



## **Institutional development of partner organisations**

*Mwaka May, The Netherlands*

THE GOVERNMENT OF Uganda has planned to have water and sanitation coverage levels for the rural areas at 100% by the year 2015. For this to be realised, concerted and collaborative efforts by all sector partners i.e. the government, districts and sub counties, private sector NGOs and external support agencies is a pre requisite.

The government has developed policies and guidelines to ensure the attainment of the sector goals. Enormous funding to the tune of \$50 million dollars annually has been allocated to the sector in a bid to solve this problem. With the new policies and guidelines came a major change in the roles of the different sector stakeholders. The district is now responsible for development planning through a bottom up approach, management of projects and supervision of the private sector and NGOs who are now responsible for implementation. The question that arises now is whether districts are well equipped and able to carry on this role? The reality on ground is their ability to effectively absorb all these funds and ensure the implementation of their plans is still questionable due to the following;

- Inadequate staffing
- Low skills and technical capacities
- Poor facilitation both logistical and financial

Efforts to address problems of staffing and logistics have been made but what about capacity and institutional issues? There is still need for support in the form of capacity building and institutional development for sustainability purposes. Institutional development, refers to stable patterns of behaviours, norms and values of an organisation manifested in the systems and procedures put in place that influence the performance of an organisation, how it sets it's objectives as well as delivery of it's goals.

SNV, Netherlands Development Organisation, an International NGO in partnership with the European Union and Government of Uganda is implementing the Gravity Water and Sanitation Programme in thirteen districts in the country, inclusive of Rukungiri district. The major objective for SNV intervention in the WES sector is to ensure that the organisational, management, planning and technical capacity of district local governments in general and District water officers in particular improved to ensure appropriate water resource management. This is through capacity building focused on organisational development and institutional strengthening.

Thus the role of SNV in this programme through regional technical support units is to strengthen and enhance the capacity of the districts and NGO partners to effectively plan, implement and monitor water and sanitation programmes. Under the districts, the institutional development is targeted at the District Management Committee that comprises all departmental heads in the district including Water and is responsible for planning and supervision of district projects and activities. Under the DMT specific emphasis is placed on the District Water Office, as the technical officer responsible for water and sanitation programmes. The district water office is comprised of engineers, social mobiliser, health inspector, planner/economist and support staff.

### **Specific responsibilities of SNV in the programme**

SNV established two regional units both in Western and the West Nile parts of the country manned by technical personnel i.e. engineers and social scientists. The units are on hand to give the districts and other NGOs back up support whenever necessary. SNV role in the GWSP programme towards institutional strengthening has involved

- Facilitating the formation and ensure functionality of the District management committee as the district technical planning unit. As already said before it is the technical unit responsible for planning and supervision of ongoing projects and activities
- Identification of district capacity needs and gaps. The capacity needs identified are specific to what is required/missing/hindrance towards the fulfillment of the developed work plans and district sector goals. This assessment is done on annual basis.
- Strengthen district capacity to effectively carry out health and sanitation activities at all levels and facilitate the integration of water, sanitation, gender and environment in the sector.
- Facilitate the development of annual work plans
- Quality assurance through monitoring of consultants and participation in the certification and verification of completed projects
- Ensure the integration of water, sanitation, gender and environmental aspects in project implementation
- Promote sharing on WES related technologies, approaches, methods, etc among all stakeholders active in the WES sector

- Develop and review monitoring and evaluation systems
- Training of district officials as per capacity needs identified
- Development of various training modules

### **Achievements**

- District management committees in place and functional. They hold monthly meetings to discuss workplan progress of all WES programmes, challenges and look into any upcoming issues. Minutes of these meetings are inputted in quarterly progress reports to donors and the district council
- Monitoring and progress reporting formats are in place and used. These include progress reporting formats to the other donor agencies as well as monitoring formats for all the project activities from implementation to handover and after service
- Development of protocol and framework for comprehensive sub county WES planning to feed into the district WES plans. This process ensures a bottom up planning as well as development of realistic and accurate plans addressing real needs on ground
- Transparent technical evaluation criteria for procurement of contractors developed and already in use
- District WES resource data base developed and managed
- Guidelines for implementation of activities developed and standardised
- Of the two completed projects, a woman chaired the project management committee of the first project.

### **Challenges faced**

- Inadequate staffing at the district. Up until half a year ago, district water offices were manned by only one officer and other extension staff at county levels. The Water Officer was receiving technical support from the community development officer and health inspector to ensure the integration of software aspects. But these are officers already bogged down with other departmental work. This caused delays in implementation
- Changing programme strategies that mainly hinged on the role of the district
- District management systems and procedures followed are as laid out in the Local Government Act following the decentralisation policy. Major changes in this can only be effected at a national /parliamentary level
- Lack of funding to address needs outside WES implementation and in particular outside GWSProgramme

issues. Given that the technical support was towards effective implementation of the specific programme, there was no room and funding for anything outside this

- Different donor conditionalities and procedures; all to be adhered to by the districts. This made standardisation of approaches difficult.
- Women participation at higher and technical levels still low. All officers in the district water office are male apart from the secretary

### **Lessons learnt**

1. In institutional strengthening of the district, one need not look at only the DMC and DWO because there are other offices and powers that impact or affect their performance beyond the technical incapacities. Thus in the institutional development one needs to take a holistic approach looking at both the technical issues as well as managerial, human resource and administrative systems in the entire district in order to have a sustainable change
2. In instances of programmes that fund specific activities, districts should be facilitated to source other funding and donors to facilitate the implementation of those other activities or address capacity gaps outside WES issues or DWO office
3. Development of performance indicators to show progress of the district and also regulate the support being rendered by SNV or other parties.
4. Need for closer collaboration with Local government ministry in particular the Decentralisation Secretariat at both national and district level.

### **Conclusion**

For more sustainable development and provision of services, the kind of support given to districts by development partner should transcend technical, financial and logistical parameters to address institutional development issues as well. These needs can be identified through a thorough organisational self-assessment. The successful address of these problems requires commitment from the district plus financial and technical support from the partners and other donors.

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