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**DELIVERING WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE SERVICES
IN AN UNCERTAIN ENVIRONMENT**

**A monitoring tool for the establishment of WASH
committees in Sri Lanka**

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It is the goal of arche noVa to provide sustainable WASH services in rural areas. In addition to the construction of locally adapted water systems and sanitary facilities the major challenge lies in the building up and establishing of competent WASH committees. Only the upkeep and maintenance of any physical infrastructure combined with securing the support from the community and instilling a sense of ownership for the project within the community ensure the sustainability of the projects in the long term. These WASH committees should be comprised of elected or appointed community members and are mandated to operate and maintain the WASH facilities. arche noVa has developed a tool, which, over a period of time, monitors and evaluates whether a WASH committee is functioning and equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to carry out their duties and responsibilities. This system measures the performances of the committee with detailed indicators.

Introduction

During the last chapter of the Sri Lankan Civil War (2007-2009), many civilians were forced to leave their homes and flee to the many IDP Camps in the North and East of the Island. After the war, once the government had regained access to the areas formerly held by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), it eventually started the controlled resettlement of the IDPs from the camps. However, the infrastructure in the areas of resettlement was severely war-damaged and once the IDPs had returned there was little support from the government. Furthermore the capacity of the communities to help themselves was greatly reduced because many of them had been traumatised.

The area where arche noVa implemented the project in which this tool was developed is situated in the western part of the Batticaloa District in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka. The villages there are mostly quite isolated and face many constraints such as limited availability of transport and accessibility, lack of functioning infrastructure, a severe lack of water and limited livelihood opportunities.

For large parts of the population in the re-settlement area the water supply had to be supplemented by water-trucking during the dry season because many existing village wells dry up completely between the months of May and November. Because of insufficient financial and logistical capacities of the local authorities, the communities couldn't be providing with a secure water service. There was therefore a big need to develop additional water sources and to construct new water supply systems as well as strengthen the self-help capacities of the resettled communities to make them less dependent on the government.

arche noVa's two-year project was named PIWASHRA (Participatory Improvement of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Resettlement Areas) and was based on a concept which involves the local population directly as far as possible in the process of project preparation, execution of construction and operation of the facilities. The first step was a campaign to mobilize the villagers and help them to make decisions about the type of system for water supply and sanitation they required, based on what was feasible in their surroundings. Using the PHAST methodology as a model, arche noVa developed a three day training: PIWASH (Participatory Water Sanitation Hygiene preparation), which also included the election of a WASH committee.

The communities were given information on a number of viable design options for the physical infrastructure components of the project to give them the necessary tools to make decisions about the types of systems they required. In order to reinforce a sense of ownership in the project the communities were directly involved in the decision-making process as well as the actual construction activities through a “cash for work” initiative, which also provided an income to them in the post-war recovery phase. All the technologies utilised in and tailored to PIWASHRA had several things in common, which were as follows:

- They could all be built with little or no advanced construction knowledge by community members (under supervision of local masons, plumbers and carpenters where necessary).
- All techniques used only locally available materials.
- They could be built without the need for heavy construction machinery.
- They were culturally accepted by the local population.

Especially the last point has been found to be important to secure a proper maintenance by the responsible WASH committee or by the community.

Several surveys and vast experience in the field have proven that a strong and committed WASH committee increases the effectiveness and durability of any WASH scheme. However, practice has also shown that it is a challenging and time consuming task to establish and build up a committee that is able and motivated to take up these tasks, especially, if they are to carry on indefinitely. arche noVa established 13 WASH committees in 13 communities in the scope of this two-year project. The committees received capacity building in empowerment, managing a funding system and income generating activities. They registered themselves as village organizations (CBOs or Community Based Organizations) in order to establish a savings account and they received capital to start income generating activities finance maintenance funds.

Definition of a WASH committee

A WASH committee is a representative group of community members, either elected or appointed by the community, which is responsible for operation and maintenance of the WASH facilities. A committee usually consists of community members carrying out various tasks on a voluntary basis.

Composition of the WASH committees

While the number of WASH committee members may vary according to the size of the scheme, the structure of the committee should be in line with the governing body of any CBO: There needs to be a President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. In the context of this project the committees also had additional members that were tasked with hygiene/health promotion and technical support.

If a committee is to function smoothly and meet the needs of the community its members must be representative of all sub-groups of said community, meaning both women and men, those who are better off and those who are poor, groups that are disadvantaged etc. The involvement of women is highly encouraged, at minimum to the level of gender balance.

Responsibilities of the WASH committee

Roles and responsibilities of the WASH committee members are defined in the constitution/statute and can be grouped into the categories social management, technical management and financial management.

The project’s success of establishing a functioning committee will depend on the capacity of the community and in particular the capacity of the WASH committee to operate, manage and maintain the facilities themselves, articulate their needs, make democratic decisions and handle conflicts. Therefore the process of reaching adequate skills of the WASH committee has to be monitored over an extended period of at least 6 – 12 months.

1. Operation of WASH facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up and adhere to an operational plan • Secure efficiently water usage
2. Maintenance of WASH facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up and adhere to a maintenance plan with regular servicing • Ensure the security of the WASH facilities against vandalism, misuse, damage
3. Management tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up and adhere to a statute/constitution for the committee • Hold regular meetings and ensure consistent reporting (minutes, reports to authorities) • Handle and control finance, ensure proper book-keeping • Plan and implement fundraising activities and collect fees and contributions • Conduct trainings for newcomers • Represent community interests in all matters related to WASH facilities
4. Sustainability of WASH facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperate with local authorities, other stakeholders to sustain and expand the facilities • Mobilize the community members to participate in WASH activities
5. Health and hygiene promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct awareness training for the community and in schools • Conduct home visits and school visits to observe hygiene behaviour and general health
6. Formulating support requirements and dealing with private entrepreneurs	<p>(In case of a repair of a breakdown that goes beyond the capacity of the committee)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and formulate exactly the type of support that is needed • Invite various entrepreneurs to submit a tender/quotation and select the best proposal • Ensure monitoring of the work is arranged according to the contract • Formulate and submit requests for assistance to donors or local authorities

The WASH performance monitoring tool

Methodology

Various measures need to be taken to establish a sustainable WASH committee and secure proper operation and maintenance of the WASH facilities. Building up skills, knowledge and accountability of the committees is a process which should be monitored closely. Therefore arche noVa, together with their local partner in the PIWASHRA project, developed a tool with indicators whereby a committee's ability to perform and the results of their performance can be quantified, monitored and evaluated over a period of time. This tool is not static but rather keeps track of developments and setbacks during the project implementation.

Step 1. Definition of indicators

Indicators need to be developed according to agreed roles and responsibilities of a WASH committee and its members. These indicators should be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound). (see Table 2).

Step 2. Weighting the indicators

In order to weight the indicators, each indicator will be compared to each other indicator by a pair-wise comparison. The marking can be either: the indicator is more important than (3), carries the same importance as (2), less important than (1) the other indicator. The weighting of the indicator results from: Total of each indicator will be put in relation to the total of weighting. The total of the weighting is 100 %.

Weighting of indicators has to be done for each project since the importance of the indicators varies according to the project context. (see Table 3).

Step 3. Marking the result/performance

On a regular basis (recommended monthly), the aspects of the assessment of the WASH committee should be assessed according to the indicators. A very good result/performance gets 4 points, good result/performance 3 points, satisfying result/performance 2 points and insufficient result/performance 1 point. The points are then multiplied by the respective weight factor. The weighted level of performance in % per aspect of assessment is calculated by the following formula (see Table 4):

WF = Weight Factor for indicator
P= reached Points (1-4)

$$\frac{\Sigma (\text{WF} \times \text{P})}{\Sigma (\text{WF} \times 4)} \times 100$$

Table 2. Summary of aspects and related indicators from the PIWASHRA project in Sri Lanka		
	Aspect of Assessment	Indicators
1.	Formation of WASH committee	1.1. Members of the community attended social mobilization meeting 1.2. Members of WASH c. were appointed or elected by the community 1.3. Composition of WASH c. represent the community (at least 50 % women)
2.	Efficiency of management of the WASH committee	2.1. WASH c. members carry out their tasks and responsibilities according to agreed TORs 2.2. Involvement, participation and information of other stakeholders (authorities, village leaders) in meetings, by reporting
3.	Efficiency of regular meetings of the WASH committee	3.1. Regular meetings (at least once per months) and attendance of all members 3.2. Participation in meetings: Have issues being discussed by all? 3.3. Have discussion lead to decisions? Action plan set up? 3.4. Minutes of meeting are written
4.	Capacity building of WASH committees	4.1. CBO Management 4.1.1. <i>Constitution/Statue/TOR formulated</i> 4.1.2. <i>Weekly, monthly, annual plan set up</i> 4.2. Finance/Book keeping 4.2.1. <i>Proper book-keeping done in a timely fashion</i> 4.2.2. <i>Cashbook and bank account in place</i> 4.2.3. <i>Board is regularly updated and informed about financial matters/decisions</i> 4.3. Leadership 4.3.1. <i>Active involvement/participation of all members in discussion and decisions?</i> 4.3.2. <i>Decisions are made in a democratic way</i> 4.3.3. <i>Networking/liaison with other stakeholders</i> 4.4. Mobilisation 4.4.1. <i>Unity and team spirit of community is increasing</i> 4.4.2. <i>Volunteer support and activities have increased</i> 4.5. Fundraising 4.5.1. <i>Proposal for income generating projects are developed</i> 4.5.2. <i>Linkages to other business related service providers established.</i> 4.6. Hygiene promotion 4.6.1. <i>Are home visits conducted regularly?</i> 4.6.2. <i>Improved hygiene behaviour of community members</i> 4.6.3. <i>Improved cleanliness observable in the environment of the community</i> 4.7. Conflict management skills
5.	Administration matters in place?	5.1. Registration completed 5.2. Bank account opened 5.3. Stationery (paper, stamp, pens) available
6.	Maintenance of WASH facilities	6.1. Regular technical checkups of WASH facilities in villages according to checklists 6.2. Daily checkups of WASH facilities in schools (clean and functioning?) 6.3. Daily cleaning of WASH facilities in schools 6.4. Repairs have been done in time (< 3 days) 6.5. Consumables, spare parts and tools for maintenance are in stock 6.6. Water test are conducted 6.7. Water level checked
7.	Financing of WASH facilities	7.1. User fees are collected on a regular basis from all users/beneficiaries 7.2. Member fees are collected regular (at least 90 % of the households paying regularly) 7.3. Transparency of fees is given and regular made available to the community
8.	Income generating projects	8.1. Business activities are undertaken 8.2. Bookkeeping done properly
9.	Phasing out of the monitoring organization	9.1. Building up linkages with other stakeholders (authorities, parents of school children) 9.2. Taking up own initiatives to maintain or expand WASH facilities 9.3. Contact with District Water Supply Office (at least 4 times per year)

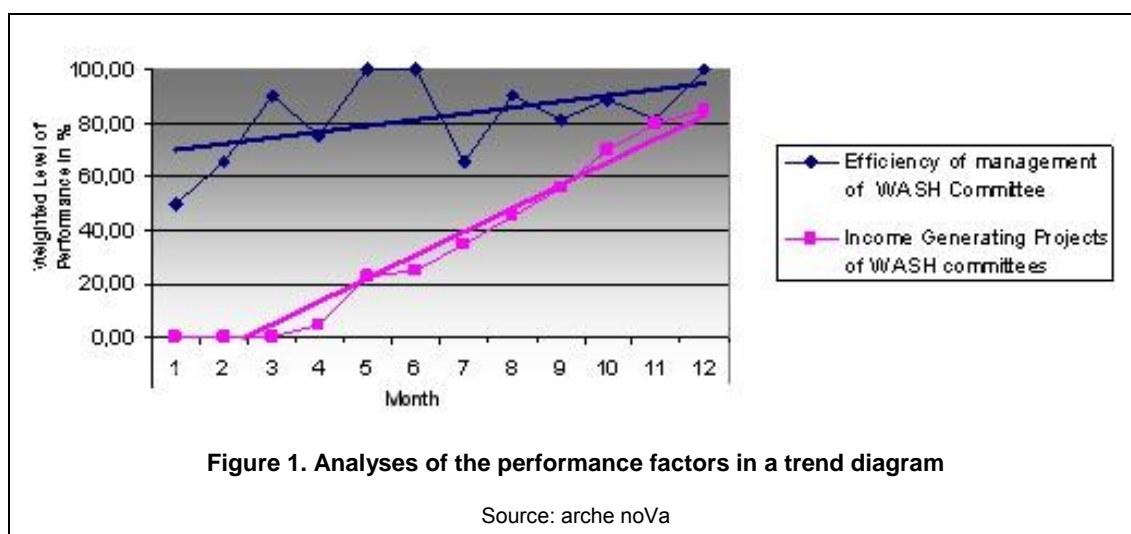
Indicator	1.1.	1.2.	1.3.	2.1.	2.2.	...all other indicators	9.3.	Total of points	Weighting
1.1.		1	1	2	2		1	79	1,27
1.2.	3		2	2	3		3	135	2,17
1.3.	3	2		2	3		3	129	2,07
2.1.	2	2	2		3		2	130	2,09
2.2.	2	1	1	1			2	78	1,25
...all other indicators									
9.3.	3	1	1	2	2			115	3,22
								3.574	100,00

	Aspect of assessment	Indicator	Weight Factor (WF)	Monitoring period												
				1st month		2nd month		3rd month		4th month		...	12th month		Final	
				P	WF*P	P	WF*P	P	WF*P	P	WF*P		P	WF*P		
1.	Formation of WASH committee	1.1.	1,27	4	5,08	4	5,08									
		1.2.	2,17	0	0	4	8,68									
		1.3.	2,07	0	0	2	4,14									
		Sum	5,51	4	5,08	10	17,90									
Weighted level of result in %				23,05		81,22	activity finished							81,22		
2.	Efficiency of management of WASH committee	2.1.	2,09	2	4,18	4	8,36	1	2,09	1	2,09					
		2.2.	1,25	2	2,50	3	3,75	2	2,50	1	1,25					
		Sum	3,34	4	6,68	7	12,11	3	4,59	2	3,34					
Weighted level of performance in %				50,00		90,64		34,36		25,00	Problem occurred			50,00*		
..all other indicators follow																

* Average of the monthly weighted level in %

There are of course different types of indicators. Some of the indicators describe performances that are measured subjectively by the evaluator while others describe results, which can be clearly measured. In every round of evaluations the points of a result are summarized. Once a result has been achieved (example the election of the committee or the constitution exists), it is not measured again, but merely carried forward to the next evaluation. Performance indicators which measure activities of a committee continuously (example: holding of regular committee meetings or proper bookkeeping etc.) get new marking points in every monitoring round. If the weighted level of result/performance reaches 100% this means that the WASH committee is operating perfectly and all activities are being implemented successfully. A significantly lower result/performance, say 50%, indicates that either the implementation was not carried out in a satisfactory manner or that some other problems were encountered which need to be addressed.

Through this it becomes very tangible on which level the committee is functioning during the observation period. One can easily observe if the WASH committee is operating on a high positive or negative level and whether their skills are increasing from round to round or if there are any setbacks. Based on these measurements the implementing NGO can align their activities and focus on addressing specific problems. At the end of the project the performance factors from all monitoring rounds can be summarized to an average. The analysis of the performance factors in a trend diagram demonstrates a more detailed account of the development of the WASH committee during the observation period (see Figure 1).



Conclusions and recommendations

When this tool is used properly, it is an excellent way to track structure and functionality of a newly formed committee. It helps the implementing NGO react in a timely manner to any upcoming problems, identify weaknesses in the existing structures or, in the best case, validate that the WASH committee is in fact on track and working well. It allows a proper final evaluation of the project implementation and makes the successes and downfalls more tangible.

However, there exists also an inherent risk in the operation of this tool. Deviations can be caused due to the subjective qualities of some of the indicators. In the worst case the measure of the indicators in the monitoring tool can be manipulated in order to falsely portray much better results to the donor or project management level. That is why it is important that the committee members also take part in the evaluation of their own performance. During every evaluation round, they should be invited to submit a self-assessment, which can be compared with the measurement by the evaluator. This allows large deviations to be investigated and gives the committees an opportunity to monitor their own progress.

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References

The monitoring tool was developed during a project implementation by arche noVa and based on experiences in the field and of the project team. As yet, there are no references to this tool.

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