



WAMMA – Scaling up water and sanitation in rural Tanzania

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In the early 1990s the Government of Tanzania recognized that it could not provide free water for all, and handed over responsibility for rural water supply to the villages. This article examines the role of WAMMA, a multi-department government team that assists villagers with this task. Ten years later, has WAMMA worked?

The water and sanitation programme WAMMA was conceived and executed in the Dodoma Region in the centre of Tanzania, a semi-arid plain 1000 m above sea level with 550 mm of rainfall annually. The region has a population of 1.7 million people belonging to a number of tribal groups.

WaterAid had been working in Dodoma since 1983. Its programme with *Maji* (the Water Department) was largely technical until 1991 and doubts had arisen over several key areas. To address these concerns an internal evaluation in 1990 recommended a shift in priorities to integrate health education with engineering and promote 'self help' within the villages in rehabilitation, repair, operation and maintenance.¹

This emphasis on the importance of self-help and of the integration of water and health departments was to be important, as was the new role for WaterAid in capacity building and institutional development with government organizations. Freedom was allowed to develop an integrated strategy with colleagues in the participating departments. This flexible approach allowed the programme to grow organically, so that, for example, the community development department *Maendeleo* joined the team early on, followed in later years by other departments. Early on the name WAMMA emerged, being WaterAid, *Maji*, *Maendeleo ya Jami na Wanawake Na Watoto* (department of community development and women and children), and *Afya* (the health department). WaterAid staff later withdrew from the district teams, their capacity-building

work completed, and the department of education joined the WAMMA teams as 'child-to-child' health education was added. The department of planning has also since joined.

Government–community action programme

In 1991 a survey was conducted by local people to identify the villages in greatest need. In time, this approach gave way to one of encouraging villagers to contact WAMMA themselves.

There are WAMMA teams in each of the districts, with involvement on an advisory basis from the department heads at regional level.

As villages were identified and contacted, it was discovered that communities with the greatest need for water

were also often the most willing to do whatever they could to solve their own problems once they realized that with assistance they could do this. Because the initial criterion for support was need, the early projects were widely dispersed. Although this might have been unhelpful in logistical terms, of far greater importance was the fact that it enabled the word to spread widely of how WAMMA could assist communities with water and sanitation problems.

Scaling up became organic, as operating village schemes acted as advertisements that encouraged other communities to apply and start the process of rehabilitating their own schemes. As a way of judging readiness, communities were asked to raise a water fund of about US\$500, which they would later use to run their scheme; cash contribu-



Pump engine maintenance engineers – a service paid for partly by villagers' subscriptions



WAMMA only starts working in villages that demonstrate an interest and a willingness to contribute to costs

tions were also asked for towards capital costs (5 per cent of the capital costs – the rest are paid either by WaterAid or another participating donor.

The ethos of self-help was fundamental to WAMMA from the beginning. The ability of WAMMA to work at the speed of the villagers was instrumental to its success. The secret to success in scaling up the WAMMA programme was to spread the word from village to village so that collectively implementation made a meaningful impact, even with the limitations of working at ‘community speed’.

WAMMA works with communities to: help them either rehabilitate old, or build new schemes; to develop the capacity to manage them; and to promote health through increased knowledge of good practice in sanitation and hygiene using participatory methodologies such as PROWESS.² The programme involves conducting a participatory rural assessment and a technical survey, working with the community on an agreement for village contributions and providing training for everything from hygiene and sanitation, to operation and maintenance, while monitoring construction activities.

The need for continuing support for water and sanitation programmes is increasingly recognized: WAMMA assistance and support for villages does not end with the setting up of new water schemes. A pump engine maintenance service, was set up in 1993, a service

paid for in part by a subscription from village water funds of US\$3 per month per village. Villagers are also charged for parts if repairs are required.

Outcomes and analysis

In 1991, fewer than 250 000 people, or 20 per cent of Dodoma Region’s population of 1.3 million people, had access to safe water. By 1994 this number had risen to 400 000 through WAMMA. By 2002, WAMMA’s tenth birthday, 1.3 million people or 76 per cent of the population were covered. Due to the increase in population of around 2.5 per cent per year, coverage is a moving target, although the gap is closing.³

The main reasons why WAMMA remains a success are as follows:

- *The adoption of a national water policy.* In 1991 the Tanzanian Government initiated a National Water Policy, which ended the concept of free water. This gave responsibility and ownership of the failing water installations to the villagers – they had to pay for and run them. In practice, communities had no knowledge of how to do this so the way was clear for WAMMA to help communities learn how to manage their own schemes.
- *Plateau/flat management style, and shared vision.* WAMMA teams work at district level and comprise professionals from participating departments. They report to each other as

much as they do to their heads of department, and each district has a WAMMA co-ordinator who can be from any of the participating departments. Thus a style of flat or ‘plateau’ management has evolved, with shared vision and team learning promoted in the working environment.

- *Staff motivation.* The vision and commitment of programme staff was of great importance, especially when it came to the quality of the work. Nevertheless, staff also need a living wage, and to assist in this WAMMA workers were paid field allowances, which helped them avoid having to seek additional ‘moonlighting’ work in order to feed their families. The field allowances are paid partly by WaterAid and partly by the government.
- *Champions.* WAMMA had champions in government at national and regional levels. The Regional Water Engineer, who has seen WAMMA grow from its birth to what it is today, has been a constant guardian of the process, and other heads of department have similarly played their part.
- *Consistent support from WaterAid.* This has enabled WAMMA to flourish, focusing on the work in hand rather than worrying about where the funding would come from. WaterAid’s role has been in advice, training and capacity building, alongside the financing and procurement of materials, transport and allowances.⁴

References

- ¹ Bennell, B., T. Spens and N. King (1990) ‘Visit to Tanzania’, unpublished report, WaterAid, London.
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- ³ Mathew, Brian (2002) *WAMMA Program 10 years after: the factors for success, Tanzania*, Delft, IRC www.irc.nl/manage/debate/tanzania.html.
- ⁴ Jarman, J., and C. Johnson (1997) *WAMMA: Empowerment in Practice*, London, WaterAid.

About the author

Brian Mathew is a freelance WATSAN Consultant, with 20 years experience in sub-Saharan Africa.