



NETWAS Uganda



Performance Improvement through Learning on Sanitation - PILS

A project funded by

Austrian

Development Cooperation

Sustaining and improving the learning platforms in Northern Uganda beyond the PILS Project.

Review of the learning approach and proposed handing over of the promotion of learning to the Districts

Introduction

Performance Improvement through Learning in Sanitation (PILS) is an initiative jointly implemented in Gulu, Kitgum and Pader/Agago districts from October 2009 until March 2012 by IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre, NETWAS Uganda and Caritas Gulu.

The overall project objective was to contribute to improved health and livelihood of the rural population that had returned from IDP camps to villages of origin (or in some instances satellite camps) through sustainable sanitation and hygiene facilities and behaviours at household and primary school level. The project goal was to support the District Water and Sanitation Coordinating Committees (DWSCCs) in the project area in their leadership and tasks to harmonise and coordinate the strategies, approaches and technologies of all stakeholders in Sanitation & Hygiene. This was done by creating effective multi-stakeholder learning and capacity development platforms, at district and sub-county levels, that were directly linked and accountable to the DWSCC meetings. The learning platforms were used for exchange of experience, planning of joint action-research activities and regular review of progress.

The Action Research project was implemented in 6 sub-counties, two in each district. Activities of the action research included: strengthening of community-based structures such as School Health Clubs (SHCs), School Management Committees (SMCs), Parents Teachers Associations (PTAs), Community Health Clubs (CHCs), Village Health Teams (VHTs) and WASH committees during learning workshops and trainings; building capacity of local masons on Ecological sanitation (Ecosan) technologies such as arbour loo and fossa alterna; promotion of Ecosan facilities and construction of demonstration fossa alterna and arbour loo latrines in primary schools and household. The action research also included other activities such as developing methodologies for the promotion of the CLTS approach and related capacity building of stakeholders in the districts.

Being new and unique in its approach, where learning is at the heart of the intervention, the project raised a mixture of anxiety, scare and excitement among stakeholders. Some thought it was a form of audit which would turn out to be potentially dangerous, digging out sensitive issues about their offices and organizations. Other saw it as an opportunity to publicise their work and methods, while other believed in it as a space for improving administrative communication and coordination. From whichever angle one looked at it, PILS fulfilled more or less all expectations (or fears) in the following ways.



NETWAS Uganda

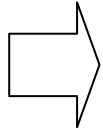


Performance Improvement through Learning on Sanitation - PILS

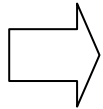
A project funded by

Austrian

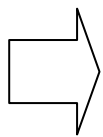
Development Cooperation



PILS the *auditor* - Organizations had to account for what they were doing; they had to convince other members about their work. Somehow they needed to show value for money



PILS a *show room* - Organizations and actors could show what they do, how and why they do it.



PILS a *vehicle of information* - Actors, especially from local government, were using the platforms to pass administrative messages. This is because the DWSCC meetings often failed to convene because of poor turn up. Besides, the Sub-county Water and Sanitation Coordinating Committees (SWSCCs) were not constituted in most Sub-counties.

The approach used for the PILS Project was based on multi-stakeholder processes called '*Learning Alliances*', which are interlinked multi-stakeholder platforms¹. Learning Alliances aim at building relationships, sharing information and experiences, and planning for solutions to common problems that cannot be solved by a single stakeholder.

Each platform brought together a range of stakeholders who captured diverse roles, interests, skills and experiences. The alliance was representative of the institutional complexities and other realities of the system, which require consensus building to agree on desirable actions and solutions before they are put into practice. The PILS Project therefore involved a wide range of stakeholders at all levels: water, health, education, community development, planning and finance officials, local NGOs, etc. at district and sub-county levels, Councilors, donor agencies and INGOs active in the districts and at national level. This also required building linkages between different administrative levels: from community to national level.

Learning platforms helped to close the gap between policy and practice and to harmonize approaches; they facilitated learning from the past mistakes and offered a platform to document past and present successes. They offered context-specific capacity building, action-learning and piloting of innovative approaches, as well as the provision of relevant and target group specific WASH information. Ultimately, the Learning Alliance approach encouraged stakeholders to work together so that their interventions have greater impact and are better coordinated. Improvement of performance was the core result of the learning.

¹ The Learning Alliance approach is derived from work on innovation systems and used as a way of putting innovations into practice (Verhagen et al., 2008): Verhagen, J.; Butterworth, J.; Morris, M. (2007) Learning alliances for integrated and sustainable innovations in urban water management. Waterlines, Volume 27, Number 2, April 2008, Practical Action Publishing, pp. 116-124(9). IRC has applied / is applying Learning Alliances in several projects in Uganda (LeaPPS, Improved WASH Governance in West Nile through Local Dialogue, and PILS) and elsewhere. More information is available at <http://www.irc.nl/page/14957>

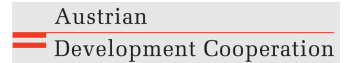


NETWAS Uganda



Performance Improvement through Learning on Sanitation - PILS

A project funded by



Some achievements of the PILS/Learning Alliance approach

- The district and sub-county learning platforms contributed to improved coordination and planning of WASH activities in the districts through building stakeholders' capacity. The participation of local and international NGOs in the learning platforms improved harmonization and coordination of interventions in the districts.
- There is evidence of public accountability, through the use of media during which the public was informed about project events, achievements and outcomes.
- The intervention influenced policy action at lower levels: some sub-counties like Adilang in Pader or Kitgum Matidi in Kitgum, have enacted by-laws; in Gulu the district is in the process of enacting an ordinance on sanitation and hygiene.
- Pader district managed to lobby for a raise of its Sanitation and Hygiene budget from less than 4% to 8%.

More community and District level achievements

Sub-county quarterly meetings were held to review and plan for the SCWCC activities. The sub-county chiefs hailed these meetings as very helpful for informing the annual sub-county development plans especially for the sanitation and hygiene sector. *"They have helped us identify problems of Sanitation and hygiene in schools, they have helped us plan and harmonize activities"*, noted the Akwang Sub-County chief. The SCWSCC has been carrying out sensitization, advocacy and monitoring for sanitation and hygiene good practices.



Interviewing and monitoring activities of stakeholders at Sub-county level



NETWAS Uganda



Performance Improvement through Learning on Sanitation - PILS

A project funded by

Austrian

Development Cooperation

There are emerging good practices at the level of communities and institutions (such as schools) as a result of the learning approach: for example handwashing with ash in the absence of soap, boiling water for drinking at household level or improving the management of water points by fencing them.

There has also been significant improvement in the sanitation and hygiene situation in the three districts as evidenced by statistics: in Pader district, latrine coverage increased from 30% to 41% and handwashing from 0.5% to 11% during the project period. In Gulu district, latrine coverage went up from 37% to 49% while in Kitgum it increased from 33% to 41%. Although the latrine coverages remain low, these improvements are quite significant, also taking into account that these statistics include urban areas which are better covered. However, a lot of work still remains to be done, given that none of the implementing districts is Open Defecation Free yet.

National Level informed on results, and policy/strategy reforms discussed

PILS facilitated coordination of local WASH stakeholders and promoted a bottom-up approach to hygiene and sanitation improvement. The project was also appreciated and supported by the stakeholders at national level including from the Ministry of Health (MoH) and Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE), as evidenced by their participation in the last Inter District Capacity Building (IDCB) workshop, during which local stakeholders were provided with more clarity on some national guidelines and policies. Some respondents compared the PILS project to the Triple-S initiative (Sustainable Water Services at Scale) which has revived the DWSCCs in other districts, including the formally war-affected district of Lira.

“PILS’ focus on households is a good approach. In the current world we talk of open defecation free environments. This is what PILS is trying to achieve. That’s why these workshops are organized to avail technical assistance and sharing of information among stakeholders” - Otai Justine from the MoH at the second IDCB organised in Kitgum district.

Challenges to the sustainability of the learning approach

The DWSCC and the SWSCC provide a readily-available structure for the continuity of the learning platform approach. In order to be efficient and sustain the learning platforms, local stakeholders will have to overcome the following huddles:

- Resources, in terms of logistics and committed manpower: the districts have not yet put sanitation and hygiene among their top priorities. Resources and time allocated to the activities of the sector are still minimal or lacking in some cases.
- Lack of focal leadership for sanitation and hygiene: there are many departments and organisations that are stakeholders of the sector without a clear and responsible lead.
- The mandated DWO has not taken full lead in mobilizing stakeholders. In some districts, the office has failed to convene DWSCC meetings because invitees at district levels simply do not turn up.



NETWAS Uganda



Performance Improvement through Learning on Sanitation - PILS

A project funded by

Austrian

Development Cooperation

- Poor attendance by NGOs who are implementing WASH activities.
- Most SWSCCs are not functional; this undermines the strength of the Sub-county platforms that should discuss some of the issues raised at the committee level.
- Due to lack of resources, there is usually delayed follow up and implementation of some of the platform recommendations.

Recommendations for passing the baton from the PILS team to local stakeholders

- Identify the achievements made per district (both at District and Sub-county levels in Learning and Action Research) and draw key lessons learnt; this should be done with stakeholders from the district and sub-county level.
- Summarise the achievements and unmet targets for each district in the form of a newsletter, bringing out the values and justifications for the continuity of learning in one form or another.
- List the key and relevant stakeholders of the Learning, whose contributions in continuing the initiative should be sought.
- Brainstorm and agree on the roles of each of the listed stakeholder: how could they be involved? This should be done in consultation with members who participated actively in the last PILS learning sessions, and who have a better understanding of the concept and approach.
- Make presentation of this before a small forum at district level, inviting the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), District Water Officer, Local Council V, District Education Officer, District Agricultural Officer, District Engineer, District Health Inspector, District Health Officer. Seek their contributions, approval and assurance on how to proceed.
- At Sub-county level, do the same with Sub-county Chiefs, LC3, Secretary production, Health Assistant, Heads of Village Health Teams, Community Development Officer. Seek their contributions, approval and assurance on how to proceed.

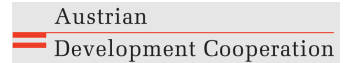


NETWAS Uganda



Performance Improvement through Learning on Sanitation - PILS

A project funded by



These key notes for a better Learning Alliance is vital in defining the direction and scope of the new phase in the Learning approach. The composition of the Alliance and how it is operated is worth revising. This time round, a keen interest should be put on those who are critical in the sanitation chain but, also including those in the water sector. This proposal is outlined below.

Proposal for revising the approach and composition of the Learning Alliance after the phasing out of the PILS project

Expand the platforms to include the private sector actors and service providers such as WASH parts vendors, drillers, Urban/Municipal Council, water contractors, market operators, traders' representatives, hotel and restaurant owners, and commercial garbage collectors.

The private sector actors implementing outstanding WASH innovations should be given the opportunity to make presentations and demonstrations. Learning visits should be conducted to enable cross-community skills transfers and adoption.

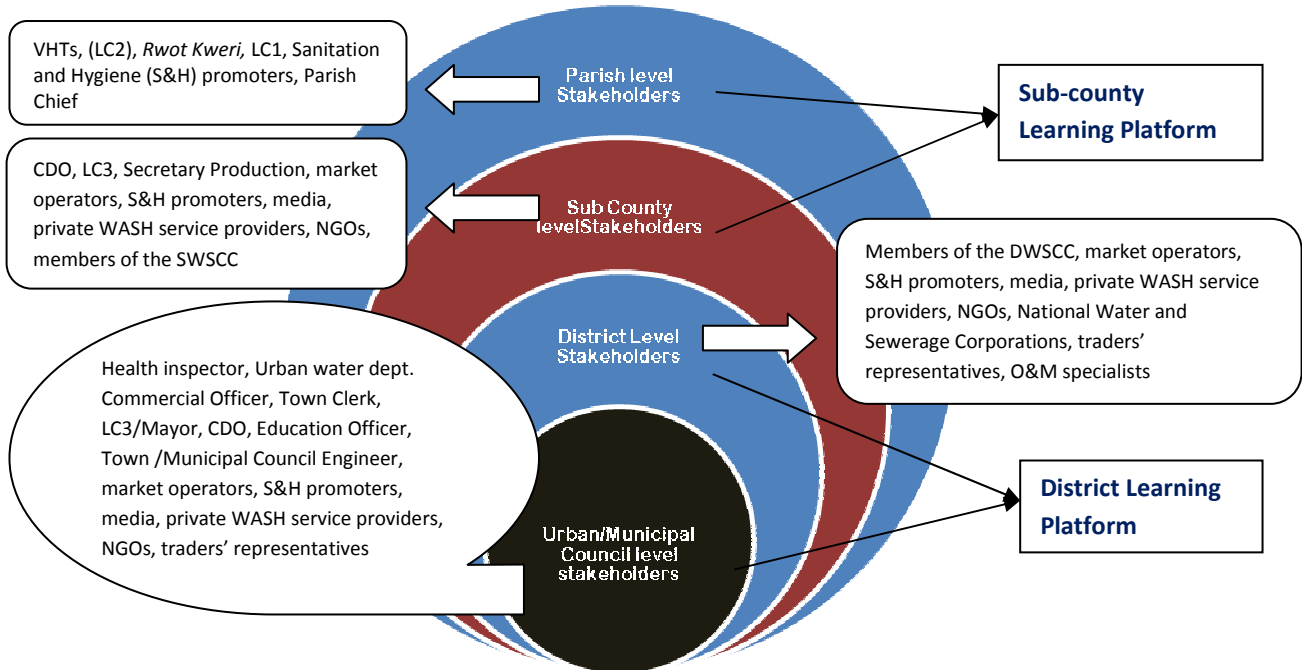
Organise once a year a WASH Innovation platform (still hosted by the DWSCC) to unveil new initiatives and technologies as well as approaches and best practices.

Private sector actors with innovative technologies should be facilitated to market the innovations in communities. The Districts together with Caritas could provide resource under the new Dutch WASH Alliance support to the private sector to engage in marketing activities.

Introduce topics to cover urban sanitation including scrutiny of the functioning of WASH laws (including by-laws and ordinances). Cross-fertilization of experiences between Urban and Rural areas is vital for consolidating the impact of any learning and sharing that may possibly take place. In fact the Urban Alliance could be instrumental in initiating and upholding standards that can in turn be replicated down into the grassroots communities.

Proceedings and recommendations should be documented and used to influence policies at Local Council levels (at District and Sub-county levels).

The new proposed Learning Alliance - Illustration of stakeholders



It is proposed that for the Sub-county Learning Platforms, the communities identify key stakeholders in WASH who should attend the platforms - this would foster accountability and responsibility. The Community Development Officer, with support from Caritas under the Dutch WASH Alliance funding, could facilitate the process.

Urban / Municipal Council would be invited to make presentations on their own strategies / plans, successes and challenges, highlighting the key players in WASH and how they are coordinated and engaged. It is also proposed that the Urban / Municipal Council make a presentation on how the WASH budget is allocated, especially fees collected from private business owners for garbage collection. This could be done before the District Learning platform which will also lead discussions and the Learning process.

For more details

Documentation available at: **IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre:** <http://www.irc.nl/page/52256>
NETWAS Uganda: <http://www.netwasuganda.org/projects-4/>

Or contact: **Mr Charles Okello Owiny**
 Program Manager Development and Livelihood, Caritas Gulu Archdiocese
 Tel: +256 7 72 92 95 14; email: owinyix@yahoo.co.uk