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DELIVERING WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE SERVICES
IN AN UNCERTAIN ENVIRONMENT

Developing awareness and skills on Inclusive WASH: a mixed mode learning format

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BRIEFING PAPER

Equity and inclusion are fundamental to WaterAid's mission as part of a rights based approach. WaterAid collaborated with the Water, Engineering and Development Centre (WEDC), Loughborough University, to design and run an equity and inclusion practitioner training course. It was designed and piloted in 2010, funded by WaterAid and WEDC. An external evaluation found that the training increased the knowledge, skills and confidence of participants to implement equity and inclusion in their own work. Recommendations were made for improvements, which were incorporated into a second course in 2011. This paper describes the training course, its strengths and weaknesses, and its impact, in terms of what staff in country programmes have put into practice since the training, and discusses further lessons learnt about the training content, the format, and its impact.

Background

WaterAid's aim is to provide water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) to the unserved - the poorest people in poor countries. Over the years different country programmes have applied a gender perspective to the work, and several have developed projects targeting disabled people with WASH services. WaterAid's Global Strategy for 2010-2015 has equity and inclusion at its core, as a result of the global efforts of the International Programmes Department and Policy and Campaigns Department.

The *Equity and inclusion framework* (Gosling 2010) was developed between 2009 and 2010, through a collaborative process involving equity and inclusion focal people in London and in each of WaterAid's country programmes. This framework sets out WaterAid's approach to mainstreaming equity and inclusion as a rights based approach. Equity is the principle of fairness, and inclusion is the process of ensuring that all are able to participate fully (Gosling 2010:6).

The framework promotes a twin track approach that involves mainstreaming equity and inclusion through all of WaterAid's practices and policies, while simultaneously developing specific knowledge and expertise on how to ensure access for specific groups of people who are normally excluded from WASH services. This includes women, children, older people, disabled people, people living with HIV, and other specific groups of people who are discriminated against in different contexts. The framework also sets minimum standards and indicators defining what we would expect to see if equity and inclusion is mainstreamed in all four of WaterAid's strategic aims.

The group that developed the framework came together at a workshop in Addis Ababa in 2010 to finalise and plan how to embed the framework in WaterAid's practice. They defined the skills, expertise, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours that WaterAid needed to develop in its staff in order to mainstream equity and inclusion. The first task was to raise staff awareness of the importance of focusing on the most marginalised groups through the approaches set out in the framework. A one day training course, "Equity and inclusion: play your part" (WaterAid n.d.) was developed and cascaded to country programme offices through the focal persons. This course has been held in each country programme office, and is repeated periodically in the London office to keep up with staff turnover.

The second task was to develop the confidence, skills and capacity of programme staff to deliver WASH programmes that are inclusive and accessible for all, and to ensure that equity and inclusion is promoted through advocacy and influencing work in country programmes and internationally.

Purpose of the training

WaterAid collaborated with the Water, Engineering and Development Centre (WEDC), Loughborough University, to design and run an equity and inclusion practitioner training course. It was piloted in 2010, funded by WaterAid and WEDC, and ran for the second time in 2011, partly funded by the Sanitation and Hygiene Applied Research for Equity Consortium (SHARE).

The course was designed to provide WaterAid's country programme staff with the skills and confidence to put the *Equity and inclusion framework* and policy into practice, specifically to:

- Gain a clearer understanding of what equitable and inclusive water and sanitation services can look like, and what they aim to achieve.
- Gain practical skills and tools for implementing an equitable and inclusive WASH programme.
- Identify equity and inclusion objectives for participants' country programmes and to identify practical steps for implementation.

Course delivery

To maximise coverage at a reasonable cost, a mixed mode delivery format was developed, using a combination of self-paced, remotely supported, locally facilitated and hands-on learning. The course lasted six months and was structured in three Phases:

Phase 1: Self-paced guided distance learning

Over a 3 month period, a series of three assignments were issued by the WEDC tutor, with tasks including reading and analysis, practical group exercises with other staff or partners, site visits and assessing the accessibility of existing water and sanitation facilities (e.g. Photos 1 and 2) . Participants were given a month to complete each assignment before submission by a due date. This allowed the flexibility to incorporate assignments into work schedules where feasible, such as project visits, partner meetings, and so on.

Photo 1. Participants carrying out the accessibility audit

Photo 2. Participant interviewing pupils about the accessibility of facilities

The 'hub' of the course was a website, (based on the Loughborough University 'Learn' platform) from which registered participants could download assignments, access a 'library' of resource materials, post questions on a discussion forum, and upload assignment reports on completion (see Photo 3). Support and advice was also provided by the WEDC tutor via email. Following each assignment, feedback and discussion was provided through a web-based seminar (webinar) facilitated by the WEDC tutor.

Phase 2: Five-day workshop

Two participants from each country programme attended a five-day workshop, which built on learning from the tasks in Phase 1. It also provided an opportunity to share learning across countries and to plan how to use the materials and approaches in programme work and in further staff training.
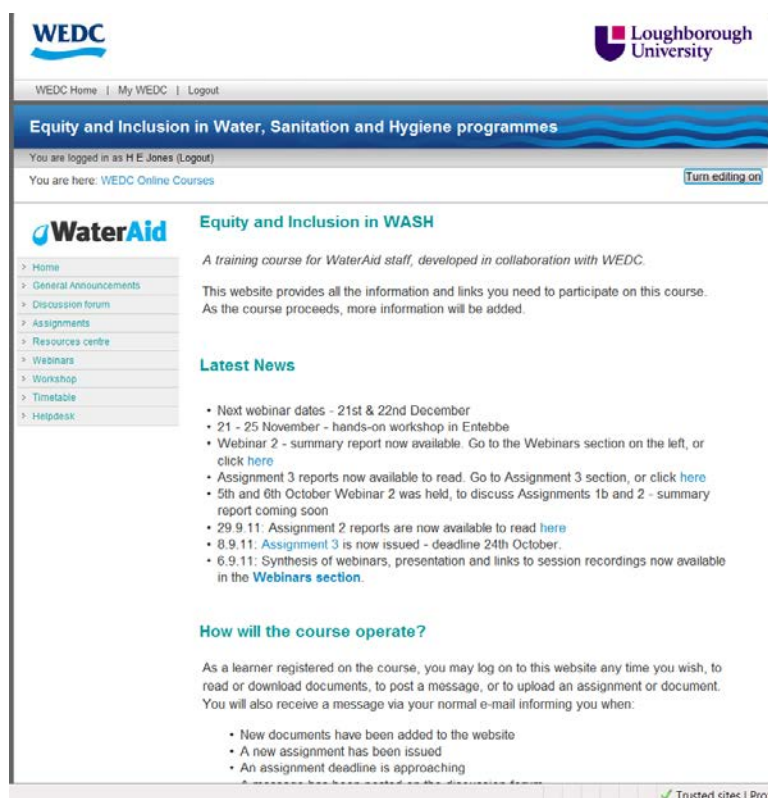
Photo 3. Screenshot of the Equity and Inclusion course website

Phase 3: Follow-up activities
To follow-up on the previous phases, three assignments were completed by all learners on return to their country programmes. These focussed on dissemination of workshop learning, and applying learning from the course to ensure that their multi-year planning and budgeting process includes equity and inclusion issues, and detailed planning of implementation.

The training course was designed using an Action Learning cycle. Each phase involved action-reflection-learning-planning across its components. This ensured that the principles of equity and inclusion were applied in practice as per the framework and policy.

Ensuring management support
To raise capacity within each country programme as a whole and sustain awareness and skills, each country programme had to identify a group of learners to participate in the training course. The aim was to create a critical mass of interest and competency in each country programme office so that the group of learners could support each other to put the learning into practice. It also had the aim of including perspectives from different roles to the subject. Urban and rural project managers, advocacy staff, finance and human resources managers all took part in the training. In several country programmes the training also involved members of senior managers.
A pre-requisite to registration on the course was that each participant signed a statement of commitment, with a supporting statement from their line manager to ensure that participants would be provided the managerial support to carry out the assignments of the course.

Implementation
35 WaterAid staff from nine country programme offices directly participated in the first course, with a further 44 WaterAid staff from ten country programme offices in the second course. Additional staff from WaterAid partner organisations and community members were involved indirectly by taking part in assignments that were designed as group activities. For example, the first assignment was a 'squat plate

exercise'. Participants from the Malawi programme decided to conduct this exercise in a school, involving children, teachers, sanitation masons, Village Health Committee members and local partner organisations.

Following the workshop, Assignment 4 aimed to spread the learning from the course to colleagues and partners. In Tanzania, for example, WaterAid participants gave presentations at the local partners' planning meeting, to influence them to embed equity and inclusion in their future plans and activities. In Timor-Leste, this assignment took the form of sharing equity and inclusion issues with district local government. During this same phase, the Country Representative in Nepal mandated that all staff had to attend training on equity and inclusion as a result of this assignment.

What worked well

An independent evaluation of the training was carried out in two stages: the first after the first course, to analyse its immediate impact and to identify any changes needed for the second course. The second stage was carried out a year later to evaluate any impact in terms of practical implementation (Mundy 2012). The following successes were identified:

Knowledge
- The training increased WaterAid staff awareness of a rights-based approach to development.
- Involvement of a range of staff showed that different staff contribute to mainstreaming equity and inclusion in line with their different responsibilities. This is not just an issue for the equity and inclusion focal person.
- It raised awareness that social exclusion from WASH is the result of a complex combination of social norms, individual prejudices, poverty, power relations, education and physical barriers and has provided a safe space in which to discuss exclusion, particularly of people with disabilities.

Skills
- It was evident from the action plans that participants had adopted the social model of inclusion to analyse and address institutional and attitudinal barriers as well as physical barriers to WASH.
- It provided opportunities for participants to reflect on and share their previous experience within the conceptual framework – the social model of inclusion – and to consider practical ways of improving accessibility to WASH.
- It has given WaterAid staff the confidence to highlight issues of exclusion in discussions and advocacy work on inclusive WASH with other actors, including government agencies. WaterAid staff have carried out follow-on training with other staff and partner organisations. They have also had further training from organisations in their country to deepen their understanding of issues in their own context.

Practice
- The practical tools and techniques to improve accessibility to WASH introduced through the training were adopted by each of the country offices.
- It established a benchmark for equity and inclusion within WaterAid and has raised expectations for inclusive WASH within country programmes.
- Service delivery and advocacy partnerships have been established with organisations representing the interests of marginalised groups, especially organisations representing disabled people.

What was learned from the first course and revised in the second

Weaknesses were identified by the evaluation after the first course, resulting in the following changes:
- **Limited management ownership and prioritisation:** in course 2, a member of the SMT of each country programme was required to take part, to ensure the learning would be adopted in the plans and budgets.
- **Resources only available in English:** training materials and key resources were translated into Portuguese for the participants in Mozambique.
- **Technology challenges** in accessing resources and participating in webinar discussions: Connectivity was a recurring issue for many of the country programme participants, and made it difficult for some to take part in the webinars, and to download assignments and reading materials from the website. To address this, the resource materials were provided on CDs for each country programme so they did not have to download the resources from the website, and the WEDC tutor summarised each webinar and disseminated it through email.
- **Confusion over the purpose of Assignments 5 and 6:** The number of assignments in Phase 3 was reduced, to align them more closely with WaterAid's organisational planning and budgeting approach.

Longer-term impact

Implementation of action plans by country programmes
All the country programmes that took part in the training have carried out follow-up activities that have strengthened and widened their work on equity and inclusion. For example WaterAid Bangladesh has incorporated disabled access into all its programmes, including its 'inclusion' programme that promotes WASH access for marginalised groups including sex workers, tea garden workers and sweeper colonies. WaterAid Madagascar has further raised the profile of its work with Handicap International, developing, documenting and promoting inclusive WASH facilities. However there is still a tendency for programme staff to focus on changes to infrastructure, they need to be continually challenged to make facilitation and hygiene promotion more inclusive and empowering for marginalised groups.

Further training and materials development
- After taking part in the course, WaterAid in Australia received funding from AusAid to run Inclusive WASH, an online training forum, to gather case studies and resources on inclusive WASH. This built on the WEDC training and added expertise on gender, HIV and disability to deepen the analysis. It was open to all and had 79 participants taking part in all of the webinars, and over 13,000 stakeholders using the website (WaterAid Australia 2012);
- WEDC and WaterAid were invited to hold a capacity building session on equity and inclusion at the WSSCC global forum on sanitation and hygiene in Mumbai, June 2011, based on the methods and resources from the training programme;
- WaterAid have developed an equity and inclusion toolkit that shows how different tools can be used in the programme cycle to ensure the participation and access of marginalised groups of people in WASH (Jansz 2012).

Research
Action research is under way in Zambia and Uganda to implement an inclusive WASH programme that will be fully documented through process monitoring. The effect on community members will be assessed using a baseline and endline study with households that have vulnerable members. This combination of process monitoring and baseline-endline comparison will be used to assess the costs and perceived benefits of making WASH programmes more inclusive and accessible to all.

What has been learnt?
Training course structure
- Self-paced distance learning is an effective method when supported by sufficient facilitation and motivation.
- This approach reaches large numbers of people at a low cost by using simple, widely available technologies such as webinars with self-paced distance learning assignments.

Facilitation
- It is time consuming to facilitate this kind of learning. Four people were involved in facilitation and management: tutor and website developer from WEDC, and two staff from WaterAid.
- Regular input is needed to maintain momentum in this type of course. Facilitators both in the UK and at country level frequently contacted participants to remind them of deadlines and, where necessary, extending them.
- Certificates were awarded for participants who had completed at least four of the six assignments, including the final assignment. This required monitoring of participation in assignments and webinars and involvement in group submissions, which was also time consuming.

Participants
- Participants should, if possible, be from a range of organisational roles, to maximise knowledge sharing, learning, significant discussions and debate.
- Participants can have a range of experience on the theme in question, but must include both senior management and junior staff to ensure resulting plans are implemented.
- The training course should allow space for other stakeholders to be involved indirectly, for example when carrying out assignments.

Training course content
- The content of the course needs to be carefully planned to bring together theory and practice, in particular when embedded in existing realities.
- Participants should be enabled to bring in their own experience through practical assignments requiring critique and analysis of existing approaches.
- The training course must be linked closely to existing work priorities and plans to ensure ownership.

What next for WaterAid's equity and inclusion training?

Instead of repeating the training a third time, it was decided to adapt the training materials used in the course into stand-alone open source learning materials for use by the wider WASH sector. These are now available on the WEDC website (WEDC/WaterAid 2012). These include activity sheets with practical participatory exercises and a pdf presentation with facilitator notes that can be used by any facilitator running a training course. In the first month they went online, the website received 836 visitors and 1,438 documents were downloaded.

Because of its effectiveness, this training delivery model is now being used by WaterAid in a different context - to develop institutional confidence and competence in partnerships. WaterAid has used the same training model – a series of assignments over a six month period, facilitated in collaboration with a specialist organisation (Building Partnerships for Development) –to build skills and capacity for managing effective partnerships across the organisation.

The training successfully supported an organisational shift towards mainstreaming equity and inclusion in WASH by generating a body of confidence and skill to operate the equity and inclusion framework. This is evident in the on-going development of equity and inclusion practice in WaterAid country programmes, in the popularity of the training materials beyond WaterAid and WEDC, and in the fact that WaterAid and WEDC are consistently seen within the sector to have skills and experience to implement a more inclusive approach to WASH.

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