan also felt that this particular visit deepened Anglian Water Alliance’s resolve ‘to do something’ for the marginalised community. The mayor noted that several Anglian visits prior to signing the agreement had helped to ‘increase the ownership of Anglian Water Alliance’ of the Beacon Project.



**The March 2018 visit of all 14 companies’ Senior Directors to Nepal was crucial. When we visited a Dalit community, we spent two hours explaining what we were hoping to achieve. At the time of leaving, one Dalit woman said ‘please don’t forget us’. We later revisited Lahan and met with the same lady and told her that we did not forget you!**

*Anglian Water Alliance senior staff*

After one of their visits, Anglian Water Alliance floated an idea to WaterAid for senior MoWS and NWSC staff to visit the UK and Anglian Water facilities. As a result, three senior MoWS staff visited the UK in August 2018. (NWSC staff were unfortunately not able to visit so a later date was planned, but this has been delayed by COVID-19). The visit provided MoWS staff with an opportunity to directly see Anglian Water activities, and helped them better understand the organisation’s technical knowledge, capacity, experience and charitable intentions. Both WaterAid Nepal and Anglian Water felt that MoWS’ quality of engagement and commitment deepened after this visit.

The UK visit of senior MoWS staff helped visitors to directly observe the extent of technical knowledge and expertise of Anglian Water, and to become fully clear about the charitable intentions of the organisation.

Likewise, on the Anglian Water Alliance side, there was a need to fully convince its alliance partners of the feasibility of the project, including that any money provided would be put to best use, and the desired changes would be seen by people in Lahan. The engagement of senior WaterAid staff, including the Regional Director and Country Director of Nepal, as well as senior staff of NWSC, MoWS, WSSDO and

Lahan Municipality, helped to enhance the confidence of Anglian Water Alliance partners about the dedication and commitment of prospective project partners in Nepal.

**(iv) Being flexible and engaging different partners and stakeholders has increased their commitment to success**

During project development, significant energy was invested in making sure that the right parties were brought in, and that each party understood the strengths, priorities, added value, complementarity, needs and limitations of the other parties.

Initial project discussions took place with NWSC. However, it soon became clear that MoWS needed to be included, as MoWS was a higher authority than NWSC at the federal level, with responsibility for national water and sanitation policies and plans as well as the planning, budgeting, implementation, regulation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes. In addition, NWSC Lahan had financial limitations, whereas MoWS could provide greater financial support and human resources to NWSC Lahan for Beacon’s effective implementation. MoWS could also potentially support in due course when replicating the project or its components in other municipalities in Nepal.

WaterAid Nepal and Anglian Water Alliance also realised, along with NWSC and MoWS, that simply going with NWSC in a municipality-wide project would have been fraught with risks – because responsibility for drinking water and sanitation lay with local governments. In one meeting, MoWS senior officials explicitly suggested that Lahan Municipality should be brought into project discussions.

There is no established formal accountability line between NWSC and local governments. WaterAid could step in to facilitate this accountability gap for Beacon by helping to institutionalise collectively agreed specific project delivery mechanisms.

Although Lahan Municipality had a constitutional responsibility to deliver on water and sanitation, they lacked an implementing arm (such as NWSC). At the same time, NWSC and local governments did not have any formal accountability arrangements under the federal system. This lack of formal institutional arrangements suggested that WaterAid Nepal could play a role in facilitating mutual accountability between NWSC and Lahan Municipality, by generating and institutionalising a ‘collective commitment’ of these partners to the Beacon Project. This would have been a difficult task for MoWS, as they are a central government agency with no formal

reporting lines from or to locally elected governments (which are autonomous). WaterAid, through its years of work in Nepal, was a credible name and would have the required acceptance of prospective institutions and partners to play a key role in the project.

These realisations came out of open discussions between WaterAid Nepal, Anglian Water Alliance, NWSC and MoWS. Such discussions also helped parties 'get to know each other' in terms of what they could bring, their limitations, and how those limitations could be overcome through complementarities of different partners. For example, NWSC could bring their technical knowledge and capacity, but being a utility provider they could also look at revenue generation opportunities from new investments. However, Lahan Municipality, having locally elected members, had a more explicit commitment to ensure Dalit people's access to piped drinking water, even though monetary return on investment may be low. Likewise, MoWS would understand both perspectives because MoWS is part of federal government, and is thus explicitly committed to national plans and programmes, including ensuring marginalised people's access to SDG 6 and other WASH targets. MoWS would also be able to influence NWSC to connect Dalit communities and provide additional budget where needed.

While the original project plan was to focus on drinking water first, Lahan Municipality emphasised sanitation programmes, leading to Beacon having both water and sanitation as project priorities from the outset.

One key example of a partner's needs and strengths influencing the project design through these discussions was the emphasis Lahan Municipality placed on the sanitation programme (which is outside the remit of NWSC). Lahan Municipality leadership was keen to launch a sanitation programme early on in the project – alongside the water supply initiatives that had previously been given a higher priority. The Beacon Project thus forged a partnership with DJKYC, a local NGO, to run a sanitation programme in 10 local schools and construct community toilets in a number of Dalit communities, with Lahan Municipality actively facilitating the process. Beacon also supported the municipality to develop a faecal sludge management (FSM) plan.

So, what started as a potential partnership between WaterAid Nepal, Anglian Water Alliance and NWSC, ended up adding Lahan Municipality as a formal institutional partner and MoWS as a strategic partner. Thus, Beacon became a partnership between a local government, a federal ministry, a national utility provider,

an international NGO, a local NGO, a private utility company and its 14 alliances overseas. The addition of partners certainly increased complexity, because they all had their own organisational systems, culture and decision-making processes. This exercise of getting the right partners on board and getting to know each other well took considerable time, but it enhanced the project's credibility and legitimacy. 'Getting to know each other' also helped partners become clearer about mutual expectations, creating a common purpose and building greater trust and confidence.

**(v) Adapting the project's approach to accommodate the organisational and work culture of partners has built strong relationships and trust**

WaterAid has been working in Nepal since 1987, with significant engagement with government agencies along with civil society and development partners on policy influencing and advocacy, and was therefore aware of the general organisational and work culture in Nepal's government institutions. However, Beacon was a new kind of engagement whereby a government utility provider and a local government were going to be directly part of a project's implementation, along with NGO partners. Lahan Municipality was undergoing massive transformation after the 2017 local elections in order to institutionally take on significant new service delivery responsibilities provided by the new Constitution. A new political leadership had just been elected, after more than 15 years where the municipality was largely run by bureaucrats. WaterAid Nepal was aware that Beacon would require a much more intense and regular relationship with prospective government institutions and partners than in the past. WaterAid Nepal assigned



Community members cleaning the new communal toilet in Ward 2

and recruited staff who had prior experience of working with government institutions, and so understood policies, context and the bureaucracy. These staff had to engage in project-related discussions and negotiations with NWSC, MoWS and Lahan Municipality, which further deepened WaterAid Nepal's understanding of organisational culture in these institutions.

WaterAid Nepal and Anglian Water Alliance had to adjust their work style and pace to suit the organisational and work culture in government partners. For instance, WaterAid and Anglian had a dominant culture of email communication and written reports, while MoWS, NWSC and Lahan Municipality significantly relied on face-to-face meetings or telephone conversations.

Understanding the work culture of partners meant WaterAid Nepal and Anglian Water Alliance staff had to adapt how they worked. For example, while WaterAid and Anglian had a dominant culture of email communication and written reports, NWSC and Lahan Municipality relied mainly on face-to-face meetings or telephone conversations (barring COVID-19, which started a culture of online meetings in government institutions too). Likewise, while formal project discussions and negotiations with NWSC and MoWS took place with senior leadership in these organisations, engagement was also needed with individuals at different levels to create common understanding and garner support for the project. However, in the case of Lahan Municipality, the engagement had to be mostly with top political leaders (mayor, deputy and chief administration officer).

While working with a locally elected body, it was important for Beacon to include 'quick wins' and short-term results programmes alongside medium- and long-term. This is because elected leaders are keen to deliver to their constituents while they are in office.

The organisational and work culture in Lahan Municipality was different again to that in NWSC and MoWS, as a local government is much closer to the people and involves elected leaders interacting with their constituents on a day-to-day basis. The municipality is under much greater public scrutiny than sectoral agencies. Lahan Municipality's organisational and work culture involved being sensitive to and influenced by people's immediate needs, as well the opinion of local people and the media. It also meant an elected body and its leaders would be interested as much in short- and

medium-term results as in long-term results, so they can demonstrate that they have fulfilled their commitments to the people while in office. WaterAid Nepal and Anglian Water Alliance developed this understanding, which helped in negotiating and shaping the Beacon Project with greater ownership of Lahan Municipality. As a result, Beacon includes medium- to long-term objectives and activities as well as 'quick wins' and short-term delivery strategy.

Respect for hierarchy in government institutions and approaching the relevant people at the appropriate level was essential for continued and clear engagement. Due consideration for engagement with government officials commensurate with their authority and profile was required. This required developing knowledge about not only organisational and work culture, but also organisational dynamics and influence of individual staff to ensure Beacon's development and negotiation processes received due response and institutional commitment. Sometimes this was quite challenging, as Nepal's government institutions were undergoing a substantial change as a result of federalisation, which created significant uncertainties and ambiguities as to the power of different institutions, institutional set-up and accountability lines. This resulted in frequent staff transfers, which meant WaterAid Nepal had to engage with new officials all over again. For example, in NWSC Lahan, the current branch manager is the fourth since the start of the Beacon Project in early 2017. The MoWS designated Board member changed three times in 2019-20 due to internal transfers. In Lahan Municipality, the current Chief Administrative Officer is the fifth since the start of the project and fourth since the formal Project Agreement signing in September 2018.

Respect for hierarchy in government institutions and approaching the relevant people at the appropriate level was essential.

Since the nature of the partner organisations varies widely, it is challenging to keep everyone equally motivated and engaged all the time. Almost the first 18 months of the project was spent identifying who will be the right partners, understanding different objectives, motivations and contributions, engaging with decision-makers in potential partners and creating appropriate project governance and delivery mechanisms. These exercises created good rapport among senior staff in these institutions – even though in some cases this had to be done all over again due to the frequent transfer of staff in government partners. Thus far, the project has done well in aligning the work of all key partners and their relevant senior staff with a clear sense of direction and open work culture.

# 5

## KEY LEARNING DURING IMPLEMENTATION

## 5.1 PREPARING TO DELIVER

The implementation phase of the project started after almost 18 months of extensive discussions among partners and other preparations. At this stage, all partners were clear about the common purpose of the project and the role of each party, and had a good understanding of the strengths, added value and limitations of each organisation. But the roles and institutional arrangements for project implementation needed to first be formalised in writing.

### (i) Signing the 'Declaration of Intent'

In September 2018, a Declaration of Intent was signed between MoWS, WaterAid and Anglian Water Alliance. This included a commitment to replicate and scale-up, mentioning that the project goal is to develop a sustainable municipality-wide water and sanitation provision 'starting with Lahan'. The Declaration states that, "the project will attempt to establish itself as a municipal model (or Beacon) for improved supply and sanitation to shine a light on how a successful and prosperous collaboration can work, in time becoming a shop window for other NWSC service towns right across Nepal to replicate and adapt". The Declaration reaffirmed the attainment of SDG 6 to be the high-level common purpose of the Beacon parties.

The Declaration also described the roles the three parties will play. MoWS committed to providing 'strategic input and support' to NWSC – which was agreed to be the 'primary delivery agency' – and to enable financial support to NWSC to improve services in Lahan, including major rehabilitation of infrastructure or installation of new facilities as needed.

The Declaration formalised WaterAid Nepal's role to be, "a facilitator of key processes to this collaboration to work for mutual benefits." It envisaged that WaterAid Nepal would be the "... driving force bringing together communities, Lahan Municipality, NWSC, MoWS and Anglian Water to bridge connections," and to, "ensure programme management and operational support for overall project implementation, ensuring effectiveness and monitoring mechanisms".

The Declaration described Anglian Water Alliance's role as "...to provide (also by procuring services from its alliance partners) key technical resources for Lahan, including capacity-building through various means like onsite coaching, training and immersions

for delivery agencies, working with WaterAid Nepal". It also envisaged that Anglian Water Alliance would support research and technology that is cost-effective, sustainable and locally-relevant. The Declaration clarified that Anglian Water will not have any commercial intentions with regards to the Beacon Project. It also mentioned that it was a document depicting the parties' commitment to work together, written in good faith but not legally enforceable. This ensured that the laws of Nepal were respected as they do not allow a foreign utility agency, without required legal registrations in Nepal, to be a party in a project agreement for not-for-profit purposes.

### (ii) Provision of the Beacon Board

The Declaration of Intent made an arrangement for a Beacon Board for the governance of the project consisting of representatives from MoWS, Anglian Water Alliance and WaterAid – NWSC and Lahan Municipality were later added to the Board with secretariat support provided by WaterAid Nepal. The document also clarified that the role of the Board would be to provide a high-level strategic steer, ensure continued commitment from all parties, and approve project plans and budget, including funding flows recommended by the Project Steering Committee.

### (iii) Provision of the Project Steering Committee (PSC)

The Declaration provided for a Project Steering Committee, with the responsibility of project execution. The PSC would comprise NWSC, WSSDO and Lahan Municipality as Chair, with secretariat support provided by WaterAid Nepal. The PSC would be mandated by the Board to prepare detailed project plans and budgets, and to recommend for Board approval. Anglian Water and WaterAid Nepal could be invited to the PSC as required. The PSC was authorised to set up specific project teams to provide required technical support to the delivery agencies, as per agreed timescales and milestones.

### (iv) Project Agreement signing

On the same day as signing the Declaration of Intent, a Beacon Project Agreement was also signed between NWSC, WaterAid Nepal and Lahan Municipality. The agreement defined the scope of activities, roles and responsibilities of NWSC, Lahan Municipality and WaterAid Nepal 'as per the spirit of the Declaration of

Intent'. The agreement further elaborated on the role of the Board and PSC. This was to ensure that roles were fully defined and legally enforceable.

## ROLE OF NWSC

Work as the primary project delivery agency

Undertake planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting in coordination with other parties in the PSC

Ensure its Lahan branch is adequately resourced (plans, financial, human)

Coordinate with MoWS and obtain necessary formal approvals from government

## ROLE OF LAHAN MUNICIPALITY

Enable effective project delivery in coordination with all other parties as the Chair of PSC

Help identify and reach marginalised communities and schools; collaborate with WaterAid Nepal and local partners on ensuring WASH programmes in marginalised communities

Provide necessary local approvals and facilitate for any provincial approvals needed

## ROLE OF WATERAID NEPAL

Undertake overall project management in coordination with all parties

Provide secretariat support to PSC

Facilitate technical support in collaboration with project parties

Supervise and monitor to ensure effective delivery of the project



Children in the Dalit community, Ward 1

## 5.2 MAKING CHANGE HAPPEN

Formal implementation began after signing of the Project Agreement.

### (i) **Locally-based project team has enabled effective communication with NWSC, the municipality and the community**

WaterAid Nepal has always had an office in Kathmandu, working through partners without having its own team permanently based in project sites. During the project discussions, no clear decision had been made that the Beacon Project team would be based in Lahan. However, Anglian Water's previous project management experience, their frequent visits to Nepal and exposure to key stakeholders, dynamics and local context led them to strongly believe that basing a project team in Lahan would be crucial for success. In addition, the language barrier and different communication styles made it difficult for Anglian Water Alliance to communicate directly with NWSC to provide technical input. WaterAid Nepal thus decided to base the team in Lahan, and relocated and recruited staff accordingly.

Anglian Water Alliance convinced WaterAid that it was important to base the project team in Lahan, so a decision was taken to do so. An on-site base of its own project team was a new experience for WaterAid Nepal.

WaterAid Nepal ensured that the project team had a mix of staff who could speak both Maithili and Nepali, since Maithili is the primary language in Lahan (Nepali is secondary). Many in the local Dalit community – mainly women and older people – can speak only Maithili. The selection of a local NGO partner set up by young people from the Dalit community which had many staff fluent in Maithili was also helpful in building trust with communities.



**We send data to Beacon and Anglian Water, they discuss and provide advice on solutions. NWSC, WaterAid Nepal and Anglian Water often sit together to resolve issues.**

*Senior staff, NWSC Lahan*

NWSC Lahan branch has been operating understaffed for quite some time. They have 37 positions, of which only 25 are in post, with two positions recruited based on Beacon experiences and recommendation – a water quality chemist and excavator operator. Less than half of these roles are on permanent contracts, with others being on temporary and daily wage contracts which could impact staff motivation. All permanent recruitment for NWSC has to be done through the Public Service Commission, which is a long process with many decision gateways. The transition to the new federal structure has delayed the pace of recruitment by the Public Service Commission, and it could be delayed further by mid-term elections. In order to increase direct contact with NWSC Lahan and provide required support, one recruited Beacon Project team member (a technical staff member) was later based in the NWSC Lahan office.

As the Beacon Project took off after signing the agreement in September 2018, WaterAid Nepal continued to reflect on the configuration of its project team, capacity to provide support to partners and ability to manage the project. From May 2019, a part-time technical team lead was assigned to Beacon and after a year, WaterAid Nepal learned that a project of this magnitude and complexity needed a more senior, full-time project lead. Thus, WaterAid reconfigured the Beacon Project team in late 2019, appointing a senior staff member as the project lead, changing some other role profiles and expanding the team, while retaining existing talent. This reconfiguration provisioned two staff, including the senior project team lead, to spend 30% of their time in Kathmandu for building high-level relationships, contacts and technical and other engagements, with 70% time allocation in Lahan.

The latest Beacon Project team structure is logical, puts a clear focus on functional areas, and the appointment of a senior team lead is appropriate for a project of the size, intensity and complexity of Beacon. The changes have brought positive results in terms of project delivery, and also put a more realistic expectation on the workload of WaterAid Nepal's Country Director, who was previously spending a disproportionate amount of time on the project.

WaterAid Nepal and Anglian Water Alliance commissioned an independent management review of the Beacon Project from September 2019 to January 2020. The purpose was to enable WaterAid Nepal and

Anglian Water to adapt, refine and improve elements of project delivery. Actions were taken based on the management review recommendations. The review also confirmed that the changes in the project team structure were justified and useful.

#### **(ii) Reconfiguration of the Beacon Board**

It was important to continuously engage with the leadership of project partners to understand partner expectations, their experiences on the effectiveness of project governance structures, and organisational and decision-making dynamics. Consequently, it was agreed at the November 2019 Beacon Board meeting that the mayor of Lahan Municipality and the General Manager of NWSC would also be added as members of the Board. It was recognised that their leadership in the Board was important for effective project delivery and to meet the expectations of these institutions.

#### **(iii) High visibility and “quick wins” to maintain commitment and engagement**

The Beacon Project has high visibility with tangible progress: borehole construction, pipe laying, community toilet construction, school toilet construction/renovation, school drinking water supply system construction/renovation, installation of taps in Dalit communities and so on. The visible nature of the project and many activities happening in the short-term raised the trust of partners, local people and other stakeholders. As there were training and capacity-building elements, this provided both personal and institutional motivation for NWSC staff to learn new things and receive new equipment. The visible nature of the project and delivery in the short-term also helped elected leaders show people that they were working hard to ensure access to water and sanitation and living up to their public commitments.

#### **(iv) Facilitating collaboration and communication between partners has strengthened their working relationships**

NWSC needed to recruit more staff for Lahan, but at the time were unable to do so. Hiring new staff following government rules would be an arduous process. WaterAid Nepal therefore hired the consulting service of a hydrogeologist for one year as WaterAid, Anglian Water Alliance and NWSC had all identified an urgent need of one for Beacon’s borehole drilling work. The hydrogeologist provided technical support, supervising boreholes drilled by both WaterAid and NWSC. NWSC did not release a payment to its contractor until recommended to do so by the hydrogeologist.

NWSC has to follow government procurement rules, which stipulate that a contract should be awarded to the lowest substantially responsive bidder; technical criteria are only incorporated into bid evaluations for tenders above NPR. 20 million. This can result in the experiences and capabilities of contractors not being given adequate weight while awarding contracts, sometimes resulting in technical and quality specifications not being met, sub-standard work and delays in timings – posing significant challenges to delivery.

By following organisational procurement policies guided by global and national standards, WaterAid could look at various competencies in bidders based on agreed criteria, such as past experience and technical capacity. WaterAid Nepal was supported by Anglian Water technical teams and the WaterAid UK finance team to develop a Beacon procurement policy to be able to properly support the Beacon Project’s needs. This was felt necessary in addition to the existing procurement policy of WaterAid Nepal, given the highly technical procurements required in the project. In the case of pipe laying, WaterAid Nepal procured the pipes which were then installed by NWSC Lahan. In other cases, Beacon provided technical procurement support to NWSC Lahan in identified and agreed areas of work.



**NWSC Lahan and WaterAid Nepal do joint planning so there is one plan between NWSC and WAN. We do our budgeting after knowing Beacon budget so that budgets synchronise. Lahan Municipality provided land for new boreholes, the municipality also helps in dealing with ‘people’s issues’ as they are better placed to do so than NWSC. DJKYC brings the social dimension and mobilisation.**



*Senior staff, NWSC Lahan*

As project implementation progressed, new aspects of partner complementarities emerged. Additional land was needed for two new boreholes, but NWSC did not own any land and did not have capacity to purchase it, which became a challenge. So Lahan Municipality provided the land for NWSC. It also became clear that Lahan Municipality brought a unique strength in dealing with community issues, such as selecting which Dalit communities should be prioritised for pipe laying (as there would be an expectation from many communities in a municipality with a significant Dalit population). The municipality was also black-topping some roads, so it agreed to allow NWSC to prioritise pipe laying in the roads

that were already being worked on. The municipality also helped select 10 schools for Beacon's sanitation programme from among all the schools in the area.

A good relationship was also established between the technical team of NWSC and Lahan Municipality – prior to the Beacon Project, these teams did not work together regularly. The NWSC branch manager has established a good working relationship with the municipality's political and administrative leadership, helping better coordinate planning and implementation.

It used to be mandatory to have a land registration certificate (Lalpurja) to get a piped water connection in Nepal. Lobbying by Lahan Municipality and DJKYC to the local NWSC branch resulted in a waiver of the Lalpurja clause, opening up an opportunity for Dalit people, most of whom did not have Lalpurja for their land and house, to access piped water. While Dalit people provided the deposit, application costs and the costs of digging and backfilling from the main connection point to their houses, Beacon provided fittings, pipes and meters.

In February 2020, WaterAid organised a visit to Bangladesh for municipality and Anglian Water Alliance

staff to see faecal sludge treatment facilities that WaterAid has built and operated there. This provided a valuable learning opportunity and helped to inspire and guide the work on faecal sludge management in Lahan.

**(v) Open and transparent Beacon work culture has helped maintain trust between partners**

Beacon successfully brought together organisations of significantly different natures and work cultures in one place through a process of intense discussions that created trust, clarity of roles and mutual expectations. Several visits to Lahan by Anglian Water senior staff and the UK visit of senior MoWS and WaterAid Nepal staff further helped create better rapport and interpersonal relationships among key decision-makers. Furthermore, project governance arrangements like the project Board and PSC helped to create a 'level playing field' for all partners where they could feel part of a team, raise any issues and concerns, and understand each other better.

Project budgets are thoroughly discussed in the PSC before submitting to the Board for approval. Thus, a culture of transparency and openness has emerged where learning and challenges are collectively discussed



Lowering casing for the new borehole recently drilled in Ward 9

and addressed. While WaterAid Nepal and Anglian Water Alliance have learned to adapt to working with government partners in Nepal who have different organisational and work cultures, this learning seems to have been reciprocated by the government partners. A senior government official interviewed said that they felt some kind of ‘professional peer pressure’ to do well, seeing the professionalism of Anglian Water senior staff from abroad who would go to the field and personally work hard in a local context that is significantly different and more challenging than they are used to.

While the PSC would meet every two months (every month when needed), the Board meets every six months. Until COVID-19, all Board members used to physically attend the Board meeting in Lahan, including Anglian Water representatives. These biannual physical meetings helped to openly discuss issues among partners in person and contributed to deepening trust. They also provided an opportunity for Anglian Board members to meet with senior MoWS, NWSC, WaterAid and Lahan Municipality officials outside of formal meetings to build a rapport and close working relationship. In November 2019, Anglian Water Alliance senior staff and relevant WaterAid (Nepal and regional) staff also had a meeting with the Ministry of Water Supply.

A locally-based Beacon project team is helpful in building this open and transparent culture, as WaterAid Nepal is playing the convener role. The project team is connected to all key parties: MoWS, NWSC, Lahan Municipality, Anglian Water Alliance and DJKYC, and is playing necessary coordination and communication roles. The project team makes sure that all key partners have important information, and if any partner raises an issue it is duly responded to by either the project team, PSC or Board as appropriate. WaterAid Nepal’s existing national network of contacts, built over many years, also helped create an open culture as they had good access and ongoing rapport and working relationships with high-level NWSC and MoWS staff.

Regular meetings take place between the Beacon Project technical teams in Nepal and Anglian Water Alliance, and NWSC have also been invited to some. The senior team lead of the Beacon Project in Lahan and Anglian Water Alliance’s Beacon project manager have weekly meetings, and WaterAid Nepal’s Beacon technical lead holds fortnightly meetings with Anglian Water Alliance’s technical leads for the different workstreams such as boreholes, water quality, network and water treatment. The senior team lead and NWSC are invited to these meetings as needed. These meetings help parties become clear about the project’s progress and issues, and take joint decisions to address them.

The planning process of Beacon and NWSC Lahan is integrated and co-ordinated with Lahan Municipality, resulting in the One Plan for all partners to work to. This has significantly helped to create transparency, openness and trust. As plans are recommended by the PSC and approved by the Board, it helps provide clarity for every partner about the project’s strategic and operational direction.

In Beacon a good work culture has developed, whereby partners feel okay to say no. This was also found in the independent management review report of January 2020. This is also the result of an open culture and trust built over time, as well as provision of formal spaces to raise issues and concerns for all partners as equals.

# 6

## CREATING A LEGACY THAT GROWS

One key objective of Beacon (shining a light) is to ensure ‘a legacy that grows’, which means the Beacon model is replicated elsewhere in Nepal (and other countries in due course).

To help the dissemination of learning from the Beacon Project, a document was produced in November 2020 called ‘From source to tap’, covering improvements to the NWSC water supply system and results and lessons learnt across seven technical areas. The document was inaugurated by the MoWS Secretary, and Beacon progress has been included in NWSC’s annual report. The current learning document focusing on partnerships and collaborations in Beacon is one more step towards shared learning and supporting interest in replication, both within Nepal and abroad. Informed by Beacon learning WaterAid Nepal, with support from WaterAid UK, has successfully applied for EU funding under the EU’s Water Operator Partnership programme to start a partnership between a Swedish utility company (Vakin) and Godawari Municipality.

The learning captured so far in this document, in the November 2020 technical learning document and other documents, provide signals that good progress has been made towards ‘shining a light’ and creating a ‘legacy that grows’. Beacon is already on the verge of showing some milestone achievements that can generate interest for replication in other municipalities.

**(i) Knowledge and skills developed in Lahan are already being used in other areas of Nepal**

While NWSC’s capacity benefited from various trainings, technical know-how and equipment, WaterAid Nepal and DJKYC’s capacities have also been raised by Beacon.

In the case of WaterAid, Beacon has provided the opportunity to manage a large, complex, long-term and multi-partnership project that brings together organisations of quite different natures. Beacon provided WaterAid with direct experience of establishing a formal partnership with a local government and a national utility agency, and also of learning to work with a technical partner that is a private company, based abroad. WaterAid Nepal’s teams have benefited from the extensive technical water system knowledge of Anglian Water Alliance, as well as their project management expertise. Beacon Project experience is also being shared with other WaterAid country teams and UK staff.

DJKYC’s capacity on WASH programme management has significantly increased. The organisation had carried out some WASH work before, but their main experience was addressing caste-based discrimination programmes to Dalits. Now, DJKYC has become a known name at local level as an NGO working on WASH issues,

and they are an integral part of local WASH networks. They are invited to important local forums, which gives them platforms to raise their voice on the issue of Dalit people’s access to WASH services. Due to the WASH experience gained in Beacon, DJKYC has been able to access funding from other donors such as ActionAid and Freedom Fund.

**(ii) Having built credible relationships with institutions in Nepal, the Beacon Project needs to develop further strategies that will deliver the “Legacy that Grows”**

Beacon has developed credible relations with key institutions, and effective access to and trust with leaders and decision-makers in NWSC, MoWS and Lahan Municipality. Thus, there is an opportunity to galvanise this access so that the overall Beacon model (in due course) or its components are replicated through timely policy and other decisions of NWSC with support from MoWS, in other NWSC-managed towns in Nepal. This access to decision-makers helps with the continued prioritisation of Lahan by NWSC central office, with increased allocations of budget and capacity so that the process of ensuring 24/7 drinking water access for all residents of the municipality can be properly supported. There is also an opportunity to replicate current sanitation-related school programmes to other schools within Lahan Municipality.

Within three years of the formal Project Agreement, Lahan Municipality residents in wards 1 to 10 are going to get 10 hours of water against about six hours before, with improved water quality. This is a significant achievement, and also gives credibility that in the near future, 24/7 access can be achieved. There has been a reduction in non-revenue water, and NWSC water supply network coverage has expanded. A proper communications strategy could draw national attention to this project in a country where getting 10 hours a day of piped water in a town is not a rule but an exception. There is scope to significantly enhance the communications strategy of the project’s modality and achievements, so that greater interest can be generated for replication in other towns.

A proper replication of significant work done by Beacon to be used across all NWSC branches in Nepal needs a well-thought-out strategy. This is because many policy or institutional decisions (including budget-related) will need to be taken at NWSC central office, by the MoWS secretary, minister and potentially at the cabinet level too. Any such strategy needs to clarify what elements the Beacon Project wants to promote for replication, who can resource that, and who can take a decision on replication. The strategy needs to be clear about what motivations and incentives exist for NWSC and MoWS

to replicate, or what incentives, if possible, need to be created by Beacon such as new resources, equipment support, knowledge sharing, etc.

Any replication effort internationally also needs a well-thought-out strategy, including resourcing in terms of funds, staff support and most importantly the technical support that Anglian Water Alliance is providing to the Beacon Lahan project.

**(iii) The impact of future political changes will need to be managed, as they will present both challenges and opportunities for the project**

There could be challenges due to the volatile political situation in Nepal, and a reality that the situation of frequent staff transfers in government institutions may continue. A change in federal government after elections could impact the dynamics between NWSC and MoWS, as any such change may result in the transfer of leadership staff in these institutions. Local elections are also likely to take place around mid-2022, leading to possible change in local leadership. WaterAid Nepal therefore needs to develop a good understanding of the emerging context and implications, as this can impact on the project. Efforts to build rapport with and create commitments of the leaders to the project should be continued.

The local elections in Nepal next year will also elect new mayors in Nepal's municipalities. This could present an opportunity, as these new mayors could be attracted to the Beacon model due to its capacity to deliver, demonstration effect and good news spread from Lahan. Local governments hold significant resources, so some municipalities may be willing to contribute funds to add to local NWSC branch budgets. This could also be a challenge to WaterAid on how to respond if new Beacon Project requests come where the local municipality agrees to contribute, but other budget and technical support is expected from WaterAid Nepal.

Three municipalities in Nepal have decided to form a local Board and bring the local NWSC branch under this Board. The process is at an early stage. If the same effort is made in Lahan, this will create a challenge of transition from the current model. However, if such a decision is taken and a locally-appointed Board has people with the right competencies on WASH issues, it could also be an opportunity as decision-making may be quicker and the municipality will have a technical arm to deliver its constitutional responsibility on water, sanitation and basic health services. If the Board does not have the right competencies and appointments are influenced by political orientations – which is often the case in Nepal – this may add new challenges. There could also be a challenge of how to manage relationships

with NWSC central office, as technical support would be required even if the local branch is managed by the municipality. The challenge will also be there because Lahan Municipality may lack the technical understanding to manage NWSC, at least in the short-term. These institutional transitions, if they occur, could impact on Beacon's progress as new institutional arrangements will demand new organisational relationships and create dynamics that will need to be managed well by WaterAid Nepal.

**(iv) Collaboration with academic institutions in the UK and Nepal is contributing new insight and will help develop independent learnings from the project**

After establishing the Beacon Project and signing the Project Agreement, engagement was expanded further to include academic institutions including Tribhuvan University (Kathmandu), the University of East Anglia and Sheffield University in the UK. This is more of a collaboration than a formal partnership, but has resulted in several pieces of research – most notably a PhD studentship at Sheffield (co-funded by Beacon and the UK Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council) – that will contribute to longer-term learning and innovation in the Beacon Project.

**(v) The approach taken by the Beacon Project provides learning that could be incorporated into future WaterAid strategies**

With the federalisation and delegation of various service deliveries to local governments, 'working with local governments' is a buzzword in Nepal's donor and INGO circles. Beacon has the practical experience of partnering with a local government, and already many good results to show. This experience and modality can be promoted to other donors in Nepal, who may themselves be interested in learning from this and trying out something similar in their new initiatives, or even funding WaterAid Nepal's new initiatives relying on the organisation's experience of local government partnership through Beacon. The 'universal approach' can be a good attraction to other donors who are committed to SDG 6's 'everyone everywhere' target.

As the Beacon team now has robust experience in designing and implementing a project, there is an opportunity for WaterAid Nepal to contribute to advice in designing and implementing similar initiatives in other parts of the world. There is also an opportunity for WaterAid Nepal to help shape Beacon-related discussions in the process of formulating WaterAid's new global strategy.

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