



Oxfam's experience in WATSAN in Ethiopia

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OXFAM GREAT BRITAIN (Oxfam GB) started its involvement in water supply and sanitation in Ethiopia in 1984/85 when northern Ethiopia was hit by drought and famine. During that time it did construction of hand dug wells and developments of springs for the communities in Delanta-Dawunt Woreda (district) of North Wollo Zone of Amhara National Regional State of Ethiopia. Its involvement in the sector, in the mean time, increased in other parts of the country by implementing either by its own or in partnership with other agencies. In addressing the water supply of the communities, Oxfam GB had two main objectives namely:

- To improve access to water, and
- To improve the quality of water.

In order to achieve the above objectives, it had employed different strategies in choosing appropriate technology, in involving communities, in addressing gender issues and sustainability of the systems.

Technology choice

Depending on the location of each project, Oxfam GB for its operational projects had selected different types of technologies. For low altitude areas (in Sabure area of Afar and Jijiga area of Somali Regional States) where there are no springs, hand dug wells, *birkas* and ponds were selected while for mid and high altitude areas (in Wolayita, Delanta-Dawunt and Deder areas) hand dug wells and spring developments were selected. The hand-dug wells are equipped with either VLOM pumps or pulley and bucket systems.

Oxfam had developed its own standard design for hand dug wells and widely employed it during the hand-dug wells rehabilitation project in Wolayita. The use of this standard design was shared with other agencies in the Christian Relief and Development Association's (CRDA) training in 1996.

The design is so arranged that at the beginning the well will be dug with a diameter of 1.7m and will be lined with concrete rings of 1.3m of internal and 1.5m external diameters. Whenever there is a drop down of ground water table and the well becomes dry, the well can be further deepened using smaller diameters of concrete rings.

Communities' involvement

Except the emergency water supply for 250,000 refugees from Somalia in 1988/89, communities had involved in all WATSAN projects of Oxfam in all project cycles. The main tools, that were employed, were water and sanitation needs assessment survey and PRA. The levels of involvement also

vary with the situation in which the project is implemented. For instance in emergency WATSAN projects, communities were involved in administration of the established systems. In rehabilitation projects, communities were involved in implementation and administration of the project including taking over. Communities in development projects had been, meanwhile, involved from the planning process up to taking over of the project when completed. Where the involvement was maximum, the communities tried to replicate the systems by themselves with minimum assistance from Oxfam and where the involvement was minimum, communities were limited to only provision of free labour.

The management style of the systems by the communities is also varies from place to place of different projects and with in the same project. Some contribute money/and or grain for the service they got while others till the farm of pump attendants.

All of them have water committees who are responsible for the overall management of the systems. Members of the committees are elected democratically by the communities themselves and these committees are working on voluntary basis.

Gender issues

The involvement of men and women and the needs of them had been given due consideration right from the beginning of the project. Attention was given not only how WATSAN projects address the workload of women but also the strategic needs of women. Women were also encouraged to get benefit during construction in the form of getting training and being employed when it was required. In addition to these, both sexes are encouraged to have equal representation in the management of the systems.

Sustainability of the systems

The sustainability of the systems is directly and indirectly related to the choice of technology, government policy, management styles of the systems etc. As much as possible Oxfam tried to introduce VLOM technologies that are operated and managed by the communities themselves. As government departments are partners of Oxfam, the working government policies and regulations are the guidelines for the implementation of projects. The standardisation of pumps, improving of the capacity of water departments are among the initiatives being taken to ensure sustainability. Communities' management structures are always in line with government policies but actual management styles are according to the local conditions.

Table 1. Average number of users at different project areas

No.	Project area	Average No. of users per well
1	Wolayita	950
2	Delanta Dawunt	740

Challenges

In the last fifteen years of intervention in the sector, Oxfam's involvement in the sanitation was limited mostly to hygiene and sanitation education, which requires a long-term involvement to bring a behavioral change. A behavioral change is not dependent only on hygiene and sanitation education but also is dependent on overall improvement of the living standards of the whole community.

With the limited available resources, Oxfam doesn't believe that it had accessed communities with adequate

amount of water as indicated on Table 1. This has a certain impact on the sanitation component.

Different approaches by different organisations sometimes create confusion in the communities when these organisations are working with the same communities.

Lessons learnt

It is not possible to use uniform approach for all communities and there is a need to employ diversified approach depending on local conditions.

Communities at different localities have their own way of management styles of their water systems.

To bring a behavioral change is not a short-term perspective. It has a complex relationship with other factors.

ABATE ESHETU, Water Adviser, Oxfam GB in Ethiopia,
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