

### CASE ON WASH ACCOUNTABILITY AT DISTRICT LEVEL (August 2010)

#### Nebbi District Case

#### “People’s Voices; How the leaders respond”

##### Summary

In Nebbi and the new Zombo district, the demand and effectiveness of WASH accountability and governance was well understood. Technocrats and political leaders supported the Action Research on the methodology and tools for improving the WASH accountability. According to the district water office, this approach gave good results. The Accountability Dialogues should be continued.

##### Introduction

Nebbi district is part of the West Nile region in Northwest Uganda. It recently split into Nebbi and Zombo districts. Two Sub-counties were involved in the WASH Accountability Dialogues: Akworo and Paidha. The water situation in these two Sub-counties is quite different. Akworo Sub-county experiences semi arid climatic conditions with minimal annual rainfall, almost non-existent streams or any other naturally flowing surface water and inadequate water supply constructed for the communities. In contrast, Paidha Sub-county is endowed with numerous springs and streams and a fair share of water supply points constructed. While the two may differ in water resources, one thing that they surely have in common is the gap in information flow and effective management of water supply facilities.

Regularly, community water users report issues and disagreements on WSSC decisions – for instance on the time for opening and closing boreholes – directly to the District Water Office, bypassing the Sub-county leadership. The reason for not reporting problems and cases to the Sub-county authorities was well reflected by a community leader: “.....having done so a month ago and no response or action had been taken up to now. When this was followed up with the Sub-county the reason the authorities gave was lack of finances to follow up cases”. Water service-related planning meetings are hardly attended. One community member said: “We have been planning and sending in our proposals for the last three years, nothing has been done and we don’t know why. It’s just useless to keep on sending requests to the Sub-county every year in and out”.

In conclusion, the community members have reduced WASH issues to requesting new water supply sources. Maintenance, accountability and governance issues of the old water supply sources had become unappealing both to the Sub-county leadership and the community members/users. Water users fees collected were being misused, as there was no proper accountability system. Water Source and Sanitation Committees (WSSC) would simply not call for meetings and eventually most water resources were rendered defunct due to simple technical breakdown. Although the communities suffered, no one spoke, for most community members it had become a fact-of-life, so they accepted it.

##### Intervention



Staff of Nebbi district involved in the making of the maps and other accountability tools

IRC, NETWAS Uganda and CEFORD, a local NGO in West Nile, introduced a project focusing on promotion of accountability, transparency and good governance on rural water service and sanitation by creating a platform for dialogue and improved communication.

Dialogue sessions were organized at Sub-county and district levels. The Sub-county political leadership attended the District Dialogues. These dialogues addressed WASH governance, accountability and transparency. And at district level agreed action points included mapping of planned district WASH activities and drawing a Gantt chart on timing and resources allocated and used.

##### Results

The Zombo district officers attended the dialogue sessions when it was still part of Nebbi district. These district dialogues on WASH governance attended by two Sub-counties have some key results:

- Lower local governments (at the two Sub-counties involved) became more responsive as noted by an increased number of cases being resolved by the two lower local governments
- A reduced number of cases being reported to the district for arbitration. Previously petty issues such as disagreement on times to open and close the boreholes would be brought straight to the district leadership.
- Apparently, the community members (and water users) have gained confidence in the Sub-county leadership.
- Budgetary allocation has been made to cater for quicker response to issues thus doing justice to the WASH cause.
- It is notable that most WSSCs are more accountable as they are conducting regular meetings with the community.
- A noted increase in number of applications for WASH services from the two Sub-counties involved in the WASH dialogues signifying a more informed populace in regard to WASH issues.

- The newly created Zombo District allocated funds for mandatory public notices in the Water Sector budget for FY 2010/11; the Zombo district's Works Committee passed the budget proposal without reservation. This will ensure that the generation and flow of information on WASH is not hindered by lack of funds.

### Success factors

The district and Sub-county Dialogue sessions provided a platform for the leaders and service providers to interact with the users in an accommodative atmosphere. They all accepted the need for governance, transparency and accountability in WASH. To further improve WASH governance they agreed to collaborate in the action research methodology and the testing of the tools. Apparently, the office of the RDC and LC III Chairpersons of the respective Sub-counties provided support and showed political leadership and commitment. In Nebbi, technocrats and politicians came to appreciate the Gantt charts and maps used as action research tools for district water accountability and they provided cooperative inputs in testing methodology and tools.

### Challenges

- The dissemination of planning information was mostly limited to English written/printed materials, thus illiterate people could not participate effectively in the process.
- Inadequate infrastructure for effective information flow e.g. Lower Local government (s/county) do not have official office phones to which the community can call in case of any clarification needed.
- The absence of a specific officer in charge of WASH at Sub-county level hinders the process of data collection and timely submission. In this case the Sub-county chief was in charge of the process and submitted the information late.



Water Gantt Chart for Nebbi District FY

### Lessons learnt

- The use of these Gantt charts and maps can be propagated further without additional costs.
- The guidelines for the District Conditional Grant for Water and Sanitation provide a budget line for mandatory public notices; therefore this fund can be effectively utilized to meet production costs of the 'accountability' maps and Gantt Charts.
- District and Sub-county technocrats appreciate that their listening and feedback to communities is very important. This keeps the technocrats informed of what is going on in water services at community level and the role they are expected to play. On the other hand this accountability maintains the trust of the water users in the government system.
- Government technocrats and NGOs need to work more together in implementation of WASH governance programmes to make such programmes sustainable and to maintain existing Dialogue structures in the districts and Sub-counties.
- The accountability tools used such as the Gantt Charts and maps are good. However, given the literacy level of the community members and the poor reading culture, these tools are not the ultimate means of passing information. Other means such as verbal communication involving all stakeholders especially in public gathering may be used in information dissemination.

More info from [netwasuganda@gmail.com](mailto:netwasuganda@gmail.com) and [ngagenoi@gmail.com](mailto:ngagenoi@gmail.com); methodology and tools on <http://www.irc.nl/page/52603>

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